

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the Coat of Arms of the Government of Yukon. The crest includes a crown with four maple leaves, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: a diagonal line; top-right: a stag's head; bottom-left: a sailing ship; bottom-right: an eagle), and a banner at the bottom with the motto "A NE FOR A".

## **Agenda Item 6**

### **Re-establishment of Pest Control Services**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Re-establishment of Pest Control Services  
**Meeting:** Emergency Executive  
**Date:** 25 June 2020  
**Submitted By:** Director of Development Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This paper follows the Council meeting on 26 February 2020, and the decision to re-establish a pest control service with provision for a more detailed report to Members to follow.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 The Executive is asked to consider, in light of the impact of the current coronavirus pandemic and consequent budgetary pressures on the Council at this present time, not establishing a pest control service in the current financial year.
- 2.2 Should this approach not be approved, to consider which of the options described in the report should be pursued.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 From 1 April 2019, Falkirk Council ceased the provision of a pest control service. Following this decision, local householders and businesses were signposted to the Council website which offered practical advice in relation to the control of pests, as well as a link to the national Buy with Confidence Scheme for approved and accredited pest control companies.
- 3.2 In previous years, the Council has provided both a free service and a chargeable service. The free service was last provided during 2014/15, which culminated with a total number of 4011 jobs. Most recently, in 2018/19 when the service was chargeable the number of jobs for the year totalled 941.
- 3.3 When the service was previously being provided, the majority of referrals related to wasps, which comprised on average 67% of the completed jobs, with vermin at 22% and treatable insects at 7%, the remaining number of jobs related to providing advice to residents at 4%. Wasp treatments are seasonal and treatment is carried out exclusively through months June – October inclusive.

- 3.4 The Council approved funding of £100,000 for the re-establishment of a pest control service which amount would support approximately 2,000 service requests per year based on the capacity of the resource to be deployed. Based on historical information, the budget would be insufficient to support a completely free service, but is clearly more than enough to cover a fully chargeable service.

#### **4. Charging Proposals**

- 4.1 The potential residential and commercial charges for 2020/21 are detailed below together with three options for a charging regime.

- 4.2 Option 1 – This option applies the full rate of charge to all domestic properties as follows: Wasps: £50.50; Vermin: £57.00; Treatable Insects: £58.00. On a fully chargeable service based on 941 jobs, the budget allocated would result in a net cost of circa £53,000 over a full financial year.

If this service was to commence from 1 September the anticipated number of jobs up to end of March would be up to approximately 550, and would result a net cost of circa £31,000. This is not an option which conforms sufficiently with the Council's Concessions Policy to merit recommendation to Members but is included for reference purposes.

- 4.3 Option 2 - From recent information collected there are approximately 13,851 households in receipt of benefits. Reflecting the terms of the Council's Poverty Strategy, this option considers applying no charge for one treatment of a household where the householder is in receipt of the relevant benefit. For residents not in receipt of such benefits, the full rate of charge would apply. At this time, there is uncertainty in relation to the number of free requests for service that may arise, and this may result in the service not be able to cope with demand.

It is possible that the majority of the service provided would be free of charge per the concessions policy, leaving little scope to provide a service to other households.

If this service were to commence on 1 September there would be capacity to provide a service to 1,100 householders and leave a budget surplus for 2020/21 only.

- 4.4 Option 3 – This proposal would be that, rather than a free service for qualifying households, they would pay half of the option 1 charge. On this basis, the service is more likely to manage service demand than if option 2 were adopted.

If the service was provided at half price it is unclear what the level of service take up would be. At present approximately 20% of households would qualify for the half price concession. The financial and other impacts would sit somewhere between those of option 1 and option 2. This option is not as favourable to those households determined eligible in terms of the Concessions Policy. The reason for departing from a free service as described in option 2 would be better to manage demand.

If this service was to commence from 1 September, it is anticipated that the service could provide up to 1100 jobs and leave a budget surplus for 20/21 only.

- 4.5 The rate of charge to commercial customers is proposed as £63.00 per call out and treatment, with subsequent visits charged at £31.50 plus a minimum charge of £12.50 for materials used. The Council's ability to service these customers is directly linked to the level of uptake/demand from domestic properties. Any income from this provision would depend on this.

## **5. Consultation**

- 5.1 None.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 A sum of £100,000 has been allocated for the provision of a Pest Control Service, which would provide two staff members and vehicles and cover associated costs. The financial implications on the service will be dependant on the agreed charging mechanism and the level of uptake. It will clearly be possible to calculate the relevant impacts following a period of operation.

## **7. Legal**

- 7.1 None.

## **8. Risk**

- 8.1 There may be a disproportionately high uptake of the service at the free or reduced rate (Options 2 & 3) which could result in resource pressures being placed upon the service outstripping our capacity to deliver. This would also take work from existing pest control companies operating within the Falkirk area.
- 8.2 Delivery of the service will be dependent upon the successful recruitment of suitable staff and will be subject to normal recruitment timescales. Staff will only be recruited on a temporary basis, as budget provision is a one off at present. Due to coronavirus, there is currently a restriction on the Council's recruitment processes, which will significantly impact on ability to deliver service during the current financial year. Appointed staff would require to hold nationally recognised qualifications in the handling and administration of pest treatments and this may add to difficulty in identifying suitable candidates – particularly if the appointment is for a period of only 7 months.
- 8.3 It should be noted that the numbers of households receiving benefits, may increase due to the impacts of coronavirus.
- 8.4 Consideration should also be given to the seasonal demands of the pest control service, which culminate during the months of June – October for control of wasps, and account for circa 60% of service demand.

## **9. Equalities**

- 9.1 Following decision by Members, the proposed service will be equality and poverty impact assessed.

## **10. Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 10.1 None.

## **11. Conclusions**

- 11.1 Implementing the decision in relation to re-introduction of a pest control service has been interrupted by the impact of measures taken to suppress coronavirus. There are now challenges associated with this that need to be taken into account in relation to pursuing provision of the service which relate primarily to financial pressures on the Council, practical difficulties particularly around recruitment and the restricted ability to deliver a full service due to the passage of time. All of these factors require to be considered before determining how to proceed.

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