

**Pest control services for council  
tenants:**

**A review of service delivery and  
best practice.**

Report of the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

April 2007



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## Background

1. The 2006 national rodent survey, undertaken by the National Pest Technician Association (NPTA) highlighted a significant increase of rat and mice infestations across the UK. The NPTA's findings, based on submissions provided by 302 British local authorities, signal that rat numbers have increased in total by 39% since 1998 and by 69% over the summer months. The increase of infestations was attributed to the following factors:
  - The introduction of charging by councils for pest control call-outs;
  - Unmaintained derelict property;
  - Fortnightly rubbish collections and composting;
  - Private water companies that do not cooperate with councils;
  - Fly-tipping, litter, discarded fast food containers.
2. The NPTA views the rise in infestations as a "grave problem" and warns that rats could pose a serious health risk should the trend continue.
3. Corresponding with this national trend, there has been an increase of reported pest problems in areas of Southwark, predominantly on housing estates in the centre and north of the borough, and in public open spaces. In particular there is concern regarding the increase of rat and bedbug infestations. In 2006, for example, a report to Tenant Council referred a request from the Walworth Central Forum that bedbugs be included in the list of pests to be treated.
4. The council's landlord duties regarding the provision of pest control are determined by statute and are influenced by contractual responsibilities. Cost constraints also affect the scope of treatment that Housing services can offer. In view of such constrictions and the considerable increase of pest problems, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee has undertaken a review of Southwark's pest control services for council tenants, with the view to identify how the capacity and quality of service provision might be improved.
5. The sub-committee has also taken into account arrangements that were established two years ago to pilot the provision of pest control services for private residents. The council established the service, in recognition of the public demand for such services and that the council was missing opportunities to map where pest problems are prevalent and where they persist. The pilot arrangement has thus proved beneficial as it has, for example, enabled the council to capture more data, submit a bid for Thameswater sewer-baiting<sup>1</sup>, and meet public expectations.

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<sup>1</sup> Systematic baiting is undertaken for the treatment, remediation and prevention of rat infestations in sewers, where rat infestations are often particularly prevalent.

## Recommendations

- i. That the current arrangement i.e. with external contractor(s) not be renewed and that LBS seek to bring this service in-house, using the experiences of Camden and Lambeth as a model, or in collaboration with a neighbouring borough such as Lambeth, which has an established and successful Pest Control department.
- ii. That any new staffing arrangements of the new service should make provision for the following:
  - a. a manager with proven experience of managing a successful pest control service;
  - b. a well resourced team of dedicated administrative staff;
  - c. a pay structure for pest control operatives that encourages staff recruitment and retention through training and career development.
- iii. That the pest control service be given appropriate enforcement powers to gain entry to properties where reasonable attempts to gain permission for entry have failed.
- iv. That the delivery of the service be offered, in part, outside of a 9-5, Monday to Friday basis as access during working times is often difficult and leads to repeat visits.
- v. That the service be offered, on a fee or contractual basis, to businesses, other registered social landlords, Thames Water, Network Rail etc and to all domestic properties whether private, tenants or leaseholders, and that this should become an income stream which could, in time, allow for LBS to waive the charge for the treatment of rats in domestic properties or consider other enhanced services.
- vi. That Southwark's current threshold, 25%, of infested properties required to trigger a block treatment be dropped, and that block treatments be determined on a more case by case basis, according to factors such as the pest type and rate of infestation.
- vii. That the current pricing structure be maintained for domestic properties, i.e. differentiating between tenants and homeowners, with the exception of bedbugs, but that the service should continue to price eradication, with a limited time of warranty, and not "per treatment".
- viii. That bedbug infestations are not a "lifestyle issue" and should be treated without charge (for tenants) and that (part) block treatments be considered where bedbugs have spread.
- ix. That the nature of the pests treated be reviewed annually due to the increase in prevalence of other pests following climate alteration (e.g. increase in mosquito reports, different types of ants etc) and that animal control should be considered for inclusion into the scope of the service.

- x. That the current (contractor) practice of using sticky pads for rodent control not be continued / authorised as it is cruel, leads to animal self-mutilation, and could render LBS liable to prosecution by the RSPCA.
- xi. That the issue of pest displacement during demolitions (where pests migrate to adjacent blocks unless drains are cemented / blocked) and during re-housing schemes (where pests concentrate on the remaining number of residents) be specifically considered as part of all major projects by the Regeneration department; and the sub-committee invites the planning department to consider the circumstances in which it would be appropriate to impose a condition or planning obligation on new developments, where part displacement is likely to be an issue.
- xii. That the quality of printed information available to users of the pest control service be improved and the authority make greater use of the website to increase awareness of services offered.

## **Key Issues Considered**

### **Tenant questionnaire**

- 6. With the view to obtain a 'bottom-up' perspective from affected tenants, a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was drafted seeking information on the type of pests that tenants have encountered, and where applicable, the standard of service provided by the council in response to infestations.
- 7. Copies of the questionnaire were sent to Tenant and Resident Association (TRA) chairs, Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), and were made available at Community Council meetings. In total, 35 responses were received. This number is proportionately very low to Southwark's tenant population (over 44,000), and so precludes any significant quantitative analysis. However, several responses were received from TRA or TMO chairs, secretaries or members writing in a representative capacity and who signalled, for example, pest types that were prevalent according to comments made at their group meetings. Individual tenant responses also included information about issues such as block treatments and the provision of services for their estate or neighbourhood. This gave a wider scope to the relevance of their observations.
- 8. Consequently, data and comments from the responses were collated, anonymously, and compiled to obtain a broader picture of pest concerns and the council's pest control services for tenants. Key findings include as follows:
  - Of the eight pest types most commonly treated by local authorities, (Mice, Rats, Fleas, Ants, Bedbugs, Carpet beetles, Cockroaches, Wasps) all types had been encountered in tenants' homes. The most common incidents of infestation were of mice, rats and ants.
  - A number of respondents explained that they first took steps to treat the infestation themselves; however a clear majority affirmed that they did not know how to get rid of the pests or know where to find information about how the council could help.

- While several tenants stated that the council had arranged an appointment with them to treat the problem within a day, the same number of tenants indicated that it took a month or longer to schedule an appointment. Similarly, the same proportion of respondents stated that the treatment was effective and that they were satisfied with the service, as those who were dissatisfied.
- Many respondents commented that the reason for their dissatisfaction was the length of time needed to schedule an appointment or that the pest control operatives failed to visit and carry out a treatment. One tenant explained that three separate appointments were arranged directly with the contractor, but none were kept. Another tenant stated that the council's customer service centre did not report the request for treatment to the contractor for two weeks, despite repeated follow up calls. Several respondents also noted that treatments had taken place but that the infestations persisted.
- A number of respondents commented that pest control treatments had ceased to take place as regularly as they were accustomed and tenants on certain estates queried why quarterly checks were no longer carried out.
- One respondent, a TMO representative, commented that she had earlier contacted the council with a request for pest treatment to learn that the council did not provide pest control services for private tenants and leaseholders and was not aware that a service now existed. This was echoed by other respondents. Consequently, it suggested that the council should increase promotion of the pilot service, with the view to ensure that all leaseholder organisations, TMOs and further relevant groups are directly informed of what pest control provision is available.

### **Examples of good practice**

9. Following desk-top research into the provision of pest control services by other inner-London boroughs, the scope of information available electronically prompted further inquiry and consultation. Members consequently met with senior pest control officers from the London boroughs of Camden and Lambeth. Members identified key features of each authority's pest control service that were of particular interest:

### **Pest control services provided by the London Borough of Camden**

10. *Service structure:* Following a best value review in 2002, Camden's pest control service was impelled to improve their business approach. At the time the service was not being offered to local businesses, as there were perceived issues of conflict of interest with the council's environmental health function. It was proposed that the council provide pest control services to residential and commercial properties, with the aim to become self-sufficient within five to six years. It is currently not considered feasible to become entirely self-sufficient, but the in-house service has reduced the financial

burden to the council's overall budget. The council also carries out pest control treatments at approximately 50 small commercial premises annually.

11. Camden contracts out a small portion of its services. Specifications are used for block control, however it is often found that private companies offer a lower price as they do not provide the same level of service or use the same standard of materials.
12. There is a charge for most services, and certainly for those that are private and commercial. A lump sum is received from the housing department, via the existing service level agreement, for charges to tenants. £200,000 was charged in 2005/06. (Camden's housing stock comprises just under 22,000 properties.) There is no direct charge to the tenant. Costings depend on the time needed and the cost of materials.
13. *Staffing:* Camden's team comprises five managerial and administrative staff, five pest control officers, and one trainee who receives formal course instruction for certification. Operatives typically work alone and staff turn over is very low.
14. Camden receives nine thousand to 10 thousand calls annually – ranging from requests for advice, to visit arrangements and cancellations etc. The numbers of pests have also increased, particularly the volume of bedbugs, mice and cockroaches.
15. *Block treatments:* The percentage of infested properties within an estate block that is required to trigger a block treatment in Camden is approximately 15%. This depends on the pest type. Also when a pattern of infestation is detected, this can impel a survey to determine whether a block treatment is necessary. Block treatments are carried out on Saturday mornings, and never during office hours or a week day, as this seen to defeat the purpose.
16. *Access issues:* If a block treatment takes place on a Saturday, housing officers will be told which properties could not be accessed and the housing office will send a letter to notify the tenant. Following two to three attempts to gain access, the Tenancy Agreement can be used, although this rarely happens, as the Housing department does not tend to pursue the issue. Last year Camden recorded 1491 cases of no access. (Haringey council evidently does not charge following the first case of no access, when a single revisit is necessary, but charges for subsequent incidents of no access - at approximately £5.)
17. *Customer satisfaction:* Having a working knowledge of the borough is seen as a considerable advantage and residents are generally satisfied with the service. A recent survey indicated that 80% of customers were very pleased. Sometimes however the timing is criticised, as due to the high demand there can be a wait for up to a week or nine days for treatment.
18. *Significant issues:* Camden's biggest pest problems are mice and pharaoh ants. Research shows that mice no longer eat their traditional foods, although the products for baiting them are typically still based on these. Camden consequently makes up its own products. There has also been a immense increase in the numbers of bedbugs. A key problem is their growing resistance to regular insecticides. Treatments need to be very thorough and

can be time intensive, as bedbugs feed every three to five days and 'hibernate' in between.

### **Pest control services provided by the London Borough of Lambeth**

19. *Service structure:* In 1997 Lambeth council withdrew all funding from its pest control service, following a decision to no longer provide treatments free of charge. (An exception was made for the continued free treatment of rats.) Lambeth's housing department consequently decided to tender to contract and received bids from companies such as Terminex, Ecolab and Rentokil.
20. In 1999 the contract was awarded to the council's in-house service team. Their work was benchmarked over a three year period against Terminex, who were contracted to provide pest control services in two representative areas of the borough. Lambeth's in-house service quoted for eradication, and included an unlimited number of treatments as necessary. Terminex' charges included three visits, although four were often needed. Consequently the contractor pricings were higher and the contract was not renewed.
21. Lambeth's pest control services sit within the council's environment department and cover three areas: block control; responsive work (including services outside the borough); and commercial contracts, including those to other council departments. Lambeth's pest control service is also a lead contractor to a number of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
22. The pest control service operates at a zero cost option, whereby no funding is received from Lambeth Council to support the service. It is therefore necessary that the service achieves a sufficient profit, in order to cover its own operative costs, the free provision of rat treatment and the requisite budget for the animal warden.
23. Lambeth pest control conducts an annual survey, the most recent of which demonstrated that 95% of customers were either fairly or very satisfied with the overall service. The service has a target of 90% to carry out the first visit within five working days. Just over 95% is achieved and the vast majority of visits take place within two working days.
24. *Staffing:* Lambeth currently employs one pest control manager (PO6), a customer services officer (Scale 5), two customer services assistants (Scale 4) and 11 pest control officers (PCOs) (Scale 6). The council also provides a trainee programme and all staff are trained to British Pest Control Association (BPCA) level. Administration staff receive both job specific and pest control training. Staff shifts include Saturdays and it is planned to establish a third team by 2008 that will also work on Sundays.
25. *Charges:* Prices compare favourably to those charged by private companies and 90 to 95% of callers pay for Lambeth's service, despite no offer of concessionary rates.
26. *Block treatments:* The need for a block treatment is calculated annually, according to the requests for pest control that are responded to through the year. Where properties are identified for block treatment, they will be treated for all pests.



27. *Significant issues:* Bed bugs are recognised as an increasing problem. Proportionately, however, rats continue to be the most prolific pest treated. Their numbers across London are known to be increasing. Pests such as mice, bedbugs and cockroaches dwell in individual properties, whereas rats are typically in communal areas and organisations responsible for such properties often do not take adequate measures to control them.
28. In view of the evidence received regarding Camden and Lambeth's in-house services, the sub-committee considered whether similar arrangements could afford the council greater flexibility regarding the scope, methodology and administration of pest control services for Southwark tenants. It was recognised, for example, that an in-house service would more easily allow the inclusion of ancillary services such as animal welfare and environmental hygiene, and would ensure that the council could respond promptly to pest control issues that may arise, as a consequence of regeneration. Thus a key benefit would be the capacity of an in-house service to effect a more integrated approach.

## **Bedbugs**

29. In November 2006, at the outset of this review, Southwark's policy regarding bedbugs was not to treat them free of charge, either through block programmes or individual treatments. The eradication of bedbugs was therefore the responsibility of affected tenants. The council also held that bedbugs are unlikely to spread from household to household, rather that infestations are contained within a dwelling and result from the use of second hand mattresses. A significant number of the external authorities consulted however, affirmed that bedbug infestations are increasing significantly; that the insect is known to move from household to household; and that infestations can result through a variety of factors such as items purchased in car boot sales, introduction through luggage used during overseas travel, as well as the purchase of second hand furniture.
30. A recent incident of bedbug infestation in London that was publicised in the national press further dispels the notion that bedbug infestation is a "lifestyle issue": A couple who were guests at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park Hotel were afflicted by hundreds of bites, which left their skin swollen and irritated. The bedbugs also embedded themselves in the guests' luggage, so that, on their return to New York, it became necessary to fumigate their apartment and replace clothing and bedding.
31. Various authorities encourage people to treat minor pest problems themselves and outline methods appropriate for domestic use. Southwark officers also suggest that there are measures residents can take to reduce the infestation of bedbugs, but that professional help may eventually be necessary. The British Pest Control Association (BPCA) however, as well as other authorities consulted, assert that homeowners should not attempt to treat bedbugs themselves and that particularly thorough treatment is requisite, in some cases to the extent of furniture disposal and re-decoration.

32. As illustrated below in figure 1, of the pest control services compared across 14 inner-London boroughs in November 2006, Southwark was the only council not to offer bedbug treatment to tenants free of charge.
33. In addition to the increase of bedbug infestations across London, the Greater London Pest Control Liaison Group has set up a mosquito watch, as it is feared that mosquitoes carrying certain viruses could become a problem in the capital.

### **Treatment methodology**

34. During consultation with the officers from other London boroughs members also enquired into the methodology of pest treatments, with the view to discern the extent of potential health risk to humans from chemical use and the extent to which certain methods inflict unnecessary suffering on pests. The Lambeth pest control manager explained that non-chemical treatments are possible, however it is necessary to balance a preference not to use chemicals with the costs of alternative methods and the need for effective treatment. It was mentioned that certain alternative non-chemical methods, can be a more cruel form of eradication and that chemicals can be used safely. The use of sticky pads for rodent control was highlighted as a particularly cruel method that leads to self-mutilation and is strongly condemned by the RSPCA. As this is currently included in the methods used by pest control operatives contracted by Southwark, steps should be taken to ensure that it is discontinued.

### **Regeneration**

35. The council is undertaking a number of regeneration schemes that are unprecedented in terms of their scope and scale. Forty per cent of the borough is either currently undergoing or is planned for massive regeneration. In view of the wide scale demolition and restructuring, typically to the very foundations of buildings, significant impact on rodent populations and feasibly other pest species is inevitable.
36. Camden pest control officers highlighted a dramatic increase in pest problems related to the current King's Cross regeneration scheme. It was emphasised that it is imperative to cap or cement any exposed drain and pipe systems in order to avert large scale rat migration to other properties. Irregular undulations in roads can even be caused, due to the collapse of subterranean pipes that were inadequately capped.

### **Provision of information**

37. Camden advertises its pest control services to businesses (albeit in such a way as to avoid a connection with their Health and Safety duty). Advertisements and information are placed in the local papers and on the council website and most requests are raised by people who have seen the website information. Comparative to the electronic information provided generally by other authorities, Southwark's website material could be significantly more comprehensive and should be reviewed to ensure that it provides ample and clear information for tenants, on the council's pest control

provision, the pest species treated and further pest types known to exist in the borough.

## **Community Impact Statement**

38. The charges for effective pest treatment can be prohibitively expensive for low income households and can consequently increase the susceptibility to associated health risks. The committee acknowledges that the council grants concessionary rates of 50% for Southwark residents in receipt of benefits and recognises that this provides considerable assistance. However, as outlined above, the committee considers it necessary that the type of pests treated be reviewed annually, with the view to identify whether there are reasonable grounds for including additional pests in the range of those treated.
39. Among the health risks posed by rats is the spread of Weil's disease, an infection that kills approximately a dozen people in Britain annually. Rats are also known to spread other diseases such as toxoplasmosis and salmonella. Moreover, a recent report from February 2007 described an extreme case where a rat ate away part of the face of a premature baby. A principal objective of pest control and a duty on the council is to avert or minimise the risk to public health from rodents and insects. The council should consequently consider whether there are increased risks for vulnerable people and take steps to ensure that pest treatments take place as promptly as possible.

## **Resource Implications**

40. In light of the information provided on the business structure of the pest control services in Camden and Lambeth, it is evident that the council could expect considerable financial benefits from the establishment of an in-house service or joint procurement with neighbouring boroughs and that this would afford improvements to and an extension of the current pest control services. It is recognised that transition to an in-house service would incur set-up costs, however it is feasible in the long-term that charges for pest treatments could decrease in line with cost savings and that the council would be able to offer free treatment of rats, as provided by other London boroughs. The committee therefore recommends that the Executive explore these options in detail.

## **Legal Comment**

41. In respect of procurement, consideration should be given to European Union treaties which generally prohibit restrictions which might prevent contractors of other member states from participating in public contracts on equal terms.
42. In respect of enforcement powers to gain entry where reasonable attempts to gain permission have failed, the tenancy agreement already provides this power. However if wider powers are to be given, in respect of council tenants, under section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, the Council is obliged to consult with secure tenants on matters of housing management which in the opinion of the Council represent changes in its practice or policy where those changes are likely to substantially affect its tenants. Similarly, in respect of

leaseholders, the lease sets out circumstances where officers may force entry. Again if wider powers are envisaged, the lease may have to be amended. In respect of private domestic properties and businesses, the contract for the provision of the service should include a clause giving the pest control officers the right to force entry. Failing this the Council may be sued in the civil courts for trespass or in the criminal courts for criminal damage.

43. With regard to the use of sticky pads for rodent control, there is currently no specific legislation governing the use of such items. The pest control industry has a code of practice and it would be desirable to adhere to the code of practice.

44. Legal services will work closely with all relevant departments and provide legal advice where required to ensure that statutory and guidance requirements are complied with.

### **Supporting Documents**

The following supporting documents are attached in support of this item:

- Appendix (1) Overview of pest control services provided by inner-London boroughs;
- Appendix (2) Questionnaire submitted to TRAs and TMOs regarding Southwark's pest control service for tenants;
- Appendix (3) Comparative data from inner-London boroughs: Treatment charges for private and leasehold residents; infestation thresholds for block treatment; advice offered;
- Appendix (4) List of further background documents;
- Appendix (5) Officer response to recommendations.

## Appendix 1

### Overview of pest control services provided by inner-London boroughs

Local Authority	Pests treated	Additional pests treated	Charges to tenants	Method for reporting	Response rates	SLA*
Camden	1 2 3 5 7 8	Other insects (charged)	No charge	Pest control hotline	see those given	Y
Ealing	1 2 3 4 5 7	Squirrels	No charge	Pest control ph/email		
Greenwich	1 2 3 4 5 7 8		No charge	Pest control ph/email		
Hackney	1 2 3 4 5 7 8		No charge 12457	Housing service line		Y
Haringey	1 2 3 4 5 8	Other insects, squirrels	No charge 12	Corporate call centre		
Islington	1 2 3 4 5 7 8		No charge	Pest control ph/email	Rats 1 day, others 3 days	Y
Kensington & Chelsea	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Other insects	No charge	Pest control ph/email/text	none given	
Lambeth	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8		No charge	Housing offices	see those given	Y
Lewisham	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8		No charge 12457, reduced 3468	Pest control ph/email		
Newham	1 2 3 4 5 7 8	Other insects	No charge	Pest control ph/email		Y
Tower Hamlets	1 2 3 4 5 7 8		No charge 12457, £35 for 3, 8	Pest control ph/email		
Wandsworth	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Other insects	No charge	Pest control ph/email/online form		
Westminster	1 2 3 4 5 7 8		No charge	Pest control ph/online form		Y
Southwark Housing	1 2 4 7 8		No charge	Housing offices		
Southwark E&L	1 2 3 5 7 8		Concessionary charges	Tenants - via housing offices		Y

Key of pest types	
1:Mice	5:Bedbugs
2:Rats	6:Carpet beetles
3:Fleas	7:Cockroaches
4:Ants	8:Wasps

SLA\* = Service level agreement

## Pest Control in Southwark Housing

The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand how effectively Southwark Housing assists tenants when they encounter pest control problems in their homes.

Please complete and return to your councillor, or forward to the Scrutiny team, Room 3.16, Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB. Alternatively, you can email the scrutiny team at: [scrutiny@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@southwark.gov.uk)

1. Have you ever found any of the following pests in your home?

Pest type	Yes	No	Not sure		Yes	No	Not sure
1. Mice				5. Bed bugs			
2. Rats				6. Carpet beetles			
3. Fleas				7. Cockroaches			
4. Ants				8. Wasps			
9. Other (Please state)							

2. If 'yes', did you know how to get rid of the pests?  Yes  No

3. Did you know where to find information about how the council could help?  
 Yes  No

4. When you discovered the pests, did you:

- contact the council's Housing Department?  Yes  No
- contact the council's Environment department  Yes  No

5. What other first steps did you take?

6. If the pest type was one that the council does not treat (eg. carpet beetles), did the council offer advice on how to deal with the pests?  Yes  No

7. How quickly did the council arrange an appointment with you to treat the problem?

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 day  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 – 3 days        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 week | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 month or longer |

8. How quickly did the council come to your home and carry out the treatment?

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 day       | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 – 3 days                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 week      | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 month                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 -3 months | <input type="checkbox"/> The treatment is still to take place |

9. Was the pest treatment effective and were you satisfied with the service?

- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Please give further details:

10. Do you have any further comments about the council's pest control service provided for tenants?

Contact details (optional)

Name & address \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation  
(if relevant) & your  
role \_\_\_\_\_

Email/tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. *The information you provide will be used fairly and lawfully and Southwark Council will not knowingly do anything which may lead to a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Housing Scrutiny Sub-committee will treat your comments in confidence.*

**Appendix 3: Treatment charges for private and leasehold residents; infestation thresholds for block treatment; advice offered**

Local Authority	Mice	Rats	Fleas	Pharoah ants	Bedbugs	Carpet beetles	Cock-roaches	Wasps	Additional cost information	Threshold for block treatment	Advice on other pests
<b>Camden</b>	mice £70 [3 visits],	rats £64 [3 visits],	fleas £51 per visit,		bed bugs - from £110,		cockroaches £58 [2 visits],	wasps - £45 per visit	Other insects - £51 per visit [clothes moths - from £152]	10 - 15% depending on pest	Advice - comprehensive
<b>Ealing</b>	mice £60 [3 visits]	rats £60 [3 visits]	fleas £60		bedbugs £30 per room [revisits £15 per room]			wasps £40 1st nest, £20 additional	Treatment for other pests - estimates given	50%	Advice - comprehensive
<b>Greenwich</b>	mice £20 per treatment	rats free	fleas £60 [3 bedroom house]	pharoah ants £3 per bait,	bedbugs free		cockroaches £51	wasps £47 1st nest [£16 additional]	Other insects £61 (3 bed house), £13 additional rooms	20-25%	No advice on wide range of pests. Contractor details provided
<b>Hackney</b>	mice £117.50 [3 visits]	Rats free [landlords £117.50-3 visits]	fleas £117.50 - 1 visit	tropical ants £105.75 [1 visit ]	bedbugs £117.50 - 1 visit		cockroaches £105.75 [1 visit]	wasp nests £64.60	Larger premises and treatment for other pests - estimates given	No information	No information
<b>Haringey</b>									Information not available	No information	Advice on pests - free
<b>Islington</b>									Information not available	No information	Advice offered & free identification
<b>Kensington &amp; Chelsea</b>	mice £85 [3 treatments]	rats free	animal fleas £85 [1 treatment ]	garden ants £85 [1 treatment], pharoah ants £125 [3 visits]	bedbugs £105 [2 treatments ]	carpet beetles £85 [1 treatment]	cockroaches £125 [3 treatments]			No information	No information



<b>Lambeth</b>	mice - base charge £78.30 + VAT	rats free	fleas - base charge £78.30 + VAT	pharaoah ants - base charge £78.30 + VAT	bedbugs - base charge £78.30 + VAT	carpet beetles - base charge £78.30 + VAT	cockroaches - base charge £78.30 + VAT	wasps - base charge £78.30 + VAT	Quotes provided for individual treatments - costs cover eradication	10%	Advice - comprehensive
<b>Lewisham</b>	mice free	rats free	fleas £40,	pharaoah ants – free, black ants £40	bedbugs – free	some beetles £40	cockroaches – free	wasps £40	[40% concession where benefits received]	No fixed %	Advice - comprehensive
<b>Newham</b>									(2) rats -free to all residents - refer to email	No fixed %, usually lower than 10%	Advice - comprehensive
<b>Tower Hamlets</b>									Information not available	No information	Advice on alternative action
<b>Wandsworth</b>	mice £74 [1-2 bedrooms 2 visits]	rats free	fleas – free, animal fleas £74 [1 visit]	pharaoah ants £264 [1-2 bedrooms - 3 visits],	bedbugs £176 [1-2 bedrooms - 1 visit]		cockroaches £166 [1-2 bedrooms - 3 visits]		[All work individually quoted - £74 minimum]	No fixed %	Advice - comprehensive
<b>Westminster</b>	mice £105 [1 treatment]	rats £105 [1 treatment]	fleas £75 [1-3 bedroom 1 visit]	ants £62 spray, £84 bait,	bedbugs £62 [1-3 bedroom]		cockroaches £62 [1-3 bedroom]	wasps £51		10% in year	Advice - comprehensive
<b>Southwark</b>	mice £66 [up to 3 treatments]	rats £66 [up to 3 treatments]	fleas £85 [2 treatments]		bedbugs £85 [2 treatments standard, 3 if extreme]		cockroaches £95	wasp nests: £50 [single treatment]	[50% concession where benefits received].	25%	Callers are advised to seek help from private company

#### Appendix 4 - List of further background documents

Title	Source
'Unwanted guests could prove costly for hotel', January 16 2007	Guardian
'Rise in rat numbers spawns health fears', January 4 2007	Guardian Unlimited
'Rat chews off sleeping baby's face', February 27 2007	Sky News
'Bedbugs have forced me to kip in a cardboard box', October 6 2006	South London Press
'Rats riot on Aylesbury: Residents run to escape rodent mayhem on Walworth estate', September 7 2006	Southwark News
'Unwelcome guests in our luxury hotels', March 25 2007	The Observer
'Rats come close to home as bins are unemptied', January 5 2007	The Times

## **Appendix 5 – Officer response to recommendations**

### **HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING**

#### **PEST CONTROL SERVICE PROVISION**

##### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL**

The proposal is to bring all aspects of Pest Control in Southwark in-house and be managed by Southwark Cleaning. The main objective of the in house pest control service will be to deal with pest problems from a single base. The responsibility for dealing with treatment, proofing, ad-hoc repairs etc being organised by one service area rather than the split of works through the contractor, area offices and Southwark Technical Services .

The proposed service will include the recruitment of suitably trained staff that will have regular intensive field training to ensure they are complying with changes in the regulations and are following the service standards laid down.

An in-house service will allow for the redirection of operatives with a lot more flexibility than by a contractor to any priority site at very short notice.

The new in-house service will implement the recommendations made by the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee (see above).

##### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

There is widespread dissatisfaction with the existing Pest Control Service offered by Southwark Council. This has been reported to Members and they have requested that officers review existing arrangements and recommend improvements.

A borough wide pest control contract was let on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2003 for three years with an option to extend for a further two years. This contract was awarded to Ecolab and Canon Hygiene with both contractors covering a proportion of the work on an area by area basis. The contract, including the extension periods, is due to expire on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008.

Before enacting the contract extension mentioned above, Housing Management entered into dialogue with both Ecolab and Canon Hygiene and they were asked to submit a Business case, setting out their plans for improvement. These were duly received though at very short notice Canon Hygiene made a decision to pull out of the discussions and indeed all work from the Borough from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006.

As a result of this and in order to maintain service delivery, discussions were held between Southwark Technical Services, the Commissioning team from Housing Regeneration and Ecolab, which resulted in their agreement to cover pest control throughout the Borough whilst a new contract procurement process was to be put in place and that these arrangements would run until a new contract was in place sometime in 2007. Ecolab further agreed to improve their service for the remainder of the contract.

##### **CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS**

The current contractual arrangements with Ecolab Ltd are based on block treatments and reactive works tackling any one of five pre-determined pests in Council properties such as rats, mice, cockroaches, ghost ants and Pharaoh ants. The

annual contract sum amounts to £800K for 2006/07. In addition to this the contractor also carries out ad hoc works for pigeon and pest proofing, netting etc by way of quotations approved by STS. The total annual allocation for the full pest control service is currently £1.2m pa.

Since April 2006, Ecolab have been working across the Borough as part of these interim arrangements. Their service has at times been below the required expected level of service in order to control and abate pest control problems as they arise. Specific areas of weakness are set out below.

- The poor quality of some of the contractor's operatives.
- Timescales for dealing with treatment visits.
- Lack of adequate supervision and management structure.
- Failure to attend appointments
- Failure to pursue no access problems on infested sites and stopping treatment.
- Poor response to works order completions
- Poor levels of feed back received / communication of works.
- Failure to equip technicians with correct equipment and uniform to make themselves evident to residents.

In order to improve the service offered to tenants and residents, the trigger levels for block treatment were raised from 10% to 25% infestation to allow the pest control staff more time to deal with each problem as it was reported. Unfortunately, this has caused infestation levels to increase and not lead to the service improvements expected.

## **IN-HOUSE PROVISION**

The provision of an in house pest control service is seen as the way forward in providing our residents with an efficient and effective pest control service.

The proposal is that Southwark Cleaning take on Pest Control activities across the borough and utilise an in-house workforce to deliver an improved service to all residents of the borough. Southwark Cleaning management have previous experience in TUPE legislation and a track record of delivering significant improvements in front line services. It is further proposed that the new Pest Control service will adopt the working practises and culture that exists within the cleaning service and will become more customer focussed and concentrate on delivering a quality service on a 'not for profit' basis.

The proposed in house service will provide:

- A redeveloped and flexible approach to the current pest control issues across the Borough, which will concentrate on a quality, pro active and value for money service.
- A fully inclusive pest control service, which incorporates both borough wide residential properties as well as commercial properties that are currently served by Environmental Health.
- A service that will deal with pests, which are not in the present contract. Examples of these are Bed bugs, squirrels, foxes mosquitoes etc.

- A more pro-active approach to addressing pest problems by having the ability to re direct staff, at short notice, to changing priorities without the need for contractual variations.
- A self managed contract, which will reduce costs associated with the current contract monitoring arrangements and that these savings will be invested in service delivery.
- Effective action in relation to properties having poor hygiene and poor access. There are gaps in the existing procedure due to a number of parties involved in this process. This course of action will include letters to tenants with poor hygiene and access problems and, if required, enforcement action being taken, including forced entries, within a single team.
- A dedicated team to deal with the reactive calls being received from residents. Additional technicians can be introduced into the reactive team at any time from another section of the in house team if required to ensure that the response times are met.
- A free advice and identification service will be offered as a proactive approach making it easier for people to request help in dealing with the pests. The list of pests covered to be treated free of charge will be increased to allow for increasing trends being found in the borough with the immediate inclusion of Bed Bugs.
- An increase in the number of dwellings on the Block treatment works will also be possible with the flexible resources available to ensure more dwellings are covered and treated.
- A well trained workforce able to make decisions on necessary treatments on the first visit, including proofing works in order to solve problems more quickly reducing the risk of spreading to neighbouring properties and less distress for residents.
- A live data base, utilising hand held technology that will record up date details for each dwelling and block, hygiene and proofing recommendations and treatment records etc. This will replace the existing out dated system.

#### Comparisons with existing and proposed service delivery

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>	<b>Proposed Arrangements</b>
25% infestation levels before block treatments works take effect	10% infestation levels before block treatment works take effect
Bed bugs not treated	Bed bugs included in the service
Average response times to service requests between 5 and 10 days	24 hour response time to service requests
17 operatives	27 operatives
Poor record keeping leading to lost legal cases	Digital technology in place leading to immediate data capture and electronic

	storage
30 - 50% no access rates on block treatment programme	10% no access rate by March 2008 with on-going improvements set in the contractual requirements
Disjointed approach to Pest Control – responsibility shared between Housing and Environmental Health	Single point of contact for all Pest Control matters
Rigid contractual arrangements leading to slow service development	Flexible contract allowing rapid response to changing needs

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The estimated annual cost of the in house service is still being assessed but is likely to be in the region on £1.1 million, which is within the current annual spend on Pest Control as mentioned earlier. This currently includes funding for two posts to deal with bed bugs but may change as likely workload has yet to be determined.

### **PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

A robust set of key performance indicators (KPI's) will be established for this service to measure;

- % of orders/works completed within the timescales agreed within the in house service
- % of response times to those agreed within the service.
- % of calls responded to by the initial request for treatment from resident.
- % of satisfaction for treatment carried out .
- % of complaints received and dealt within timescales.

### **PROGRESS TO DATE**

- Existing contractor has been notified of the plans to bring the service in-house
- A project team has been established to manage the process
- A draft TUPE list has been provided by the current contractor
- A draft structure has been created for in-house service delivery (Appendix A)
- A suitable location for the service has been identified
- Fact finding trips to Lambeth, Haringey and Lewisham are underway to establish best practise
- Job descriptions are in place for pest control officers and an advert will be placed in the local and trade press next week
- The service manager is meeting existing staff employed on this contract on Thursday 12th April 2007.

Appendix A

