

# PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024

## POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF IN-HOUSE PEST CONTROL AGENCY

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to instigate an initial discussion on whether we should develop an in-house Pest Control Agency within the Housing and Public Protection Division.

### **THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IS ASKED TO:**

**Provide views on whether officers should prepare a detailed business case for the development of an in-house Pest Control Agency as part of the pre-decision process for policy development, prior to submission to Cabinet.**

### **Reason**

To formulate the views of Scrutiny Committee prior to potential detailed development work in this area.

### **CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-**

**Cllr Aled Vaughan-Owen (Climate Change, Decarbonisation and Sustainability)**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**PLACE, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

**POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF  
IN-HOUSE PEST CONTROL AGENCY**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this report is to instigate an initial discussion on whether we should develop a more detailed business case for an in-house Pest Control Agency within the Housing and Public Protection Division.

**1. Why are we considering setting up an enhanced internal provision?**

- To offer a potentially improved service provision to the public, irrespective of tenure, where there are currently gaps in provision. It will not be set up to replace existing successful private sector provision; and
- We believe that, with the development of a detailed business case, an in-house pest control service could be self-financing both in terms of advice, treatment and follow up.

Whilst pest control 'treatment' is not a statutory function, experience over the years has demonstrated that having a Council operated pest control service would be of benefit to both the Council and residents of Carmarthenshire. It is recognised, however, that it would be necessary to introduce a service where the costs of the service are fully recovered.

**2. What is the current context?**

The previous fully operational pest control service of the Council ceased to operate in 2010. Since then, officers have dealt with pest related problems through advice and enforcement work only. This means that residents and businesses have to choose a commercial organisation to provide the appropriate treatment or undertake works themselves. Leaving the eradication of pests to the commercial market alone, however, has created the following issues/perceptions:

- Inconsistent quality of treatment and service;
- Inappropriate and potentially ineffective treatment provided;  
Experience has shown that some private companies can fail to eradicate and identify the cause of a problem e.g. not identifying / reporting structural defects or surveying drainage systems.
- Advice given by Council employees not being properly followed by the private treatment company;  
Previous issues have included some companies not turning up on site, not making appointments to meet council officers dealing with a case, not enough poison being used to eradicate an issue and using inappropriate / weaker poisons.
- Vulnerable residents not having the service suited to their needs;

- Residents not taking action on the advice given due to concerns about the overall cost and efficacy of the treatment;
- Difficulty in selecting the most appropriate provider; and
- Generation of more enforcement work as pest problems were not resolved.

Due to the issues being experienced, a decision was taken to reintroduce the treatment element of the service to our Council homes in 2016 but keep providing advice only to all other tenures. Since 2016 the team has received very positive feedback from housing officers and tenants, and the service is working well.

In addition to providing treatment and advice, the team also completes works in default when officers in the team are carrying out enforcement duties. This ensures pest control is completed adequately and complies with the legal requirements. Pest control officers also work closely with Public Health officers and provide evidence for legal action / prosecution. They also take a holistic approach and survey other properties in the area as they have rights of entry into neighbouring land when required. Private companies are unable to do this.

We believe that providing the service to all tenures will be positive, subject to a detailed sustainable business case.

Nationally, figures are showing an increase in rodent related calls, fleas, wasps, and bed bugs in environments such as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and the private rented sector. This could be for various reasons such as social / economic / chemical resistance building in the rodent population or private businesses carrying out poor treatments.

In addition, other factors such as ageing drainage systems, bait resistance, and changes to legislation covering pest control poisons / treatments are also likely to cause a further increase in rodent related issues.

### **3. How could we make the in-house pest control service self-financing?**

The intention would be to provide a better quality of treatment that would be consistent and would aim to eradicate an infestation without any repeat visits. The cost would also be set at a reasonable level but would need to cover the costs of the service.

We would potentially look to recover costs through:

- Offering the service for rats, mice and wasps to begin with, as these are the highest type of pest calls we currently receive. This would allow officers to concentrate work and income generation on the highest workstreams. The service could grow to cover other pests of a lesser public health significance, such as ants and bed bugs;
- The Council being seen as a trusted organisation that many may choose to use;
- Developing contracts with other internal departments, such as leisure centres, care home facilities, and schools. Currently some departments are using private firms for this work;
- Developing contract work with private businesses across the county, such as food establishments and farms;

- Offering a CCTV survey element to the service which would cover drainage systems that could be charged for. Many pest problems arise from defective drainage systems, so this would help resolve issues and prevent repeat calls. This would also link in with our enforcement work;
- Undertaking ‘treatment’ in default of legal notices, which can be recharged to the owner of the property;
- Undertaking minor repairs to properties where faults are allowing entry for pests, e.g. missing ventilation covers / holes around waste pipes. This could be recharged for and allow a problem to be repaired quickly.
- Re-charging Welsh Water for sewer treatments; and
- Charging for visiting to provide advice only.

#### 4. What are the potential challenges and risks?

- Making sure that our market analysis, as part of the development of the business case, is robust and a high benchmark is set to ensure future sustainability of the service;
- An acknowledgement that the service could be offered differently in certain parts of the county based on our market analysis.
- Initial costs to setting up the service;
- Ensuring the right costs are charged to cover service costs, but do not discourage members of the public from taking up the service offered;
- Ensuring we don’t duplicate what is already being provided and significantly impacting existing private businesses;
- Recovering money (maybe charge upfront) – previous history of problems of charging after the job was completed and not being paid; and
- Considering whether we offer discounts in certain circumstances or charge everyone the same.

#### 5. What will be the key drivers and tests considered as part of the development of the detailed business case?

The following table summarises the drivers and tests to be considered:

Drivers	Tests
Maintain and increase the breadth and quality of service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enables ability to work in an integrated close partnership with other services within the Council</li> </ul>
Reducing public health risks from pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enables a preventative approach to the recurrence of pests</li> <li>• Allows for a holistic service that is more effective in preventing reoccurrence</li> <li>• More accessible to the public, and especially vulnerable people</li> </ul>
The ability to achieve the major initial change and future evolution of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows the required changes to be achieved?</li> <li>• Allows the service to meet environmental and commercial demands in the future?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows initiatives such as extending services, and providing them to private individuals and public and private sector organisations?</li> </ul>
Manages operational, financial and reputational risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensures management of the statutory risk</li> <li>• Will enhance, not harm, the reputation of the Council</li> <li>• Supports the market without destabilising it</li> </ul>
Provides efficient and cost-effective service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for expansion of services</li> <li>• Provides the most cost-effective, self financing and sustainable delivery model</li> </ul>

**6. What are the potential next steps/recommendations?**

Members are asked to provide views on an enhanced in-house pest control agency and, if considered worthwhile, officers will:

**Work up a detailed business case on an in-house pest control agency for further consideration.**

<b>DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?</b>	<b>NO</b>
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# IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report:

Signed:      Jonathan Morgan      Head of Housing and Public Protection

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets	Bio-diversity & Climate Change
<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>

**CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER AWARE/CONSULTED**  
YES

**Cllr Vaughan-Owen is supportive on a preliminary Scrutiny discussion on this potential pro-active initiative.**

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information**  
**List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

**THERE ARE NONE**