Item 3

24th November 2026

Glasgow City Council

Environment and Liveable Neighbourhoods City Policy Committee

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PIGEON ACTION PLAN

Purpose of Report:

To highlight the public health, environmental and amenity impacts arising from the feeding of pigeons in urban areas, and to support the implementation of proportionate measures to discourage this activity in identified hotspot locations throughout Glasgow.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee notes the public health, environmental, community and economic impacts associated with feeding pigeons and supports measures to discourage the practice.

Ward No(s):	Citywide: ✓
Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐	consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1 Key Message

While feeding pigeons is often perceived as a harmless act of kindness, it can create significant public health and environmental problems. Regular feeding encourages unnaturally large pigeon populations, increases the accumulation of droppings, attracts pests, damages infrastructure and can expose residents to disease-causing organisms.

2 Public Health Risks

2.1 Disease Transmission

Pigeons and their droppings can harbour a range of bacteria, fungi and parasites that may pose risks to human health. Diseases associated with pigeon droppings include:

- Histoplasmosis – a fungal infection affecting the lungs.
- Cryptococcosis – a fungal infection that can affect the lungs and, in severe cases, the nervous system.
- Psittacosis (ornithosis) – a bacterial infection that can cause flu-like symptoms and pneumonia.
- Salmonella and other gastrointestinal infections through environmental contamination.

Although the risk to individuals is generally low, people with weakened immune systems, respiratory conditions, older adults and young children are more vulnerable to adverse health effects.

2.2 Respiratory Problems

When pigeon droppings dry, they can break down into dust containing fungal spores and allergens. These airborne particles may be inhaled by members of the public, potentially causing:

- Respiratory irritation.
- Allergic reactions.
- Worsening of asthma symptoms.
- Chronic lung conditions in cases of prolonged exposure.

3 Environmental and Community Impacts

3.1 Increased Pigeon Populations

Regular feeding provides a reliable food source, allowing pigeon populations to grow beyond levels that would naturally be supported by the environment. Larger populations result in:

- Greater volumes of droppings.
- Increased nesting activity.
- Increased pressure on public spaces and buildings.

3.2 Attraction of Other Pests

Food left for pigeons often attracts:

- Rats and mice.
- Seagulls and other nuisance birds.
- Insects and vermin.

This can create additional public health concerns and increase pest control costs for Glasgow City Council and property owners.

3.3 Unsanitary Public Spaces

Large concentrations of pigeons can result in significant accumulations of droppings on:

- Footpaths.
- Benches.
- Children's play areas.
- Building entrances and public squares.

This creates unpleasant, unhygienic conditions and can reduce the enjoyment and accessibility of public spaces.

4 Economic Impact

4.1 Damage to Buildings and Infrastructure

Pigeon droppings are acidic and can damage:

- Stonework and masonry.
- Metal structures.
- Roofing materials.
- Monuments and public artworks.

Cleaning, maintenance and repair costs associated with pigeon activity can place a significant financial burden on councils, businesses and property owners.

5 Conclusion

Feeding pigeons contributes to larger bird populations, increased droppings, greater risk of disease exposure, attraction of pests and costly damage to public infrastructure. For these reasons, many local authorities actively discourage pigeon feeding as part of their public health and environmental management strategies. Encouraging residents not to feed pigeons is a simple and effective measure that helps maintain cleaner, safer and healthier public spaces for everyone.

6 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:	The plan will be delivered within existing service arrangements where possible.
Financial:	Any financial implications will be managed through existing approved budgets unless further specific interventions are required.
Legal:	The plan will support compliance with relevant environmental health, public health and statutory nuisance responsibilities.
Personnel:	Delivery will be supported by existing staff resources and established operational procedures.
Procurement:	Any procurement requirements will be considered in line with Council procurement rules.
Council Strategic Plan:	The proposal supports the Council's strategic priorities by helping to maintain clean, safe and well-managed public spaces and by improving the quality and consistency of local environmental services.
Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:	
Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2025-29? Please specify.	The proposal supports fair access to clean and safe public spaces.
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	No significant negative equality impacts have been identified at this stage.
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	The proposal may provide a positive impact by supporting cleaner and safer local environments, including in areas experiencing higher levels of environmental concern.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	The proposal does not directly support a specific Climate Plan action, but it promotes responsible environmental management.
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	No significant adverse climate impacts are anticipated from the report.
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	The proposal is not expected to make a material contribution to Glasgow's net zero carbon target.

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:	No.
Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N	
If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out	

7 Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee notes the public health, environmental, community and economic impacts associated with feeding pigeons and supports measures to discourage the practice.

Appendix 1: Pigeon Action Plan

Proposed Action
Engagement with Neighbourhood Liaison Team – Review of Previous Approach • Re-engage with Neighbourhoods City Centre Team regarding earlier interventions. • Review effectiveness of previous signage including bin wraps in relevant locations, public engagement, and the partnership with Poundland (including provision or funding of materials such as feed alternatives or signage). • Identify lessons learned and opportunities for adaptation or expansion.

Development of a Communications Campaign
• A refreshed communications strategy will be developed to discourage public feeding of birds.
• Campaign themes may focus on:
  ○ Public health and cleanliness
  ○ Responsible behaviour in shared spaces
  ○ Clear messaging on consequences of excessive feeding
• Communications channels will include social media, local press, on-site signage, and updated website content.

Identification of Hotspot Locations
• Operational teams will map known hotspots through:
  ○ Cleansing and Environmental Health reports
  ○ Community feedback
  ○ Data provided by the Uniformed Enforcement Team
• These hotspots will inform prioritisation for signage, enforcement presence, and targeted communications.

Liaison with Scottish Borders Council – By-law Approach • Officers will contact Scottish Borders Council to review their current by-law or regulatory approach relating to bird feeding. • A summary of their legal framework, implementation, and enforcement experience will be used to inform consideration of any local regulatory options. • Any potential by-law development would require a separate legal and consultation process.

Collaboration with George Square Team – Bespoke Signage

- Engage with the George Square Management Team to design bespoke signage appropriate to the civic and aesthetic context of the Square.
- Signage branding to align with the communications campaign.
- Materials to be weather-resistant, high-visibility, and accessible for all users.
- Enhanced Cleaning by operational teams

Uniformed Enforcement Team – Informal Engagement

- The Enforcement Team will provide a visible presence at key locations.
- Initial approach will be informal, focusing on:
  - Education
  - Advice to the public
  - Signposting to campaign materials including bin wraps in relevant locations.
- Escalation to formal enforcement will be considered at a later stage if required and legally supported.

. Updating of Council Web Pages

- Relevant web pages will be reviewed and updated to:
  - Reflect new messaging and guidance
  - Provide information on the reasons for discouraging bird feeding
  - Present clear advice for residents, businesses, and visitors
- Content will be aligned with the wider communications campaign.