



Petitions Committee

13 June 2014

Report title	Petition to Remove Vermin in St Giles' Crescent	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Peter Bilson, Economic Regeneration and Property Councillor John Reynolds, City Services	
Wards affected	East Park	
Accountable director	Tim Johnson	
Originating service	Democratic Services	
Accountable employee(s)	Tessa Johnson	Graduate Management Trainee
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Report to be/has been considered by	N/A	

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Review the issues raised within the petition.
2. Assess the actions already completed.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To consider the petition received regarding vermin on St Giles Crescent.
- 1.2 To recognise the work already completed regarding the area in question.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In February 2014, a 27 signature petition was submitted to the Council by the lead petitioner.
- 2.2 The petition referred to an infestation of mice in properties and rats in back gardens in multiple properties on St Giles Crescent. The lead petitioner's property had been infested with mice for three months. The property in question is managed by Wolverhampton Homes. The petitioner emphasised the potential health issues associated with such vermin.
- 2.3 The petition mentioned that animals were being kept in back gardens which may have attracted the vermin.
- 2.4 Before the petition was submitted, the lead petitioner had contacted Wolverhampton Homes and Environmental Health. Additionally, Pest Control had visited the area three times and tenants had also put down bait. The table below shows the visits in the area by Pest Control over the last two financial years.

Date of call	Pest	Address
30/05/2012	Rats	St Giles Crescent
26/09/2012	Rats	St Giles Crescent
12/11/2012	Mice	St Giles Crescent
16/11/2012	Rats	St Giles Crescent
05/03/2013	Rats	St Giles Crescent
22/04/2013	Rats	St Giles Crescent
22/10/2013	Mice	St Giles Crescent
12/11/2013	Mice	St Giles Crescent
25/11/2013	Mice	St Giles Crescent
17/12/2013	Rats	St Giles Crescent
28/01/2014	Mice	St Giles Crescent
17/03/2014	Rats	St Giles Crescent

- 2.5 A review of complaints made to Environmental Health shows that only nine complaints in total were received in relation to sightings of rats and mice in the Old Heath Road, St Giles Crescent and Coventry Street area before this petition was received. The latest one being in August 2011.
- 2.6 This petition involves a number of issues which cut across service areas, including Wolverhampton Homes, Environmental Health and Public Realm. Action already taken has

involved multiple services and any proposed actions must be carried out in a joined up manner.

3.0 Actions since petition submission

3.1 On 29 February Andrew Finch (Wolverhampton Homes) spoke to the lead petitioner to acknowledge receipt of the petition. The petitioner outlined the following concerns:

- Bin men leaving rubbish in the street
- The situation has worsened since building development work on the nearby former pub site
- There has been more problems since Decent Homes work was completed in the street
- There is a fenced off area with rubbish at end of her rear garden
- Some neighbours are keeping chickens and not cleaning up dog mess

3.2 On 21 March, Zoe Brennan (Environmental Health) and Bob Belstone (Wolverhampton Homes) visited the properties referenced in the petition who were keeping birds in their back gardens. The birds at one property were in a clean and hygienic condition and there was poison laid down, some of which had been taken. The tenant reported having seen no mice since putting poison down. Another property contained two large aviaries, which contained dried bird droppings and waste on the floor, and smelt. The second property will be revisited by Environmental Services.

3.3 On 27 March, the Estate Manager from Wolverhampton Homes visited the lead petitioner's property to discuss the 'no man's land' area at the bottom of her garden, which contained a lot of rubbish and may have contributed to the infestation of vermin.

3.4 The tenant had mutually exchanged into the property on 5 March 2012 and the 'no man's land' area had been fenced off by the previous owner when she moved in. The Estate Manager explained that the maintenance of this area was the tenant's responsibility.

3.5 The Estate Manager offered to provide a skip for the tenant to clear the area and she agreed. Andrew Finch spoke to the lead petitioner on 4 April and agreed to arrange for a quotation of the cost for such clearing work.

3.6 On 2 April, Tessa Johnson (Democratic Services) spoke to the lead petitioner with regards to the actions already taken, and whether she was happy that the issue had been resolved. The lead petitioner responded that although she appreciated of the work already completed, she did not feel that the matter had been fully resolved and therefore requested the petition be considered by the Committee. There were still rats and mice in the street.

3.7 Steve Wightman, Amey Account Director, confirmed on 7 April that a waste collection supervisor would visit St Giles Crescent before and after the next scheduled refuse collection, to identify any issues caused by the collection crews.

3.8 On 9 April, Andy Nicholls (Wolverhampton Homes) visited the properties whose tenants had previously complained of vermin. Miss T, who had found mice in her living room, kitchen

and garden, had resolved the issue by purchasing her own traps and did not want her property to be inspected as she felt the issue had been resolved.

Mrs W had also purchased her own traps and this, along with the recent renovations under Decent Homes, had resolved all the vermin issues within her property.

Miss H was not home when visited but her daughter informed Andy that they had heard mice within the walls, but not seen any. Andy will carry out minor floorboard repairs in the property and identified rubbish in the garden which may be attracting the vermin. This has been raised with Bob Belstone (Wolverhampton Homes).

3.9 On 30 April Andrew Finch (Wolverhampton Homes) spoke to the lead petitioner. She confirmed that no rats had been seen in the area recently but she had concerns they may return in the future. She also reiterated her concern regarding rubbish left in the street, which was passed on to the manager concerned by Steve Woodward (Head of Service, Public Realm).

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There may be financial implications if Pest Control needs to carry out repeated visits to the area, although these may be paid for by the tenants.

4.2 Wolverhampton Homes has paid £1344 to clear the land at the back of Miss Wilkinson's garden. The tenant was asked to contribute to the cost of clearing the land but she was unable to. [CF/05062014/E]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 The Wolverhampton Homes tenancy agreement states that tenants are responsible for keeping their gardens free of rubbish. The tenant was aware that the area in question was included as part of the garden when she mutually swapped properties.

5.2 Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 it shall be the duty of every local authority to take such steps as may be necessary to secure as far as practicable that their district is kept free from rats and mice. This includes as far as practicable to destroy rats and mice on land of which they are occupiers and enforce this duty on owners and occupiers of such land. [RB/06062014/A]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 If the issue is not resolved, there may be environmental implications associated with prolonged vermin infestations.

8.0 Corporate landlord implications

8.1 There are no corporate landlord implications associated with this report, as the property is managed by Wolverhampton Homes.

9.0 Schedule of background papers

Nil.