



| <u>Committee and Date</u>                      |
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| Environment and Services<br>Scrutiny Committee |
| 21 July 2014                                   |

| <u>Item</u>   |
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| <b>8</b>      |
| <u>Public</u> |

## Summary of DEFRA's Badger Control Policy

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### 1. Summary

1.1 The badger cull pilot is a Government scheme operated in Somerset and Gloucestershire through Defra and Natural England. There are no current plans to extend the badger cull into Shropshire. This report provides a summary of the Government's current policy for badger culling.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 If the Government considers it necessary to extend the cull into Shropshire the Council will consider its position at that time in light of the latest information. Therefore at this point in time it would be premature for the Council to consider its position ahead of a formal decision and before it has an opportunity to evaluate the latest evidence in support of any proposal regarding a badger cull in Shropshire.

## REPORT

### 3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

3.1 This report is provided for information only and therefore no risk assessment and opportunities appraisal has been carried out.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Financial implications need to be considered when the Government considers it is necessary to extend the cull.

#### **5.0 Background - Bovine TB**

- 5.1 Bovine TB is mainly a disease of cattle but can affect a range of species; there is a significant reservoir of infection in badgers. The disease is transmitted between cattle, between badgers, and between the two species.

- 5.2 The relationship between bovine TB in badgers and in cattle is highly complex. Areas of England with a high incidence of bovine TB in cattle also tend to have high numbers of badgers.

#### **6.0 Badger control policy**

- 6.1 Pilot badger control pilots are currently limited to areas of west Somerset and west Gloucestershire. Applications in the pilot areas are made to Natural England for a licence to become a cull area. The applications are voluntary joint ventures by landowners in the area in question and 70% of the landowners in a given area have to sign up for that area to be granted a licence among other conditions.

- 6.2 The latest information available from Defra and Natural England is that badger control will not be rolled out in any other areas in 2014.

- 6.3 The Government's approach to eradicating bovine TB from England includes a wide range of tools including:

- Offering grant funding for private badger vaccination projects in specific geographical areas aiming to increase TB immunity in uninfected badgers and reduce the spread of the disease. Defra provide match-funding for successful applicants;
- Continuing to strengthen cattle movement controls and testing regime to stop the disease from spreading from herd to herd;
- Improving biosecurity by helping farmers understand the disease risk of cattle they buy; and
- Continuing to invest in development of a new vaccine for cattle which could be field tested next year, and an oral badger vaccine which may be available for use by 2019.

**7.0 Additional Information**

7.1 Shropshire Council owns approximately 25 farms/small-holdings which it rents out. The majority of these are not beef or dairy herd farms.

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| <p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p> <p>Petition to Save the Shropshire Badgers from being culled</p> |
| <p><b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b></p> <p>Councillor Steve Charmley</p>  |
| <p><b>Local Member</b></p> <p>All</p>   |
| <p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>None</p>  |