



Subject:	Update on Pest Control Service
Date:	7 December 2021
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Aoife Moody, City Protection Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report provides an update on Pest Control services following the Committee update and recommended actions of the 7 th September 2021.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee are asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the update report on the current position for pest control services and the resumption of pest control services for NIHE & all housing associations.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Following the update on Pest control services on September 7th to Council members, it was agreed that pest control services would resume to all tenures. It was also requested by members that officers would investigate the establishment of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with both the NIHE and Housing Associations with a view to the Council discussing the opportunity of recouping the costs for these services.

3.2	<p>On the 14th September the BCC Chief Executive received correspondence from Minister Hargey, Department for Communities raising concerns about our restricted Pest Control services for NI Housing Executive and Housing Associations. A response was sent to the Minister on September 15th (Appendix 1) indicating that as agreed by members pest control services would resume to all tenures and that we would explore the establishment of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with both the NIHE and Housing Associations with a view to the Council discussing the opportunity of recouping the costs for these services.</p>
3.3	<p>At the request of members, the Operational Director wrote to the Regional Manager of the NI Housing Executive and all Housing Associations on October 6th advising them that services would resume and that we would welcome a meeting to discuss a Service Level Agreement between both parties. Copy of letter in Appendix 2.</p>
3.4	<p>Services subsequently resumed in early October for all tenures and our business support team were instructed to accept all service requests for public health pests including rats and mice.</p>
3.5	<p>A meeting was arranged with the NI Housing Executive to explore the option of an SLA and discussing the opportunity of recouping of costs. This meeting took place on 16th November. At this meeting NI Housing Executive (NIHE) shared their concerns about ensuring equity across all constituents and tenures allowing access to BCC pest control services free of charge. They advised that are they have approximately 30,600 properties in the Belfast City Council area and pay 100% rates on all their properties whether occupied or void. They officers expressed the need to ensure their tenants should be entitled to benefit from the Councils free public health pest control services. They also highlighted that they had been using their own contractor for Pest Control for the last 18 months absorbing this cost directly. Their service requests totalled approximately 1400 over the period of September 2020 to 2021 which was significantly more than a normal pre Covid year due to in their view the reduced provision of our services.</p>
3.6	<p>Since the last update to members in September our waiting time for an appointment for an internal treatment or sewer baiting treatment is approximately 3 weeks. The impact of the pandemic generally and within the front line services continues to challenge our resumption of the operational services to pre pandemic service standards. We are also in the process of recruiting for some vacancies which in turn has reduced the overall capacity of the team. We expect that in the coming weeks our waiting times will increase significantly as referrals</p>

	fully resume for Housing Associations and NI Housing Executive. We will continue to monitor this very closely.
3.7	Finally, in light of discussions with the NIHE and taking account of issues of equality for all BCC residents, the issue of cost recovery for the pest control services would clearly need to be considered across all sectors at a future point.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.8	There are no additional financial implications associated with this report. The Council continues to provide the service free of charge
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.9	There are no implications associated with this report
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Letter to Minister Hargey Appendix 2 - Letter to Northern Ireland Housing Executive