



# TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

## THE COUNCIL'S POLICIES ON PEST CONTROL

8<sup>th</sup> April 2003

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# REPORT ON THE PANEL'S SCRUTINY REVIEW ON THE COUNCIL'S POLICIES FOR PEST CONTROL

## 1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OF THE TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL TO THE REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S POLICIES FOR PEST CONTROL



- 1.1 I have pleasure in writing this introduction to this report on pest control in Tameside MBC.
- 1.2 Firstly I wish to place on record the thanks of my panel members to all the officers and members of the public who gave evidence to the panel.
- 1.3 Pests, we all recognise pests, or do we? Is one mans pest another mans pet? Rats, squirrels, pigeons, are all classed as pests, but many people feed squirrels in their gardens and parks, and many people keep rats and pigeons as pets.
- 1.4 Pigeons carry up to forty diseases, some of which can be fatal. I believe we all know that rats carry diseases. Squirrels can do a great deal of damage if they get into houses. They can gnaw through live electricity cables which left undetected can result in house fires.
- 1.5 Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, local authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that their districts are kept, as far as is practicable, free of rodents.
- 1.6 This Act imposes a statutory duty on the occupiers of non-agricultural land to notify the local authority if “substantial numbers” of rodents are living on, or are resorting to the land. Consequently, the Act gives local authorities the power to require landowners and occupiers to control rodent infestations.
- 1.7 There are a number of other Acts and Regulations to which the Council conform, when considering and undertaking its pest control duties. These include:-

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act and Regulations made thereunder;
- The Health and Safety at Work Act and Regulations made thereunder;
- The Public Health Act and Regulations made thereunder;
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990 and Regulations made thereunder;
- The Control of Pesticides Regulations and Regulations made thereunder;
- The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations;
- Protection of Animals Act and The Animal (Cruel Poisons) Act and Regulations made thereunder;
- Food Safety Act and Food Safety (General Food Hygiene) Regulations and Regulations made thereunder.

1.8 In response to the above-mentioned legislative requirements, the Council has an established Pest Control Unit, whose specific strategic aim is:-

“To provide an efficient service for controlling pests and stray dogs in the Borough”

1.9 The Unit fulfils its requirements in this matter by providing a number of services which enable it to accomplish its strategic aim. These services include:-

- Dealing with requests for the control of pests within the Borough;
- Undertaking a sewer-baiting programme, partly financed by United Utilities (Water Company), to control rat infestations within the Borough;
- Providing a comprehensive pest control service to the business sector.

1.10 I hope this report allows you to make a careful judgement on how we must protect our residents.

**Councillor P J Robinson**

**Chair of Technical, Economic and  
Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel**

## **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report, which was approved by the Members of the Technical, Economic and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2003, seeks to examine the Council's policies for the provision of domestic and commercial pest control services and the need for such a service. In dealing with these issues, the Panel have looked at how effectively the Council's policies are being implemented and delivered, and the strategic aims of the service.
- 2.2 The report deals thematically with the scrutiny exercise and conclusions and recommendations relate to the major issues that were discovered by the Scrutiny Panel in the course of the scrutiny exercise. These are supported by the evidence received by the Panel
- 2.3 In preparing this report the Scrutiny Panel met officers responsible for the Council's service, private sector providers and an expert in the technical aspects of pest control. In addition, the Panel received information from the Greater London Authority concerning issues relating to pigeon control, and information from the Pigeon Control Advisory Board.
- 2.4 The Scrutiny Panel found that the Council's Pest Control Service provides good value for money and is highly competitive for the residents of Tameside. Furthermore, the Panel found overwhelming customer satisfaction with the service. However, to remain cost effective, the Pest Control Unit needs to become more competitive, particularly in relation to the commercial business. In the long-term, it is felt that the commercial necessity for this part of the service needs to be assessed in light of the alternative provision that is available.
- 2.5 One of the main issues arising from the review is the effect of the Council's housing stock transfer on the Pest Control Unit's income. The transfer of the housing stock has led to a loss of income to the Unit of approximately 70%. Although agreements were established with New Charter following the transfer, the Council needs to re-establish these links in order to maintain and improve current income levels.
- 2.6 Tameside's Pest Control Operatives are extensively trained and are highly regarded by residential and commercial customers alike. Operatives are trained to the Royal Society of Health standard and they receive ongoing training through the Council's supplier of pest control products, Killgerm. The Panel recognises the high standards maintained by the Pest Control Unit and regards training of operatives as being fundamental for the provision of a quality pest control service.

- 2.7 The Pest Control Unit has taken steps to improve access to the service through the provision of an online booking system. The Panel noted, however, that access to the service, for certain communities in the Borough may be restricted and it referred to the Council's Equalities Policies to see whether any additional action is required.
- 2.8 There is concern over the level of funding and future funding arrangements for the sewer-baiting programme from United Utilities. As sewer-baiting is crucial for preventing potential rodent problems, it is important that the Council works in partnership with United Utilities to determine the strategic future of the service.
- 2.9 The persistent feeding of pigeons by the public is regarded as a boroughwide problem and one, which has the potential to cause health problems. The Panel noted that current methods of pigeon control are limited and successful only in the short term. In order to reduce numbers in the long term, steps are required to persuade members of the public from not feeding the pigeons, such as an educational publicity drive or in more extreme cases, legal action against persistent offenders.

### **3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL**

Councillor P Robinson (Chair), Councillor Wardle (Deputy Chair), Councillors Doubleday, Downs, Meredith, S Quinn, Roberts and Smith.

### **4. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SCRUTINY REVIEW ON THE COUNCIL'S POLICIES FOR PEST CONTROL**

The following Terms of Reference were approved by the Panel at its meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2002:-

**“To Review the Council's Policies for the provision of both commercial and domestic pest control.**

**To consider the need for such provision, its effective implementation and delivery, resources and development.”**

(See Appendix One for details of the Scoping Document).

## **5. METHODOLOGY**

- 5.1 The Panel received a presentation from Mr Robin Monk, the Service Unit Manager for Environmental, Consumer and Bereavement Services on the Council's Pest Control Service. Mr Monk also provided information on access to the service, domestic and commercial charges, sewer-baiting, feral pigeons, squirrels, performance indicators, best value, budget and cost and possible improvements to the service.
- 5.2 Members received information from Mr Peter Fielding, Area Manager for Northern England at Killgerm Chemicals Limited, who discussed the technical aspects of pest control. (See Appendix Two for information on Killgerm Chemicals Limited).
- 5.3 The Panel interviewed Mr Trevor Devlin from Abate Pest Control Services, who discussed pest control methods used by his company. Mr Devlin also provided information on general pest control issues in Tameside. (See Appendix Three for information on Abate Pest Control Services)
- 5.4 The Panel interviewed Mr Jason Littler, the Area Surveyor and Mr Mike Sokol, the Area Manager of Rentokil Pest Control, who presented information relating to pest control methods used by their organisation. (See Appendix Four for information on Rentokil)
- 5.5 The Panel visited the Council's Training Depot on Ash Lane in Droylsden, at which they watched demonstrations in sewer baiting, and inspected the pest control store.
- 5.6 The Panel interviewed the Cabinet Deputy for Environmental Services, Councillor Cath Piddington and the Head of Environmental Services, Mr Geof Kaufman, and received information on:- The strategic and future aims for the Council's Pest Control Service; the delivery of the service; sewer-baiting and pigeon control.
- 5.7 The Panel was interested in receiving information on the steps taken by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to control pigeon numbers in Trafalgar Square, and consequently wrote to the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone on this matter. (See Appendix Five).
- 5.8 The Panel received information from the Pigeon Control Advisory Service.

## **6. REVIEW FINDINGS**

### **6.1 Service Provision by Tameside MBC**

- 6.1.1 Within the Council, the Pest Control Unit is part of the Environmental Operations and Waste Management Division.
- 6.1.2 The work of the Unit is mainly undertaken by four front-line Operatives. These are acknowledged as a few of the only “front-line” employees who still visit people’s premises, with the aim of providing a service, which has usually been requested by the householder. Pest Control Operatives are generally regarded as being good ambassadors for the Council.
- 6.1.3 The operatives use approved pesticides, which have undergone rigorous testing procedures, and are believed to be the least harmful to the environment and humans, regardless of cost.
- 6.1.4 Wherever necessary, the Unit consults with external consultants, in order to identify and examine pests. One of the Council’s main suppliers and consultants is Killgerm Chemicals. Killgerm are a very large organisation, who specialise in the supply of pest control products and have a number of departments which can formulate new products, offer training courses, and identify insects. The Council consults Killgerm on a regular basis.
- 6.1.5 The Pest Control Unit offers morning or afternoon appointments during Monday to Thursday. In periods of peak demand, the Unit works evenings and weekends.
- 6.1.6 Tameside’s Pest Control Unit was the first Council service to take on-line bookings, which enable the customers to specify the time and date they wish the operative to visit.
- 6.1.7 Tameside’s Pest Control services are also offered to the commercial sector with approximately 300 businesses receiving pest control services from the Council. In addition to the duties of the Pest Control Operatives, Environmental Health Officers regularly visit food premises to offer advice on health and safety issues. These visits can often highlight pest control problems, which might be experienced.
- 6.1.8 Budgetary information indicates that as a whole, the costs of the commercial pest control service are met by the income. This however, is a very competitive market and in the long term, the Council’s Pest Control Unit might wish to review the continued provision of commercial services.
- 6.1.9 In terms of the cost of the service in 2001/2002, Tameside had a cost per Head of Population of £0.50, which was one of the lowest in Greater Manchester.



## **CONCLUSION**

**6.1.(C1) The Council's Pest Control Service is acknowledged as being a very professional and successful service and is highly competitive for the residents in the borough, although the commercial service operates in a very competitive market.**

## **6.2 Budget**

6.2.1 The net budget for 2002/03 for the Pest and Sewers and Rodent Control Units is £167,630 and the income required to maintain the service is £117,580 per annum from fees and internal recharges. In addition, there is an income requirement of £23,000 to maintain the sewer baiting activity, (£13,000 from United Utilities, and £10,000 by way of recharges to Engineers).

6.2.2 The cost to the Council of providing a Pest Control Service is dependent on the amount of income the service receives. The incidence of pests tends to be seasonal, therefore any associated income received depends on the occurrence of pests within the Borough (see Appendix 6 for details of Call Out costs).

6.2.3 In 2001/2002, Pest Control and Sewers/Rodent Control had a combined actual expenditure of £308,013 and a total income of £142,313. The Net Cost of the service therefore, for this period was £165,700, which was £32,720 over the estimated net budget.

6.2.4 Overtime payments in 2001/2002 totalled £31,125, representing 95% of the total budget deficit however, this was not work connected with pest or rodent control (see 6.2.5. below).

6.2.5 The Pest Control Operatives are encouraged to be flexible in their approach to work. As a result, they often work weekends performing other duties such as driving the Tamesider vehicle, recycling, clearing void properties, etc. As these overtime and out of hours costs were previously paid out of the pest control budget, this lead to an unbalanced reflection of the true cost of running of the Pest Control Unit.

6.2.6 From April 2002, Operatives' overtime payments have been costed out to the actual Unit for which the work was done. This has meant a realignment of the cost of running the Pest Control Unit.

6.2.7 Costs to the Council are affected by the use of the service. Therefore busy years, offset costs, however, slow years have a detrimental effect on the Council's Pest Control budget.

6.2.8 Since the transfer of the Council's housing stock to New Charter Housing, there has been a reduced call on Tameside's pest control services. Approximately 60-70% of the Pest Control Unit's income has been reduced. As a consequence of this, the number of Pest Control Operatives has been reduced from 8 to 4. The Council however, is making stringent efforts to re-establish its previous customer links.

**CONCLUSION**

**6.2(C1) That the Council's income has been adversely affected by the transfer of its housing stock to New Charter Housing.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**6.2(R1) *That the Council seeks the co-operation of New Charter Housing in the promotion of its pest control services to its tenants.***

**CONCLUSION**

**6.2(C2) The Panel heard that the commercial side of the Pest Control Unit is limited although it realises a small profit.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**6.2(R2) *That the Council considers the future of commercial pest control provided by the Pest Control Unit, with a view to developing its marketing strategy.***

**CONCLUSION**

**6.2(C3) The Panel noted that the Pest Control Service would benefit from partnership working and this will be considered over the next twelve months.**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**6.2(R3) *That the Pest Control Unit considers in detail, forms of partnership which will enable it to extend the Service and therefore create more income.***

## **6.3 Training**

- 6.3.1 The Council's Pest Control Operatives receive comprehensive ongoing training in order that they can deal with all pests, and the Environmental Health Division does not cut corners in safety measures for its Operatives. For example, the best quality filters and facemasks are used in order that the health of the Operatives is not compromised.
- 6.3.2 The Council places great emphasis on the importance of providing training for its Operatives, because the individual Operatives can be prosecuted, as well as the organisation for which they work, if they are proven to be negligent in completing their work.
- 6.3.3 The British Pest Control Association offers diplomas in Pest Control and the Royal Society of Health offers examinations and certificates to NVQ levels 2 and 3.
- 6.3.4 In order to enable pest control companies to keep abreast of the latest developments, the Killgerm Group, offers a range of health and safety training courses for Pest Control Operatives, many available for no extra charge, as well as a series of specialist courses in response to industry demand. For example, Reducing Pesticide Risks, Insect Control and Rodent Control are all courses that are provided free of charge. Killgerm also offers seminars and courses tailor-made to meet individual customer requirements.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.3(C1) All the Council's Pest Control Officers are trained to the standards specified by the Royal Society of Health.**
- 6.3(C2) All the Council's Pest Control Officers receive continual training, together with the back-up support of the Council's Environmental Health Officers.**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.3(R1) *That the Council continues to procure appropriate health and safety training courses, in order to keep its Pest Control Operatives up-to-date with new pest control products, which consequently will continue to offer a quality service for the customers.***

## **6.4 Performance Indicators**

- 6.4.1 Although there are no national performance indicators for the provision of pest control services, the Pest Control Unit uses local performance indicators, mainly response times to call outs, and public feedback to judge their performance.
- 6.4.2 The Unit aims to respond to requests within three working days, however, response times can be misunderstood within the performance indicator figures, because customers are able to request dates and times to suit themselves, which in some cases may be within a few weeks. Consequently, this appears as though the response to a particular call has taken some weeks, when in fact, this date has been chosen by the customer.
- 6.4.3 In 2001/2002, the Pest Control Unit received 4211 requests for the service. Of these requests, 1775 (42%) were responded to on the same day, increasing to 3359 requests (79%) responded to in three days or less.
- 6.4.4 The Unit surveys 10% of all its customers on an ongoing basis. Results show that over 90% of customers are satisfied with the service, 75% of respondents are satisfied with the response time, and 100% of customers said that Pest Control Officers kept to the given appointment time. A Member reported that she had been informed several times by members of the public that “they felt safe” using the Council’s Pest Control Service because of its accountability.
- 6.4.5 A priority service is provided for rats within dwellings and the Unit aims to respond as quickly as possible within the same working day. In cases of rats being reported outside a domestic premise, the unit will respond within one working day.

### **CONCLUSION**

- 6.4(C1) That the booking system of the Pest Control Unit allows customers to specify times and dates which are convenient for themselves, in order to be flexible and accommodating to the customers’ specific needs.**

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.4(R1) *That the Pest Control Unit’s Performance Indicators identify that customers are able to book requests weeks in advance, and that these advance bookings are not recorded as long response times for the Unit.***

## **CONCLUSION**

**6.4(C2) That overall customer satisfaction for the Council's Pest Control Service is very high.**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**6.4(R2) *That the Council continues to monitor customer requirements, and external competition, in order to maintain the customers high levels of satisfaction for its Pest Control Service.***

## **CONCLUSION**

**6.4(C3) The Panel noted that Tameside's Pest Control Service has been placed second against other Greater Manchester authorities in two Benchmarking exercises, which were undertaken as part of the Greater Manchester Pest Control Council Technical Officer Group.**

## **6.5 Charging Policies**

- 6.5.1 The vast majority of domestic call outs relate to rats and mice, which carry diseases that can be passed on to humans through contamination of food and surfaces. Amongst these diseases, the potentially fatal leptospirosis carried by rats is the most serious. As a result, infested areas should be regarded as a source of disease. Consequently, the Council regards such pests as a public health risk and, therefore, provides a free service for their eradication. Other pests, which the Council regard as a public health risk and provide a free service for, include cockroaches and bedbugs.
- 6.5.2 For non-public health pests, such as ants and fleas, the Pest Control Unit charges £30 + VAT, (ie. £35.25) for domestic call-outs. For the treatment of wasps and bees the unit charges £38 + VAT (£44.65), or £19 + VAT (£22.33) for pensioners.
- 6.5.3 The Pest Control Unit offers a trap hire service for squirrels on domestic premises, which is charged at £30 + VAT for 28 days hire, plus £15 for every subsequent visit.
- 6.5.4 The eradication of feral pigeons within domestic premises is subject to quotation but there is a minimum charge of £30 + VAT for daytime visits, or £80 + VAT for evening visits.
- 6.5.5 With regard to commercial requests, the Pest Control Unit provides rodent control treatments for between £70 to £150 + VAT.

- 6.5.6 Rodent Control Contracts are available from £80 based on the size of the premises. The service includes 8 visits per year plus 2 free insect treatments of non-food pests.
- 6.5.7 Insect treatments for commercial premises, which includes treatments for wasps and bees are available for £65 + VAT (£70.50).
- 6.5.8 The treatment of feral pigeons for commercial premises is subject to quotation, but there is a minimum charge of £65 + VAT for daytime visits or £100 + VAT for evening visits.
- 6.5.9 The Pest Control Unit also treat fleas which have been brought into premises by cats and dogs. The fees that are charged include revisits if any fleas return.
- 6.5.10 Payments for the service are made to the visiting Pest Control Operative, either by cash or cheque, prior to the work being undertaken. This avoids the Unit amassing lots of debts for their services, a problem, which has happened in the past.
- 6.5.11 Details are given below of the average costs, charged by small operatives that we obtained following a mystery shopping exercise. They show that Tameside Pest Control gives a very competitive service which is free for major pests such as rats, mice and cockroaches.

(The following costs include VAT).

<b>Pest</b>	<b>Average Charge Small Operatives</b>	<b>Tameside</b>
Rats	£64.48	Free
Mice	£64.48	Free
Bedbugs	£67.27	Free
Cockroaches	£96.35	Free
Ants	£45.65	£35.25
Fleas	£49.64	£35.25
Wasps	£44.06	£44.65

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.5(C1)** The Council's charging policy has proven to be extremely cost effective for its customers. The service provides well trained Operatives, accountable, reliable and efficient pest control services at competitive prices with the treatment of rats and mice, on domestic premises, at no charge.
- 6.5(C2)** The Council is the only organisation, within Tameside, which does not charge for the eradication of rats and mice from domestic premises.

## **6.6 Marketing**

- 6.6.1** The Council does not actively market its Pest Control Unit, however, leaflets are freely available from the Council Offices, and consideration is being given to displaying the information in local libraries. The leaflets offer information on pests and provide advice on how to treat certain pests.
- 6.6.2** As the purpose of the Operative is to eradicate a particular problem, following a request, the feedback from the customers is that the service is very professional, cost-effective and well received. The Operatives, spend time with the customers offering advice during their visits, and any potential follow-up work which may be required, as a direct result of the initial visit, is free of charge.
- 6.6.3** The Council's Pest Control Unit advertises its services on the Council's website.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 6.6(C1)** That the Pest Control Unit could increase its active advertising measures, which could prove beneficial in bringing added income into the Unit.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.6(R1)** *That the Pest Control Unit develops a marketing policy for its services.*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.6 (R2)** *That the Pest Control Unit considers undertaking a more rigorous marketing policy for its pest control services, by advertising for example, in the Yellow Pages, libraries, customer service centres, leisure centres, electronic notice boards, etc.*
- 6.6(R3)** *That in view of the extensive private and commercial provision of pest control services in competition with the Council's own service, the Pest Control Unit should either consider the benefits of a fully private service or the marketing of its services more proactively.*

## **6.7 Access to the Service**

- 6.7.1** The Council's Pest Control Service is available to all residents and businesses in the borough and feedback from customers indicates that the service is easy to access. It is important however, that all sections of the community are able to easily access and understand the services available from the Council.

## **CONCLUSION**

- 6.7(C1)** **The Panel considers it important that the Pest Control Service is able to demonstrate its accessibility to all residents in the Borough.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.7(R1)** *That the Service Unit Manager for Environmental, Consumer and Bereavement Services ensures that the Pest Control Service fully operates within the Guidelines of the Council's policies for equality and diversity.*
- 6.7(R2)** *That equality and diversity training be given to Pest Control Operatives.*

## **6.8 Sewer Baiting**

- 6.8.1** The Sewer Baiting programme is financed by three sectors: The Council's Environmental Health Division contributes 50% towards the cost, the Council's Engineering Division contributes 25% towards the cost and United Utilities contributes 25% towards the cost.



- 6.8.2 Funding received from United Utilities amounts to approximately £13,000 per annum, however, there is some concern regarding their future funding contributions, as this figure has only been agreed until March 2003.
- 6.8.3 If this funding is withdrawn, the Council has no legal responsibility for the eradication of rats in sewers, as the sewers are the property of United Utilities. However, this problem could pose a potential public health risk for the residents of the Borough and it would be the statutory responsibility of the Council if this matter was not kept under control and rats caused a nuisance on the surface.
- 6.8.4 In addition, United Utilities are legally responsible for the maintenance of its sewers. Therefore, if there are breakages in the sewage pipes, these are not the responsibility of the Council. Unfortunately however, it is acknowledged that the Council could be adversely affected by the damage, as rats could surface onto the Council land, which would then become the responsibility of the local authority.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.8(C1) Tameside does not employ a rolling programme of baiting all sewers, but targets areas of greatest need. This will be reinforced by the use of a Geographical Information System, which will come on-line in 2003/2004.**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.8(R1) *That consideration be given to alternative methods of rodent control in sewers and a report be presented to the Cabinet Deputy.***

## **CONCLUSION**

- 6.8(C2) That during the course of sewer baiting activities, any broken drains are reported to United Utilities.**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.8(R2) *That consideration be given to the provision of a comprehensive maintenance programme, which will ascertain problems with sewer pipes, to avoid a rodent infestation.***

## **CONCLUSION**

**6.8(C3) Potential health problems could be identified if funding is withdrawn by United Utilities, therefore, consideration needs to be given to new practical working methods, to avoid potential rodent issues arising in the borough.**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**6.8(R3) *That the Pest Control Unit works in Partnership with United Utilities to determine the strategic future of the service and future funding arrangements.***

## **6.9 Feral Pigeons**

6.9.1 One of the main pests associated with the borough, are feral pigeons. Unfortunately, members of the public often encourage their presence by persistently feeding them, which exacerbates the problem.

6.9.2 There are a variety of ways to eradicate pigeons including shooting, poison and narcotics, and trapping.

6.9.3 The Council has previously used narcotics to induce stupor so that the birds can be easily caught and killed. However, this method of baiting has been proven ineffective since the operatives found it impossible to kill all the stupefied birds, thus leaving many birds to be found by members of the public. In addition, the Council's licence for such baiting has lapsed and the method is therefore no longer in use.

6.9.4 The Pest Control Unit has found that the use of live traps for baiting is the most effective and efficient means of reducing pigeons.

6.9.5 There is a lot of public sympathy for pigeons, even though they are considered a health hazard and many people have strongly objected to their trapping and culling. This has resulted in the Pest Control Unit, looking to use unobtrusive culling methods, which are not seen by the members of the public.

## **CONCLUSION**

**6.9(C1) That the persistent feeding of pigeons is regarded as a boroughwide problem, which has the potential to cause health hazards.**

## **CONCLUSION**

- 6.9(C2)** That the public isn't fully aware of the problems and diseases associated with pigeons.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.9(R1)** *That the Pest Control Unit undertakes an educational publicity drive, explaining the health hazards associated with pigeons, in a bid to alleviate persistent pigeon feeders, and emphasising that the Council will take action against offenders.*
- 6.9(R2)** *That the Pest Control Unit considers the use of falconry as a method of reducing pigeons.*

## **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.9(C3)** That Local Authorities have a general power contained within Section 24 of the Public Health Act 1961, to take any steps for the purpose of abating or mitigating any nuisance, annoyance or damage caused by the congregation of pigeons in any built up area.
- 6.9(C4)** That the Panel notes, Section 79(e) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, provides that "any accumulation or deposit of pigeon droppings, which is prejudicial to health or a nuisance" constitutes a statutory nuisance.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.9(R2)** *That the Council adopts a protocol detailing how action will be taken for offenders, together with a standard letter, to ensure consistency in the process.*
- 6.9(R3)** *That the Pest Control Unit places bigger signs in more visible places warning members of the public not to feed the pigeons, and that any people caught feeding the pigeons, could be prosecuted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.*

## **CONCLUSION**

- 6.9(C.5)** That the current method of pigeon trapping, while effective at reducing the pigeon population in the short term, has proven ineffective at controlling numbers in the long term.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**6.9(R4)** *That the Pest Control Unit investigates alternative and more effective ways of reducing the pigeon population in the Borough in the long term.*

## **6.10 Pest Control Products**

6.10.1 It is important that all pest control products are correctly applied, to avoid contraindications. The testing period for all products takes approximately ten years, before approval for their safety is allowed. The pest control product industry is constantly moving towards the production of safer products which, although may be more labour intensive in the short term, are safer in the long term.

6.10.2 Some old pesticides, which have now become obsolete or banned in the UK are still used in other countries. For example, DDT is still used in the third world countries, in order to control mosquitoes.

6.10.3 Strychnine is a product which is now only available from the pharmacist, and is only usually used by Gamekeepers if they can justify its use.

6.10.4 Most manufacturers try to produce antidotes for their products, which can counter any adverse effects of the chemical, if required. For example, rodenticides, which are very commonly used, have an associated antidote.

## **6.11 Legislation and Health and Safety on the use of Pest Control Products**

6.11.1 With regard to legislative requirements, governing the use of the pesticides, the labels containing the instructions for the administration and disposal of the products, are considered to be legal documents, which must be strictly followed in order to avoid the possibility of litigation.

6.11.2 The Council's Pest Control Operatives, receive regular training in order that they can administer and dispose of pesticides, in accordance with legislative requirements.

- 6.11.3 The safe disposal of pesticides is very important to the residents and the environment. For example, they cannot be disposed of down the drains, as they will affect the sewer and water balance levels. Killgerm does include this aspect within its training programmes.
- 6.11.4 Good practice and the law also require companies to dispose of pest control waste in an approved manner. Killgerm offers a subsidised waste disposal service that will dispose of not only the pesticides, but also the animal waste within the legal requirements.

## **CONCLUSION**

**6.11(C1) Members noted that both Abate and Rentokil Pest Control Services undertake a health and safety assessment prior to completing a treatment, as well as undergoing regular training to remain up to date with developments in the industry. However, the lack of monitoring in the industry means that it is possible that some operators in the commercial sector may be able to undercut the local authority by foregoing high standards for low charges thereby putting peoples' health at risk.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.11(R1) *That when producing advertising literature on its Pest Control Service, the Council highlights that all Operatives have appropriate qualifications, and comply with health and safety regulations.***
- 6.11(R2) *That the Pest Control Unit reviews its health and safety policies for its Pest Control Operatives.***

## **6.12 Pest Control Issues in Tameside**

- 6.12.1 The Service Unit Manager for Environmental, Consumer and Bereavement Services confirmed that there is an association between fast food outlets and rodent and pigeon activity, due to greater incidences of food debris being left in public places. This is exacerbated by instances of broken sewer pipes in town centres, which enables rats to access the surface.

## **CONCLUSION**

**6.12(C1) That the problems associated with rats in the Borough are often caused by broken drainage pipes and the increased number of fast food outlets in the town centres.**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

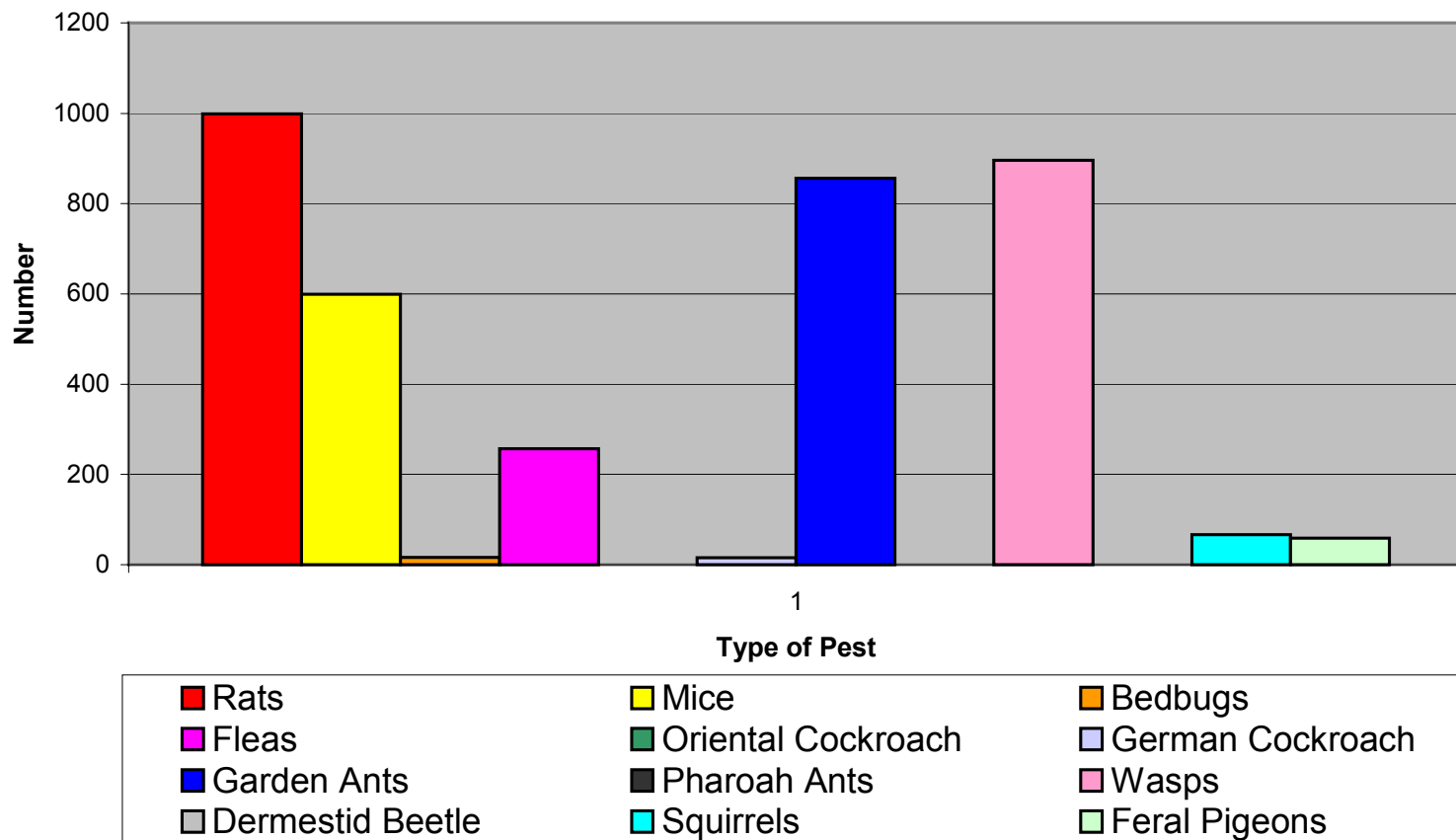
**6.12(R1) *That the Council liaise with commercial property owners/leaseholders to assist with public education and possibly with a litter reduction strategy.***

6.12.2 The following four pages display coloured charts detailing information on:-

- (i) The number of confirmed infestations in the Borough in 2001;
- (ii) The number of confirmed infestations in the Borough in 2002;
- (iii) The number of confirmed domestic infestations in the Borough in 2001;
- (iv) The number of confirmed infestations in the Borough in 2002.

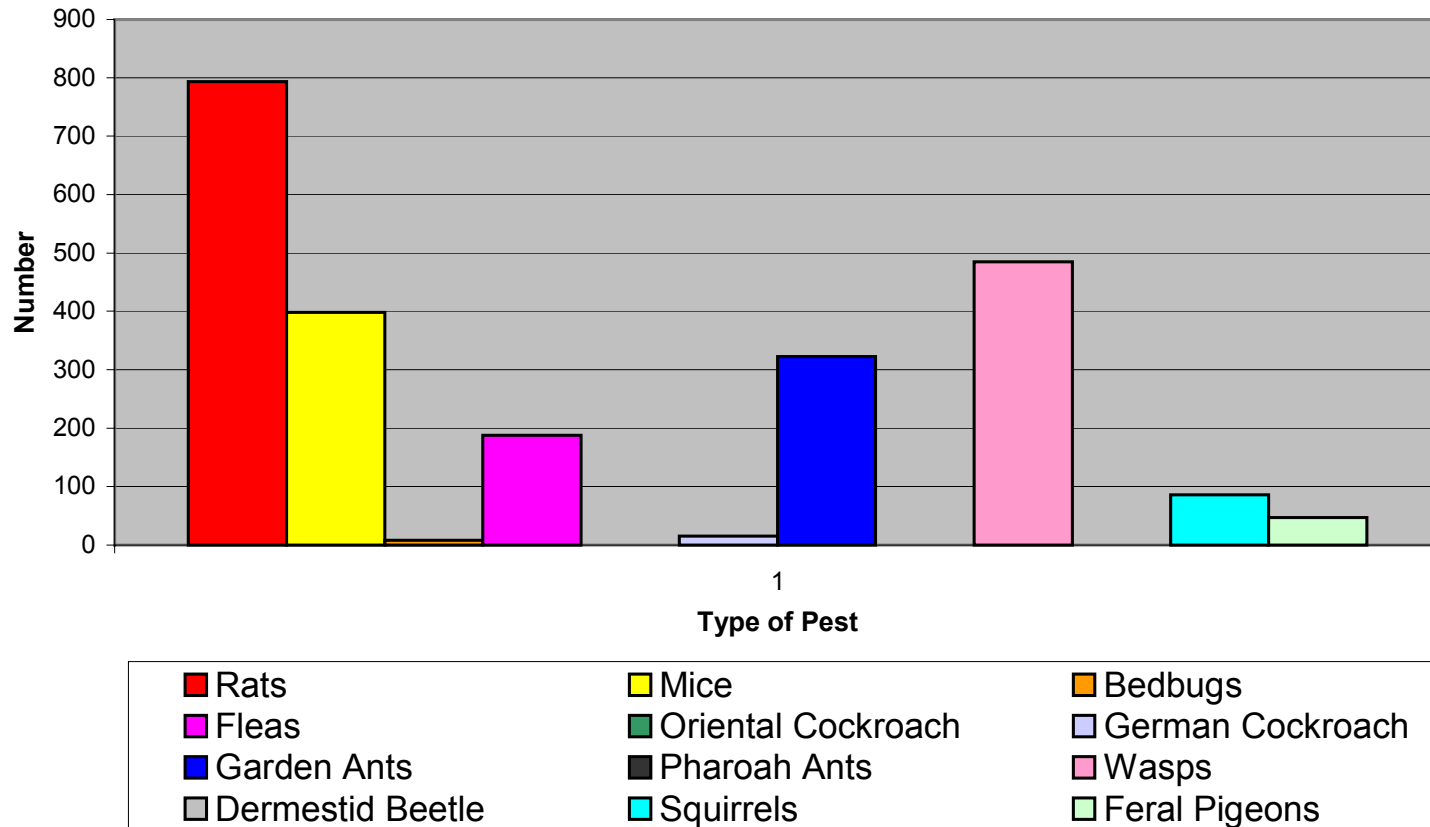
6.12.2 The following chart details the number of confirmed infestations in the Borough in 2001:

**Number of Confirmed Infestations in the Borough in 2001**



6.12.3 The following chart details the number of confirmed infestations in the Borough in 2002:

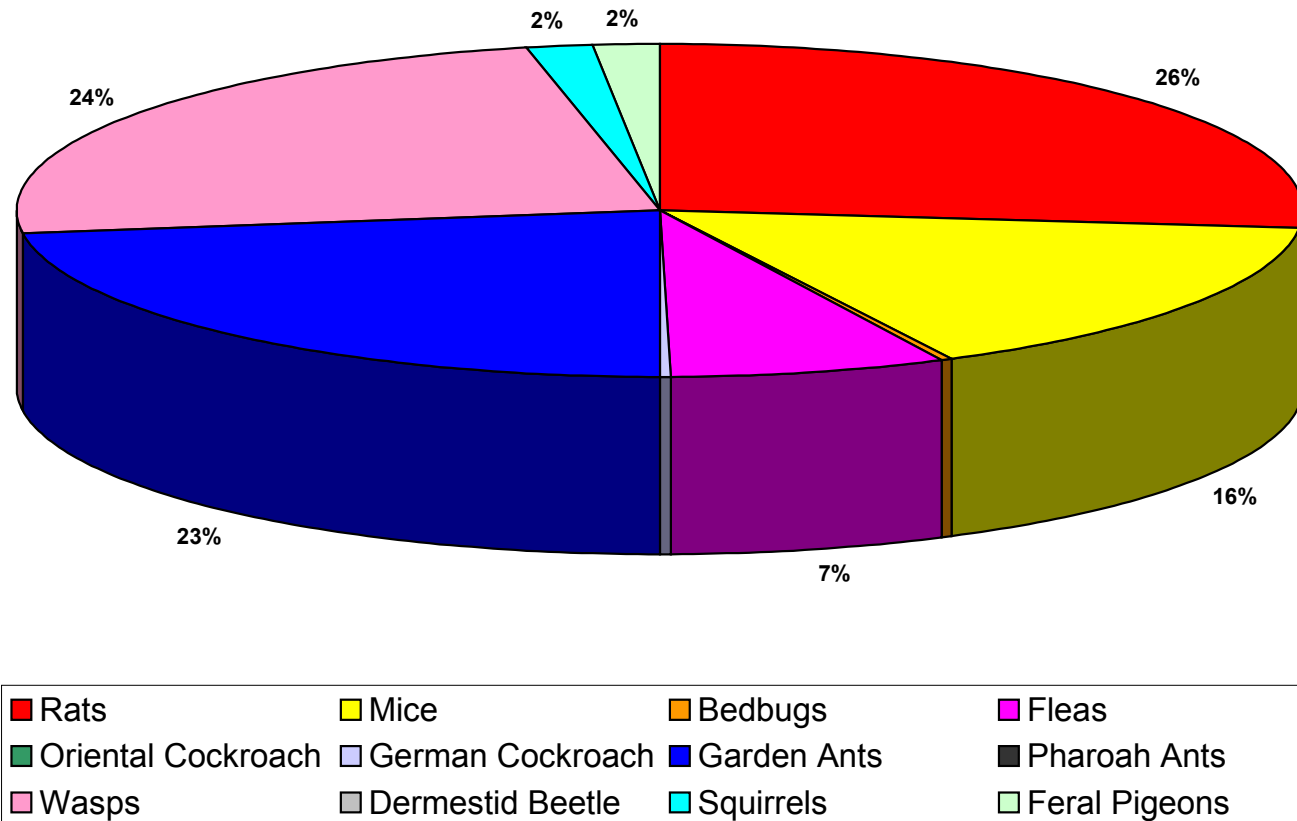
**Number of Confirmed Infestations in the Borough in 2002**





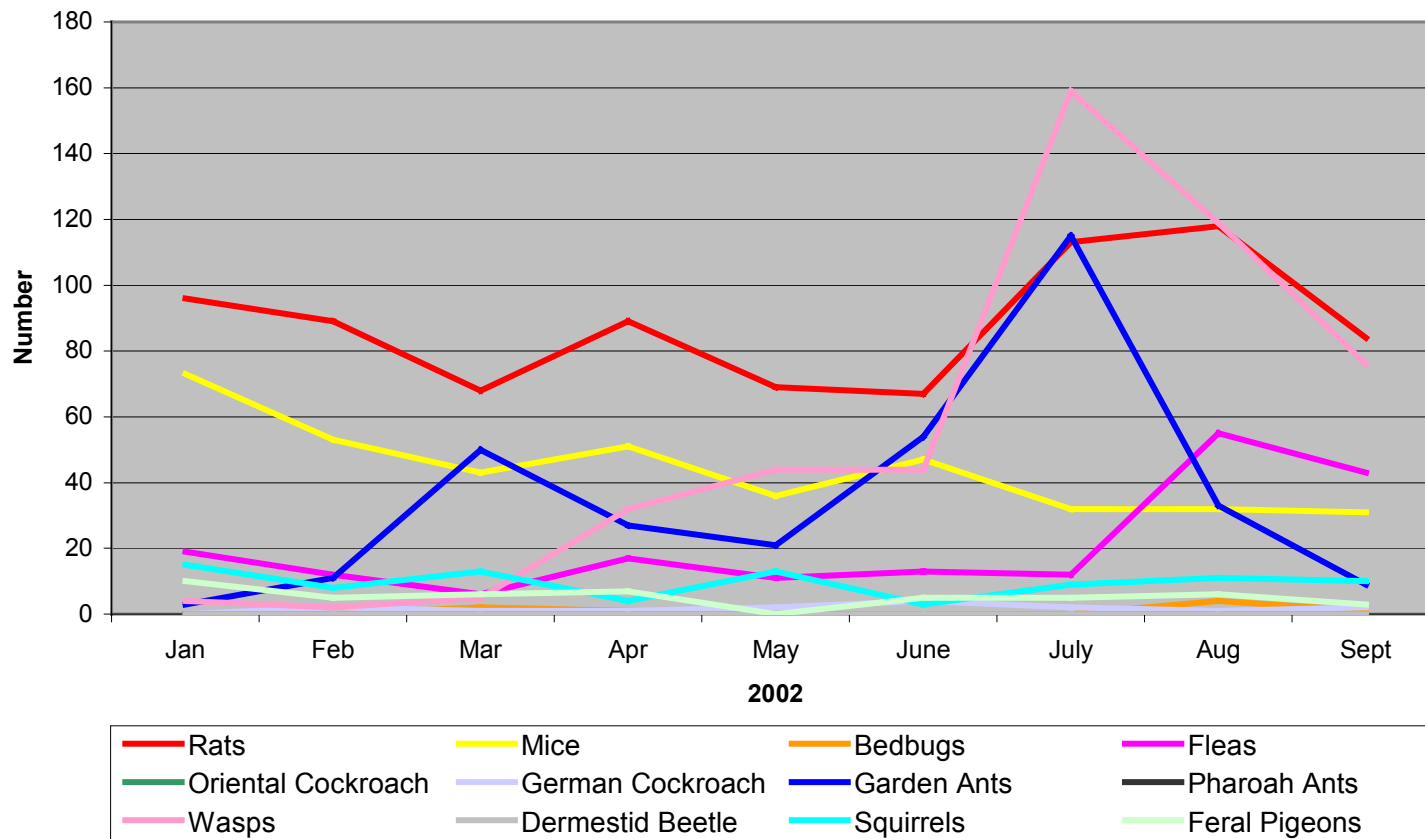
6.12.4 The following chart details the number of confirmed domestic infestations in the Borough in 2001:

**Number of Confirmed Domestic Infestations in the Borough in 2001**



6.12.5 The following chart details the number of confirmed infestations in the Borough in 2002:

**Number of Confirmed Infestations in the Borough in 2002**



## **6.13 Best Value**

- 6.13.1 The Environmental Services Division is currently undertaking a Best Value review exercise, which includes the Pest Control Unit.
- 6.13.2 The Pest Control Unit has achieved CharterMark Status for its pest control services.
- 6.13.3 The Council's free service for the treatment of rodents is highly competitive compared to commercial providers. However, small operatives in the Borough are able to undercut the Council on other services such as the treatment of wasps and ants.

## **6.14 Continual Improvement**

- 6.14.1 As a result of reduced income due to changes in New Charter Housing policies, the Unit has reduced its staff numbers to four, in order that it remains cost effective.
- 6.14.2 Consequently, the Unit is also seeking to secure commercial contracts, in order to raise additional income.
- 6.14.3 Within the Department's Business Plan for 2002/2003, the Pest Control Unit's Performance Action Plan, for this period states its aim is to complete all pest control visits within agreed timescales. These improvements are to be measured by improved levels of customer satisfaction.

## **7. OBSERVATIONS OF THE BOROUGH TREASURER, BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

### **7.1 Borough Treasurer**

Budget for 2002/2003:-

	Exp £	Income £	Net £
Pest Control	234,040	-117,580	116,460
Sewers and Rodent Control	74,170	-23,000	51,170
	<u>308,210</u>	<u>-140,580</u>	<u>167,630</u>

At the last monitoring point (week 34), Pest Control was projected to exceed budget by £15,000, and Sewers and Rodent Control by £5,000 this year. These deficits will need to be managed within the overall Environmental Health budget, and on an ongoing basis, marketing Pest Control services to maximise income and the control of costs are aspects that the Units must address.

The Pest Control function is a trading activity and subject to monitoring of charge comparisons and market potential on an ongoing basis.

The services provided commercially need to be reviewed to establish if they are competitive with external providers and if they break-even in their own right. If the full costs of this commercial service are not covered by income on a continuing basis, they should be reviewed to establish if they can be reduced or income increased, (comparison with external providers should provide knowledge of ability to increase charges). If the commercial service cannot breakeven in its own right it should be left to others to provide. Similarly, the timing of charges made should be reviewed to ensure that the Council's cash flow is optimised.

## **7.2 Borough Solicitor**

The observations of the Borough Solicitor have been incorporated within this report.

## **7.3 Head of Environmental Services**

The observations of the Head of Environmental Services have been incorporated within this report.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1** *That the Council seeks the co-operation of New Charter Housing in the promotion of its pest control services to tenants.*
- 8.2** *That the Council considers the future of commercial pest control provided by the Pest Control Unit, with a view to developing its marketing strategy.*
- 8.3** *That the Pest Control Unit considers in detail, forms of partnership which will enable it to extend the Service and therefore create more income;*
- 8.4** *That the Council continues to use the health and safety training courses offered by Killgerm, in order to keep its Pest Control Operatives up-to-date with new pest control products, which consequently will continue to offer a quality service for the customers;*

- 8.5** *That the Pest Control Unit's Performance Indicators identify that customers are able to book requests weeks in advance, and that these advance bookings are not recorded as long response times for the Unit;*
- 8.6** *That the Council continues to monitor customer requirements, and external competition, in order to maintain the customers high levels of satisfaction for its Pest Control Service;*
- 8.7** *That the Pest Control Unit develops a marketing policy for its services.*
- 8.8** *That the Pest Control Unit considers undertaking a more rigorous marketing policy for its pest control services, by advertising for example, in the Yellow Pages, libraries, customer service centres, leisure centres, etc;*
- 8.9** *That in view of the extensive private and commercial provision of pest control services in competition with the Council's own service, the Pest Control Unit should consider the benefits of a fully private service or the marketing of its services more proactively;*
- 8.10** *That the Service Unit Manager for Environmental, Consumer and Bereavement Services ensures that the Pest Control Service fully operates within the guidelines of the Council's policies for equality and diversity;*
- 8.11** *That equality and diversity training be given to Pest Control Operatives;*
- 8.12** *That consideration be given to alternative methods of rodent control in sewers and a report be presented to the Cabinet Deputy.*
- 8.13** *That consideration be given to the provision of a comprehensive maintenance programme, which will ascertain problems with sewer pipes, to avoid a rodent infestation;*
- 8.14** *That the Pest Control Unit works in Partnership with United Utilities to determine the strategic future of the service and future funding arrangements;*
- 8.15** *That the Pest Control Unit undertakes an educational publicity drive, explaining the health hazards associated with pigeons, in a bid to alleviate persistent pigeon feeders, and emphasising that the Council will take action against offenders;*

- 8.16** *That the Pest Control Unit considers the use of falconry as a method of reducing pigeons.*
- 8.17** *That the Council adopts a protocol detailing how action will be taken for offenders, together with a standard letter, to ensure consistency in the process;*
- 8.18** *That the Pest Control Unit places bigger signs in more visible locations warning members of the public not to feed the pigeons, and that any people caught feeding the pigeons, could be prosecuted under the Environmental Protection Act 1990;*
- 8.19** *That the Pest Control Unit investigates alternative and more effective ways of reducing the pigeon population in the Borough in the long term;*
- 8.20** *That when producing advertising literature on its Pest Control Service, the Council highlights that all Operatives have appropriate qualifications, and comply with health and safety regulations;*
- 8.21** *That the Pest Control Unit reviews its health and safety policies for its Pest Control Operatives.*
- 8.22** *That the Council liaises with commercial property owners/leaseholders to assist with the public education and possibly with a litter reduction strategy in order to reduce the risk of pest infestations.*

## Appendix One

# TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

## PEST CONTROL REVIEW SCOPE AND PROJECT PLAN

### 1.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

To review the Council's policies for the provision of both domestic and commercial pest control services.

To consider the need for such provision, its effective implementation and delivery, resources and development.

### 2.1 PEOPLE TO SPEAK TO AND WHY

Service Unit Manager , Robin Monk -

*To discuss the Council's policies, budget, business plan and performance indicators.*

Pest Control Operatives -

*To discuss pest control operations.*

Experts in the field -

*To discuss the technical aspects of pest control.*

Borough Environmental Health Officer, Geof Kaufman

Pigeon Control Advisory Service (PICAS) –

*To discuss non-lethal forms of pigeon control.*

External companies – commercial providers

*To enable the Panel to challenge the Council's provision of the service.*

Cabinet Deputy, Cllr. Catherine Piddington -

*To discuss the Council's policies.*

### **3.1 INFORMATION**

Best Value reviews (both the draft Tameside report and other authorities')  
Policies and protocols  
Business Plan  
Budget  
Number of requests received  
Response times  
Charter Mark evidence  
Service Standard booklet

### **4.1 SITE VISITS**

Shadow a Pest Control Operative

To see how the operatives work and the range of work they undertake on a daily basis; to talk to customers.

Areas where pigeon control schemes are in place

To monitor the success of the schemes and see how they could be implemented elsewhere in the Borough.

London (part of another trip)

To see how London has successfully implemented pigeon control schemes.

Other authorities

Visit other authorities that have been successful in controlling pests – to see how these could be implemented in Tameside; visit other authorities that no longer offer a pest control service – to see the implications of alternative means of service delivery.

### **5.1 CONSULTATION**

Contact the Mayor of London on the Greater London Authority's policy to control pigeons  
Damage caused by pests and the health implications



## Appendix Two

### **KILLGERM CHEMICALS LIMITED - AREA MANAGER FOR NORTHERN ENGLAND, MR PETER FIELDING**

#### **Background information relating to Killgerm Group**

The Killgerm Group is the largest supplier of pest control products in Europe and comprises five main subsidiary companies, which are located in five European countries.

The Group specialises in the formulation and distribution of public health pest control products, including insecticides, rodenticides, application equipment and protective clothing.

In the UK, there are seven regional centres, which support customers by offering backup assistance and technical help.

There are a number of training courses offered, including training for Food Inspectors who visit food establishments.

The products, supplied by Killgerm, are used by people and organisations who are involved in public health control for example, Local Authorities, the food industries and private contractors.

Killgerm does not produce or market herbicides for gardening or agricultural industries.

All the products supplied by Killgerm undergo rigorous government controls and must be approved by the Health and Safety Executive. Once a product is approved, it will be given an approval number and accompanying documentation proving its authenticity.

The company is a member of the British Pest Control Association (BPCA) and holds an ISO 9002 accreditation. It is currently working towards ISO14001 environmental standards.

Approximately 4,500 insects are sent to Killgerm every year for identification, as there is an increase of pests coming into the UK from abroad.

The black rat, which was responsible for the black plague, has been mostly eradicated, but can still be found in Africa or Asia and is known as the tree rat. They are sometimes brought into this country, aboard ships.

One of the main problems regarding pest control in the public sector is the lack of funding available. The water companies in particular, do not wish to invest funding into this area.

New York, USA, agreed to cease all Pest Control work a few years ago, and as a result there were problems of rat infestation in buildings, and injuries by rats on babies. The rats were also causing fires by biting through cables.

The health industry is currently funding a World Health Organisation Report on Rodent and Insect Control and their effects on people, which will take three years to complete.

In this country, the law states that local authorities must keep their land free from vermin.

Killgerm are sensitive to the considerations of Animal Liberation Groups and aim to offer discreet and humane methods of pest control.

## **Appendix Three**

### **Abate Pest Control Services – Proprietor Mr Trevor Devlin**

#### **Background information relating to Abate Pest Control Services**

Abate Pest Control Services has been in existence for approximately 14 months, and is a small independent company based in Mossley.

The proprietor, Mr T Devlin, has worked within the pest control service for 12 years, ten of which were with Tameside Council.

Abate provides services around Glossop, Stockport, Tameside, Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire and South Derbyshire.

Abate specialises in the provision of domestic pest control services although commercial work is also undertaken.

Mr Devlin, provides a response time of approximately 30 minutes when a request for service is received, and offers treatments for rats, mice, moles squirrels, ants, fleas, wasps, bees, cockroaches and all other types of insects.

Abate Pest Control Services has a very competitive charging policy, however, it does charge for controlling rats on domestic premises, in comparison to the Council, which does not charge for this service on domestic premises.

All treatments are undertaken in accordance with health and safety legislation, and all methods of disposing with carcasses are done in accordance with recommendations from the Ministry of Agriculture.

## Appendix Four

### **Rentokil Pest Control Services – Mr Mike Sokol (Branch Manager) and Mr Jason Littler (Area Surveyor)**

#### **Background information relating to Rentokil Pest Control Services**

Rentokil Pest Control is a division of Rentokil-Initial plc and is the UK's leading pest control company specialising in the provision of domestic and commercial pest control services.

Rentokil operates from 32 branches nationwide and their aim is "to eliminate or reduce the number of pests to that they are no longer a problem and then to prevent a recurrence of these pests."

Rentokil Pest Control holds ISO9002 accreditation, and the company claims that its Pest Control Technicians are trained to the highest professional standards. Service Technicians receive in-service training on new techniques and solutions as well as being monitored by programmed supervision and quality audits.

Rentokil places special emphasis on health and safety and the protection of the environment in all its work.

Rentokil's Research and Development team aims to develop more effective methods of pest control and, in keeping with the company's emphasis on environmental protection, to produce treatments that are more environmentally responsible. Developments include techniques that can eliminate the use of toxic chemicals and the risk of contamination from pesticide residues.

As part of the Company's environmental protection policy, Rentokil has been instrumental in reducing insecticide usage. Rentokil now follows an inspection and treatment only where necessary strategy. In addition, there has been a move away from the use of conventional insecticidal sprays to the use of baits, for example, "Chlorpyrifos Paste", a new bait used for cockroach control.

Rentokil Pest Control is able to offer customers advice on practical pest prevention measures. Where infestations do occur, Rentokil offers a complete range of treatments to control pests such as insects, birds and rodents.

A pest prevention service for commercial customers is provided which is normally carried out over eight visits a year for specified pests. As part of the visit a pest control technician will carry out an inspection of the site and apply treatments where necessary.

Rentokil provides a fumigation service to kill a range of pests. This involves the process of applying a fumigant gas into a sealed airtight container killing 99.9% of pests within. Rentokil uses a variety of different gases and methods in its work, including the fumigation bubble, stack fumigation and controlled atmosphere technology. In addition, Rentokil provides a pest proofing service.

## **Appendix Five**

### **Details of Response from Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone**

The Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone was concerned that the number of pigeons in the square was in conflict with the plans to regenerate the area and made the decision to withdraw the licence for the sale of pigeon feed in Trafalgar Square.

In view of the amount of publicity caused by withdrawing the licence, the mayor commissioned a report by an independent expert for bird ecology considering the views of animal welfare groups and members of the public.

The report found that the main attraction to feral pigeons in Trafalgar Square is the presence of large quantities of food and that a reduction in food would lead to a reduction in the number of birds in the Square.

As a result of the report, the Mayor's original decision to withdraw the licence was upheld. However, in order to ensure that there was no possibility of the pigeons starving, a phased reduction in the supply of food in the square was implemented.

In addition to the withdrawal of the licence, the Greater London Authority (GLA) has also placed signs requesting members of the public not to feed the pigeons. Despite these measures, pigeon numbers remain high as a small number of activists continue to drop large quantities of feed in the square for the pigeons.

As a result, the GLA has trailed a number of other approaches including placing pigeon deterrent measures on statues, using klaxons to scare the birds while the feed in the square is cleared and the use of a hawk to deter the pigeons from gathering.

The above are recent initiatives and therefore the effects are still being monitored. However, the GLA have received the advice that as long as activists continue to drop large quantities of feed, the pigeons will continue to congregate. Currently the GLA is seeking a byelaw to prohibit the feeding of pigeons in Trafalgar Square.

The information received from the GLA shows that the main problem associated with high pigeon numbers is the persistent feeding of the birds by members of the public.

## Appendix Six

### Cost to the Council per visit per Pest

<b>Pest</b>	<b>Cost per visit</b>	<b>Charge</b>	<b>Number of call-outs 2001</b>	<b>Total Cost of visits 2001</b>	<b>Profit</b>
Rats	£28.00	£0.00	999	£27,972.00	-£27,972.00
Mice	£28.00	£0.00	599	£16,772.00	-£16,772.00
Bedbugs	£28.00	£0.00	16	£448.00	-£448.00
Oriental Cockroach	£28.00	£0.00	0	£0.00	£0.00
German Cockroach	£28.00	£0.00	15	£420.00	-£420.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>1629</b>	<b>£45,612.00</b>	<b>-£45,612.00</b>
<b>Pest</b>	<b>Cost per visit</b>	<b>Charge</b>	<b>Number of call-outs 2001</b>	<b>Total Cost of visits 2001</b>	<b>Profit</b>
Wasps	£28.00	£44.65	896	£25,088.00	£14,918.40
Fleas	£28.00	£35.25	257	£7,196.00	£1,863.25
Garden Ants	£28.00	£35.25	856	£23,968.00	£6,206.00
Pharoah Ants	£28.00	£35.25	0	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>2009</b>	<b>£56,252.00</b>	<b>£22,987.65</b>