

Geoff Raw – Chief Executive

Brighton & Hove City Council

Hove Town Hall

14th November 2016

Dear Geoff

I am submitting the following letter under Council Procedure Rule 23.3 to be included on the agenda for the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee meeting of 29th November 2016.

Public health is often described as the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organised efforts of society. Accordingly, Environmental Health Departments in Local Authorities play an important role in preserving, promoting, and protecting the public's health.

It is acknowledged that wild rats, often found in considerable numbers within sewer systems, may carry and propagate many threats to human health (e.g. leptospirosis Salmonellosis, Listeriosis, Toxoplasmosis, Hantavirus).

The main statutory duties placed on Local Authorities to control rats are detailed in the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 (PDPA). These require Local Authorities to take such steps as may be necessary to secure, so far as practical, that its area is kept free from rats. Local Authorities are also required to ensure the owners and occupiers of land deal with rats and mice, under the statutory provisions.

R. norvegicus is the only urban species in Britain that inhabits sewer systems and, whilst it is generally agreed that rats in sewers are not a problem by themselves, damaged sewers and drainage systems allow them to escape from the sewers into above ground locations.

Across Hangleton and Knoll, and presumably other areas across the city, there has been a reported increase in the sightings of rats, which is leading to increased contamination, and a potential risk to public health.

While there is no statutory requirement for Local Authorities to provide in-house pest control services, the control of rats should be a part of their public health function. We would be grateful if, given the increase in rat sightings, a report could be produced for the next committee detailing the work of the Council, in cooperation with the Water Authorities, that is currently underway to identify the impact of defective drains and sewers, and thus control the above ground rat explosion.

Yours sincerely

Cllr. Tony Janio, Cllr. Dawn Barnett & Cllr. Nick Lewry