

# Swindon Borough Council Diversity Impact Assessment

## Future of Pest Control Services 2014

### 1 What's it about?

Refer to equality duties

*What is the proposal? What outcomes/benefits are you hoping to achieve?*

It is proposed to stop the council's current 'In-House' pest control service from April 2015. The reasons for doing this are set out in some detail in the Cabinet Member Decision Note due to be considered in late December 2014. These are primarily:

- Reduced demand for the service.
- Recognition of the reasons why less Swindon people need council run pest control services
- A corresponding reduction of fee income which has increased the net cost of providing the service in Swindon beyond budget.
- The urgent need to invest in the service if it were to continue in a sustainable form.
- Severe cost pressures within the council.
- The need to focus the limited resources within the Public Protection team on necessary enforcement and on other areas of assistance where there is no alternative market provision.

Some other neighbouring council's have already stopped providing pest control services in the interest of efficiency and savings.

*Who's it for?*

The council's pest control service is currently available to all Swindon residents and businesses. Although the council has a limited number of commercial contracts with businesses who require proactive pest control, the service is primarily responsive and carries out treatments on request. There is no evidence to indicate that the service is used more by any one particular group.

*What are the barriers to meeting this potential?*

Cost pressures, and specifically the increasing net cost of providing the service due to reducing fee income, are now severely affecting the councils ability to provide an effective and sustainable 'In-House' Pest Control Service.

If the current service is stopped the council will need to monitor availability of commercial pest control services in its area to ensure that this remains sufficient in terms of both capacity and suitability. Sufficient budget will be retained to ensure that we can continue to fund 'concessionary' and 'public interest' treatments for those residents needing help.

### 2 Who's using it?

Refer to equality groups

*What data/evidence do you have about who is or could be affected (e.g. equality monitoring, customer feedback, current service use, national/regional/local trends)?*

There has historically been no formal monitoring of users of the service. However there is no indication that the service is used more, or in a different way, by any particular group(s).

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Pest can be associated with poor housing conditions and some pests, such as rats are more common in older areas of the borough where factors like badly maintained sewers, can increase their prevalence. It is recognised that representation of some ethnic or age groups in town centre neighbourhoods may be above average, but this is not believed to require consideration in its own right, or any corresponding adjustments necessary in respect of this proposal.

The important consideration is for the council to continue providing concessionary treatments / discounts to ALL those households facing recognised financial disadvantage. This will not change from current arrangements.

Please see the Cabinet Member Decision Note (CMDN) for further information about use of the service and its reduction in recent years with the increase of commercial pest control services in Swindon.

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*How can you involve your customers in developing the proposal?*

Customers have not been consulted on this proposal, but it is recognised that if we were to do so they would likely object to the ending of the service. However only a limited number of Swindon people use the council's pest control service and it is likely that this majority would be less concerned.

The council is facing many hard choices in the view of growing budget pressures. The recommendation to stop the council's pest control service has been discussed in principle with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection who is in broad agreement given the pressures faced by the service.

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*Who is missing? Do you need to fill any gaps in your data? (pause DIA if necessary)*

In making this decision it would of course be helpful to have better information on the users of the service. However, it is not considered justified to retrospectively source this data or to delay any decision at this stage.

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### **3 Impact**

*Refer to dimensions of equality and equality groups*

Show consideration of: age, disability, sex, transgender, marriage/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation and if appropriate: financial economic status, homelessness, political view

Using the information in parts 1 & 2:

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*How will this proposal meet the equality duties?*

This proposal is not believed to affect the councils over-arching equalities duties provided the necessary safeguards are put in place to ensure the current levels of support and assistance regarding pest control needs are maintained under the new arrangements.

The Public Protection team will continue to address pest control problems where these are a threat to public health, safety or local amenity. Where problems are on public land or there is an urgent need for treatments in the interest of public safety, the council will continue itself to commission

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and pay for necessary treatments.

Where enforcement is required to ensure other land owners or occupiers take responsibility for pest control matters this will continue to be undertaken using the statutory powers available to the council.

- a)** *Does the proposal create an adverse impact which may affect some groups or individuals? Is it clear what this is? How can this be mitigated or justified?*

Stopping pest control services in Swindon is not expected to impact on any particular group although it is important that the council continue to provide information to all regarding pest control and signposting to alternative providers. It is recognised that council charges for pest control treatments are generally lower than commercial providers and that stopping the service may be an additional burden on some households.

The council currently provides concessions to those households least able to afford the cost of pest control. Currently households in receipt of 85% or more Council Tax Support receive free treatments of rats, mice and bedbugs and discounted treatments of other pests. It is intended to continue offering this level of subsidy for qualifying households after the councils own service has ceased. This will be done through an arrangement with approved providers.

It is proposed to use the councils existing 'Buy with Confidence' scheme to vet and approve alternative providers of pest control services.

The impact of this decision is not believed to affect any particular groups disproportionately in Swindon. Its potential impact is on:

- A. Any household who is financially disadvantaged and least able to afford the cost of commercial pest control treatments. (The numbers of these in some ethnic or age groups may be higher than average, although this is hard to quantify.)
- B. Those otherwise least able to source alternative commercial pest control service from the market place.

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*What can be done to change this impact?*

*A. MITIGATION : (1) Maintaining existing levels of subsidy and concessions to the service ensuring that qualifying household pay no more for pest treatments than under current arrangements. (2) Maintaining free 'Public Interest' treatments where required. This will continue to be published via the councils website and elsewhere providing information regarding pest control services*

*B. MITIGATION: (1) Continue to provide comprehensive information on pest control matters to Swindon people via the council's website, contact centre and one stop shop. (2) Update to reflect the changes being proposed. (3) Provide a vetted list of 'endorsed' pest control providers available to the public*

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**b)** *Does the proposal create benefit for a particular group? Is it clear what this is? Can you maximise the benefits for other groups?*

No benefit has been identified which affects any particular group (s)

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*Does further consultation need to be done? How will assumptions made in this assessment be tested?*

Other than the routine consultation on the CMDN no other consultation is considered appropriate.

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**4 So what?**

[Link to business planning process](#)

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*What changes have you made in the course of this DIA?*

The DIA has focussed attention on the need to preserve subsidy and concession arrangement to disadvantaged households who require the service and also to ensure that good information is available to all regarding alternative providers of pest control services.

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*What will you do now and what will be included in future planning?*

These provisions have been built into the recommendations made in the CMDN due for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Protection.

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*When will this be reviewed?*

December 2014

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*How will success be measured?*

Local Residents and Businesses will continue to have access to quality and effective pest control services in Swindon. These should be affordable to all.

Following the cessation of the councils 'In-House' Pest Control Service, an evaluation of the measures put in place to assist local people to access alternatives will be carried out. In particular it will be beneficial to understand who is taking up these services and whether others are facing barriers or difficulties in doing so.

<b>For the record</b>	
Name of person leading this DIA: – Paul Simmonds	Date completed: 17 <sup>th</sup> November 2014
Names of people involved in consideration of impact	
Name of manager signing DIA: - Cherry Jones	Date signed:

# Diversity Impact Assessment – an inclusive business planning tool

## 1. What's it about? refer to equality duties

- What is the proposal? What outcomes/benefits are you hoping to achieve
- Who's it for?
- How will this proposal meet the equality duties?
- What are the barriers to meeting this potential?

## 2. Who's using it? consider all equality groups

- What data/evidence do you have about who is or could be affected? (e.g. equality monitoring, customer feedback, current service use, national/regional/local trends)?
- How can you involve your customers in developing the proposal?
- Who is missing? Do you need to fill any gaps in your data?

## 3. Impact consider dimensions and equality groups

Using information in parts 1 & 2:

- a) Does the proposal create an adverse impact which may affect some groups or individuals? How can this be mitigated or justified?  
> What can be done to change this impact?
- b) Does the proposal create benefit for particular groups or individuals. Is it clear what this is? Can you maximise the benefits for other groups?
  - Does further consultation need to be done? How will assumptions made in this assessment be tested?

## 4. So what?

- What changes have made in the course of this DIA?
- What will you do now and what will be included in future planning?
- When will this be reviewed?
- How will success be measured?

## Considerations

### Our equality duties

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
2. Advance equality of opportunity
3. Foster good relations

### Equality groups

For the following equality groups: age, disability, sex, transgender, marriage/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation.

Extended by SBC policy to include: financial economic status, homelessness, political view.

## Dimensions of equality

How will the proposal affect Human Rights and life chances of different groups? Consider how the proposal affects

1. Longevity.
2. Physical security.
3. Health.
4. Education.
5. Standard of living.
6. Productive and valued activities.
7. Individual, family and social life.
8. Participation, influence and voice.
9. Identity, expression and self-respect.
10. Legal security.