

### **Question: Street cleaning – What powers does the Council have to enforce the clearing of rubbish from front gardens?**

#### **Response from Environmental Health Manager (West)**

“The statutory powers available to enforcement officers in relation to rubbish in front gardens enable waste accumulations and litter that attract/harbour pests and/or that have a detrimental effect on the visual amenity to be tackled. Officers respond to all complaints that may fit these criteria and work informally with residents and property owners to resolve issues, treat for pests and clear the land. Where rats or mice are thought to be present our Animal Control Officers, will carry out test baiting and treatment as required. Where property owners/occupiers are uncooperative in clearing the garden formal Notices can be served, these Notices have a right of appeal to a Magistrates Court of between 21 and 28 days. Works in default can be carried out and the costs reclaimed, including a fixed penalty of £100 in relation to a notice dealing with refuse or litter that is reducing the quality of the local environment within a neighbourhood.

In the majority of cases, of which there have been 70 since January 2013, not including waste in alley ways and fly tips on private land, an informal resolution has been achieved. Where formal action is required this can take a number of months given the need to allow for an informal resolution and then the appeal period that must be allowed. Customers are kept up to date of progress throughout the process. Where pests are present these cases are prioritised and members should note that treatment for rats is free throughout the borough for domestic premises.

In addition, in relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation there are regulations that require landlords to proactively keep their gardens and yards clear and in good order. Officers will proactively deal with any problems found during their routine inspections. Where recurrent issues from properties such as these are found, a prosecution can be brought.

Any reports of accumulations in gardens should be notified to Customer Service Centre on 01923 2378503 or [enquiries@watford.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@watford.gov.uk) who will record the complaint and pass it to the Environmental Crime team for investigation.