

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to the Executive for Decision 10 July 2017

Portfolio:	Health and Public Protection
Subject:	Review of Pest Control Services
Report of:	Director of Planning and Regulation
Strategy/Policy:	Corporate Strategy 2011-17
Corporate Objective:	A safe and healthy place to live and work Dynamic, prudent and progressive Council

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to review the Council's Pest Control Service, to bring it in line with other Hampshire Authorities. In particular to amend the fees and charges to introduce charging for rodent treatments, but also to ensure that the service is accessible to those in the community on the lowest incomes free of charge.

Executive summary:

The Council has operated a Pest Control Service for a number of years and apart from some very minor changes the Service has remained unchanged. It is essentially a service which provides free treatments to residents for rats and mice and a chargeable service for insects, although for people on low income the insect service is also currently free of charge. This report considers the options for the service going forward. These options range from not providing a service at all, to introducing charges for rodent treatments. Over the last few years most other Authorities in Hampshire have introduced charges for rodent treatments.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Executive agrees:

- (a) to introduce charging for rodent treatments but to keep it free of charge for those on the lowest incomes, as detailed in Appendix D;
- (b) to introduce a £30 fee to survey and quote for flea and bed bug treatments as a standard charge doesn't reflect the work involved for heavy infestations of these insects; and
- (c) to give delegated authority to the Head of Environmental Health to waive any charges in appropriate cases.

Reason:

It is necessary to amend the Pest Control Service to bring it in line with other Hampshire Authorities. In particular, to amend the fees and charges to introduce charging for rodent treatments, but also ensure that the service is accessible to those in the community on the lowest incomes. The additional income from rodent treatments will help the Council meet the difficult financial challenge it faces.

Cost of proposals:

The introduction of charging for rodent treatments should generate additional income. It is difficult to estimate how much, as currently the service is free. The service currently carries out around 1,000 rodent treatments each year, however there may be a fall in demand if charging is introduced. As an example, if demand fell by 20% to 800 treatments and 50% were chargeable, the additional income would be £24,000. There would be additional costs of around £5,000 attached to re-organising the service so that it wouldn't be reliant on an external contractor.

Appendices:

- A:** Current Pest Control Charges
- B:** Hampshire Local Authority Pest Control Services and charges
- C:** Local Pest Control Companies charges
- D:** Proposed Pest Control Charges

Background papers: None

Reference papers: None

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Executive Briefing Paper

Date:	10 July 2017
Subject:	Review of Pest Control Services
Briefing by:	Director of Planning and Regulation
Portfolio:	Health and Public Protection

INTRODUCTION

1. The Environmental Health Partnership with Fareham has been in place now since the 4 January 2011. It was initially created following a management restructure opportunity which arose in Gosport, together with an aspiration from each Council to explore the possibility of partnership working, to deliver resilience and efficiency savings.
2. Since 2011 a series of service reviews and restructures have been undertaken to continue to deliver both resilience and efficiency savings. The Partnership currently has a vacancy on the establishment of posts and so an opportunity has arisen to review the Pest Control Service. The service is currently provided on the same basis as it was prior to the Partnership arrangement and has not been reviewed for some years.
3. Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, each Local Authority has a statutory duty to keep its own land free from rats and mice. This is the basis for the provision of a pest control service. There is no statutory duty in respect of insects. Where we treat our own land ourselves there is no additional costs incurred.
4. Traditionally the Council has offered a service to the community as generally the rodent population in the Borough is then controlled and there is less likelihood of an infestation on Council land. There is also merit in treating for rodents given their public health significance, i.e. they are a reservoir for zoonotic diseases and are also linked to asthma and allergic reactions.
5. The Pest Control Service for the Partnership (Fareham and Gosport) is provided jointly by staff who routinely work in both Boroughs. Any changes to the service provision need to take account of the joint provision although it may be possible to tailor the service for each Borough should this be required.
6. Recently whilst the Service has been reviewed, due to a vacancy that has arisen, a local pest control company has been supporting the Council's service although this is costly and not viable on a long term basis.
7. The current fees and charges are shown as Appendix A.

8. A review of advertised local authority pest control services in Hampshire has been undertaken, the results of this can be seen as Appendix B.
9. A survey of private companies' charges has also been carried out, these companies' charges for rodent treatments range from £120 - £402 per treatment. The results of this can be seen as Appendix C.
10. In terms of the numbers of treatments carried out in Fareham by the Council, these are shown in the table below:-

Pest Control treatments - FBC			
Pest Type	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Rats	803	770	843
Mice	197	199	129
Wasps	126	134	106
Fleas	61	61	31
Bed Bugs	18	26	20
Other	54	37	210
Total	1259	1227	1339

11. Colleagues around Hampshire have indicated that charging for rodent treatments has not seen a significant fall in demand.

ALTERNATIVES

12. Going forward there are a range of potential options for the service.

Option 1 – Provide no service.

13. There is no statutory duty to provide a pest control service. However as stated earlier, there is a duty for the Council to keep its own land free from rodents and in keeping the general rodent population down by providing a wider service assists with this. There are public health issues associated with rodents and the public expectation would be that the Council offer a Pest Control Service. If there were no service at all it is likely that lower income households would suffer the most, as private treatments are likely to not be an option for these households.

Option 2 – Continue the service as it is currently.

14. This is an option, however looking at the other Hampshire authorities, most are charging now and Fareham would be out of step with them and it does not follow the service user pays principle. The potential lost income opportunity is difficult to ignore given the current financial challenges that face the Council.

Option 3 – Introduce charges to all treatments with no reductions for those on low incomes.

15. This option would affect those on lowest incomes who would not be able to afford treatments and could potentially have a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing. In addition, if infestations went untreated, this could affect neighbouring properties.

PROPOSAL

Option 4 - Introduce charging for rodent treatments subject to exemptions and amend some of the other charges.

16. Considering the above information, it would now seem appropriate to introduce a charge for rodent treatments. Given that the range of charges amongst the Hampshire Authorities is between £38 and £105, it is recommended that Fareham set a charge at the lower end at £60 a treatment.
17. In order to protect the least able to afford a rodent treatment it is further recommended that rodent treatments (and insect treatments) are offered free of charge. To determine who is entitled to free of charge treatments the customer would need to be in receipt of any of the specific benefits as follows:-
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Income Support
 - Pension Credit (Guarantee)
 - Universal Credit (maximum award)
18. Also proposed is to introduce a fee of £30 to survey and quote or if possible treat for bed bugs and fleas. The charging regime would then better reflect the work involved with heavy infestations.
19. The effect of these changes to fees and charges can be seen as Appendix D.
20. Allow the Head of Environmental Health to waive any charges in appropriate cases.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

21. The introduction of charging for rodent treatments should generate additional income. It is difficult to estimate how much, as currently the service is free. The service currently carries out around 1000 rodent treatments each year. There may be a fall in demand if charging is introduced. As an example, if demand fell by 20% to 800 treatments and 50% were chargeable, the additional income would be £24,000. There would be an additional cost of around £5,000 attached to re-organising the service, so that it wouldn't be reliant on an external contractor.

RECOMMENDATION

22. To introduce the changes to the service detailed at option 4.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Ian Rickman, Head of Environmental Health. (Ext 4773)

Appendix A - Current Pest Control Charges

Pest Control			
Domestic Premises charges are inclusive of VAT			
Persons in receipt of certain benefits - Free			£
Fleas, Carpet Beetles and Carpet Moths			
1, 2 or 3-bedroomed property		70.00	
4-bedroomed property		76.00	
5-bedroomed property		88.00	
over 5 bedrooms	Quotation on request		
Bedbugs - All properties		120.00	
All other insects (including wasps)		70.00	
Rodent control treatment and advice	No charge		

Appendix B - Hampshire Local Authority Pest Control Services and charges.

Authority	Rodents	Low income discount
Portsmouth	£50	£25
Southampton	£105	£60
Winchester	£80	No discount advertised
Havant	£38	Free
East Hants	£60	Free
Eastleigh	£72	£11
Test Valley	£66	Free
Basingstoke & Deane	-	Concession only service
Hart	£63	Free
Rushmoor	Free	Free
Fareham	Free	Free
Gosport	Free	Free

Appendix C - Local Pest Control Companies charges

	Rodents	Insects
A	£402	Wasps £45 - £234, Some only priced after survey
B	£299 + VAT	
C	£180	
D	£160 +VAT	
E	£125 + VAT	
F	£120	
G	£110 - £165 + VAT	

Appendix D – Proposed Pest Control Charges

Pest Control	
Fleas, Bed bugs + unknown infestations	£30 to visit and quote
All other insects treated	£70
Rodents	£60

(Domestic premises are inclusive of VAT)

(Persons in Receipt of certain benefits – Free)