

Chichester District Council

CABINET

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Future Provision of the Pest Control Service

1. Contacts

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2. Recommendation

- 2.1. **That expressions of interest are sought from suitably qualified and experienced contractors to operate the council's Pest Control service**
- 2.2. **That the Head of Housing and Environment Services be authorised to award the contract and determine the period in accordance with financial standing orders.**

3. Background

- 3.1. Pests are unpleasant and can spread disease. Pests primarily include rodents (rats, mice, squirrels) and insects (wasps, fleas, caterpillars, carpet beetles). Pest Control is currently delivered in-house and has two elements:
 - a) A service to the public and businesses for which a charge is made. This is a discretionary service, although there is a public expectation that the Council will provide such a service.
 - b) A statutory element which obliges the Council to survey its district and keep it free from rats.
- 3.2. There are currently around 60 contracts with businesses and around 800 domestic jobs carried out annually. Many of the contracts are in food producing premises and premises to which the public have access (e.g. Hospital and Theatre). At the time of peak activity in 2011/12 nearly 2000 domestic jobs were undertaken. Demand for the service is very weather dependent – a poor summer particularly affects wasp activity.
- 3.3. For many years the service was staffed by a Pest Control Supervisor with two Pest Control Assistants. This was reduced in 2013 when the Supervisor left and further reduced in 2014 when one of the two remaining staff took early retirement. Since that time the service has operated with 1.0FTE supplemented by an external contractor as necessary.
- 3.4. There is a net cost to the Council in providing this service (see 7.1 below).

- 3.5. The current arrangements for delivery of the service are not sustainable. With only one staff member there is no resilience and the external contractor is unable to plan their service to the Council on the ad hoc basis that it currently operates.

4. Outcomes to be achieved

- 4.1. That the Council is able to fulfil its statutory obligations to survey the district and eradicate rats.
- 4.2. That the Council is able to ensure that customers receive an efficient, safe, cost effective and professional domestic and commercial pest control service.
- 4.3. That Council officers who rely upon pest control expertise in carrying out their duties have access to that specialist advice.
- 4.4. That customers receiving certain types of benefit continue to receive a subsidised service for eradication of certain pests.

5. Proposal

- 5.1. To proceed with the tendering process to run the Councils Pest Control service either by direct competition or via a suitable framework agreement. A balance of price, experience and quality of service will be assessed when appointing a contractor.
- 5.2. Preliminary discussions with external providers working in partnership with the Council have indicated that a contracted out service would be run at no cost to the Council and, depending upon numbers of jobs, there may be an opportunity for the Council to receive a small payment per job.

6. Alternatives that have been considered

- 6.1. Various other options have been considered as below. In making the recommendation officers have considered that there is a public expectation that the Council will provide a service and the duty that the Council has to keep the district free from Rats.
 - a) Having no pest control service and leaving demand to be met by the open market. There would be a need to buy in services to comply with the Council's statutory duties as and when they are needed. Disadvantages include a lack of ability to ensure that those on certain benefits receive a reduced cost service. Timely advice to other services of the Council may not be available and that quality and safety of the treatments carried out in the district cannot be assured.
 - b) Working in partnership with another Local Authority. This has been explored with Arun District Council, whose service also operates at a cost. It is not been possible to identify sufficient savings to project a financially sustainable position.
 - c) Recruit a new officer and continue to run the service in house. Efforts have been made over recent years to increase income and reduce costs. Whilst this has been successful to some degree, the service has still not

achieved a break even position, primarily due to recharges applied to the service.

- d) Contract out the service but maintain a relationship with the appointed contractor so that residents can apply for the service through the Council's website. This is the preferred option because it allows the Council to ensure that a professional safe service is offered to residents keeping the district pest free and therefore contributing to public health. This option addresses the public expectation that the Council will provide a pest control service and also ensures that we can fulfil our statutory duties and that pest control advice is available to other services in the Council when it is required. It is hoped that this will be a zero cost option. Consideration was given about whether existing contracts had any value, however, they are short term and therefore of low value.

7. Resource and legal implications

- 7.1. The costs of the service over the last 2 years are shown below. There is also a budget set aside of £29,000 for statutory work.

2013/14	£
Expenditure (including recharges of £29,000)	£106,000
Income	£61,000
Net cost	£45,000

2014/15	£
Expenditure (including recharges of £28,000)	£92,000
Income	£68,000
Net cost	£24,000

The costs in 2014/15 are lower than in previous years owing to unfilled vacancies. However, this is not sustainable long term as customer service has been at reduced levels.

- 7.2. If the service is put out to contract it will be necessary to give notice to contract holders and give pro-rata refunds for the remainder of contract periods.
- 7.3. There is a legal duty placed upon the Council to survey its district and eradicate rats. There are also powers given to the Council to require owners of property to take measures to prevent damage by pests. There are provisions to allow the Council to carry out works in default should the owner not comply with a Notice. The Council needs to have the ability to fulfil the above duties either through an in-house team or through a relationship with an external contractor.
- 7.4. The current value of assets is considered to be negligible, although there will be a saving on the asset replacement register.
- 7.5. There is currently 1.0FTE employed in the Pest Control service and if the service is contracted out TUPE would apply.

7.6. The majority of the support costs are attributable to the recharge from the Contact Centre and although it is not proposed to reduce the staffing levels in the Contact Centre on the letting of this contract savings will be made as and when other services are transferred into the Contact Centre.

8. Consultation

8.1. The staff member involved has been consulted and the matter has been reported to the Joint Employee Consultative Panel. The Cabinet Member for the Environment and the Senior Leadership Team has also considered the options.

9. Community impact and corporate risks

9.1. Customers currently using the Council's Pest Control service will have that service delivered by a contractor. It is not known at this time whether this will apply to existing commercial contract holders. When appointing a contractor we will ensure that quality and safety of the service are ensured.

9.2. Should an appointed contractor fail financially the service will be re-tendered. As part of the tendering process officers will ensure that contractors have the necessary public indemnity insurance to indemnify the Council.

9.3. Any contractor appointed will be required to provide regular performance statistics to the Council.

10. Other Implications

Crime & Disorder:	None
Climate Change:	None
Human Rights and Equality Impact:	None
Safeguarding:	None

10.1. Background Papers

None