

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee
DATE: 15 March 2012
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Communities
PORTFOLIO: Environmental Sustainability
SUBJECT: Increasing Pest Control Charges
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To set out proposed increase in charges for 2012/13 for Halton BC Pest Control.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members of the Executive Board approve:

- 1. that the pest control service continues to provide treatments for public health pests without charge; and**
- 2. the proposed increase in charges for nuisance pests and commercial pest treatments.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Pest Control and Dog Warden's service has a statutory duty to require owners and occupiers to prevent and eradicate infestations of public health pests on their land or premises. Halton Council currently provides free treatments for the eradication of major public health pests such as Rats, Mice and Cockroaches. In the majority of cases this is considered the most cost-effective approach to securing public health and avoids the costly legal process of establishing land ownership, serving legal notices and obtaining court orders and warrants.

3.1.2 This approach is consistent with other Cheshire and Merseyside authorities. All these authorities with the exception of Cheshire West and Chester offer free treatments in relation to rats. Approximately 50% of these authorities also offer free treatments for mice, cockroaches and bed bugs – the remaining 50% charge for this service.

3.1.3 It is not proposed to introduce a charge for treating rats, mice, cockroaches or bedbugs – these treatments will continue to be free. With

respect to mice customers are currently provided with free bait from Direct Link Offices. A professional treatment is only carried out if the free bait has been unsuccessful.

- 3.1.4 The table below provides an indication of the number of public health pest treatments carried out during 2010-11:

	No of Treatments
Rats	1282
Mice	505
Cockroaches	5
Bed bugs	16

- 3.1.5 The Pest Control team also provides the Dog Warden service for the borough. This includes the collection and removal of stray dogs, responding to complaints of dog fouling and antisocial dog ownership and liaison with the police in relation to dangerous dogs.

3.2 **Pest Control & Public Health**

- 3.2.1 Pests cause damage - sometimes substantial - to structures and can contaminate products. The damage caused by fires, floods etc. has been well documented. Pests are known carriers of human diseases.

- 3.2.2 Recent changes to global climate such as higher temperatures and seasonal variations of rainfall are considered to have had a significant impact on all UK pests. The World Health Organisation's recent report highlights the need for continued effective policies to control pests.

- 3.2.3 The control of pests is vital for both the public health of the community but also for the commercial prospects of the area. Pest Control is important in the regulation of food safety, occupational health & safety and the safety & well-being of residential accommodation.

- 3.2.4 As public health duties move to local authorities, Pest Control services are a vital part of strategic planning for public health improvement.

- 3.2 The need for the regulation of pest control is also a health & social inequalities issue. The incidence of pest infestation is higher in areas of multiple deprivation.

3.3 **Charges for commercial premises and nuisance pests**

- 3.3.1 In addition to the core public health pest control function the service also carries out treatments of less serious nuisance pests such as wasps, fleas and ants. The service currently charges domestic customers for this service. The service also charges commercial premises for the treatment of all pests (both public health and nuisance). The income from this work subsidises the core pest control and dog warden function.

3.4 **Commercial charges**

3.4.1 Two forms of service are offered to commercial premises;

- Annual contract for regular preventative work
- One off treatments in response to infestation

The charge for commercial work in 2011-2012 was £89.40 per hour inclusive of VAT. It is proposed to increase this charge to £94.40 per hour inclusive of VAT in 2012-13.

3.5 **Domestic charges**

3.5.1 The current charge for domestic work is £38.40 per treatment inclusive of vat. Payment is made in advance prior to treatment. It is proposed to introduce a new charging structure in 2012-13.

3.5.2 It is proposed to introduce a charge for wasps of £45.50 inclusive of VAT. A single treatment is normally sufficient.

3.5.3 The charge for treating fleas and ants will rise to £50.40 inclusive of VAT. This charge reflects the fact a second visit is normally required.

3.5.3 The table below provides an indication of the number of chargeable treatments carried out during 2010-11.

	No of Treatments
Wasps	1092
Ants	72
Fleas	79

3.6 **Determining the level of charge**

3.6.1 The current and proposed levels of charge have been compared with neighbouring local authorities and commercial pest control operators. The proposed charges are considered both consistent and competitive and should ensure continued demand for the service.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The service will continue to provide free treatments of public health pests.

4.2 The service will increase charges for commercial and domestic pest treatments.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Summary of Charges

	Charge 2011-12	Charge 2012-13
Commercial (per hour)	£89.40 inc VAT	£94.40 inc VAT
Domestic (per treatment)	£38.40 inc VAT	£45.50 inc VAT - wasps £50.40 inc VAT - fleas, ants

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Maintaining a free service for the treatment of rats, mice cockroaches and bedbugs will help protect the health of children and young people in the borough.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

There are not considered to be any significant impact on employment learning and skills in Halton.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Maintaining a free service for the treatment of rats, mice cockroaches and bedbugs will help protect public health.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Treatment for public health pests will help to maintain safe and attractive neighbourhoods. However increased charges may make treatments of nuisance pests such as wasps unaffordable for some residents.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Land or premises infested by pests can have a negative impact on the environment.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are not considered to be any significant risks associated with this proposal

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are not considered to be any equality or diversity issues associated with this proposal

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.