

COUNCIL – 29 NOVEMBER 2017

AGENDA ITEM 14 (A)

Question from Councillor Altaf Hussain to the Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations

“Data from the British Pest Control Association (BPCA), identified that in 2015-16 Bridgend County Borough Council dealt with more rat problems per head than any other authority in Britain. Last year Bridgend had a 4% reduction in the pest call out levels compared to other Authorities across the UK, which appears to be a step in the right direction. However in recent weeks the number of rats seen across the County Borough appears to be increasing including in my own ward of Pen-y-fai. Although many of these rat sightings are of dead rats, can the Cabinet Member explain what is being done to minimise the rat population across the County Borough and what steps are being taken to ensure that the health and wellbeing of the residents is not adversely impacted by the rat population?”

Response from the Cabinet Member Wellbeing and Future Generations

The opportunity to provide further information regarding the British Pest Control Association’s view that Bridgend County Borough Council dealt with more rat problems per head than any other authority in Britain in the year 2015-2016, is something that I’m sure members are keen to read.

It should be noted that BPCA survey itself recognises limitations in comparing the Pest Control activity of different local authorities. Unlike 92% of authorities in the UK, Bridgend County Borough Council provides a free service for pests of public health significance, including rats. It is well documented that the introduction of pest control charges by a local authority reduces the number of treatments undertaken by the Council. The figures produced by the BPCA are therefore likely to be a reflection of the pricing policy that Bridgend Council operates rather than a true comparison of the scale of rat problems in UK local Authorities.

It should also be noted that a significant number of UK local Authorities no longer provide any Pest Control Services and thus the BPCA survey does not include any information from those areas or from private Pest Control companies.

In light of this, and the fact that the BPCA have stated that their figures were incomplete, to describe Bridgend as having a particular problem is hugely unfair. The British Pest Control Association’s view highlights both the sterling work that Bridgend County Borough Council are doing in relation to dealing with pests, as well as the fact that unlike most other local authorities, Bridgend County Borough Council still offers a free service which residents are engaging with. Retaining this free service, amongst the background of financial cuts, is a positive step which prevents the health and wellbeing of the residents being adversely impacted by the rat population.

All of the pest related calls received relating to residential dwellings are referred to Mitie Pest Control, who are the Council’s contracted service provider. During comparable periods in the last 4 years the number of pest related calls have remained at a consistent level, so I cannot comment on what other local authorities have done to increase their call out rate, but our figures show residents are still engaging with our service at the same rate they were in 2015-16.

In relation to the Pest Control treatment service, the contractor liaises with officers within the Shared Regulatory Service to highlight areas of concern. Officers will then investigate issues whether there may be a problem with disrepair to a property allowing entry to rats or also if there are accumulations of refuse which are providing a food source. Officers have the powers to serve notice, and prosecute for non-compliance or carry out work in default the costs of which are then recharged to the notice recipient who may be either the owner or occupier of the property.

In relation to call, all calls concerns and complaints are logged directly by our call centre, which has resulted in officers taking both informal and formal action requiring persons to arrange for the removal and proper disposal of refuse which removes food sources for rats, so helping to control the population.

Bridgend County Borough Council also manages the Sewer Baiting Contract on behalf of Welsh Water, and officers of Shared Regulatory Services can direct sewer baiting to be carried out in specific areas where reports or calls have been received of increased rodent activity. This again highlighting the positive steps that Bridgend County Borough Council have been taking and the high regard that other organisations have for the Pest Control Service.

We are proud to be one of the few councils still providing this service free of charge, and will continue to respond promptly to all calls relating to pest control.