

Subject: Changes to Pest Control Delivery in Rossendale: **Status:** For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 7th June 2006

Report of: Head of StreetScene and Liveability

Portfolio

Holder: Cabinet Member for StreetScene and Liveability

Key Decision:

YES (Please highlight)

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

"X" In Relevant Box

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider entering into a partnership with two other local authorities (Bury and Rochdale) to offer the residents of Rossendale an improved service delivery for pest control at a reduced cost to Rossendale Borough Council

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report are linked to and support the following corporate priorities:

- Street Scene and Liveability Strategic Partnership – Through introducing partnership working in a discreet area of service where economies of scale are not achievable and which is unlikely to attract market interest as part of the wider partnership.

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Report requires the redeployment of those staff affected by the proposal. There is a risk of Employment Litigation. Appropriate measures relating to consultation will be put in place to minimise this risk.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 Pest Control is not a statutory service however under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949; local authorities have a duty to:

- Destroy rats and mice on the land which they occupy, and to keep land so far as is practicable free from rats and mice.
 - To enforce the duties of owners and occupiers of land, to carry out such operations to rid their land of potential hazard causing pests.
- 4.2 Rossendale Borough Council currently provides pest control services to domestic and commercial properties. The service is provided Monday to Friday between the hours of 8am and 4pm
- 4.3 The council currently employ two operatives to undertake Pest Control activities, each of which operate a fully equipped vehicle, stocked with access equipment and various materials for treatment of pests. The operatives are based at the Henrietta St depot in Bacup from where they are issued with programmed work. Each operative operates independently in normal circumstances although occasionally due to restricted access or size and nature of a particular job there is a requirement for a two man operation. Each operative historically is entitled to 2 hours per week contractual overtime for vehicle checks.
- 4.4 All enquiries are currently directed to and received by staff at Henrietta St, whereby the decision is made to offer advice, or log the enquiry on the Flare database. If a customer requires more than advice, information is supplied regarding the cost of service provision dependant on the type of pest identified.
- 4.5 Since July 2005 Rossendale Borough Council no longer treat, Ants, Bees, Silverfish, Woodlice or any type of garden pest. Fact sheets and leaflets containing advice are made available in response to enquiries of this nature.
- 4.6 The following charges currently apply to domestic residents of the Borough after the initial survey which is currently free;
- 4.7 Rats / mice (internal) 1 visit £20.00, subsequent visits £ 5.00.
Rats / mice (outside) 1 visit free to assess and sewer bait, subsequent visit £20.00 Removal of Wasps nest £40.00, subsequent visit £ 5.00
Cockroaches, fleas, bedbugs, initial visit £40.00, subsequent visit £ 5.00.
- 4.8 Commercial rates for all charged as follows;
Initial visit of up to one hour (minimum) £48.40 plus VAT & materials.
Subsequent visits or over one hour, £24.20 plus VAT & materials each 30mins or part thereof.
- 4.9 **Data**
- Based on the amount of Pest Control enquiries received, and completed by Rossendale Borough Council in the period between April and September, figures for 2005 indicate 373 enquiries were received, of which detail provided in table.

2005-2006	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	TOTAL
MICE	0	14	7	4	5	5	35
RATS	1	14	8	12	7	8	50
RATS O/S	1	13	15	23	28	15	95
FLEAS	0	1	6	6	2	6	21
BEDBUGS	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
WASPS	0	12	13	33	53	28	139
SQUIRRELS	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
OTHER BIRDS	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
BEETLES	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
FLIES	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
BEES	0	4	1	1	0	0	6
GARDEN ANTS	1	11	3	0	0	0	15
PHAROH ANTS	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
OTHER PEST	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
	3	74	56	80	98	63	373

From 373 enquiries logged, 342 related to domestic property and 31 to commercial premises.

In comparison the period between April and September, figures for 2004 indicate 558 enquiries were received, of which detail provided in table.

2004-2005	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	TOTAL
MICE	11	7	6	10	4	10	48
RATS	28	24	16	31	31	13	143
RATS O/S	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
FLEAS	3	5	4	5	14	5	36
COCKROACHES	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
WASPS	0	8	56	105	72	12	253
SCABIES	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
SILVERFISH	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
WOODLICE	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
GARDEN ANTS	19	13	12	13	7	1	65
	62	58	97	164	133	44	558

4.10 In 2004/05 during the same period, 558 enquiries were logged, of which 479 related to domestic property and 79 to commercial premises.

4.11 Based on an average of 21.5 working days per month for the 6 month period in question Which equates to 129 days x 2 operatives = 258 operative days, - 30 days average for annual leave = 228 operative days.

558 jobs in 228 days is the equivalent of 2.45 jobs per day per operative, taking into account annual leave.

During the winter period sewer baiting is carried out on behalf of United Utilities with an annual income of £3,500.00. The order is currently processed via Environmental Health.

4.12 Budget implications

4.12.1 The budget for the service for 2006-07 was reduced by £17,600 in line with the savings bid put forward relating to the transfer of pest control service provision to neighbouring Authorities, and now stands at a net figure of £28,760. An assumption was made at that time that the likely cost charged by the other Authorities would be in the region of £20,000 each.

4.12.2 Salaries are currently forecast to account for circa £40,000.00 of this year's operational budget, with materials forecast to cost £5,000.00, current forecast for income is £17,000.00 inclusive of United Utilities work previously mentioned. This does not take into account the cost of a vehicle each, fuel, road fund license & maintenance.

4.12.3 Figures indicated above show cost of c£40,000.00 with no provision taken into account of employer liability, public liability, pension strain, central admin fees, transport, communications, provision of PPE, Inspections carried out by Environmental health officers.

4.13 Proposals for Improvement

4.13.1 Options available would include the reduction in the number of Pest Control operatives to one, thereby reducing operational cost by 50%. There would be some logistical difficulties as an element of work undertaken will still require two operatives in attendance.

4.13.2 An alternative option would be to investigate the use of a specialist preferred partner to provide the service within the Borough. The business appeal to a prospective partner would be realised through economies of scale within the area, and discounts obtained on materials due to the greater buying power due to dealing in larger amounts.

4.13.3 Similarly, another option would be to speak with one or more neighbouring authorities regarding the provision of the service on a partnering basis.

4.13.4 This option would require negotiation with any prospective partner to ensure chargeable rates remained favourable to residents & businesses alike while providing a top quality service. The benefit to the council would be identified by way of a lesser financial strain to the Environmental services department. Prospective partners would be responsible for managing performance daily and reporting back to the council with performance figures on a monthly basis.

4.13.5 Part of any negotiation would need to take in to account the implications regarding current operatives and elements of work currently provided by the

council free of charge, requested via environmental health inspectors. Clear guidelines as to what elements would constitute provision of a free service require agreement prior to negotiations in order to benchmark percentage figure as a recharge direct to Rossendale Borough Council.

5. Enforcement

The council would continue to provide advice concerning the identification, prevention and treatment and to enforce the relevant legislation where necessary. Enforcement action would be undertaken in accordance with the prevention of damage by pests' act 1949, by NEAT Team officers.

6. Summary

In the first six month period of 2005/06 the number of jobs carried out equated to 66.58% in comparison with the same period in 2004/05.

The same comparison shows the figure of 71.4% as a comparison for domestic properties during the periods highlighted.

While to a large degree the number of enquiries/requests received determines the workload, the reduction in enquiries in comparison to last year would indicate that requests for advice and provision of information can be resolved as a result of a telephone conversation.

It is clear to see that in the current format the service provision is costly and inefficient. It is unlikely that a proposal to place the operatives into one team thereby reducing the cost of vehicle provision, would result in an increase of the number of jobs completed or in significant savings from the reduction of vehicles .

7. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

- 7.1 This report deals with the implementation of a decision included in the approved budget which realises a revenue saving to the Council. Therefore to minimise the financial risk to the Council it is important that the agreement is concluded as expeditiously as possible. The proposed cost is £10,000 less than estimated when the budget was set, further reducing the risk to the Council and freeing resources for reinvestment elsewhere.

8. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 8.1 The making of agency agreements with other Local Authorities under s101 of the Local Government Act 1972 is a function that is statutorily reserved to the Full Council. The relevant portfolio holder will need to be consulted on the specific terms of any agreement prior to signing.

9. COMMENTS OF THE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

- 9.1 Consultation has taken place with the Trade Union and the employees affected.

The Councils Redeployment Agreement will be used to facilitate the redeployment of those individuals at risk.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The current service offered by Rossendale Borough Council is both expensive and inefficient; a partnership arrangement with Rochdale M.B.C. and Bury M.B.C. who offer a great deal of expertise in this field would be of great advantage to the residents of Rossendale. The savings made by the council would also fall within the principals of Best Value, and lead to a more efficient delivery of Pest Control Services.

11. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Cabinet are recommended to:

1. Recommend to Full Council that partnership agreements are concluded for the provision of Pest Control Services with Bury MBC and Rochdale MBC effective from 1st August 2006.
2. That the terms of the agreements be agreed by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the portfolio holder for Street Scene and Liveability prior to presentation to Council.
3. That the operational boundary between the two partners be set at Waterfoot.
4. That the resources freed through the saving in excess of the budgeted amount be initially held as a contingency sum within the Streetscene and Liveability budget.

12. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 12.1 Consultations were carried out with the two pest control operatives who are happy to be redeployed within the Street Scene operational staff based at Henrietta Street

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No background papers