

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 5a

meeting date: THURSDAY 20 OCTOBER 2016
title: PEST CONTROL FEES SERVICE REVIEW
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: HEATHER COAR – HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the pest control service review, evaluating options for delivering a pest control service and make a recommendation for approval for delivering the service in the future.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - Community Objectives – The report generally relates to the Council's ambitions to make people's lives safer and healthier.
 - Corporate Priorities – To engage with our community to ensure we deliver services to meet customer needs and expectations.
 - Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The report examines the current pest control service, and evaluates future delivery options. The review follows the recommendation for a leaner service. A decision on the future of the service is required as the current pest control service is running at a very low cost recovery level. An evaluation of the current service and a benchmarking exercise was undertaken when considering making this recommendation.
- 2.2 The Environmental Health Service is responsible for the day to day running of the pest control service as well as other functions such as the Dog Warden Service, Building Control, Emergency planning, Markets, Cemeteries and Environmental Health functions. The service has been reviewed to prioritise those services that are more readily aligned to the environmental health service. The priorities in the future are pest control and the dog warden service.
- 2.3 In relation to pest control, the review of the service will increase the section's capacity to deal with a greater range of pest control activities in a wider variety of premises and will include both domestic and commercial sectors.
- 2.4 Currently, the pest control service covers the treatment of rats (inside or outside), mice in the home, ants in the home, fleas, bed bugs, cockroaches and wasps. At the moment we do not currently provide a pest control service for birds, squirrels, moles, rabbits, snails and slugs, bees, bats or foxes.
- 2.5 The current fees and charges for pest control are set as follows:

RVBC Pest Control - Fees and Charges 2016/17 current fees

Service Area	Service	RVBC Current Charge 2016/17 £
Pest Control	Commercial - Single Treatment Charge (per hour plus materials - minimum charge 1 hour)	44.70
	Commercial - Annual Contract - Per Visit	36.10
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge (Rodents)***	22.00
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge - Out of Hours (Rodents)	44.00
	Domestic Callout Charge - Per Visit (unspecified reason)	11.40
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge - Public Health Pests (eg cockroaches and bed bugs)	No Charge
	Missed Appointments	No Charge
Non-Public Health Insect Treatment (eg. wasps, ants, flies, silverfish, carpet beetles and fleas)	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Single Treatment Charge during working hours***	44.00
	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Each additional nest treated on same visit ***	16.50
	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Out of Hours	88.00
	Missed Appointments	44.00
*** 50% concession if householder is eligible for State Pension, Housing or Disability Benefits		

- 2.6 Currently visits are undertaken Tuesday to Friday and we cannot offer a specific appointment time.
- 2.7 The pest control treatment service is discretionary; it is a service that is provided by most local authorities, particularly targeting those pests considered a public health risk, such as rats and mice. Treatment is a separate issue to enforcement of statutory pest control legislation that remains the duty of the Council.
- 2.8 In that respect, the Council has specific duties under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 to take steps to ensure that the borough is reasonably free from rats and mice and in particular to:
- From time to time carry out inspections.
 - Destroy rats and mice on land the Council owns or occupies.
 - Enforce duties of owners and occupiers to keep other land free from rats and mice.
- 2.9 The Council does not have a statutory duty to provide a pest control service, and there is no requirement to offer the service free of charge.
- 2.10 Other powers and duties regarding public health pests are included in other environmental health legislation, such as the current Food Safety legislation, the Public Health Act and the Housing Act.
- 2.11 The Council has provided a pest control service for over 30 years. In recent years a charging regime has been introduced. However, in some areas this is no longer consistent with what other local authorities or private providers charge.

2.12 There is also scope for the booking and payment service to be more effective.

3 ISSUES AND PROPOSALS

3.1 It is proposed that the revised pest control service continues to carry out the current treatments for pests, but with more realistic charges being made for such treatments and the service being managed more effectively.

Managing the service more effectively

3.2 The review has identified several measures to manage the service more effectively.

3.3 The number of visits for rodents and non-public health pest treatments that relate to the charges made has been clarified:

- The “Single Treatment” charge for rats and mice (rodents) will include one initial treatment and two follow-up visits. Should the problem not have been treated within the allotted timescale and designated visits, then a further charge per visit is proposed to be made to cover officer time and service provision.
- For wasps, ants, fleas and other non-public health pests, the treatment charge is made for one “Single Visit”.

3.4 Following the introduction of one initial visit and two follow-up visits for “Single Treatment” of domestic rats and mice (rodents) and a “Single Visit” for non-public health treatments, officers will analyse the number of advice/call outs over a period of 12 months to gauge the effect on the service.

3.5 Standardised documentation including procedure notes will be introduced for pest control staff.

3.6 The service will move to taking payment at the point of booking the treatment. This allows the Council more certainty over payment for the service provided and reduces the security risks of the pest control officer taking payment by cash on-site.

3.7 The introduction of web based payments are likely to make booking and payment easier for the Council and service users. Options to introduce this are being considered but the costs of introducing such a system must be considered also.

3.8 It is hoped that the proposed new charges will make residents consider their role in helping to prevent pest infestation, and will encourage greater local accountability rather than relying on the Council to undertake the service and not receive payment. This would enable the pest control officer to perform an education role during visits and provide information to help prevent further infestations.

Changes to Pest Control Charges

3.9 The Council’s current pest control charges have been reviewed by:

- assessing the hourly cost to the Council of providing each service; and
- comparing the Council’s current charges with charges set by other Lancashire councils and a local private provider.

3.10 The review identified the following issues:

- Costs for the domestic treatment of rats and mice (rodents), were much higher than the current charge of £22 for a “Single Treatment”, mainly because there is

often more than one visit included in the “Single Treatment”, and other councils and the local private provider charged higher rates for this service.

- The cost for a “Domestic Call Out” were much higher than the current charge of £11.40, mainly because the cost was virtually the same as a treatment visit.
- The cost of treating an additional nest on a non-public health treatment was minimal.
- The current charges for non-public health pests (such as wasps, ants and fleas) covered the costs of providing single visits and were broadly in line with the charges made by other Lancashire councils and were cheaper than the local private provider.
- Out of hours treatments and missed appointments by householders are costly for the Council. Whilst they do not happen very often, charges should be maintained to cover the Council’s costs in such circumstances.
- There were different levels of concession rates provided by other Lancashire councils.

3.11 New charges have been proposed for pest control. These are based on the above review alongside the following:

- The aim of introducing a simplified and consistent charging regime across pest control treatments.
- Accepting that treatment of rats and mice is a public health treatment and is costly, so it is acceptable and fair to not fully recover costs in this area.
- The current cost recovery of the pest control service is very low compared to other Lancashire councils.

3.12 The main changes included in the proposed new charges are:

- The Domestic “Single Treatment” Charge (rodents) for rats and mice increases from £22 to £44. The “Single Treatment” for rats and mice (rodents) will include one initial treatment and two follow-up visits. Should the problem not have been treated within the allotted timescale and designated visits, then a further charge of £44 per visit is proposed to be made to cover officer time and service provision. The charge is reflective of increased but not full cost recovery, is now consistent with the charge for non-public health pests (but covers up to three visits), is lower than the local private provider rate and is just above the average fee charged by other Lancashire councils that charge for this.
- The Domestic Call Out Charge Per Visit increases from £11.40 to £44, as the time and cost of these visits are similar to a treatment visit.
- A Missed Appointment charge of £44 is introduced for rodents’ treatment, which is consistent with the same charge for non-public health treatments.
- The Each Additional Nest Treatment on Same Visit charge has been scrapped because the extra treatment costs are minimal.
- The concession on some charges for those on benefits and pensioners has been removed.

3.13 There is no change to the “Single Visit” Charge of £44 for wasps, ants, fleas and other non-public health pests treatment or for the Commercial Annual Contract charge per visit of £36.10.

3.14 The pest control charges apply equally to all residents whether they are owners/occupiers, Council tenant or private rented. There will, however, be situations where the landlord has direct responsibility to control pests, ie where there are structural defects or properties with multiple occupation. In these situations, the

landlord will be charged at a commercial rate. Commercial rates are to be charged on a case by case basis dependent on the time taken - £50 per hour plus materials. This is an increase from £44.70 per hour plus materials, but is competitive, when compared to other Lancashire councils.

3.15 The proposed new charges are as follows:

RVBC Pest Control - Fees and Charges 2016/17 proposed new fees

Service Area	Service	RVBC Proposed Charge 2016/17 £
Pest Control	Commercial - Single Treatment Charge (per hour plus materials - minimum charge 1 hour)	50.00
	Commercial - Annual Contract - Per Visit	36.10
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge (Rodents)	44.00
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge - Out of Hours (Rodents)	88.00
	Domestic Callout Charge - Per Visit (unspecified reason)	44.00
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge - Public Health Pests (eg. cockroaches and bed bugs)	No Charge
	Missed Appointments	44.00
Non-Public Health Insect Treatment (eg. wasps, ants, flies, silverfish, carpet beetles and fleas)	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Single Visit Charge during working hours	44.00
	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Each additional nest treated on same visit	No Charge
	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Out of Hours	88.00
	Missed Appointments	44.00

3.16 Based on the treatments and visits charged for in the last full financial year, 2015/16, it is estimated that additional income of up to approximately £4.5k per year will be generated by introducing the new charging regime.

Plans to further develop services in the commercial sector

3.17 As stated earlier in the report, Ribble Valley Borough Council will be providing a pest control service to both domestic and commercial premises. There is a potential to take on other commercial contracts including local businesses, schools and even commercial operations such as food retailers. The pest control section will be in a better position to consider this once the initial review has been undertaken.

3.18 At this time there is half a pest control officer position vacant. However, there is little supporting evidence to quantify employing another member of staff. It is therefore suggested that a 12 month review is undertaken following the implementation of the suggestions identified in this report. Should it be felt that there is a need for further pest control operatives, then this will be addressed at a later point.

3.19 By offering businesses a low cost pest control service that covers cost for the service provider, it is likely to have benefits to the residents living in the vicinity. Commercial premises often provide a source of food and harbourage to pests, which can cause

numbers to increase in the area. Controlling this at source will prevent wider public health issues as well as saving time on enforcement action.

3.20 This report details the specifications on the process and procedure of enabling the Council to be the best provider for pest control services.

3.21 The Council has provided an efficient and well used pest control service for many years. There has been little need for the Council to enforce under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 due to the availability of the service.

3.22 As outlined earlier, there is not a statutory duty to provide a pest control service. The Council however does have certain obligations covered by the following legislation:

- Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 and the Public Health Act 1936. This legislation requires the Council to enforce duties of owners and occupiers to keep their land free from pests. The legislation does not require the Council to offer a pest control service.
- A discretionary pest control service can be provided under the Local Government Act 2000, which gives local authorities powers to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion and improvement of an economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their area (power of wellbeing).
- A charge for providing a pest control service can be made under the Local Government Act 2003, which includes a general power for local authorities to charge for discretionary services.
- The income from the pest control service is seasonal and very much dependent on the prevalent weather conditions.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – The introduction of the proposed charges will result in increased income.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
- Political, Reputational – The report represents the Council taking appropriate action to secure income to continue to provide a well-used and important front line service.
- Equality & Diversity – None.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Consider and approve the request for a new approach to the delivery of the pest control service.

5.2 Approve the new proposed charges from 24 October 2016 onwards as follows:

RVBC Pest Control - Fees and Charges 2016/17 proposed new fees

Service Area	Service	RVBC Proposed Charge 2016/17 £
Pest Control	Commercial - Single Treatment Charge (per hour plus materials - minimum charge 1 hour)	50.00
	Commercial - Annual Contract - Per Visit	36.10
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge (Rodents)	44.00
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge - Out of Hours (Rodents)	88.00
	Domestic Callout Charge - Per Visit (unspecified reason)	44.00
	Domestic Single Treatment Charge - Public Health Pests (eg. cockroaches and bed bugs)	No Charge
	Missed Appointments	44.00
Non-Public Health Insect Treatment (eg. wasps, ants, flies, silverfish, carpet beetles and fleas)	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Single Visit Charge during working hours	44.00
	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Each additional nest treated on same visit	No Charge
	WASPS, FLEAS, ANTS, OTHERS - Out of Hours	88.00
	Missed Appointments	44.00

HEATHER COAR
HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Heather Coar, extension 4466.

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