

<b>Report of:</b>	Geoff Field - Director of Environment and Community Services Councillor Dennis McCabe - Executive Member for Environment
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Executive - 11 May 2021
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<b>Subject:</b>	Final Report of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel - Pest Control Services - Service Response
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**Summary**

<b>Proposed decision(s)</b>
That Executive approves the service response to scrutiny - Pest Control Services

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent? <sup>1</sup>
Decision	Yes, impacts two or more wards	No	No

<b>Contribution to delivery of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan</b>		
People	Places	Business
It supports our commitment toward ensuring our town is an absolute leader on environmental issues.	The service will reduce reported environmental issues and therefore assist in making Middlesbrough look and feel attractive	The service will help toward creating a positive perception of our town.

<b>Ward(s) affected</b>
The proposal impacts across all wards

## **What is the purpose of this report?**

1. The purpose of this report is to ask Executive members of consider the service response to the final report of the Economic Development, Environment and Infrastructure Scrutiny Panel – Pest Control.

## **Why does this report require a Member decision?**

2. The proposal affects more than two wards and is therefore considered a key decision requiring approval by the Executive.
3. The Scrutiny Panel have recommended that a report is submitted to the Executive in order that an informed decision is made.
4. There is a financial risk if the consideration is approved

## **Report Background**

5. A report was submitted to the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 23 February 2021 (see enclosed Final Report – Pest Control)
6. The Scrutiny Panel recommended a number of actions for further consideration
  - I. Consideration be given to Middlesbrough Council offering a low cost Pest Control Service to residential properties and whether this would provide an additional income stream to the service area.
  - II. Investigate whether an amount could be included within the Council Tax charge to provide a pest control service to private residents without any additional fee.
  - III. Promote educational messages about good house-keeping to prevent vermin infestations through the Love Middlesbrough magazine.

### **Consideration be given to Middlesbrough Council offering a low cost Pest Control Service to residential properties and whether this would provide an additional income stream to the service area.**

7. As a consequence of changing climate and milder winters there has been an increase in rodent activity both nationally and locally increasing the need for Pest Control across Middlesbrough. Coupled with this has been the impact of the Covid 19 restrictions which has led to more people being at home, generating more waste and spending more time in their gardens putting up bird feeders, both of these factors have caused an increase in rodent activity within domestic properties.
8. Currently Middlesbrough Councils Pest Control service is not offered to domestic properties as this was suspended in 2018 due to resource issues. However, since 2019 we have worked hard to increase the team to 4 technicians (3 FTE & 1 Agency) and invested in training for new technicians so they are fully qualified in all Pest Control duties not just rodents. This has enabled the Council to continue to carry out commercial work alongside treating Council buildings and open spaces. The table below indicates the income generated when the Council did offer a domestic pest control service:

<b>Year(s)</b>	<b>Domestic Pest Control Income</b>
16/17 (2629 visits)	£32,799.00
17/18 (2016 visits)	£32,628.81

- Please note – there is no correlation to the number of visits and the income generated. This is due to the varying Pest Control requirements e.g. wasps, rodents, bed bugs etc. generating varying levels of income per visit type

9. A cost analysis of the Tees valley councils and private businesses has been undertaken, showing the below information

<b>Council</b>	<b>Free Service</b>	<b>Chargeable Service</b>	<b>Charge</b>
Stockton Council	Rats and mice	Wasps, Fleas, Bed Bugs, Cockroaches	£35 + vat per visit
Darlington Council	Rats and mice	Wasps, Fleas, Bed Bugs, Cockroaches	£70.20 + vat per visit
Redcar & Cleveland Council		Rats/Mice Insects	£83 (up to 2 visits)
Hartlepool Council	Rats (if in house)	External rats Mice	£40 £80 (up to 4 visits)
Pest Control contractor		The average cost of Pest control is usually between £95 and £200, with the average quote at around £150.	£150 per treatment (average)

10. If we were to offer this service again, additional resources would be required to ensure that current service levels do not drop and that we can offer a competitive chargeable service which is reliable. This would require 2 members of staff and associated vehicles and equipment.

11. There would be a financial impact due to recruitment of two additional Pest Control technicians, the upgrade of senior technician and the auxiliary costs of the additional services, costs details below:

2 X New Operative @ Grade F	£52,068
2 X Vehicles	£14,000

Additional equipment & supplies	£5,000
Upgrade x1 Technician to Senior Technician	£2,670
Total Cost	£73,738

12. To enable the service to be financially viable, 2000 paid visits would be required per annum.
13. There is the residual risk in offering this service, as it is based on supply and demand of service requests. Should the residential uptake be below the estimated 2,000 visits per year
14. A reduction in requests will generate less income, resulting in a budget pressure, as a consequence of the income not recovering the costs of providing the service.
15. An increase in requests will generate service pressures to fulfil the service, resulting in possible additional resources required and/or complaints
16. Given the above information we would need to introduce that a residential charge for Pest Control would be £36.87 per visit. The number of treatments varies, pending on the pest problem. In most cases up to 4 treatments will be required to treat Rats/Mice. This would equate to a cost per treatment of £147.48. This is within the range of treatments offered by the private sector.
17. Given the proximity of the local authorities charge to the private sector and the element of risk involved it is not recommended to recommence this service.
18. To provide a service below this cost would require a subsidy from the council which is not recommended.
19. In respect of placing a charge on the council tax for such an approach is not undertaken by the authority.

***Recommendation 2 Investigate whether an amount could be included within the Council Tax charge to provide a pest control service to private residents without any additional fee.***

20. The funding of any specific service from Council Tax is not possible as the overall funding available to the Council, which includes Council Tax, Business Rates, Government grant funding etc. is allocated to directorates for overall service management.

**Recommendation 3: Promote educational messages about good house-keeping to prevent vermin infestations through the Love Middlesbrough magazine.**

21. The Service will provide suggestions on good housekeeping and waste minimisation to prevent the occurrence of rodents such as residents unwittingly feeding rats as a result of wishing to feed birds, through the following channels:
  - Love Middlesbrough Magazine
  - Council Website

- Intranet
- Advertising in community hubs/libraries/council buildings
- Social Media

### **What decision(s) are being asked for?**

22. Approve the service response to Scrutiny and that:

- A chargeable residential pest control service is not reintroduced.
- Future consideration of a subsidised service should be considered as part of future budget setting processes.
- An education and communication programme around “Good hygiene” to reduce pest problems should be introduced.

### **Why is this being recommended?**

23. A local Authority resident’s pest control service could not be delivered within budget cheaper than the private sector.
24. A communication and education programme could reduce pest problems across Middlesbrough.

### **Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended**

25. Introduce a subsidised service. Introduction on a less than break even pest control service would require a budget subsidy which is not in the MTFP.

### **Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)**

#### **Legal**

26. There are no legal implications.

#### **Financial**

27. There are no financial implications associated with these recommendations. Marketing costs can be found within existing budgets.
28. If approved we would look to provide suggestions on good housekeeping and waste minimisation to prevent the occurrence of rodents such as residents unwittingly feeding rats as a result of wishing to feed birds, through the following channels:
- Love Middlesbrough Magazine
  - Council Website
  - Intranet
  - Advertising in community hubs/libraries/council buildings
  - Social Media

## **Policy Framework**

29. The report sets out a proposal in accordance with the Council's approach to the delivery of efficient services. It delivers on priorities set out in the council's Strategic Plan.

## **Equality and Diversity**

30. An Impact Assessment has been carried out and there are no initial concerns.

## **Risk**

31. There are no risks associated with this approach.

## **Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)**

32. Implement education and communications plan

## **Appendices**

33. Equality impact assessment – Chargeable Pest Control April 2021)

## **Background papers**

34. Draft Final Report - Pest Control Services

<b>Body</b>	<b>Report title</b>	<b>Date</b>
	Consideration to provide a chargeable Domestic Pest Control Service to Middlesbrough Residents	April 2021