



Portfolio Holder Report

The portfolio holder will make a decision on this item after seven days have elapsed (including the date of publication).

Report of:	Portfolio Holder	Date of publication
Mark Billington, Director of Environment	Councillor Lynne Bowen, Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder	4 April 2024

Proposed changes to Fees and Charges for the treatment of Public Health Pests

Key decision: No

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To confirm the proposed fees and charges for the treatment of public health pests, (rats and mice) to align with those of Lancaster City Council.

2. Council priorities

2.1 A well run, forward-thinking council that puts customers first.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That the proposed fees and charges set out in Appendix 1 are approved with immediate effect.

3.2 To provide delegated powers to the Director of Environment to enter into a service level agreement with Lancaster City Council as and when required to deliver a Pest Control Service.

4. Background

4.1 Wyre Council's Pest Control service is currently provided by a single officer without suitable cover arrangements in place for periods of absence. This can lead to periods when the council is unable to provide the service and a backlog of appointments. In order to strengthen resilience within the service and provide cover, Lancaster City Council have been approached to provide the service in Wyre under a Service Level Agreement, as and when required.

- 4.2** The council have a number of contracts with private companies to treat pests on their premises, generating a regular income for the pest control service, which helps to offset its costs. In the event that the council is unable to service these contracts, it is likely that the council will lose their custom and the income associated with the provision of the service. Lancaster City Council have indicated that they have some capacity for treating public health pests such as rats and mice in Wyre as and when required. However, they would not have sufficient capacity, to treat pests not considered a public health risk, for example a wasp infestation.
- 4.3** Although an arrangement with Lancaster City Council would not ensure cover for all the pest control services we currently offer, the core public health aspects would be within their capacity and it is deemed to be a suitable interim arrangement.
- 4.4** In the financial year 2023/24 Wyre Council charged £48 per domestic rodent treatment which was due to increase £51 in the financial year 2024/25 following the approval of the Portfolio Holder Fees and Charges report of 14 December 2023 (all fees exclusive of VAT).
- 4.5** In the financial year 2023/24 Lancaster City Council charged £66.17 per domestic rodent treatment which will increase to £72.83 in the financial year 2024/25 (all fees exclusive of VAT). If Wyre's fees and charges are aligned to Lancaster's in this area it represents an increase of over 40%. Previously, Wyre have subsidised the treatment of rodents on public health grounds and this increase will reduce that subsidy and bring us in line with one of our neighbouring councils.
- 4.6** Under these proposals the revised fees and charges for public health pests would remain consistent irrespective of which council undertakes the work. Aligning our costs with Lancaster City Council and allowing them to keep the income they generate from undertaking the treatment, enables Wyre residents to continue to access treatment for public health pests at no additional cost to Wyre Council.
- 4.7** The Original Estimate for 2024/25 forecasts that the pest control service will be subsidised by an estimated £45,220 (including capital charges and support service recharges). This is consistent with the forecast for 2023/24 (Outturn 2022/23 was £57,503). It should be noted that during any periods where Lancaster City Council operate the rodent treatment service, the income will be theirs and we will see a reduction in our income. Overall, the income budget for the whole service in 2024/25 is £37,810 and if a suspension of the in-house service is assumed to be for a period of six months (April to September) then the loss of income is likely to be in the region of £24,330, factoring in seasonality. There will be a limited reduction in costs.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1** It is proposed that the council will align its fees and charges for Public Health treatments with those of Lancaster City Council stated in paragraph 4.5. This will allow Lancaster City Council to undertake treatments in the Wyre Council area when required to do so as part of the service level agreement.
- 5.2** The aligning of fees and charges will increase the resilience of the pest control service and its ability to treat public health pests.
- 5.3** The aligning of these fees will allow for increased co-operation between the two services.
- 5.4** The Local Government Act 2003 states that local authorities are under a general duty to secure that, from one financial year to the next, the income from charges for services does not exceed the costs of provision ([section 93\(3\), LGA 2003](#)). A local authority can set the level of charge for each discretionary service as long as the income from charges for each kind of service does not exceed the costs of its provision ([section 93\(5\), LGA 2003](#)). Having considered various options for providing the service when our in-house service is unavailable, utilising Lancaster City Council has been identified as a suitable alternative, and as such is considered compliant with the Local Government Act 2003. The council is still expected to be subsidising the pest control service, as reported in the fees and charges report December 2023 [Agenda for Portfolio Holder Decisions on Thursday, 21st December, 2023, 12.00 pm \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

6. Alternative options considered and rejected

- 6.1** Private Contractor - in the event that Wyre Council are unable to operate the service in-house consideration was given to using the a private pest control company. This was rejected on the basis that our existing commercial contracts would be at increased risk of being lost to the private sector and further jeopardise the service.
- 6.2** Ceasing the service - in the event that Wyre Council are unable to operate the service in-house consideration has been given to ceasing provision of this discretionary service. This was rejected at this time as it ensures that Public Health treatments are maintained.

7. Delegated functions

- 7.1** The matters referred to in this report are considered under the following executive function delegated to the Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder (as set out in Part 3 of the council's constitution): "To determine charges or fees for any relevant services operated within the Portfolio."

Financial, Legal and Climate Change implications	
Finance	<p>The report enables Lancaster City Council to undertake public health domestic rodent treatments in the Wyre area as and when required to support delivery of the service. This will require a change to existing fees and charges to replicate those of Lancaster City Council. These charges will apply even if Wyre are providing the treatment and not Lancaster. There will be a reduction in the council's income when the service is provided by Lancaster City Council. This has been estimated at £24,330 based on a six month period as detailed in 4.7 above.</p>
Legal	<p>The provision of pest control treatment services is a discretionary service for which there is a general power to charge under section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003.</p> <p>The aim of discretionary charging is to allow local authorities to recover the costs of providing services or improvements to services that they might not otherwise have been able to justify providing or been in a position to provide. Local authorities are under a general duty to secure that, from one financial year to the next, the income from charges for services does not exceed the costs of provision.</p> <p>A service level agreement will be entered into with Lancaster City Council.</p>
Climate Change	<p>There is no significant Climate Change impact anticipated as a result of this report although there will be a slight increase in transport emissions due to the additional distances travelled when using Lancaster City Council to provide the service.</p>

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x
equality and diversity	x
health and safety	x

risks/implications	✓ / x
asset management	x
ICT	x
data protection	✓

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

report author	telephone no.	email	date
Neil Greenwood	01253 887410	Neil.greenwood@wyre.gov.uk	11/03/2024

List of background papers:		
name of document	date	where available for inspection
none	N/A	N/A

List of appendices

None