

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option presents a proposal to reduce operating costs of the Pest Control Service in Wirral whilst continuing to increase income.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

The Pest Control Service provides a treatment service to domestic customers and fulfils contracts to the private sector. Income from the growing private sector treatments subsidises the cost of the free provision for public health significant pests.

The exercise has identified a reduction in operational costs of £21,500 for pest control. It is proposed to add to this by a reduction of one specialist operational staff member at a saving of £30,000. This will equate to a total reduction in direct operational cost of £51,000.

IMPACT

The proposal will see the loss of one full time staff member. This could undermine the ability of the service to deal with the demand for service.

A reduction in staff/ level of service could have an impact on Registered social landlords are key customers for the service. Area treatments have been successfully organised through partnership with for example, Wirral Partnership Homes.

In terms of legal implications, the council has a statutory duty to ensure that infestations of pests are treated.

MITIGATION

Changes have been previously made to mitigate the loss of one team member in that the team leader also carries an operational workload and **all operatives** now undertake treatments for both domestic and commercial premises as part of normal routine.

In terms of possible additional options for service delivery, other local authorities outside of Merseyside have used private contractors to carry out pest control treatments on behalf the council. This can be done for the current service. However, the reduced net direct cost of the service is effectively supporting 1550 free treatments for rats. Unless there is a sharp decline in income then this represents good value for money.

Another option is to charge for rat infestation treatments. This is not recommended for the following reasons:

- A charge will discourage reporting and infestations could go ill or untreated.
- Citizens may be tempted to treat themselves using relatively strong poisons. This could provide health risks lead to non target species being harmed and increase immunity amongst the rat population.
- Unlike other pest species rats can affect properties other than those harbouring the animal. Problems arise when people are unwilling to pay to treat a problem that they perceive as being the responsibility of others.

- The current system is being effective in reducing and controlling the overall population in Wirral.
- Rat treatments are carried out in areas of Wirral but tend to disproportionately affect vulnerable communities.