

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 JANUARY 2018
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE)

PEST CONTROL UPDATE

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides members with the annual update relating to the pest control contract currently awarded to the council appointed contractor, SDK Environmental Ltd (“Dial a Pest”). It highlights the extent of pest control treatments and activities by them during the period April 2017 to March 2018. It also provides information on the levels of pest control enforcement action undertaken by the council’s Public Health and Protection Service during the same period.
- 1.2 The report makes reference to the undertaking of the scrutiny sub-committee.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 For members to note the report, the performance of the contractor and the work and services that have been provided.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The duties on Local Authorities are to keep their own land free from rats and mice and to enforce that other owners/occupiers do the same.
- 3.2 The Council provides a subsidised contracted pest control service that is available to householders, regardless of tenure, throughout the district. The service runs independently from the Council with customers needing to contact the contractor’s call centre directly to arrange and pay for treatment.
- 3.3 This service also provides treatment for Council owned land and buildings and assists in the Council fulfilling its statutory functions under the Prevention of Damage of Pests Act 1949 Sec 4 (PDPA).
- 3.4 There is no statutory requirement on Local Authorities to provide a pest control contract. However, in order to fulfil its own duties Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council have a contract with SDK Ltd to carry out proactive inspections and reactive treatments.
- 3.5 Without effective pest management, pest infestations will increase and will result in increasing incidents of pest borne disease, damage to buildings and risk to food businesses.
- 3.6 Pest control remains an important public service to residents of the Borough and is of particular relevance to the most disadvantaged. The service is also important to meet future challenges brought about by climate change and by increased

movement of goods, animals and people. In providing this affordable service the council will continue to play a key role in protecting public health.

- 3.7 Due to some concern by officers and members of the public including postings on social media of the high levels of rats in Hatfield an extensive extra treatment plan was funded by the Council and carried out by SDK Ltd.
- 3.8 In addition an EOSC scrutiny sub committee was formed to look specifically at the prevalence and eradication of rats in the Borough. During February and March 2018 there was a number of meetings, examination and presentations to the subcommittee. It was agreed that as the scrutiny exercise had to be concluded by the end of the Municipal Year that the recommendations be presented to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday, 26 March 2018 and Cabinet on 3 April 2018.
- 3.9 An action plan was agreed with a number of long term and strategic targets including the need to replicate the model of partnership working to address the rat infestation in Hatfield Town Centre in other areas. This work should be used to inform how the Council deal with issues such as this in future. The issue may not just be confined to an infestation of rats however the methodology and approach can be used to form the basis of the cross Council protocol in how matters significantly affecting two or more wards or teams be addressed.
- 3.10 The targets of the action plan are still in progress to be completed by the end of the financial year.
- 3.11 The contract with SDK will expire on 31 March 2019. Although the new contract is under the £100000 financial threshold for going through The General Procurement Board, due to the nature of the contract it was deemed appropriate to be under the same scrutiny as other major contracts.
- 3.12 The Board agreed the concessionary prices and agreed that they provided value for money and that any increase would deter people from using the service. The need for residents to use a reputable contractor to keep pest numbers down overrides the need to raise prices. As this in return would create other environmental issues for the Borough. A price comparison between local authorities was provided.
- 3.13 The Board agreed that the default price/quality split should be 50/50. The tender process and timeline was agreed. The contract will be awarded in February 2019.
- 3.14 Regular quarterly contract review meetings are held between the Council and SDK. These are an effective way of managing the contract and maintaining a good client/contractor relationship. Issues ranging from quality control, technical advice, vulnerable people, complaints and approach to complex cases are discussed. Agreed minutes are kept from these meetings.
- 3.15 Charts showing enforcement actions, numbers of treatments carried out annually and monthly are included in the appendices. It can be seen that there is a distinct drop in treatments carried out from the previous financial year.

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 The council is not obliged to provide a pest control service, but is under a legal duty to keep its own land free from rats and mice and to enforce the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 throughout the borough.
- 4.2 The council and contractor are generally required to comply with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. Sometimes this results in certain requests for service not being undertaken by the Contractor due to risk to their staff. For example, they will not enter unboarded lofts or work at height where there is a risk of injury.

5 Risk Management Implications

- 5.1 The risks related to this proposal are:
- 5.2 The risks to public health from certain pests are well understood and documented. The council pest control contract can assist with reducing such risks.
- 5.3 The council is at risk of legal challenge if it fails to meet its legal duties under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949
- 5.4 There is a reputational risk to the Council by the general misapprehension of Council powers with respect to pest control.
- 5.5 Inappropriate use of pesticide products can create risks to children and wildlife, employing the services of a competent contractor reduces this risk.

6 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)

- 6.1 Certain pesticide products in the wrong hands could be used for inappropriate purposes, employing the services of a competent contractor reduces this risk.

7 Procurement Implication(s)

- 7.1 The contract is due to expire at the end of the financial year and is currently going through the procurement process.

8 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 8.1 As the climate changes it is likely that the range of pests we will see in the UK may change. This may have longer term implications for the scope of the contract and the services which are provided.

9 Human Resources Implication(s)

- 9.1 None

10 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)

- 10.1 There are health protection implications if there is a significant infestation of public health pest either in a business or residential environment as it is widely documented that certain pests carry communicable disease and pathogenic bacterial organisms.

11 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)

- 11.1 Positive reporting is needed to ensure the wider public are aware of the work carried out by the Council to deal with infestations. Educational messages regarding reducing sources of available food are an ongoing requirement.

12 Link to Corporate Priorities and Objectives

- 12.1 **1. Our Community** - Promoting inclusive and safe communities and Improving public health and well-being
- 2. Our Environment** - Keeping our streets clean
- 3. Our Council** - Achieving value for money. Also linked to statutory provisions under pest control legislation.

13 Equality and Diversity

- 13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out in connection with this pest control contract. The results of that EIA have been used to inform the contract provision, especially as regards to vulnerable clients

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Appendices

Pest Control Statistics: April 2017-March 2018