

**PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED for Place Scrutiny Committee – 8 March 2018
from Mr Leon Poltawski**

To Councillor Stephen Brimble as Portfolio Holder, Place

Question

Having seen the litter havoc wrought by growing numbers of seagulls around the city, I wonder when the council are going to do something about making the litter bins around town gull-proof? Cathedral Green, a major tourist attraction in Exeter, is blighted by litter scattered by gulls, but the problem is widespread through the city centre and residential areas.

I appreciate that cost is an issue but the solution does not have to be expensive, perhaps a matter of fitting swinging doors to the bins. And remember the cost saved by not needing as much time spent on clearing up.

Response - Councillor Brimble, Portfolio Holder Place made a response and advised that the Cathedral Green area was owned and managed by Cathedral management staff. The litter bins on this green area were a different design to that of the public litter bins around the rest of the city. During the summer of 2017, Exeter City Council in partnership with the Cathedral management conducted a trial of Big Belly Bins. These bins have a battery powered by solar energy and have a compactor inside the bin, which increased the volume of litter that could be placed inside. It also had a flap style opening which meant that gulls (or anyone else) did not have access to litter once in the bin. The 6 week 'Big Belly Bin' trial, took into account the summer tourist season and when the students returned to the city in numbers, coped with the waste very well. Unfortunately the decision to implement changes to the existing litter bin provision on the Green, was not one that Exeter City Council could take as this land was privately owned by the Cathedral. The trial was undertaken to prove or disprove the concept. It was agreed at the time of the trial that the Big Belly Bins would be a solution to the problem described on the green area at times. However, it did not take into account litter left behind on the grass by picnickers. The Big Belly Bins were also considerably more expensive (more than 8 times) that of a standard litter bin and this would no doubt be a factor to consider for the Cathedral staff.

With regard to the other litter bins across the city. Most of the City Council's litter bins had fairly small apertures because of the reason stated in the question, although it was important to accommodate a pizza box size of litter. Last week there was a demonstration of a different style of litter bin with even smaller apertures available. It is planned to purchase some of these new style litter bins to trial in the new financial year, albeit within the constraints of the Council's existing budgets, which currently sit at around £15,000 p.a. Councillor Brimble, Portfolio Holder Place also put this into context, and advised that the City Council had approximately 1,200 litter and dog bins across the city which needed to be maintained as they become broken or vandalised.

The City Council's street cleaners were out on the streets from 06:00 – 18:00, 7 days a week, 364 days per year and do their very best to keep any over flowing litter bins to a minimum. On the odd occasion this occurred they responded quickly and efficiently to return the place to an acceptable standard.

Bags of waste presented for collection also attract seagulls. The Council encouraged residents to use seagull—deterrent sacks to contain their rubbish. For commercial waste collections the pricing policy encouraged the use of wheelie bins rather than rubbish sacks for those customers who could store a bin. The Council was also

investigating the potential to install larger on-street bins in parts of the city centre where rubbish sacks could be contained as a deterrent to seagulls.