

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 22 SEPTEMBER 2011  
title: INTRODUCTION OF NEW CHARGES FOR PEST CONTROL SERVICE  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: JAMES RUSSELL – HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider and approve the introduction of new charges for pest control services.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – To help make people's lives safer and healthier.
- Community Objectives – To support health, environmental, economic and social wellbeing of people who live, work and visit Ribble Valley.
- Corporate Priorities – To enable the delivery of effective and efficient services.
- Other Considerations – None.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 As part of the Council's need to find substantial savings over the next 2 years, a report was recently presented to the Council's Corporate Management Team in July relating to the restructure of environmental health services. The report included the proposal to extend charging for pest control services within the borough.

## 3 ISSUES

3.1 Following a Best Value Review, the Council introduced charges for the treatment of wasps nests and nuisance insects (eg ants and fleas), but have continued to treat for rats, mice and insects of public health significance, free of charge.

3.2 There is no direct mandatory duty to provide a pest control service, however, it is generally viewed that the provision of a pest control service is a more cost effective and preferable option to adopting a purely enforcement approach, to address pest problems within the community. Due to the current financial situation, it has been appropriate to review the service further and the way it is delivered including the current charging scheme for the treatment of rat and mouse infestations. The preferred option recommended is to both increase charges for insect treatments in light of increasing costs and also introduce charges for the treatment of rat and mouse infestations, which should result in increased income in the region of £7,000 per annum to help towards the annual service costs of £35,440.

3.3 The pest control service currently treats between 550 and 750 service requests per year and between 300 and 350 service requests annually for rats and mice. It is a well used and popular front line service provided to protect and deliver fundamental public health. Residents often express surprise that no fees are payable. The introduction of charges will also discourage the more spurious service requests eg heard noise in loft and request visit as precautionary measure to identify possible cause.

- 3.4 There are obvious risks in relation to extending charges to include rodents in that residents may be discouraged from arranging early treatment, resulting in more significant and more serious problems in the longer term. Furthermore, where a number of properties/gardens are involved, who will have the responsibility for payment? In these circumstances a sensible pragmatic approach will continue to be adopted. Where treatments are required following reports of sightings of pests in streets/public areas, these will be undertaken without charge (unless specific source identified).
- 3.5 After considerable debate and consideration of potential options to achieve the best balance of reducing costs but continuing an acceptable service, the following charges are now recommended be introduced from 1 October:
- Single standard charge of £20 be introduced for rat and mouse treatments.
  - Callout charge of £10 where service requested for unspecified reason.
  - The charge for insect treatments be increased from £32.50 to £40.
  - That treatments for public health insects – cockroaches, bed bugs continue to be undertaken free of charge.
  - 50% concession for residents eligible for State Pension, Housing or Disability benefits.
- 3.6 By the introduction of the above charging regime and its operation over the next few months will enable a more informed judgement as to the ultimate replacement of the recently retired part time Pest Control Officer.
- 3.7 It is also proposed that the above changes will be outlined in the next issue of Ribble Valley News.

## 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – The introduction of the proposed charges should result in increased income in the order of £7,000.
  - Technical, Environmental and Legal – There are no particular technical, environmental and legal implications.
  - Political/Reputation – The report represents the Borough Council taking appropriate action to secure increased income to continue to provide a well used and important front line service.

## 5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Consider the report and approve the new fees and charges set out in Paragraph 3.5.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 None.

For further information please ask for James Russell, extension 4466.