

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Scrutiny Board

Date **28 July 2017**

Report of: **Head of Democratic Services**

Subject: **CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION No. 1926: PEST CONTROL SERVICES**

SUMMARY

Call-in can be triggered by three non-Executive members giving due notice to the Chief Executive Officer before the end of the call-in period. A call-in was received on Thursday 13 July 2017 relating to the decision made at the meeting of the Executive on Monday 10 July 2017. The call-in relates to the decision of the Executive regarding the Pest Control Service.

This matter is now referred to the Scrutiny Board to determine. The options open to the Scrutiny Board are:-

- (a) to accept the decision made by the Executive, in which case the decision can be implemented; or
- (b) to request that the Executive reconsiders the decision, giving reasons for such a request.

INTRODUCTION

1. At the meeting held on Monday 10 July 2017, it was resolved that the Executive agreed:
 - (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 of the report;
 - (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.:
2. On Thursday 13 July 2017, the Chief Executive Officer received a valid call-in request signed by Councillors R H Price, JP, Mrs M Brady and Mrs K K Trott. The reasons for the call-in, contained within the formal notice, are about charging for rodent treatment. A copy of the call-in notice is included at Appendix A.
3. As a notice of call-in has been received, the implementation of the decision stands suspended until the matter has been reviewed by the Scrutiny Board.
4. The information contained within the call-in notification now needs to be considered by the Scrutiny Board. This has been identified as information that is within the public arena.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION IN PUBLIC

5. The reasons given within the call-in letter are as follows:-
 - i. The risk to public health;
 - ii. Residents on low income but not in receipt of Benefit will not be able to afford the treatment;
 - iii. Health risks to pets and humans by individuals self treating the problem;
 - iv. We do not have to follow what other authorities do, but do what is right for our Fareham residents, especially as we are a wealthy Borough;
 - v. Cost of services is already in the budget.
6. To assist the Scrutiny Board in its review of the decision, a copy of the report considered by the Executive in relation to this matter is included at Appendix B, together with a copy of the record of the Executive decision 2017/18 1926 at Appendix C.

COUNCIL'S BUDGET

7. Within the call-in notice it has been identified that the grounds of the call-in are that the decision was contrary to, or not wholly in accordance with the Council's budget with the Public Protection and Pest Control budgets being cited.

8. The specific area listed in the notice of call-in is that the:
 - v. Cost of services is already in the budget.
9. The Section 151 Officer has reviewed the decision of the Executive and can provide the following comments:
10. The Council's Financial Regulations govern the preparation, setting and management of service budgets. While budgets are set annually for the purposes of determining the annual council tax, this does not preclude decisions being taken during the course of the financial year where service plans change.
11. These decisions rest with the Executive, as the constitution provides that the Executive will:-
 - i. lead the preparation of the Council's policies and budgets
 - ii. take decisions, within any constraints imposed by the Council, on the use of resources in order to deliver budgets, policies and services decided by the full Council
 - iii. consider and make decisions on reports and recommendations from its own Executive members and Committees of the Council
 - iv. take any action (relating to any matter under a local Act other than in respect of functions reserved to the Council) subject to compliance with the Council's approved policies and budgets
12. A supplementary estimate is only required where a decision results in a temporary or permanent increase in the Council's net budget (which would require approval by the Council).
13. In light of the review of the Pest Control service, the Executive resolved to make a policy change that is expected to reduce the net cost of the service to the Council. No supplementary estimate would therefore be required.
14. The Director of Planning and Regulation has been consulted and offers the following comments:
15. Within the Pest Control service there have been issues with the recruitment and retention of Pest Control Officers for some time. The service is being supported currently by a local private contractor. The current method of delivery has resulted in an overspend in the Pest Control area as reported to the Executive on 10 July 2017. Expenditure of £63,297 was reported against a budget of £51,900 with an overspend of £11,397.
16. This situation is not sustainable and if the Council were to continue to provide the service on the current basis, it would ultimately become a growth item for the Council. It is therefore considered appropriate to review and consider changing the Service delivery model, as set out in the report to the Executive meeting of 10 July 2017, to ensure that it can be delivered at least within existing agreed budgets going forward, and potentially to also achieve some efficiency savings.

17. In summary, in the opinion of both the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer, the decision was not a departure from the approved budget.

RISK ASSESSMENT

18. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report

CONCLUSION

19. On considering this matter, the Scrutiny Board will need to decide if it wishes to accept the decision made by the Executive, in which case the decision can be implemented; or request that the Executive reconsiders the decision, giving reasons for such a request.

Appendices:

A: Call-in notice - setting out reasons for call-in

B: Report to Executive 10 July 2017

C: Decision Sheet 2017/18/ 1926

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Leigh Usher. (Ext 4553)