
Cabinet Member (Policing & Equalities)

2nd October 2014

Name of Cabinet Member:

Policing and Equalities - Councillor Townshend

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Executive Director – People

Ward(s) affected:

Westwood

Title:

E-Petition to Save Coventry's Badgers from Culling

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

This report responds to an e-petition which was generated on the Council web site, in July 2014, from residents who called on Coventry City Council to prohibit the culling of badgers on council-owned land and invest in a vaccination programme locally.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member is requested to:

- (1) Acknowledge the e-petition and confirm the Council's support for the wider aim of the Government's strategy in achieving TB free status by 2038.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 – front page of petition

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No,

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 In July 2014, an e-petition of 61 e-signatures was raised by residents who call on the Council to prohibit the culling of badgers on council-owned land and invest in a 'vaccination program', locally. The petitioners believe culling to be inhumane, inefficient, and unscientific in the control of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in cattle. They claim that this is a national issue which will be of direct concern to the people of Coventry when DEFRA "rolls out" its culling policy in 2014.
- 1.2 Licences were originally issued in 2012 by the Government for badger control in two pilot areas in autumn 2012. These pilot areas are in West Gloucestershire and West Somerset and the licence permitted controls to take place on four occasions over a four year period. Badger control activity took place in the two pilot areas in 2013. Natural England have recently issued letters authorising the resumption of badger control measures in the two pilots areas in 2014, and a start date for culling activity will be decided by the cull companies.
- 1.3 There are currently no plans to carry out badger culling outside these pilot areas.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 On 3 April 2014, DEFRA announced a comprehensive strategy to achieve TB-free status in England by 2038. This includes continuing to strengthen cattle movement controls, a grant-funded scheme for badger vaccination projects in the 'edge area' at the frontier of the disease, and improvements to the four-year badger cull pilots in Somerset and Gloucestershire.
- 2.2 Following recommendations from DEFRA's Independent Expert Panel that assessed the badger cull pilots last year, a series of changes will be made to improve the effectiveness, humaneness, and safety of culling. These changes will be monitored to assess their impact before further decisions are taken on more badger cull licences next year. Improvements to the pilot culls will include more extensive training for contractors carrying out the cull, better planning by the licensed companies to ensure culling is spread evenly across all land available, and better data collection to assess progress.
- 2.3 Addressing bovine TB in badgers in high risk areas is just one part of DEFRA's new long-term strategy to eradicate bovine TB from England. Their strategy includes a wide range of tools that will be used to achieve the aim of TB-free status by 2038. This includes:
 - a) Offering grant funding for private badger vaccination projects in the edge areas aiming to increase TB immunity in uninfected badgers and reduce the spread of the disease. (DEFRA will provide match-funding for successful applicants.)
 - b) Continuing to strengthen cattle movement controls and testing regime to stop the disease from spreading from herd to herd.
 - c) Improving biosecurity by helping farmers understand the disease risk of cattle they buy.
 - d) Continuing to invest in development of a new vaccine for cattle which could be field-tested next year, and an oral badger vaccine which DEFRA would look to have available for use by 2019.
- 2.4 DEFRA state that the scale of the problem differs from region to region, so they will establish three bTB management regions known as the high risk area, low risk area and

the edge area. A range of measures will be applied to control the disease within each zone according to the risk. For security reasons DEFRA does not publish maps of these areas.

- 2.5 It is also important to mention that under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, Badgers are protected and so are the setts (burrows) they live in. This legislation applies to all land owners and this includes the City Council.
- 2.6 The City Council has not been approached by DEFRA concerning badger controls in what is a largely urban area and does not anticipate that it will feature in future programmes. Cabinet Member is recommended to acknowledge the petition and confirm the Council's support for the wider aim of the Government's strategy in achieving TB free status by 2038.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

None

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

Not applicable.

5. Comments from the Executive Director, Resources

Finance: There are no financial implications.

Legal: There are no legal implications.

6. Other implications

None

6.1.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard).

6.1.2 Not applicable.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

None

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA

None

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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This report is published on the Council's website:
www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

APPENDIX 1

ePetitions – Coventry City Council

Coventry City Council's ePetitions site

Save Coventry City Council's Badgers from Culling

"This is a national issue which will be of direct concern to the people of Coventry when DEFRA "rolls out" its culling policy in 2014. The object of the petition is to ensure that Coventry City Council's badger population is as safe as possible from slaughter and that the already available injectable badger vaccine against bTB is used in as many cases as possible. We ask this because we believe the culling policy is inhumane (DEFRA's measurement of "humaneness" is to time the screams of wounded badgers), inefficient (previous culls showed an increase in bTB because of badger movement) and unscientific (the majority of scientific opinion hold that a cull will have "no meaningful result").

We, the undersigned, call on Coventry City Council to prohibit the culling of badgers on council-owned land and invest in vaccination programmes locally. We ask this because we believe culling to be inhumane, inefficient and unscientific."

Petition Organiser: Works in Coventry

End Date: 19th July, 2014

Number of Signatures: 61

This ePetition has now closed for signatures. More information will be available soon. If you need any more information, please [contact us](#).

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