

**Committee:** COMMUNITY

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 24 January 2008

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**Title:** REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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Item for decision

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### Summary

- 1 An annual review of fees and charges is undertaken to keep pace with inflation and keep in step with internal and external influences on the services. Two areas are particularly featured:
  - i) the introduction of a new service to deal with nuisance grey squirrels in properties and
  - ii) the introduction of a nominal charge for rat treatments as recommended in an recent audit report.

### Recommendations

- 2 That Members consider the introduction of a nominal charge for the treatment of rats and set a charge.
- 3 That Members approve the introduction of a service to deal with nuisance grey squirrels in properties at a charge of £54 per hour.
- 4 That the table of revised charges for Environmental Health Division is approved.

### Background Papers

- 5 The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author.
  - a) Audit of Public Health
  - b) Last year's fees and charges

## Impact

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Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	The service contributes to community safety by providing a robust public health service.
Equalities	Discounted charges for 65 year + and those on income based benefit.
Finance	Increased income
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	Enforcement would be required to be taken against those not dealing with rat infestation.
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	Increased workload for Environmental Health Officers.

## Situation

### 7 General Fees and Charges

Table 1 is attached to this report setting out the proposed fees and charges for 2008/9. As much of the work undertaken by this service involves an element of transport costs this is a little above the general rate of inflation to reflect fuel costs. A benchmarking exercise has been undertaken against other Local Authorities and also Local providers on discretionary services to balance with market forces.

### 8 Treatment of Rats

The origins of the service are in the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 which places a duty on the Council to 'take such steps as are necessary to secure as far as practical that their District is kept free from rats and mice'. There is a power to serve a Notice on the occupier or owner of land to take such steps as are specified to keep their land free from rats and mice. A Notice can require treatment and works. The destruction of rodents is primarily a public health measure preventing the spread of diseases but also preventing damage to crops and property.

- 9 In practice rodents, especially rats, roam over a wide area which in residential areas is very likely to be in different ownership, consequently identifying an individual householder as being solely responsible for the infestation will in many cases be problematic.
- 10 Where a free service is provided the treatment can be carried out in the most appropriate location regardless of 'blame' but by giving the highest priority to the placing of poisonous baits in secure positions away from children, pets and non target species. In addition it will be carried out by a professionally qualified pest controller using the poisons approved for the situation and followed up with repeat treatments until the problem has been eradicated. These safeguards cannot be 'guaranteed' if householders carryout their own treatment.
- 11 If a charge was to be levied there will potentially be many disputes over which resident has caused the problem. If no one is prepared to pay the charge the Council will need to service Notices on the occupiers of all the properties that shows signs of rodent activity requiring the householders to carry out an effective rat treatment. This would involve Environmental Health Officers in gaining access to the properties, inspecting the gardens, preparing and serving Notices, and subsequently returning to ensure that the Notices have been complied with within a reasonably time. If Notices have not been complied with it would be necessary to carry out works in default and recover our costs, if necessary through the courts. These additional resource implications need to be weighed against the potential income generated from charging.
- 12 The net cost to the Council of providing a pest control service in 2006/7 was £45,899. The income generated from the treatment of mice, non-domestic property rats, wasps, fleas, bed bugs and other infestations was £30,740.
- 13 Potential Income generated from a rat treatment charge.

No. of initial treatments in 2006	Income at £10 per initial treatment	Income at £20	Income at £30
979	£9790	£19580	£29370
It is inevitable that the number of treatments will decline with the introduction of a charge; as a result the modelled income is unlikely to be achieved.			

14 Summary of Average Charges for rat control across Essex 2007/08

Pest	UDC charge	No. authorities charging for service (out of 15 Essex LA's)	Average Charge	Range of charge
Rats Domestic	Free	4	£29.00	£6.25 - £40

15 Nuisance Grey Squirrels in property

During the preparation of this report it was highlighted by the Pest Control Officers that requests for treating grey squirrels are often received in situations where they are causing severe damage to the fabric of loft spaces and that a chargeable service to catch and dispatch these nuisance squirrels could be introduced. There are a number of practical and training issues to resolve before such a service could be offered but if these can be addressed it is suggested that the charge for the service be based on the hourly rate for pest control work in commercial premises, currently £54.00 per hour. A minimum charge of 1 hour would apply with the estimated average time taken to resolve a problem being 3 hours. A rough estimate is that 10 requests for service per year may be received generating income of between £540 and £1620.

**Risk Analysis**

16 Rat Charging

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating actions</b>
Increased public health risk from decrease in treatment for rats in the district	Rats may become better established.	Rats will seek any food source available	Increase enforcement action against persons who fail to carryout effective treatment.
Adverse public reaction to charge for rat treatment	Reported sightings of rats will be connected with charging	Unfavourable press.	Explain reasons for charging in press.
Increased legal proceedings	No proceedings are being dealt with currently as free treatment is offered.	Increased workload for enforcement officers. Conflict.	High profile enforcement.

Some members of the community may not be able to meet the cost of charge for rat treatment	Low	Enforcement or rats left untreated	Reduced rate where 1 residents in a household are 65 + or on income related benefit.
Neighbour disputes over who should fund the cost of treatment.	Rats roam widely and are not specific to a property.	Rats go untreated.	Enforcement on multiple households that have evidence of rat infestation.
Enforcement notices not complied with	Low	Increased workload for enforcement officers. Conflict.	Works carried out in default and costs recovered, if necessary through courts.
Householders who choose to use DIY rat treatments will not deal with poisons responsibly	Low	Non – target species will be affected.	Cost of rat treatment remains subsidised.
Other charges			
Adverse reaction to increased charges	Low	Unfavourable press	Clear communication of revised charges. Charges set to recover costs incurred.

**Table 1**

<b>FEES &amp; CHARGES</b>	<b>UDC 2007/8 Current fee</b>	<b>Recommended fee for 2008/9</b>
<b>Food &amp; water safety</b>		
Health Certificate for Export	£53.00	£55
Voluntary Surrender Certificate	£42.00	£45
Water Samples (airport)	£9.00	£11
Water Samples (private supply)	Free – statutory duty	Free – statutory duty
Water Samples (private supply, if also have mains)	£26.00 plus £10 invoicing	£27 Plus £12 invoicing
<b>Imported Food Inspection Charges</b>		
Inside Office Hours Non animal products	£1.40 per 1000kg Min charge £32	£1.50 per 1000Kg Minimum charge £35
Outside Office Hours	£2.80 per 1000kg Min charge £64	£3.00 per 1000Kg Minimum charge £70
Organic Produce Certificate office hrs	£47 per certificate	£50 per certificate
Organic Produce Certificate out of hrs	£200 per certificate	£210 per certificate
Border Inspection Post	£155 per consignment subject to Vet Check	£160 per consignment
	New charge for research samples.	£55 per consignment
<b>Animals</b>		
Micro-chipping of pets	£22.00	£23
Micro-chipping Owners aged 65+ or benefits	£17.00	£18
Statutory fee for Stray Dog	£25.00 + £35 for un-chipped dog £25 + £29.40 for chipped dog	£25 Statutory fee + £37 for un-chipped dog £25 Statutory fee + £31 for chipped dog
Kennel fee	£20 for day 1 £10 per extra day	£21 for day 1 £11 per extra day

<b>FEES &amp; CHARGES</b>	<b>UDC 2007/8 Current fee</b>	<b>Recommended fee for 2008/9</b>
<b>LICENCES</b>		
Animal Boarding Est.	£78.00	£100
Dog Breeding Est.	£78.00	£100
Riding Est.	£180.00 + vet fee	£185 + vet fee
Pet Shops	£67.00 + vet fee	£100
Dangerous Wild Animals	£180.00 + vet fee	£185
Zoo Licence	£180.00 every 5 years + Vet fees	£500 every 5 years, includes interim inspections
Ear Piercing & Elect.	£83.00 for premises	£120
<b>TRAINING FEES</b>		
Level 2 Certificate Food Safety Course	£49.00 Per person	£55
Food safety Update Course	£27.00	

<b>FEES &amp; CHARGES</b>	<b>UDC 2007/8 Current fee</b>	<b>Recommended fee for 2008/9</b>
<b>PEST CONTROL</b>		
Rats in domestic premises	No charge	For decision by members.
Mice in domestic premises	£49.00 (£32.00 for 65+ years and income support)	£52 (£35)
Rats & mice in commercial premises	£54.00	£65
Minimum charge/Abortive visit	£27.00	£30
Flies, Fleas, Ants etc	£54.00	£60
Wasps per nest	£49.00	£52
Wasps per nest in commercial premises	£64.50	£70
Wasps (for persons 65+ years and income support)	£32.00	£35
Multiple infestations	£32.00	£35