

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **30th July 2020**
Title: **Changes to Pest Control Service**
Portfolio Area: **Wellbeing – Cllr Hawkins**
Wards Affected: **All**
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: 28 July 2020

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Recommendations:

That the Executive:

- 1. approve the removal of free pest control (rats and mice treatments) service for residents and replace it with a free service for benefit recipients only (Option 4 refers at paragraph 4.4 below); and**
- 2. accept and approve the tender from Terminix to deliver the service in South Hams area..**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The report proposes to replace the existing free pest control service (rats and mice treatments) for all residents with a free service only for those who are in receipt of benefit payments.
- 1.2 The contract to provide the service has expired and the Council went out to tender using a procurement framework. The current provider did not tender as they no longer had the resource available to provide coverage throughout the Council area.
- 1.3 The tender prices received were far in excess of the previous contract price and the budget that the Council has available.
- 1.4 It is recommended that the Council resumes the service by providing a free service (rats and mice treatments) to residents who are in receipt of benefits only. The reduced number of treatments that will be required should not present a serious cost

pressure. The contract price will be based on the price per treatment quote in the previous tender documentation. It is anticipated that approximately 50% of residents who will enquire about treatment will be entitled to a free service. The remaining residents who do not qualify for a free treatment will have the option of a paid for treatment with the contractor or going elsewhere for a service.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council has a legal duty to take steps to ensure as far as practicable that its own land is kept free from rats and mice, and that owners and occupiers of land keep their land similarly free (Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949). In some cases, the Council may also require "vermin" to be destroyed along with other steps such as the cleaning of premises (Public Health Act 1936). Use of these powers generally involves the service of a legal notice requiring the owner or occupier to carry out treatment and/or other related works (such as clearing waste that is attracting rodents). There is no legal duty to have a free treatment service for rats and mice.
- 2.2. A pro-active treatment service enables rodent populations to be controlled before a serious infestation causes a major health hazard.
- 2.3. The pest control service has been provided for the last ten years by Pro Pest Solutions (formerly trading as County Mole Pest Control). The service has been provided on a contractual basis to provide free rats and mice treatments to all residents. The demand for rats and mice treatments has slowly risen over the last five years from 1483 in 2015 to 1686 in 2018 (combined SH and WD) last year.
- 2.4. The tender prices received were far in excess of the previous contract price and the budget that the Council has available. There are a number of options available that are presented in this report.
- 2.5. The current provider is maintaining a service until the end of August 2020, after which time a new provider needs to be found.
- 2.6. The Council has a duty to keep its land free from rats and mice, and owners of land have similar responsibilities. The rodent population varies from place to place and from year to year and can be seasonal. The more recent trend has been for an increase in the rodent population due to warmer, wetter winters and where a plentiful supply of food is available.
- 2.7. COVID-19 disruption is likely to have had an impact on the population with less food available from discarded food in town centres meaning the rodents may seek an alternative source from domestic premises.

- 2.8. The Council needs to ensure that new arrangements are in place following the expiration of the current contractual agreement with the current service provider. Residents need to be notified of the changes.
- 2.9. The removal of free treatments for some residents may result in the number of rat and mouse infestations increasing and a general increase in the rodent population. Complaints regarding rodent infestations may increase and Environmental Health Officers will be required to inspect premises and take action to resolve problems. This may require service of legal notice and the carrying out of treatment and proofing works in default, with a charge being placed upon the property for example.
- 2.10. This work fits with the Council's Wellbeing theme, rodents can be a carrier of infectious disease that can be passed on to humans.
- 2.11. This issue will affect residents, but the impact on more vulnerable people should be offset by the Council offering a free service to those on qualifying benefits.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The Council should aim to secure a value for money pest control service that protects the wellbeing of the most vulnerable who are not able to obtain a private funded service.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 Option 1. Take up the winning tender to provide a full service (free treatment for all for rats and mice). The cost pressure to take on the proposed services would be approx. £30,000 per annum. This will be £120,000 cost pressure on the Council during the life of the 4 year contract. The Council would have a good service in place to provide free pest control treatments to all residents for rats and mice. This will protect the health and wellbeing of residents and control the rodent population in residential areas.
- 4.2 Option 2. Withdraw from providing a free rats and mice service for all residents and carry out enforcement activity where residents/RSL's/private landlords do not take appropriate steps. The Council has the power to serve legal notice on residents, landlords and businesses where adequate steps are not taken to prevent/remove and infestation. The Council can do works in default and put a charge on the property. This is resource intensive and will require officer resource (with appropriate training and competency). It is usually a reactive response to a problem that is having serious impacts on health and wellbeing.

The Council will provide some advice about how to deal with Pests online to provide some support and re-assurance to residents.

4.3 Option 3. Provide in house service. There are significant costs arising from running an in house service and a level of competency that requires membership of an approved trade association. There are also stringent regulations around poison storage and distribution.

Annual costs may include;

Operative salary 25k per annum

Training to maintain competency £1k per annum

Van – rental costs plus fuel >£5k per annum

Poisons store to comply with Regs – initial costs >£20k

Poisons costs 20k per annum

Insurance and indemnity as part of overall Council cover.

Approx cost year 1 ; £75k plus management costs

4.4 Option 4. Provide a service that is free to residents on benefits where the qualifying criteria is met. The cost of the service to the Council will be approximately 50% of Option 1. Residents that do not qualify for a free service will have the option of using the contractor in a private arrangement or seek the services of another pest control professional. The cost pressure in South Hams will be approx. £8173 per annum.

4.5 Qualifying benefits will include;

- Income Related Employment & Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Disability Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- Housing Benefit (must be paid 100%)
- Council Tax Benefit
- Pension Guarantee Credits
- Universal Credit

4.6 It is recommended that option 4 is taken up.

4.7 The Council's procurement officer and the Lead Members for Wellbeing have been consulted. Councils with similar services to what is being recommended have also been contacted

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1 It is proposed to use the rate per treatment contained within the framework agreement tender process to identify a preferred

bidder and to commence the contract based upon 50% of the treatments carried out in the previous year. A free service will continue to be offered to those residents who can prove receipt of benefits (listed in 4.5 above), with the option of a paid for treatment being purchased for those not in receipt of benefits.

- 5.2 Any change to the contract value of greater than 50% will require a re-procurement exercise to take place.
- 5.3 As the proposal in 5.1 is based upon 50% of the original tender estimate the Procurement Officer has advised that the Council will **not** need to go through a new tender process and a contract can be agreed based upon the proposed rate for treatments contained in the original preferred tender.
- 5.4 This proposal provides vulnerable residents with support to treat rodent infestations in their properties and is also affordable as it can be covered within the existing service budget.
- 5.5 Public dissatisfaction will need to be countered by good communication explaining the proposed changes to the service.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council has a legal duty to take steps to ensure as far as practicable that its own land is kept free from rats and mice, and that owners and occupiers of land keep their land similarly free (Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949). In some cases, the Council may also require "vermin" to be destroyed along with other steps such as the cleaning of premises (Public Health Act 1936). Use of these powers generally involves the service of a legal notice requiring the owner or occupier to carry out treatment and/or other related works (such as clearing waste that is attracting rodents). There is no legal duty to have a free treatment service for rats and mice. The Council has followed its own procurement rules under the supervision of the Council's shared Procurement Officer
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	To continue with the existing service at the tendered prices would mean a cost pressure of approx. £30,000 per annum. That is £120,000 over the duration of the 4 year contract. The offer a service of only providing a free service for residents would present a cost pressure of approx. £8173 per annum (approx. £33,000 over

		<p>the duration of the contract). This cost pressure can be met by savings/income elsewhere in the EH budget.</p> <p>The cost of the contract should be considered as an investment in preventative treatments that prevent a wider issue with infestations in the area.</p> <p>Numerous , uncontrolled infestations would take Officer costs to resolve and also expose residents to risk of infection.</p>
Risk	Y	<p>To not offer a free service to treat rats and mice to all residents raises the risk of more widespread and more serious rodent infestations in the area. Rodents can be a carrier of infectious disease that can be passed on to humans. The potential impact on vulnerable residents will be significantly reduced by providing a free treatment service for those on benefits.</p>
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	<p>The Council should aim to secure a value for money pest control service that protects the wellbeing of the most vulnerable who are not able to obtain a private funded service. This work fits with the Councils Wellbeing theme, rodents can be a carrier of infectious disease that can be passed on to humans.</p>
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	<p>The contract procurement process ensured that all potential service providers must be able to comply with the National Standards in terms of control of use of pesticides and the impact on other species and ecosystems.</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	<p>The Council will act in accordance with Equality Act legislation and Equality and Diversity implications have been taken into account during the Procurement Exercise.</p>
Safeguarding	Y	None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	<p>The procurement process ensured that all potential service providers must be able to comply with the National Standards in terms of health and safety at work , control of use of pesticides and have suitable safe systems of work in place</p>
Other implications		

Supporting Information

None