

North East Derbyshire District Council

Cabinet

3 March 2022

Pest Control Fees and Charges

**Report of Councillor C Cupit, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for
Environmental Services**

Classification: This report is public.

Report By: Joint Assistant Director, Environmental Health

Contact Officer: Ken Eastwood

PURPOSE / SUMMARY

To propose an increase in pest control fees and charges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That pest control fees and charges be increased to the 'mid-position' obtained through benchmarking.
2. That a new, non-refundable call out charge of £25 be introduced for pest control visits.
3. That these changes be implemented with effect from 1 April 2022.
4. The Cabinet require the Joint Assistant Director – Environmental Health to carry out a review after 12 months on the impact of the changes to the fees and charges.

Approved by the Portfolio Holder – Cllr Cupit, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services.

IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

The service currently costs the Council £32k per annum to run and the proposal to increase fees and charges to the benchmark 'mid-position' would reduce this by around £15,000 per annum. The additional income from fees and charges and call out will contribute towards the Council's annual efficiency target.

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

[Click here to enter text.](#)

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Decision Information	
Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: BDC: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEDDC: Revenue - £100,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £250,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	No
District Wards Significantly Affected	None
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Cabinet / Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SAMT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes Details: Ward Members

Links to Council Ambition (BDC)/Council Plan (NED) priorities or Policy Framework including Climate Change, Equalities, and Economics and Health implications.

The Pest Control Service links to the following: -

- Our Residents - Enhancing our residents' quality of life.
- Our Environment - Protecting and promoting the character of our District.
- Our Services - Delivering high quality cost-effective services by engaging with residents, partners and Council staff.

REPORT DETAILS

1 Background

- 1.1 The Council's Environmental Health Pest Control Service provides advice and treatment to control a range of pests. The Council charges for services provided. Income received partly offsets the cost of delivering the service.
- 1.2 The Council is not under a statutory duty to provide these services, but in common with the majority of Councils in the UK, services are provided in the interests of protecting public health.
- 1.3 Officers have undertaken a benchmarking exercise, collating fees and charges levied by other councils across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire (excluding the cities). These have supported a modelling exercise, projecting potential changes to income based on aligning NEDDC charges with the average charged elsewhere or with the highest charges elsewhere.
- 1.4 Currently, the Council does not charge a call out fee. Full payment is usually taken up front and there are relatively high levels of refunds, arising where payment and a visit has been made, but a treatment cannot be carried out. This can arise when customers mistake bees for wasps, for example.
- 1.5 There is a need to review this approach as it is inefficient, resulting in a calculated 1.3 weeks-worth of aborted and uncharged work during the busiest months of the year.
- 1.6 Some councils charge a standard call out fee, which encourages customers to more accurately identify the infestation and avoid aborted call outs. A call out fee would also recover some income where advisory visits are made and no treatment provided (currently free of charge).
- 1.7 The service currently costs the Council £32k per annum to run.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 The following table illustrates existing charges at NEDDC and enables comparisons with calculated 'mid-position' and 'top-position' charges based on the benchmarking data obtained.

Pest Control Service	Current NEDDC Charge¹	Benchmark Mid	Benchmark Top
Rats Inside	£41	£54	£70
Rats Outside	£41	£54	£70
Mice Inside	£41	£55	£70
Wasps Outside	£45	£57	£69
Wasps Inside	£45	£57	£69
Ants Inside	£45	£70	£89
Cockroaches	£65	£75	£126
Bed Bugs	£65	£100	£250
Fleas	£45	£80	£150
Other Insects	£45	£70	£89

Note ¹ NEDDC offer a 50% discount on all charges to customers in receipt of income related benefits including pension credit.

- 2.2 Increasing fees and charges to match the benchmark 'mid-position' is proposed.
- 2.3 The introduction of a non-refundable call out fee of £25 is also proposed (based on the calculated average cost of a single visit without treatment). This would be deducted from any refund given and would be charged as a stand-alone fee for an advisory visit where no treatment is given. The 50% concession would also apply to this charge.
- 2.4 There are relatively low levels of 'no access' visits in pest control. However, no access visits, visits where advice is given without treatment and visits where treatment cannot be provided for other reasons, presents an inefficient use of resource that the call out charge should address.
- 2.5 The benchmarking exercise revealed that the other Councils charging a call out fee, charge between £15 and £30.

- 2.6 Pest control requests for service are highly seasonal and vary year on year. It is projected that the proposed increases will reduce the cost of the service to the Council by £15,000 in a typical, average year.
- 2.7 Increasing fees and charges to match the benchmark 'top-position' would theoretically reduce the cost of the service to the Council by £28,000 in a typical, average year. However, this would result in significant increases in fees and charges, ranging between + 53% and + 284%. It is likely that such increases would result in a reduction in requests for service, which would impact negatively on income received.
- 2.8 The net cost of service delivery will be reduced further by the introduction of the proposed call out charge. A reasonable estimate, based on average numbers of refunds and advisory visits, would be additional income in the region of £1,000 per annum. Whilst a relatively modest sum, the introduction of this measure is also forecast to free up some Pest Control Technician time which may generate additional income from other activity undertaken.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Pest control fees and charges have not been increased for some years. Currently, the service costs the Council £32k per annum to run.
- 3.2 The cost of baits, poisons and other materials used have steadily increased over recent years. Some products have also been withdrawn from the market, for environmental and health and safety reasons, and have been replaced with significantly more expensive treatment solutions. This has increased the cost of service delivery.
- 3.3 A benchmarking exercise has revealed that the Council's charges are generally low by comparison to fees charged by other Councils in the region.
- 3.4 Visits to give advice and aborted treatment visits are relatively frequent, take up valuable time and amount to uncharged activity. The introduction of a call out charge will help to reduce the incidence of aborted visits and provide some income to cover visits by a Pest Control Technician when advice is provided, but a treatment is deemed not to be necessary.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 Alternatives considered included retaining existing fees and charges, not introducing a call out charge and increasing fees and charges by a higher amount.
- 4.2 The financial pressures faced by the Council, along with the increased cost of providing the service, justify an increase in fees and charges and the introduction of a call out charge.
- 4.3 Increasing fees and charges by a higher amount, such as to the highest in the region determined by benchmarking, would impose a significantly higher

financial burden on service users and could result in lower take up of the service and in risks to public health arising from ineffective control of pests.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title
Click here to enter text.	N/A
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
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