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# NOTICE OF MEETING

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## TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

MONDAY, 13 MARCH 2023 AT 11AM

THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL,  
PORTSMOUTH

Telephone enquiries to Democratic Services 023 9283 4060

Email: [democratic@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

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### **Public health guidance for staff and the public due to Winter coughs, colds and viruses, including Covid-19**

- Following the government announcement 'Living with Covid-19' made on 21 February and the end of universal free testing from 1st April, attendees are no longer required to undertake any asymptomatic/ lateral flow test within 48 hours of the meeting; however, we still encourage attendees to follow the public health precautions we have followed over the last two years to protect themselves and others including vaccination and taking a lateral flow test should they wish.
- We strongly recommend that attendees should be double vaccinated and have received any boosters they are eligible for.
- If unwell we encourage you not to attend the meeting but to stay at home. Updated government guidance from 1 April advises people with a respiratory infection, a high temperature and who feel unwell, to stay at home and avoid contact with other people, until they feel well enough to resume normal activities and they no longer have a high temperature. From 1 April, anyone with a positive Covid-19 test result is still being advised to follow this guidance for five days, which is the period when you are most infectious.
- We encourage all attendees to wear a face covering while moving around crowded areas of the Guildhall.
- Although not a legal requirement, attendees are strongly encouraged to keep a social distance and take opportunities to prevent the spread of infection by following the 'hands, face, space' and 'catch it, kill it, bin it' advice that protects us from coughs, colds and winter viruses, including Covid-19.
- Hand sanitiser is provided at the entrance and throughout the Guildhall. All attendees are encouraged to make use of hand sanitiser on entry to the Guildhall.
- Those not participating in the meeting and wish to view proceedings are encouraged to do so remotely via the livestream link

## **Membership**

Councillor Gemma New (Chair)  
Councillor Dave Ashmore  
Councillor Simon Boshier

Councillor Charlotte Gerada  
Councillor Mark Jeffery  
Councillor Russell Simpson

## **Standing Deputies**

Councillor Ryan Brent  
Councillor Stuart Brown  
Councillor George Fielding  
Councillor Graham Heaney

Councillor Ian Holder  
Councillor Abdul Kadir  
Councillor Benedict Swann

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(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting).

Please note that the agenda, minutes and non-exempt reports are available to view online on the Portsmouth City Council website: [www.portsmouth.gov.uk](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk)

## **AGENDA**

**1 Apologies for Absence.**

**2 Declarations of Members' Interests**

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (Pages 3 - 4)**

**RECOMMENDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 be agreed as a correct record.**

**4 Scrutiny review into reducing the use of pesticides on council land.  
(Pages 5 - 18)**

The panel is asked to agree the attached draft scoping document for this review.

The following Portsmouth City Council officers will attend to assist with this review:

Philip Bentley, Head of Estate Services  
Martin Lavers, Assistant Director, Regeneration  
Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager

Representatives from Colas will also attend.

Members of the public are permitted to use both audio-visual recording devices and social media during this meeting, on the understanding that it neither disrupts the meeting or records those stating explicitly that they do not wish to be recorded. Guidance on the use of devices at meetings open to the public is available on the council's website and posters on the wall of the meeting's venue.

# Agenda Item 3

## TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

MINUTES OF A MEETING of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday, 22 March 2022 at 4pm in Portsmouth Guildhall.

### Present

Councillor Lee Mason (in the Chair)  
Matthew Atkins  
Stuart Brown  
Leo Madden  
Charlotte Gerada

**50. Apologies for absence (AI 1)**

Councillors Lee Mason and Matthew Atkins apologised for lateness as the Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation, Councillor Lynne Stagg, had stopped to talk to them about the Review into the accessibility of the transport network report. Councillor Hannah Brent had submitted her apologies.

**51. Members' Interests (AI 2)**

No declarations of Members' Interests were made.

**52. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2022 (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2022 be agreed as a correct record, subject to minor typographical changes.**

**53. Review into the accessibility of the transport network (AI 4)**

Councillor Lee Mason asked members if they had anything to add to the draft report circulated before the meeting. Members indicated they were content with the draft circulated.

The Chair offered his thanks to the support given by all members of the Panel since the review had begun, as well as to officers who had provided evidence for the enquiry.

**RESOLVED to agree the final report and its recommendations for submission to Cabinet at its first meeting of the new municipal year (2022-23).**

**54. Review into the enhancement of biodiversity in urban Portsmouth (AI 5)**

Councillor Lee Mason enquired if members had anything to add or amend to the report, noting that the preface and section relating to budget and policy framework implications had been completed and circulated on 21 March 2022.

Councillor Lee Mason commented that he was dismayed to note that the response to recommendation 33 (*Council-owned sites in Portsmouth and Hampshire which have been procured for commercial purpose i.e. Lakeside North Harbour must still comply with both the letter and spirit of the council's policies and strategies on biodiversity and should ensure public access to areas of biodiversity on the sites*) was that public access needs to be restricted to

protect the commercial operation and profitability of assets. Members of the Panel agreed that Council-owned properties should set an example and that it did not bode well if operating to established policies on biodiversity did not allow council assets to be run profitably.

Councillor Charlotte Gerada commented that she was proud of the work undertaken by the Panel and the resulting report, adding that she hoped it would make a difference.

Councillor Leo Madden noted that he would prefer it if the Chair's preface did not include comments about leaving "politics at the door" as the work of scrutiny panels should be apolitical. Councillor Lee Mason responded that he had written the preface to reflect how very pleased he was at how hard members had worked together to complete the report in such a short time. He had initially been concerned that it would not be completed before the end of the municipal year, but members had agreed to a busy schedule of meetings and he was delighted with the report and its recommendations. He also noted that when witnesses had not been able to attend, they had often submitted written information which had been welcomed. The Chair went on to thank Jane Di Dino, Local Democracy Officer, for the support she had provided to the panel including turning minutes around very quickly.

Members noted that they had nothing further to add to the draft report and were content with the draft circulated.

Members agreed that thanks should be conveyed to all the organisations and individuals who had contributed to the report and the Chair asked that all contributors be sent a link to the report.

**RESOLVED to agree the final report and its recommendations for submission to Cabinet at its first meeting of the new municipal year (2022-23).**

The meeting concluded at 4.20pm

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Councillor Lee Mason, Chair

# Agenda Item 4

## Portsmouth City Council Scrutiny Scoping Document

<b>Scrutiny Panel</b>	Traffic, Environment & Community Safety.
<b>Topic</b>	Reducing the use of pesticides on council land.
<b>Purpose of enquiry inc. potential outcomes.</b>  (The remit to be clear and concise as this statement forms the backbone of the enquiry)	<p>To evaluate the council's delivery of a phased withdrawal from the use of all pesticides, including Glyphosate, over a period of three years by understanding:</p> <p>The current procedures for weed removal in the different areas: parks and public open spaces, communal areas surrounding council housing stock and citywide highway infrastructure (roads, pavements and other public realm areas).</p> <p>The steps the council is currently taking to reduce and minimise the use of pesticides</p> <p>The trials of alternative methods of weed removal.</p> <p>How other local authorities have reduced their use of pesticides.</p>
<b>Reason for enquiry</b>	<p>In July 2022 the Full Council passed a Notice of Motion:</p> <p>To ask Cabinet, utilising the TECS Scrutiny Panel as appropriate, to commission trials of a wide range of non-chemical and mechanical alternatives for weed treatment and management and to request council officers report back the findings within six months.</p> <p>To ask Cabinet to involve local communities in becoming a pesticide-free city, including ensuring the council communicates the benefits of stopping pesticide use and invites residents to take part in trialling other methods of weed management.</p> <p>To request that Portsmouth City Council, through Cabinet, delivers a phased withdrawal from the use of all pesticides, including Glyphosate, over a period of three years, using methods tested in the aforementioned trials. This includes all of the council's subcontractors, such as Colas.</p> <p>To ask Cabinet to take the opportunity of the best-value review of its contract with Colas in 2024 to both improve community liaison and identify ways in which Colas can change its practices to help the council achieve its</p>

	<p>environmental objectives. For example, not spraying where residents have opted out, allowing for larger and non-sprayed tree pits and other opportunities for allowing wildflowers to flourish.</p> <p>To request that the Leader of the Council provides bi-annual updates to members on the progress of this initiative.</p>
Enquiry format	Scrutiny review.
Corporate Priority linked to	Improving health and care for our communities. <a href="#">Our council aims and priorities - Portsmouth City Council</a>
Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	<p>Cabinet Member for Traffic &amp; Transportation</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Housing &amp; Preventing Homelessness.</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure &amp; Economic Development.</p>
Relevant officers	<p>To include:</p> <p>Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services</p> <p>Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager</p> <p>Martin Lavers, Assistant Director, Regeneration.</p>
Consultees & stakeholders	<p>Colas Ltd.</p> <p>University of Portsmouth</p> <p>Portsmouth Friends of the Earth</p>
Start Date	March 2023.
Target Completion Date	December 2023.

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<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Subject:</b>	Use of Pesticides on City Council Land
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	22 March 2022
<b>Report by:</b>	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services Director of Regeneration
<b>Report authors:</b>	Adrian Rozier, Parks Service Manager Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services
<b>Wards affected:</b>	All

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1. **Requested by** the Leader of the Council

2. **Purpose**

To update Cabinet on the city council's current use of pesticides, approach to reducing and minimising use and the trialling and practical implications of alternative methods.

3. **Information Requested**

3.1 **Background**

3.1.1 Pesticides are used by three council services in the maintenance of parks and public open spaces, communal areas surrounding council housing stock and citywide highway infrastructure (roads, pavements and other public realm areas).

3.1.2 This report informs on the current use of pesticides, consideration of alternatives and measures to reduce usage by the three services, these being Parks and Open Spaces (Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services), Green and Clean (Housing, Neighbourhoods and Building Services) and Highways PFI Team (Regeneration). Parks and Housing operations are largely undertaken by in-house teams and highway maintenance work undertaken by COLAS.

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3.1.3 Strict controls are applied by the council on the pesticides that are applied to sites, with alternative methods being researched and trialled as they become available.

**3.2 Current Use of Pesticides**

3.2.1 Pesticides, also known as 'plant protection products' are used to control pests, weeds and diseases. Examples include insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, molluscicides, and plant growth regulators. They can exist in many forms, such as solid granules, powders or liquids and consist of one or more active substances co-formulated with other materials. The active substance or substances within a pesticide has the controlling effect on the pest, weed or disease.

3.2.2 The council uses the following types of pesticides for selective applications and only when required:

Type	Number of products	Treatment	Area Used
Biocide	1	Moss, algae	Paved areas / hard surfaces
Fungicide	2	Foliar	Roses, sports turf
Herbicide	8	Weeds (including Japanese Knotweed)	Paths and paved / hard surfaces, gullies, tree bases, street furniture bases, shrub beds, sports turf
Insecticide	2	Pest control (including Brown Tail Moth)	Infected plant areas only

3.2.3 The use of herbicide to control weed growth on hard surfaces is by far the most common form of pesticide in use by the authority. Weed growth can interfere with visibility for road users and weeds in kerbs or around drains can prevent or slow down drainage. Their growth and moss on pavements may eventually become a trip / slip hazard for footway users. Application of chemical herbicide is used ahead of mechanical weed control due to the ease of application, which often saves on the cost of labour and is carefully targeted to minimise product use. It remains the most effective and cost-efficient means of weed control.

3.2.4 Restricted use of selective herbicides are used for the control of weeds on fine turf and sports areas such as cricket squares, bowling greens and golf greens to control broadleaf weeds and retain a safe and uniform playing surface. This is only carried out to affected areas and where it is not practical to manage the control by hand.



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- 3.2.5 Fungicides are required to prevent and remove fungal attacks on fine turf areas such as golf greens, where high quality surface condition is closely associated to participation and player satisfaction. Other grounds maintenance operations are carried out to reduce the potential for recurrence, such as increasing aeration by mechanical means.
- 3.2.6 Small pesticide plugs are inserted into tree stumps where access by a mechanical stump grinder is not possible and there is a need to control re-growth or spread.
- 3.2.7 The city also has small pockets of Japanese Knotweed and where this is identified, stems are injected with herbicide (glyphosate) to control this invasive species. Other harmful and invasive plants may be treated to maintain their control.

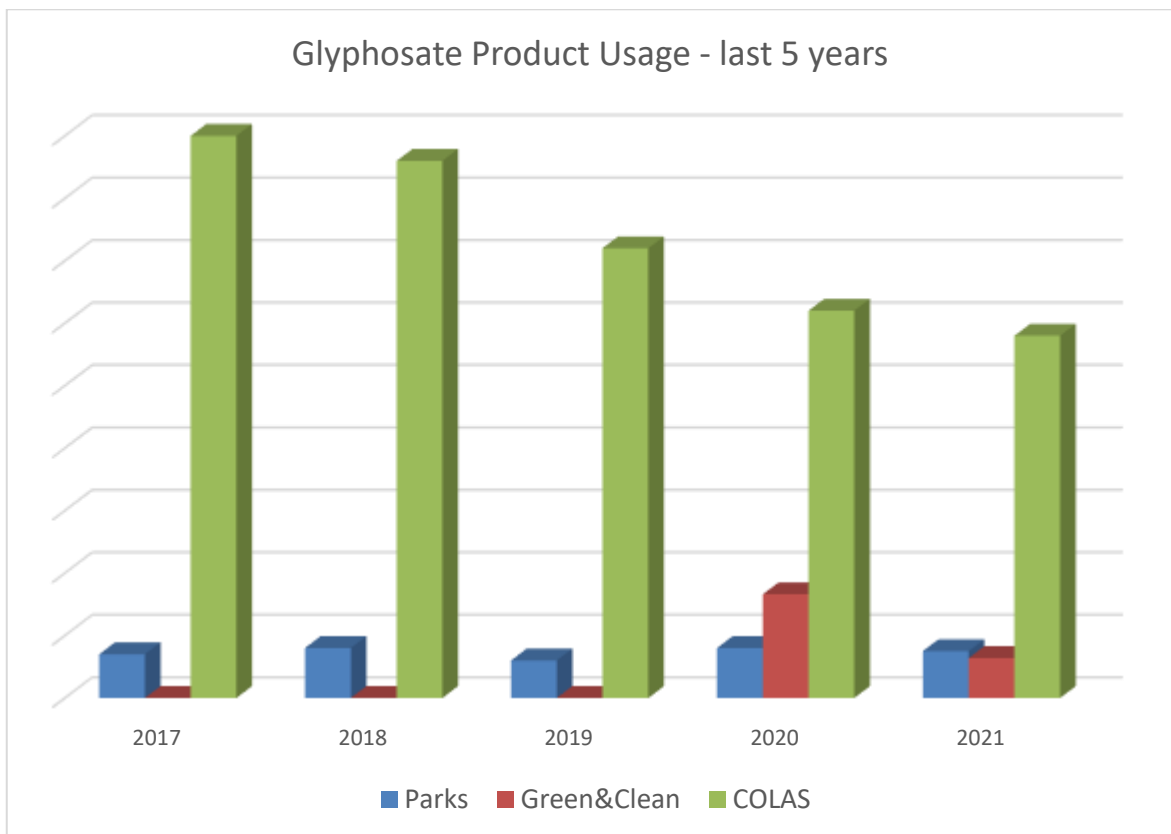
### **3.3 Use of Glyphosate**

- 3.3.1 In 2015, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) identified glyphosate, the world's most commonly used herbicide, as a "probable human carcinogen". This report has been contested by the manufacturers of glyphosate who maintain the product remains safe to use. Whilst there has probably been more scientific scrutiny of glyphosate than any other weed control product, the evidence relating to this remains both complicated and conflicting.
- 3.3.2 All products containing glyphosate have previously had to be registered and approved by the European Pesticides Commission having been subjected to a rigorous scrutiny process. From 1 January 2021, an independent pesticides regulatory regime is in operation and new decisions taken under the EU regime will not apply in Great Britain, with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) the national regulator for the whole of the UK.
- 3.3.3 Authorised use of glyphosate has a current EU expiry date of 15 December 2022, but the legislation introduced post-Brexit means active substance (glyphosate) approvals due to expire before December 2023 now allows extension for 3 years to allow time to plan and implement the GB review programme. Should this extension be applied to glyphosate, it will remain authorised for use until December 2025 unless the Health and Safety Executive exercises its power to review this approval at any time, should new evidence identify any concerns to human health or the environment.
- 3.3.4 Regardless of whichever timescale applies to authorised use of glyphosate, there is a will by all council services to continue reducing dependency on pesticides and using alternative methods to chemical control where these are available and demonstrated to be effective.

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3.3.5 The below graph shows the amount of glyphosate product used by council services over last 5 years:



Notes to be read in conjunction with graph:

1. Parks usage in 2020 includes additional areas to the west of the city and schools being incorporated within the in-house service and 2021 usage includes Great Salterns golf course being incorporated within the in-house provision. Reduction in actual use across all parks areas now maintained in-house is estimated at between 25-30%.
2. Green&Clean usage figures for 2017-19 are not available for representation but show a 60% reduction between 2020 and 2021.
3. COLAS figures represent a 35% reduction in the last five years.

**3.4 Reducing use of Pesticides**

3.4.1 All council teams involved with grounds maintenance or that use pesticides in maintaining the highway infrastructure and public realm work to the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012 (formerly the Sustainable Use Directive) and the requirement to consider all available methods of intervention that are economically viable but that minimise risk to human health and the environment.

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3.4.2 The steps the council are currently taking to reduce and minimise the use of pesticides include:

- Restricting use to a minimum - pesticides are only used where they are required - all treatments are targeted with no preventative treatments carried out, whether that be weed or pest control.
- A selective herbicide is no longer applied to any grassed area, other than high amenity sports turf (excluding football pitches).
- Use of weed suppressants - increased mulching of shrub beds and new tree plantings using recycled woodchip from tree works carried out in the city helps to suppress weed growth and the need for treatment.
- Overplanting - an annual winter improvements programme allows for planting beds to be supplemented (gapped-up) or re-planted, not only for their aesthetic and environmental gain, but to reduce areas for weed growth and need for future treatment.
- Maintaining surface integrity - working procedures are in place for surveyors to report surface defects and arrange timely repairs. The efficient reporting of repairs reduces the potential for weeds to grow as they would through damaged paved and hard surfaces. Collaborative working between site surveyors and design teams influence future decision making around the type of surfacing and street furniture.
- Reduced mowing of grass - to enhance and support biodiversity, teams have relaxed mowing regimes to an increasing number of areas across the city and continue to trial expansion of this. Public response has been favourable where this has been introduced and continues to inform further areas where the right balance can be found between increasing wildlife friendly grassland and scrub and public amenity use and respecting walking desire lines. All sites are on a case-by-case assessment and these changes are being monitored and reported through updates on the Council's greening strategy. Wilder site boundaries mean herbicide is no longer applied along areas such as fence lines.
- Mechanical and manual cultivation - chemical treatment is no longer used when preparing beds for the popular and increasing number of wildflower and meadows seeded areas that have been incorporated across a range of green spaces and adjacent residential housing and highways.
- Mechanical weed ripper machines are used to remove moss and weeds to suitable housing curtilage areas and ball courts.
- Manual weed removal is still employed where relatively small areas are affected and it remains more time-efficient for operatives to undertake the necessary control using hand implements, than for this to be followed up by scheduled herbicide treatment.

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- All staff involved in the selection of and use of pesticides have received the necessary training to ensure it is safely applied and is used to a minimum.
- Continual review - teams continue to work with product suppliers to ensure any pesticide used is based on an informed decision and where herbicide is still required, products other than glyphosate are used where possible, or that help reduce the amount used in the weed growing season.

**3.5 Alternatives to Chemical Weed Control**

3.5.1 Whilst the Council continue with targeted use of pesticides where it is required, all are open to and have trialled alternatives that are on the market, each with pro's and con's. These include:

<b>Method</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
Hot Foam (thermal treatment)	Weeds in hard and gravel surfaces  Moss on hard surfaces and play safety surfacing  Grass, where control is required (ie. tree bases)	Foam forms a thermal blanket around heated water and the weed, using natural plant oils  Not weather dependent  Claimed to kill high percentage of weeds, including roots	Does not kill all weeds on first application  Expensive - needs investment of £20k for equipment (estimated to cost £51k to include transport, staffing and materials)  Vehicle transport and boiler are diesel powered, increasing carbon footprint  Not suited to use on highway network or spaces where access is restricted  Resource intensive  Time consuming
Hot water / steam (thermal treatment)	Weeds in hard and gravel surfaces  Moss on hard surfaces and play safety surfacing	Lower initial purchase cost than hot foam	Requires repeat treatments as heat does not sufficiently damage plant / root structure  Diesel consumption and transport increases carbon footprint  Resource intensive  Time consuming

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Method	Use	Advantages	Disadvantages
Flame gun / weed burners (thermal treatment)	Weeds in some hard surfaces	Relatively cheap to purchase	Health and safety risk when used in public areas Not fully effective
Electrocution	Weeds in hard and gravel surfaces	Pesticide free	Health and safety risk when used in public areas (high-voltage) Diesel consumption increases carbon footprint Time consuming
Mechanical removal blade (highways) / sweeper ripper attachments (paving)  See Appendix A	Weeds along kerb lines and in hard surfaces	Attachments can utilise existing machinery	Health and safety risk of projected debris Requires a clear pathway (highways) Ancillary damage to paved areas and kerbing Severs weed head but does not treat root system effectively Fuel consumption increases carbon footprint Risk of manual handling injuries including Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVs) Resource intensive Time consuming
Vinegar	Weeds in hard and gravel surfaces	Low competence level for application	Not fully effective Strong smell
Soda crystals	Moss treatment	Cheap and effective  Low competence level for application	Labour intensive to mix product, apply and agitate moss Slippery on contact, creating alternative hazard
Manual removal	Weeds generally	Effective  Low set-up cost	Very time consuming Teams would require significant additional staff resource  Increased risk of staff injury

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### **3.6 Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVs)**

- 3.6.1 Hand-arm vibration syndrome (HAVS) comes from the use of hand-held power tools and is the cause of significant ill health (painful and disabling disorders of the blood vessels, nerves and joints). HAVS is preventable, but once the damage is done it is permanent.
- 3.6.2 The equipment used in some alternative methods of weed control has the potential to increase staff exposure to Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and this must be managed by risk assessment. The assessment is to mitigate risk and does not completely remove it. To engage in further mechanical treatment of weeds will pose additional risk to staff by its very nature (see Appendix 1) and it is pertinent that previous risk assessment of HAVS has directed services to using herbicides to reduce this exposure.
- 3.6.2 Chemical application is only carried out by qualified and competent operatives and all staff involved in the selection and use of pesticides have received the necessary training to ensure it is safely applied and with minimal use. This report identifies that not only is pesticide use financially economical but is also economical in relation to the level of resources required to complete such tasks. Spray application of a pesticide does not present qualified staff the risk of Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome.

### **3.7 Future Use of Pesticides**

- 3.7.1 It is widely recognised that public use and interaction with open spaces has changed notably in the last 18 months, with a significant increase in usage levels. This has further increased debate and awareness around climate change and concern over anything that is considered to have harmful effect on people, the environment, wildlife or that can have a lasting effect on biodiversity generally. There is greater engagement in the way our public spaces are managed, how they are maintained and allowing for sites to be adapted to connect green infrastructure across this densely populated city.
- 3.7.2 Charities such as Pesticide Action Network (PAN UK) seek to promote safe and sustainable alternatives to pesticide use. It campaigns for pesticide free towns and a number of authorities are recorded as having signalled a phased reduction or end to the use of glyphosate and/or all pesticides, although highways management is often separated from the management of parks, play areas and public footways around housing estates.
- 3.7.3 A commitment to banning the use of all pesticides is not considered a feasible option at this time where there is no viable alternative that is as effective and meets the city's cost and resource constraints for the wide range of circumstances

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where they are currently in use. Appendix A is one example of a recent trial that illustrates this. The significance of weed growth each year is closely aligned to environmental conditions, but the poor appearance and overrun condition of public realm areas in Brighton and Hove was well-publicised in 2021, following the withdrawal of glyphosate from operations. Numerous examples have been illustrated of walkways and public areas being taken over by plant growth, causing reputational damage and reported petition for this to be addressed, as well as claims of surface damage and trip hazard. Engagement with authorities that have committed to a phasing out of pesticides or banning certain products has been commenced by service lead-officers and will help inform success and failures experienced to date.

- 3.7.4 The council's approach is to continue to work towards a reduced, minimal use of pesticides and an integrated or pesticide-free solution wherever possible. The in-house maintenance teams are already committed to reducing the use of all pesticides (see graph in 3.3.5) and the measures being taken to significantly reduce this use are documented in Section 3.4 of this report, resulting in positive outcomes to date. Pesticides will only be used where they are required and where there is no equally effective and cost-efficient alternative (see Appendix A). Continued engagement with authorities that have committed to a phasing out of pesticides or banning or products will further inform success and failures experienced to date.
- 3.7.5 The maintenance of highway infrastructure is subject to a contractual arrangement and specification requirements that require formal amendment if resulting in a material change to the way the infrastructure is managed (such as banning the use of pesticides). Public highways and footways need to be effectively treated to maintain structural integrity, clear flow of drainage channels and avoid trips hazards and slippery surfaces. Trials to find a pesticide free alternative that can meet the complexities of the highway network will continue as alternatives become available.
- 3.7.6 Green spaces will continue to be assessed on a site-by-site basis and a whole site management approach that may incorporate more wildflower and wildlife friendly grassland that increases connectivity for biodiversity and reduces or eliminates the need for herbicide application. Work will continue to naturally suppress the growth of weeds with the use of recycled mulch and maintaining well-stocked planted areas.
- 3.7.7 There is opportunity for green spaces to be managed in consultation with local communities, such as Allotment Associations, Friends Groups and housing residents, to help determine areas where maintenance and use of pesticides may be relaxed and wildlife and biodiversity enhanced.

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- 3.7.8 Invasive and other harmful plants, such as Japanese Knotweed, will continue to be treated with glyphosate as there is no suitable alternative available, so the city council can control growth and spread to neighbouring land. Fine turf areas may also necessitate pesticide treatment to retain their required performance standard until pesticide free alternatives become available, with routine maintenance targeted at prevention of pest and disease, rather than curative treatment.
- 3.7.9 Manual weed removal will still be employed where relatively small areas are affected and it remains more time-efficient for operatives to undertake the necessary control using hand implements. Increased participation by volunteer groups can help support the extent of areas that can be maintained by hand.
- 3.7.10 Chemical application is only carried out by qualified and competent operatives and all staff involved in the selection and use of pesticides have received the necessary training to ensure it is safely applied and with minimal use. Their use is both financially economical and economical in the level of resources required to complete tasks. Spray application of a pesticide does not present qualified staff the risk of Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome.
- 3.7.11 Maintenance teams will continue to work together, in conjunction with product suppliers and with other authorities to share learning and assessment of alternative products that reduce active ingredient usage, offer pesticide-free solutions and adopt integrated control methods where these are proven to be successful. The assessment of alternatives includes capital outlay and ongoing revenue costs such as servicing and maintenance, transport, fuel and power source, consumables, staff welfare and staff resources (including additional treatment visits to that of chemical weed control if required).
- 3.7.12 The environmental benefits of working towards reduced or pesticide-free solutions should also consider the impacts of increased use of fossil fuels and emissions associated to machinery and equipment that enables this transition. In the main, compromise of one is required to offset the other and future operations must account for both. Officers will work with the council's Principal Strategy Advisor for Carbon Management when comparing predicted CO<sub>2</sub>e values between existing treatment methods and potential alternatives.

## **3.8 Financial Consideration**

- 3.8.1 A full financial evaluation has not been carried out for each alternative method to pesticide use due to the perceived disadvantages outweighing the advantages, that means they are not considered a viable alternative at an early stage. Where this includes a capital outlay cost or increase in staff resource, this results in a financial implication in addition to assessment of effectiveness.



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- 3.8.2 Whilst in-house teams have not undertaken a comprehensive financial evaluation, the demonstrations and trials undertaken to date provide an indication on the potential financial impacts if Portsmouth were to expedite the reduction in use of pesticides through the investment in mechanical treatments for weeds:
- The trial illustrated in Appendix A results in an estimated increased cost in the region of £49k to equip all Housing Green & Clean area teams with mechanical weed rippers, vehicles and additional staff resource for the treatment of all weeds across housing estate hard surfaces.
  - Following the demonstration of the Foamstream (Weedingtech) thermal treatment machine offering the highest productivity, the Parks Team estimate it would result in an increased cost in the region of £51k to purchase the machine, vehicle, additional staff resource and sundries for the treatment of all weeds across parks and open spaces, including cemeteries.
- 3.8.5 These estimates are high-level, based on limited feasibility and are not an indication these alternatives are recommended to become the adopted method. Neither of these estimates can account for the unknown of repeat treatment frequencies necessitated by their degree of effectiveness. However, it does suggest this would result in additional cost of approximately £100k for both the Parks and Housing Green & Clean teams to adopt alternative practices to applying herbicide.
- 3.8.6 The in-house teams of Parks and Housing have no financial capacity to support the transition to either the hot foam or mechanical alternatives and pesticide application, and there are no identified scheduled works or activities that can be stopped to create capacity, without wider impact. These costs would need to be met from Housing rent payer (via the service charge) and / or the general fund.
- 3.8.7 It is not established what financial consequences may apply to the Highways PFI should there be a requirement to change the contract specification and the use of pesticides in the management of the highway network, or how this may be achieved. This cannot be investigated further until re-structure within the Highways PFI Team is complete. However, since the highway network is extensive and requires the highest volume of herbicide application by any of the teams, any move away from the most effective and cost-efficient method of control will likely be at considerable expense.

**THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

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Signed by (Director)

**Appendices:**

Appendix A - Weed Removal Trial

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location