

**Decision under Delegated Powers
Fees and Charges for Environmental Health Services**

Officer Requesting Decision

Kerry Bowley – Health and Safety and Business Engagement Manager

Officer Making the Decision

Alan Twells – Head of Regulatory Services

Recommendation

To approve the new charges for domestic rodent pest control treatments from 1st April 2021.

Reason

Following a pest control service review, it was approved by SLT and by Cabinet as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy to introduce new charges for rodent treatments in domestic premises that were previously carried out free of charge. The introduction of this new charge would contribute to annual savings of £14,300 from cost centre F210.

Authority for Decision

By virtue of the Delegation to Heads of Service in section 8 of the Constitution, Heads of Service are delegated to undertake the periodic review of fees and charges raised within their service areas and falling within the scope of the Council's Income and Charging Policy Framework.

Decision and Date

Background

The Council has the power under the Local Government Act 2003 to charge for discretionary services, but this power is limited to recovering the costs of providing the service. Section 93(3) of the Act places a duty on the Council "to secure that, taking one financial year with another, the income from charges ... does not exceed the costs of provision".

The pest control service already has pest control charges in place that are reviewed annually and take into consideration inflation, increases in direct costs and the charges made by other local authorities for the same service across the County.

The Control of Damage by Pests Act 1949 places a duty on local authorities to take such steps as may be necessary to secure so far as practicable that their district is

kept free from rats and mice. There is no statutory duty to provide a pest control service, however by providing an in house pest control service this gives the residents and some businesses in Charnwood a pest control provider, at a price that is considered reasonable, to encourage residents and business to effectively deal with any pest infestations that they are experiencing. This will then reduce the regulatory investigation time and resources of our Environmental Protection and Private Sector Housing Team as well as Landlord Services in dealing with pest control related issues.

Over the last 10 years the number of local authorities that are providing pest control services has reduced. In Leicestershire, there are now only 5 out of the 9 local authorities have a pest control service and one of those the pest control service is contracted out to a private pest control company. All the local authorities in Leicestershire that are offering a pest control service have some form of charging scheme in place for rodents.

Following the pest control service review, it was approved by SLT and by Cabinet to continue to provide an in-house pest control service due to the benefits this provides both the council and the service users. To continue to do this and as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy it was agreed to introduce new charges for rodent treatments in domestic premises that were previously carried out free of charge. The introduction of this new charge would contribute to annual savings of £14,300 from cost centre F210. There are additional savings of £27,500 due to a reduction in staffing levels as part of the pest control service review. This charge is not a full cost recovery charge as the Council still want to encourage residents to use our pest control services and is comparable to other Leicestershire local authorities. Rodent internal service requests will still be carried out free for those that are in receipt of a specified benefit to ensure that any internal rodent problems can be addressed by the resident and are not left untreated resulting in additional problems.

The pest control service carries out sewer baiting and commercial rodent contracts which an income is received for. These will continue and will take up to one day a week of the pest control officer's diary, there are spaces available on this day, however for the purposes of these calculation we have not included them.

The calculations are based on 45 weeks (to cover all holiday) for two pest control officers carrying out service requests on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. There are 8 visit slots for each pest control officer per day. An average service request is 4 visits.

This would mean that there is a minimum of;
45 weeks, 4 days, 2 PCO's x 8 visits slots = 2,880 visits = **720 service requests**

On average, the pest control service received 878 service requests per year over the last two years. Due to the introduction of charges this is expected to reduce by at least 20%, therefore this will be approximately 702 service requests. This means that there are enough visit slots available to deal with the average number of service requests, but this does not allow for seasonal changes; service response times may not be complied with depending on the demand at that time and may need to be reviewed.

The fees have been calculated based on 702 service requests.

It is expected that up to 20% of rodent service requests to be in receipt of a specified benefit. This can only be compared to the percentage of wasp service requests who paid a reduced charge due to being in receipt of a specified benefit being 14%. As the rodent internal service request is free, not at a reduced charge, then this uptake may be slightly higher.

All Leicestershire local authorities offer a free service for rodents within a domestic property for those in receipt of a specified benefit, and there will be a 50% reduction for rat externals for those in receipt of specified benefits. This charge is to ensure that residents are taking the steps to minimise rats coming into their garden before they are visited by the pest control team so that the visits can be effective.

The pest control income for 20/21 was budgeted at £11,400 and at least £5,000 of this is from commercial rodent contracts. The remaining £6,400 is from insecticide treatments, this is mainly income from wasp treatments in the summer months. The priority of the pest control team are rodent treatments and although insecticide treatments are still being offered in 2020/21, they will only be carried out if there are visit slots available, therefore the total income required from pest control treatments is £6,400 + £14,300 = **£20,700**.

702 Service Requests

391 Internal Service Requests

313	Full charge £37.50 (Customer £45)	= £11,737.5
78	No charge / specified benefit	No income

311 External Service Requests

249	Full charge £37.50 (Customer £45)	= £9,337.50
62	50% charge £18.75 (Customer £22.50)	= £1,162.5
Total		= £22,237.50

This number of service requests would meet the proposed savings £14,300 towards the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

There is an excess of £1,537.50 however there may be occasions where the charge is waived by the Health and Safety and Safety and Business Engagement Manager for reasons such the infestation continuing and there are issues outside their control which are being investigated by other teams.

There may be a decline of over 20% in the number of rodent requests received. If this occurs then this will allow more insecticide treatments to be carried out, which bring in more income per visit than the rodenticide work.

If a decline in the average number of rodent service requests is not received, then the priority will be given to internal rodent service requests and rat externals service requests may have to be temporarily put on hold when the numbers of requests received are high.

There will be a refund given to those who have paid for the service, but when the visit is carried out the pest control officers are unable to carry out the treatment. This may be for health and safety reasons or because we are unable to confirm the

presence of the target species or do not treat the species identified. For those on specified benefits they could receive a refund of £10 for rat external service requests and for those paying full price £20. This will then free up visit time for another service request.

In the long term there may be future impacts on the works of other teams as a result of the introduction of charges for rodent control in domestic properties as a result of residents choosing not to deal with a rodent infestation. The pest control service will work with these teams to try and minimise these impacts and will assist where they can and we will periodically review this.

The Lead Member for Regulatory Services has been consulted and is in agreement with the new charges for domestic rodent treatments.

The new fees will be published on our website along with the existing pest control fees for other services.

In summary, the following new pest control charges will be introduced from 1st April 2021 for rodents;

Type of Service	New Charge	Notes
Domestic rat / mouse internal service request	£45 for up to 4 visits. £10 for each additional visit. £20 refund if a treatment is not carried out and the Pest Control Officer has carried out an assessment visit following a service request.	This service is available free of charge to those that are in receipt of a specified benefit.*
Domestic rat external service request	£45 for up to 4 visits. £10 for each additional visit. £20 refund if a treatment is not carried out and the Pest Control Officer has carried out an assessment visit following a service request.	This service is available at a 50% reduction £22.50 if they are in receipt of a specified benefit.* The refund will be £10 if a treatment is not carried out and the Pest Control Officer has carried out an assessment visit following a service request.
Mouse trap tunnel and two traps	£10	

* The following are specified benefits:- Income Support, Pension Credit, Job Seekers Allowance, Income Based (JSA-IB), Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Universal Credit or Employment and Support Allowance – Income Related (ESA-IR)

Financial Implications

Income for services is included in F210 J0501. This is currently £11,400.

There is a potential loss of up to £6,400 due to not carrying out insecticide treatments. This income is to be replaced by the rodent treatment income. The projection is;

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New Rodent Income £22,237.50

Existing Income £5,000

Total Income for F210 J0501 £27,237.50

- F210 J051 (£11,400) = £15,837.50 additional income in 21/22

This projected number of service requests would meet the proposed savings £14,300 towards the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This figure is predicted only and will depend on take up and staff resources available.

Risk Management

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
The number of rodent service requests received exceeds the number of visit slots available.	3	2	Moderate (6)	Due to the introduction of charges the number of service requests are likely to drop to a level that is achievable by the reduced staffing level, although there may be times when new rats external service requests are not accepted for short periods of time to prioritise rodents internally. Service response times may need to be reviewed at peak times or as a result of annual leave. This will be reviewed regularly.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
The number of rodent service requests received is lower than expected.	3	1	Low (3-4)	If the number of rodent service requests is lower than expected this will allow insecticide work to be carried out, which brings in more income per visit, therefore the budgeted income will be reached.
Insecticide treatments may no longer be offered and there will be loss of income as a result.	3	2	Moderate (6 - 9)	If this is a service that we cannot offer, then there are private pest control contractors that offer this service. Any loss of income will be replaced with the new income from the rodent service requests.
Increased workload or expenses of other teams such as Environmental Protection, Private Sector Housing and Landlord Services	3	2	Moderate (6 - 9)	In the long term there is the possibility that residents may choose not to pay for the pest control treatment and not do anything about, resulting in a problem which may need action from another team. We will have steps in place to try and minimise this through use of letters and offering our service or any other advice. The pest control service will work with the other teams to try and minimise this and review regularly.

Key Decision: No

Background Papers: None