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# NOTICE OF MEETING

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**TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL**

**FRIDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 4PM**

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

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

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## **Membership**

Councillor Judith Smyth (Chair)

Councillor Charlotte Gerada (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Simon Boshier

Councillor Chris Dike

Councillor Jason Fazackarley

Councillor Mark Jeffery

## **Standing Deputies**

Councillor George Fielding

Councillor Graham Heaney

Councillor Leo Madden

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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 - 10)**

**RECOMMENDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2023 be agreed as correct record**

**4 Reducing the use of pesticides on council land (Pages 11 - 70)**

**RECOMMENDED that the attached report into reducing the use of pesticides on council land be signed off.**

To note: the completed budget and policy implications table will follow.

Members of the public are now 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 the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 22 September 2023 at 3pm in the Guildhall.

### Present

Councillor Judith Smyth (in the Chair)  
Charlotte Gerada  
Chris Dike

**19. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)**

**20. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

Councillor Charlotte Gerada declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest; she is a member of the RSPB.

**21. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July be agreed as a correct record.

### Matters Arising

At the previous meeting, Councillor Pitt stated that members of the public had raised concerns about the council's Estates Services' greening proposals in Cosham. The Chair had looked into this and determined that it had concerned public green open spaces under Portsdown Hill and was now resolved.

### **Action**

The location be sent to Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services so he can look into this.

**22. Reducing the use of pesticides on council land. (AI 4)**

It was agreed that the panel is aiming to complete this review at its meeting in October if possible, and submit it to Cabinet during November to allow any new expenditure to be considered as part of the 2024/ 25 budget-setting process.

### **Councillor Kimberley Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Greening the City**

Councillor Barrett asked the panel to note the following points.

Many people are discussing this important issue which is a priority for the council.

### *Colas*

Some residents have reported that when asked, Colas has left the base of their garden walls unsprayed.

Areas where it is safe to stop weeding have been identified.

There has been some good work with community groups.

Pesticide use has significantly decreased in Estates Services and Parks. Highways is working towards to further reduce their use.

Building up the evidence base is key to ensure the resources are deployed in the correct locations and that the money is there in future budgets.

In response to questions, she explained that:

Felicity Harris, Green and Healthy City Co-Ordinator is very keen to increase biodiversity and green spaces etc. She is working on biodiversity policies and strategies and an updated Greening Strategy will go to Cabinet on 3 October. This will be updated as and when changes happen. It is important that the council's policies are aligned.

There are discussions about including a Biodiversity Policy in the Local Plan.

Work was a little siloed in the past but will be under one umbrella going forward.

She was the Nature Champion for two years, but this role was removed because it was duplicating work that was already being carried out.

As Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Greening the City she works with many departments.

She tries to inform Opposition Spokespersons about what is going on as much as possible. The opposition monthly briefings are not held in public. The spokespersons attend portfolio briefings and decision meetings. Other members can make deputations or just talk to Cabinet Members. She encourages public deputations and is happy for these to be read out. She would be happy for more information to be made public. Public involvement is very important as they do not have all the answers.

She receives many emails from residents with concerns regarding pesticides use and requests for their streets to opt-out of spraying.

More research is required to establish whether there is a link between the reduction of pesticide use and increased biodiversity.

Milton Park is beautiful especially with the changing of the plants during the seasons. However, some complaints were made about the wilding and no-mow areas in the park.

An email from Felicity Harris was read out which included the following points: Every local authority has a duty with regard to improving biodiversity. The council is looking into having a biodiversity paper / strategy which will recognise the importance of being evidence-based and will look at different strands including having a soil policy. It is important that plants being put in now will be resilient to the changing conditions over the next few years.

Felicity Harris is running a workshop on 17 October for officers across many departments.

## **Action**

More information from Felicity Harris is available upon request.

The Greening Strategy will include pesticides use and the results of this panel's findings.

It is important to take people along with us in the journey.

Depaving in Buckland was very successful.

The council is looking into identifying what can be done to encourage and support residents to adopt tree pits. It is important to consider that the responsibility for maintenance would revert to the council if the person no longer able / wants to look after it. The tree pits furthest from the highway would be easier to maintain.

Some residents would like to have wild plants growing at the base of their front walls, but their landlords do not permit this.

More advice can be given to garden owners and allotment holders to reduce pesticide use and increase biodiversity.

The council's Climate and Greening website page can include more information.

During their discussion, the panel raised the following points:

There is an appetite for a new way to manage wild plants. People have noticed more wild plants on front walls and that does not bother them. Care must be taken that paths are kept safe of course.

The management of wild plants without using pesticides may cost less because the council would be doing less.

Seafront noticeboards about the changes of planting have been well received.

This can only progress as part of a wider, integrated strategy.

There may be a need for engagement rather than a big consultation.

Westminster Council encourages residents to adopt tree pits and are advised to attach green ribbons on the trees to show that the pit should not be sprayed.

The Planning Committee can now add a condition to require a permeable surface be laid if a front lawn is being removed to make space for parking.

### **Discussion paper on Pesticide Changes.**

*Councillor Dike left the meeting at 4pm.*

Charlotte Smith, Assistant Director for Corporate Services introduced the discussion paper that had been published with the agenda and in response to questions, explained that:

Information from national guides could be repurposed to create local guides for residents. Interest in the information provided on the website and social media channels would be evaluated to ensure that it is relevant.

Members agreed that engagement regarding pesticide use would need to be integrated with the rest of the communication strategy. It would focus on information, education and celebration and feature what residents have done.

### **Other local authorities' use of pesticides.**

Councillor Smyth noted that it had been very difficult to obtain a clear picture of what other local authorities are doing and a number have made false steps. The Notice of Motion to Full Council's aim was to eliminate pesticide use. This review has demonstrated that a significant reduction has already been achieved. Care must be taken when referring to eliminating pesticide use, as residents cannot be prevented from using them in their own gardens.

This panel was unable to obtain information from the big landowners Portsmouth Hospitals' NHS Trust and the University of Portsmouth. It is important to consider how the council can work more closely with these partners

In response to questions, Arian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that:

As glyphosate is effective for a long period of time, no repeat treatment is required.

This is not an exact science; trials are analysed and lessons learnt.

Some alternatives including acetic acid are still treated as hazardous to health and are not as effective as pesticides. Non-spraying methods are therefore preferable. However, alternative could possibly be trailed in different environments.

At the start of their shift, operative collect their tools and glyphosate, then go to the sites on the list. Glyphosate use is not measured per site, so it is not possible to provide more granularity.

Next year, if still glyphosates are still being used, the service is looking into getting a better level of data on the different approaches on sites and the monitoring of outcomes.

Members agreed that a breakdown of glyphosate use in different sites would be very useful and that a method for doing that should be found. Additionally,

if glyphosate treatment did continue to be used on Japanese Knotweed, the panel would not want this to continue indefinitely. The market should be monitored regularly for alternatives.

#### **Draft Weed control in the Parks Service trial report**

The panel noted this report and commented that many visitors manage the wild plant growth themselves to a small extent.

#### **Growing in the Community report by the Local Government Association**

In response to questions, Arian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that:

There are approximately 2,000 allotment holders.

The council could restrict what products the allotment associations stock and influence the advice they give to allotment holders.

Empty plots are generally cleared and strimmed as quickly as possible because there is a long waiting list.

Members agreed that a further piece of work would be needed regarding allotments with consultation and involvement of allotment holders.

#### **Glyphosate usage in the Parks, Housing & Highways Services.**

In response to questions, Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services explained that:

If people enquired, we talked about what we were doing but people are happy with the approach taken. There had been no complaints about the area around a housing block in Paulsgrove when two maintenance cycles had been missed and the grass was ankle high. There seems to be an acceptance of having more greenery in estates.

Cleaners are instructed through their contracts for to clear wild plants where possible and within reason. Any significant growth is ripped or strimmed.

Members were impressed with the approach taken by Estates Services.

#### **Glyphosate use by Highways.**

This report was not available for this meeting but is attached to these minutes as an appendix.

Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical) gave a brief update on the progress made in reducing pesticide use in highways.

Usage in 2018 was 860 litres and in 2023: 550- 600 litres. This reduction shows the decrease in concentration, not the volume being sprayed.

The alternatives were covered previously and included mechanical methods, electrocution, foam, flame, steam and high-pressure water. There are issues

associated with most of these and also a potential increase in carbon emissions.

Colas is keen to keep up to date with the changes in the market and will trial alternatives when they come up.

The costs that would be incurred if the PFI were amended as a result of an instruction from the council to reduce pesticide use have not been calculated and would be commercially sensitive.

The council is monitoring how other local authorities manage wild plants.

Acetic acid has been trialled but there were complaints about the possible impact on bees and plants.

There is 450km of carriageway and twice as much when footways are included.

Colas will attend the biodiversity workshop that was mentioned earlier in the meeting.

There was concern that planting in a tree pit might have reduced visibility and been a factor in an accident where a child ran into the road.

He has talked to Colas about the letters that they send to owners of hedges that overhang too far onto pavements. These should state more clearly what is expected of the residents and how much should be cut back.

### **A review into biodiversity improvements in urban Portsmouth 22 March 2022**

Members had already seen the Cabinet's response to this biodiversity report and therefore agreed that their current review's recommendations should align with those made in the biodiversity review.

### **The guiding principles for the drafting of the recommendations**

Members discussed these principles and agreed that the review should be put in context with what other local authorities are doing.

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified.



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Councillor Judith Smyth  
Chair

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# Agenda Item 4



# Portsmouth CITY COUNCIL

## TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

### Reducing the use of pesticides on council land.

**Date published: 10 November 2023**

**Under the terms of the Council's Constitution, reports prepared by a Scrutiny Panel should be considered formally by the Cabinet or the relevant Cabinet Member within a period of eight weeks, as required by Rule 11(a) of the Policy & Review Procedure Rules.**

## **PREFACE**

This TECS report is about the reduction of use of pesticides on land owned and managed by Portsmouth City

There is a more ambitious report to be done in three-five years' time to investigate the elimination (or very near) of the use of pesticides across the whole city and some of our recommendations pave the way for that.

We can say with certainty that the last two years have seen a very significant reduction in the use of pesticides across the city departments / directorates that use pesticides. The Housing Estates team have led the way and have almost eliminated the use of pesticides with no addition to budget and great benefit to the environment and biodiversity. Their approach is commended to landowners and managers across the city.

Large reductions have also been achieved by the Parks Teams and the Highways contract with Colas we had hoped to be able to measure the reduction in the use of pesticides across all 3 departments. And provide predictions on future predictions for the city council. However, meaningful combination of the data cannot yet be done and remain a recommendation of this report.

There are recommendations for Parks & Highways that take into account the particular challenges of each, not least the considerable range of different places maintained by the Parks Department e.g. no pesticides are used in the country parks but bowling and golf greens remain a significant challenge where we may need to wait for more effective products or planting schemes to be available.

The report builds on the TECS scrutiny report on biodiversity and the 22 March 2022 Cabinet report. We have relied on these and they are important source documents. We are grateful for all the work done to produce these reports. We recommend that future reporting and accountability is at least aligned and probably incorporated with reporting and accountability for increasing biodiversity.

Many people have helped us find evidence for this report. We have been interested in in opinion too and taken it into account e.g. in our proposals about communication and public education about pesticide use. We are grateful for their help.

Particular thanks are due to Philip Bentley, Head of Estates Services, Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager and Richard Stocks, Highways PFI, Deputy Contract Manager who have worked tirelessly to answer our questions. We are also indebted to Jane Di Dino, Local Democracy Officer who has given invaluable support throughout. Thank you all.

Councillor Judith Smyth  
Chair, Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel.

Date: 10 November 2023

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## **Background**

In July 2022 Full Council agreed the following notice of motion:

- To ask Cabinet, utilising the TECS Scrutiny Panel as appropriate, to commission trials of a wide range of nonchemical and mechanical alternatives for weed treatment and management and to request council officers report back the findings within six months.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- To request that the Leader of the Council provides biannual updates to members on the progress of this initiative.

On 16 January 2023, the Scrutiny Management Panel allocated it to the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety scrutiny panel (henceforth referred to in this report as the panel)'s work programme.

At its first meeting of this review on 13 March 2023 the panel comprised:

Councillor Gemma New (Chair)  
Dave Ashmore  
Simon Boshier  
Charlotte Gerada  
Mark Jeffery  
Russell Simpson

The Standing Deputies were Councillors Ryan Brent, Stuart Brown, George Fielding, Graham Heaney, Ian Holder, Abdul Kadir and Benedict Swann.

From 8 June it comprised:

Councillor Judith Smyth (Chair)  
Charlotte Gerada (Vice Chair)  
Simon Boshier  
Chris Dike  
Jason Fazackarley  
Mark Jeffery

The Standing Deputies are Councillors George Fielding, Graham Heaney and Leo Madden.

At its meeting on 23 March 2023, the panel agreed the terms of reference for the review:

Purpose of the enquiry including potential outcomes.

To evaluate the council's delivery of a phased withdrawal from the use of all pesticides<sup>1</sup>, including glyphosate, over a period of three years by understanding:

- 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).
- The steps the council is currently taking to reduce and minimise the use of pesticides.
- The trials of alternative methods of weed removal.
- How other local authorities have reduced their use of pesticides.

The scoping statement describes the topic of our work as "Reducing the use of pesticides on council land". Note also that question 2 and 3 are about herbicides rather than all pesticides.

In practice we have focussed on land that is both owned and managed by Portsmouth City Council (henceforth referred to as the council). We have not been able to get detailed responses from agencies that manage our land on a long lease - such as Crookhorn Golf course. In addition to agencies managing council land, we have also tried to learn from other landowners in Portsmouth by asking them about their use of pesticides since we think that the overall aim of the council should be to reduce/ stop the use of pesticides across the city as far as possible. However, with some exceptions the responses have been few and thin. More responses were obtained by the panel when it reviewed biodiversity and reported in March 2022, including one from the University of Portsmouth, which is useful context for this report.

The scoping document has focussed our attention on five questions. These questions are answered in our report separately below. Note that question 1 specifically refers to a three-year phased withdrawal so that our report is essentially an assessment of progress in the first year of a three-year programme. We have also taken evidence about what is likely to be achieved by March 2025 and likely exceptions that are likely to prevent the total withdrawal of the use of all pesticides on council land until new less harmful remedies are available to us.

The scoping document is attached as appendix two.

The panel met formally on five occasions to receive evidence from a number of internal and external witnesses and to consider evidence. A list of meetings held by the panel, details of the witnesses and the written evidence received can be found in appendix one. The minutes of the panel's meetings and the documentation reviewed by the panel are published on the council's website [Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel meetings](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Pesticides includes chemicals that eliminate insects and other unwanted creatures as well as unwanted plants. Herbicides are a subset of pesticides. The most frequently used pesticide contains glyphosate.

A site visit was undertaken to see the effect of the reduction of the use of pesticides and herbicides on the appearance and management of the Buckland estate where the Housing Estates team have been changing how they work for three years.

A questionnaire was sent to 42 landowners<sup>2</sup> to find out how they manage their land and to seek their views on the council's management of its own land. Another questionnaire was sent to 22 local organisations<sup>3</sup> seeking their views on the council and other landowners' approach to the use of pesticides. Completed questionnaires were returned from:

- Durrants Allotments Association.
- CESSA Housing Association.
- Hants & IoW Wildlife Trust.
- Portsmouth Friends of the Earth.
- Baffins Pond Association.
- Milton Neighbourhood Forum.
- Portsmouth & Southsea Tree Wardens.

### **EVIDENCE RECEIVED**

A report on the use of pesticides on council land that came to Cabinet in March 2022 (attached as appendix five) stated that 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. Although this finding has been contested by the manufacturers of glyphosate who maintain the product remains safe to use there is general agreement that it is unsafe to use and that it reduces bio - diversity.

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 reasonably effective. It is also understood that the appearance and functionality of places where pesticides have long been used will change. Many people will welcome these changes if they are well communicated but perhaps not all.

### **The national context**

A Pesticide Action Network (PAN)'s Going Pesticide-Free: a guide to local authorities states that pesticides are chemicals used to control a variety of pests in a range of situations. Agriculture is the largest user of pesticides in the UK, but they are also used for amenity control of pests and weeds and by the public in their homes and gardens.

Pesticides include:

- Insecticides that kill insects
- Herbicides that kill plants
- Fungicides that kill fungal problems.

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<sup>2</sup> 36 housing associations, Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth Football Club, Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust, University of Portsmouth and H&IoW Wildlife Trust,

<sup>3</sup> 8 allotment associations, Baffins Pond Association, Portsmouth & District Bowling Association, Lakeside Estate Management, Port Solent Residents Management Committee, Portsmouth Friends of the Earth, Portsmouth Cycle Forum, Portsmouth Disability Advisory Group, Portsmouth Pensioners, Milton Neighbourhood Forum, Portsmouth Tree Wardens, Portsmouth Climate Action Board, Greenpeace Portsmouth, Friends of Victoria Park and Sustrans.



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A report on the use of pesticides on council land that came to Cabinet in March 2022 stated that:

*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.'*

### **The local picture**

The report also explained that:

*'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 [...] 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 under our PFI contract by COLAS.*

*3.2.1 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.*

*3.1.4 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.*

*3.3.4 Regardless of whichever timescale applies to the 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.'

### **Context**

The council has already reduced the use of pesticides considerably as the report shows below. A very important context for this activity and this report is the report 'A Review into Biodiversity Enhancement in Urban Portsmouth dated March 2022<sup>4</sup>). The report is long and detailed and describes the many ways in which many agencies are improving biodiversity across Portsmouth. We are taking the whole report, the officers' response to it at the meeting on 26 July 2022 and the minute of the Cabinet resolutions<sup>5</sup> as evidence.

It is somewhat surprising that the report mentions the use of pesticides very little although recommendation 9 states '*Pesticide use be banned on council allotments*'.

*Recommendation 15 is 'Phase out the use of pesticides and encourage businesses, residents and organisations to do the same too.'* The conclusion was that '*Evidence was given that pesticide use by the council is not excessive or extensive, but the Biodiversity panel believes a continuing ambition to reduce it to zero is desirable. The programme for doing so should be reported to the appropriate Cabinet member on an annual basis*'.

The report on biodiversity also includes some recommendations about strategy and communications and on joint working (see below) with which we agree. In particular our recommendations recognise that the reduction of pesticide use and improving biodiversity need to be approached together in terms of monitoring results, accountability and leadership. For example, rather than recommending separate reporting and communication for pesticide use, we will propose that the reporting and communications are combined for pesticide use and biodiversity.

*Recommendation: A Biodiversity Strategy be developed to cover all areas of the council's operations and the whole city.*

Officers' response:

The response to developing the approach to biodiversity in Portsmouth is inextricably linked to other agendas around our approach to sustainability and the environment, including carbon reduction and the response to climate change; greening; air quality; the nature emergency; energy reduction; ocean management.

As noted by the scrutiny panel, there is now a significant opportunity as we act on the findings of the review to reassess how we are approaching these areas of work and ensure that we are reducing duplication and identifying the linkages. This will ensure that we are targeting resource at those areas of highest priority and impact, including in relation to biodiversity.

We will therefore undertake a mapping exercise to bring together the current activities focused on environmental sustainability and identify where there are opportunities to reshape resource to ensure that all priorities are being addressed, strategically and operationally. This will include bringing together the various

<sup>4</sup> [Biodiversity scrutiny report.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [26 July Cabinet reports and minutes.](#)

information sources that we hold on environmental assets in the city (carbon data, open space register, tree inventory etc) and convening fora to enable officers to work collaboratively across these areas.

The panel's recommendations around public engagement are welcomed. There is an opportunity to look at how we engage with the wider community on these issues collectively. Our external communications will be considered alongside the mapping exercise, and we will also look at the rich mix of partner groups in the city - including Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Portsmouth Climate Action Board, various residents and community groups - to ensure that we are working as effectively as possible with these on the agenda.

The work that has been undertaken on developing the climate change strategy is a strong starting point for the development of this wider approach to the environment in the city, and a range of key issues already relate to this. Officers will work together to broaden the scope of this strategy to ensure wider environmental and social gain is delivered, including biodiversity, and will present this work regularly through the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change.

*Recommendation 3 Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Liaison Group in the council comprising representative officers with responsibility for biodiversity projects across each of the different departments.*

Officers' response:

This officer will work with the Virtual Green Team and Portsmouth Climate Action Board to establish links with appropriate stakeholders and forums (internal and external) to co-ordinate biodiversity projects.

*Recommendation 4 Establish a Climate Change and Biodiversity Public Forum to allow representatives from residents groups and third party organisations to meet and discuss ways to contribute to the city's biodiversity strategy.*

Officers' response:

As above.

Representation is enabled through the Residents Consortium and Link Consortium Group via the Residents Participation Scheme (Housing Neighbourhood & Buildings directorate). Communications to be channelled through Portsmouth Climate Action Board (PCAB) (including e-bulletins). PCAB includes representation from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. The Virtual Green Team to continue to work with third party organisations. There are a number of Parks Friends Groups and volunteer groups which allow for interested parties to contribute to the city's biodiversity. Friends Groups: Rock Gardens, Canoe Lake, Victoria Park, Wilder Eastney. Volunteer Groups: Portsdown Hill, Hilsea Lines, Waterfront Garden Centre (Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services directorate).

*Recommendation 5 Develop a Biodiversity Public Communications Strategy to encourage residents to take action on biodiversity at home.*

Officers' response: Biodiversity Public Communications Plan to be developed by corporate communications officer in conjunction with Climate Officer, on same model as Climate Action Bulletin.

Overall, the report into biodiversity details the amount achieved in recent years to improve biodiversity and descriptions of what more needs to be done is a significant input to our investigation into the withdrawal of the use of pesticides. Significantly it provides evidence of a changing environment in which pesticides might be used. For example, de-paving so that more plants can be grown in more places and replacing traditional planting with, for example meadows or shrubs changes the context for the use of pesticides. In some cases, improving biodiversity will increase the perceived need for using pesticides, in others the reduction of pesticide use has gone hand in hand with improving biodiversity and in others different uses of pesticides may need to be considered. In all cases the environment is changing because of the need to improve biodiversity and places are looking very different with or without the use of pesticides.

Although some of the evidence we have considered was focussed very much on the consequences of withdrawing pesticides apparently with little regard for existing policies to increase biodiversity, the panel accepts the inevitability of more greenery overall. We are framing our report in the context of increasing biodiversity and accept the need for pesticide withdrawal to be in the context of a greener city with a greater area and range of planting rather than considering this review against a past status quo.

It is worth noting that cabinet members had noted that '*the council cannot stop using pesticides entirely*' but the report shows what can be done to minimise their use' Minute 56 of the cabinet meeting held on 22 March. This panel will provide information about the few exceptions (including Japanese knotweed) and make a case for a speedy withdrawal of pesticides for more general use following the example of the Estates department which has reduced use of pesticides almost to nothing at no extra cost and with no adverse effects for the workforce.

Glyphosate product usage over the last five years by the three maintenance teams.  
Glyphosate Product Usage, in Litres Year Parks Housing Highways

Year	Parks	Housing	Highways/ Colas
2017	70	-	900
2018	80	-	860
2019	60	-	720
2020	80	166	540
2021	75	64	720
2022	55	10.73	560
2023	50	0.03	100

The above figures need to be read in conjunction with the following notes:

- Parks usage figures for 2017-2019 represented the grounds maintenance operations carried out by the newly established in-house team that covered the north, east and south areas of the city. These figures did not include any usage by the external contractors for the west, cemeteries, schools (under Traded Services) and golf course and unfortunately, we do not have a benchmark figure for these. In 2020, the west, cemetery and schools' maintenance also transferred in-house and in 2021 the golf course maintenance transferred in house. Therefore, the figures for 2020 and 2021, although higher than 2019, actually represented a continued reduction in overall use for all maintained areas and estimated to be a 25-30% reduction overall in those years. Since 2021, usage has continued to reduce through the adoption of alternative measures and maintenance practices, and it is estimated to have reduced by 55% overall since 2017.
- Housing usage figures for 2017-2019 are not available for representation but show a 60% reduction between 2020 and 2021 and the latest figures show current practices are using alternative methods of weed control.

Colas records represent a 35% reduction between 2017-2022, with latest usage figures to be provided. Colas are also trialling a reduced concentration product that reduces the glyphosates from 490g/l to 360g/l concentration. This represents an effective 26.5% reduction in glyphosates.

The steps the Parks Service is currently taking to reduce and minimise the use of pesticides.

Table showing reduction in glyphosate use since 2017, whilst the service has transitioned to a fully in-house service. Table data needs to be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Glyphosate used by in-house team, in litres</b>	<b>Estimated total used in-house and contracted service in litres.</b>
2017	70	100-110 (West, cemeteries and golf externally provided).
2018	80	100-110 (West, cemeteries and golf externally provided).
2019	60	90-100 (West, cemeteries and golf externally provided).
2020	80	80 (golf externally provided)
2021	75	75 (all services transferred to in-house).
2022	55	55 (all services transferred to in-house).
2023	50*	50* (all services transferred to in-house).

Parks usage figures for 2017-2019 represent the grounds maintenance operations carried out by the newly established in-house team that covered the north, east and south areas of the city. These figures did not include any usage by the external contractors for the west, cemeteries, schools (under Traded Services) and golf course. We do not have a benchmark figure for these, but based on current applications, an estimate has been provided of the total used across all sites by both inhouse and externally contracted services).

In 2020, the west, cemetery and schools maintenance also transferred in-house and in 2021 the golf course maintenance transferred in-house. Therefore, the in-house usage figures shown for 2020 and 2021, although higher than 2019, actually represented a continued reduction in overall use for all maintained areas and estimated to be a 25-30% reduction overall in those years.

Since 2021, usage has continued to reduce through the adoption of alternative measures and maintenance practices.

It is estimated that total usage in 2017 was between 100-110 litres of glyphosate and the usage for 2023 is estimated to be 50 litres (\* as this report is in-year) and therefore there has been a 50-55% reduction in use of glyphosate by the Parks Team in the last 6 years.

Other pesticides used:

- Approx. 20 litres of a selective herbicide is used annually at Great Salterns golf course and on fine turf sports areas (bowls and cricket)
- Approx. 1.5 litres of fungicide is used annually at Great Salterns golf course.

The draft Parks and Open Spaces Strategy sets out the current provision as follows:

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Area in Hectares</b>	<b>Area in m<sup>2</sup></b>
Amenity greenspace	81.89	818,900
Public parks and gardens	137.64	1,376,400
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	344.94	3,449,400
Play areas + provision for young people	4.15	41,500
Allotments	27.86	278,600
Cemeteries and church grounds	41.09	410,900
Outdoor sports grounds	141.79	1,417,900

There are a range of maintenance approaches adopted to each of the land types, with the Parks Team ground maintenance function carried out by 55 permanent staff supported by seasonal and casual staff. In addition, there are 4 Countryside Officers overseeing dedicated management of the city's more natural areas.

It is not possible to breakdown the amount of glyphosate used within each typology, although natural greenspace can be excluded since herbicide is not applied to this type of area (except for treating invasive species). Parks records show the following areas are identified for weed control:

Hard Surface Areas	53,541 m2 (with additional 19,387 m2 in schools)
Hard Surface Linear	14,037 lin m (with additional 9,426 lin. m in schools)
Shrub Bed Weed Control	89,336 m2
Grave Top Maintenance	4,596 graves

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These represent the total area and linear measurements in amenity greenspace, public parks and gardens, play areas and allotments that are identified as needing some form of weed control, albeit these will be targeted treatments and where weeds exist, not preventative treatments across the whole area.

#### How has the reduction been achieved?

The following measures have been implemented to achieve the 50-55% reduction in use since 2017:

- restricting use to a minimum - reduction in treatments carried out annually (most areas only treated once per year) and targeted treatments only.
- selective herbicides are now only used on maintaining quality of selected sports facilities (golf course, mini-golf, bowling greens and cricket).
- increased use of woodchip derived from council tree works as a weed suppressant.
- overplanting / gapping up in beds to reduce areas for weed growth to establish.
- reduced mowing regimes to create or increase environmental areas in parks and around tree bases.
- manual weed removal where small areas are being treated.

#### What is the target reduction by 2025?

If operating within current staffing and financial resources, the Parks Team expect to achieve a further 20% reduction in the use of glyphosate by 2025.

Glyphosate product is typically supplied with concentration rates of 360g/l and 490g/l. The team will trial more diluted application rates where the product is still used, towards achieving the projected reduction and establish whether a greater reduction is feasible.

#### What are the exceptions?

The council has a responsibility to control the spread of any Japanese Knotweed identified on its land and the Parks Team currently use an external specialist to treat identified sites using glyphosate.

A selective herbicide is required to maintain the tees, fairways and greens at Great Salterns golf course, greens at Southsea mini golf, the bowling greens at Milton Park and cricket tables at Langstone, Rugby Camp, Drayton and Farlington. A fungicide is required to maintain the fine turf on golf greens and bowling greens in order to maintain a surface to the required standard.

#### Trials of alternative methods of weed removal

The Parks Team undertook a trial of some alternative methods of weed control between March and August this year within Kingston Cemetery and the draft report is appended.

The trial evaluated the hot foam thermal treatment, glyphosate, pelargonic acid, acetic acid, wire weed brush and hand weeding, recording observations of the resource required (staff and equipment), time taken for treatment and any issues associated to the method. The results of the effectiveness of the treatment are photographically recorded.

The trial unsurprisingly concludes that glyphosate remains the most economic and effective form of weed control. However, it has confirmed the teams understanding of the practicality and effectiveness of the alternatives and this is summarised within the report conclusions.

What more can be done and by when?

The purpose of the trial was to give the team a greater understanding of the preferred approach for weed management if to stop, or significantly reduce, the use of glyphosate beyond that already being achieved.

If additional financial resource were made available to support this transition, the team's recommended approach is the addition of dedicated operatives and vehicles adopting an integrated approach, using a combination of manual tools, wire brush / sweeper and trimmers as the alternative treatment to applying herbicide. If this approach were adopted, it is suggested the following be monitored in the subsequent 12 - 24 month period:

- the weed management method employed per site / area treated.
- record any site where herbicide is still required and the reasons why (inc. invasive species)
- public / school feedback from a change to this approach and the standards attained.
- record of condition of a selection of public spaces.

Since the trial has established none of the alternative treatments are as effective as applying herbicide (glyphosate), requiring more treatments per year if to be maintained to the same standard, it is almost inevitable there will be some visual impact and public response to a change in approach.

There are two levels of resource that, with best-estimate at this time, are predicted to deliver two levels of service and the perceived change in standard of maintenance:

2-operative team, van hire and tools £72,124<sup>1</sup>

Anticipated outcome	minimum 1 visit to each site for weed management per annum re-growth will not be treated substantial reduction in the effectiveness of weed management visible reduction in standards / evidence of weeds in public areas
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4-operative team, van hire and tools £144,248<sup>1</sup>

Anticipated outcome:	1-2 visits to each site for weed management per annum repeat treatments prioritised to selected sites reduction in the effectiveness of weed management some reduction in standards / evidence of weeds in some areas
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1 Figures based on labour being Band 3, spinal point 4 operatives, current van hire rates, the uniform, tools and machinery required and based on each operative covering an area of approx. 50m<sup>2</sup> per hour. All subject to the recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff. Staff deployment based on current site task schedule and at discretion of grounds maintenance supervisor.

#### 1.0 Herbicides - Highways PFI Application and Use

In controlling weeds on the Project Network, herbicide use and application are summarised in table 1 below.

Product Name	Type	Treatment	Area of Application	Total Applied Quantity	Frequency of Application	Period of Application
Qualgex	Surface Biocide	Moss, Algae	Paved areas	5 litre per annum	3 per annum	Mar - Oct
Greenor	Board spectrum herbicide	Weeds	Grass areas	5 litre per annum	3 per annum	Mar - Oct
Chikara	Pre-emergent herbicide	Weeds	Street furniture (bases)	750 gram per annum	3 per annum	Mar - Oct
Mascot Hi Aktiv Amenity	Non-irritant High-load Glyphosate Herbicide [490g/l]	Weeds	Paved areas	500 - 600 litre per annum	3 per annum	Mar - Oct
Gallup Biograde Amenity	Non-irritant High-load Glyphosate Herbicide [360g/l]	Weeds	Paved areas	Trialled in 4 roads in the City	3 per annum	Mar - Oct

Since 2018 Colas has used the following quantities of Mascot Hi Aktiv Amenity herbicide on the highway network;

- 2018 = 860 litres
- 2019 = 720 litres
- 2020 = 540 litres
- 2021 = 720 litres
- 2022 = 560 litres

This year to date 400 litres has been used with the final spraying starting which will take the total to an estimated 550 - 600 litres.

Colas are trialling the use of a reduced concentration herbicide [Gallup Biograde Amenity] which reduces the Glyphosate concentration from 490g/l to 360g/l. This equates to a reduction of 26% of Glyphosate. If this year's trial is successful this will be rolled out across the network from 2024.

The other herbicides in Table 1 have also been used since 2018 and remain at the same quantities applied over whole period to 2023.

The HPFI network includes;

- 456Km of carriageway
- 767km of footway
- 27km of cycleway
- 43ha of landscaping

It is not entirely possible to breakdown the amounts of herbicide used on each typology. However, soft landscaping will only require herbicide targeting specific unwanted plants. Also, carriageways typically don't need treatment as the action of the traffic keeps the plants down. We also avoid its direct use in the drainage channels using the street cleansing to remove the detritus that encourages plant growth, although this is problematic with the amount of on street parking in the city.

Following the 2012 Sustainable Use Regulation we do not use glyphosate around schools, hospitals, old people's homes, shopfronts and play area interfaces.

## 2.0 Alternatives Trailed

Range of non-chemical alternatives were trailed by Colas between 2016 and 2021 are summarised Table 2 below.

<b>Alternative</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Trail Area</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Constraints &amp; Limitations</b>
Mechanical Removal Blade and Brush attachments	2016	Walton Road	Ancillary damage to paved areas and kerbing Debris - transient and 'flying'	Safety concerns - consideration of screening Too large requiring a clear pathway Noisy Cut or served weeds leaving short stem and root system in tack
Electrocution	2018	Walton Road	In-effective Non-practical	Safety concerns - compact urban environment Current generated by a 2 stroke petrol engine - noisy and fuel emissions Required temporary rolling road closure
Foam Application			All demonstrated but not specifically trailed on-street. Deemed neither practical nor suitable for use in a compact urban environment, such as Portsmouth. Additionally, some applications - not all, rendered health and safety implications, specifically Hand Arm Vibration.	
Flame				
Steam				
High Water Pressure (Hot)				

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The above results were combined with the results of trails from other directorates into a paper to Cabinet on the 22 March 2022 'Use of Pesticides on City Council Land'.

The Panel requested commentary on the additional costs or savings of the alternative methods if Colas were to adopt them. This is difficult to determine due to the nature of the contract and this information would be considered commercially sensitive. For these reasons this paper will not cover this question.

### 3.0 Contractual Requirements

Colas have the following contractual requirements under their contract with Portsmouth City Council;

#### 3.1 Referencing Schedule 4 Part 1:

#### 3.2 Clause 152 Pesticide use restricted to and approved by:

- 'UK Pesticide Guild' published by the British Crop Production Council

#### 3.3 Clause 153 herbicides are restricted in use:

153.1 total herbicides permitted on:

- Channel
- Footway and paved areas
- Base of street furniture

153.2 for weeds listed in:

- Weeds Act 1959
- Wildlife Countryside Act 1981

Approving application of herbicides containing glyphosate or approved equivalent.

Note 1. Nationwide product authorisation under licence.

153.3 Different herbicides to be used and applied as manufactures recommendations, on a rotational basis, to negate weed development of chemical resistance.

5.4 Clause 154 Blanket application of herbicides, require prior written consent of the PCC representative.

5.5 Clause 156 Injurious Weeds, as listed the Weeds Act 1959:

- Common Ragwort
- Broad-leave Dock
- Curled Dock
- Creeping Thistle
- Spear Thistle.

Together with Invasive Plants, named in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:

- Japanese Knotweed
- Giant Hogweed.

Note 2. The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, include nuisance provision for the growth of 'Injurious Weeds' and 'Invasive Plants'.

5.6 Clause 165 Control of Brown Tail Moth, inflected trees and shrubs, characterised by 'tents', are pruned out during winter period and sprayed by approved pesticide to manufacturer's recommendations.

Alternative use of 'pheromone traps' is permissible. Although, from a practical perspective, vulnerable to public interference and removal.

5.7 Clause 166 Weed Control, areas forming the carriageway, pedestrian areas and cycle lanes/ways, are maintained free of weeds.

5.8 Clause 167 All areas not forming carriageway or addressed in the 'Landscaping Maintenance Plan', i.e. hard landscapes, are maintained free of weeds.

Formal amendment of Portsmouth's contract with Ensign would require a legal Deed of Variation which is a time-consuming process.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

This part of the report summarises our conclusions and explains how we have chosen our recommendations.

#### **Pace of change**

Overall progress has been fast across city owned and managed land. However, there is a significant range of possibilities requiring detailed measurement and monitoring. For example, there are large natural areas including Farlington marshes, part of Milton Common, Portsdown Hill and beaches where no glyphosates have been used for a long time and where they would not be used. There are also specialist locations where there are apparently no alternatives to pesticides to use over large areas if the council wants to retain current land use. This includes golf greens, bowling greens, grass tennis courts, some flower beds, perhaps some of our 'wild' meadow areas where a single species can take over.

This review is taking place early in year two of a three year plan with ambitions to eliminate the use of pesticides on Council owned and managed land by 2025. The review has taken into account what we have learned through trials, trial and error and understanding progress in other local authorities. The approaches we have used include:

- Reducing the amounts and strength of glyphosate use
- Changing the extent of land treated
- Changing the appearance of some areas
- Changing the methods of controlling unwanted plants

All of these need to work hand in hand with improving biodiversity

Estates have quietly made admirable progress and now use virtually no pesticides whilst increasing biodiversity. There were no additional costs, communication with residents is continuous and there have been no major complaints to the new ways of working. The in-house team has learned new ways of working together and experimented on the job. The reduction has been achieved by using other methods to reduce the prevalence of unwanted plants, by reducing the extend of ground requiring weed control. For example, more manual 'just in time' work using new lighter

machinery, replacing paving with planted areas, changing the type of planting and reducing the frequency of some operations. Grassed areas are generally wilder and therefore better for biodiversity. These approaches can be used with similar results on some of the land managed by Parks and also Highways.

Over the last two years Portsmouth City Council has reduced the use of pesticides by around 50% on land it owns and manages. All three departments using pesticides have reduced the amounts used significantly. Thanks are due to all those involved so far. The first recommendation of this panel is therefore to continue this work at pace. Continuing as now, even if none of the recommendations in this report are accepted by the Cabinet will continue to achieve further reductions in pesticide use across the city

However, the prospect of completely eliminating the use of pesticides before 2025 is unrealistic. Until there are effective and affordable solutions for use in specific situations such as the elimination of Japanese knotweed and the treatment of bowling greens, golf courses and specific highway locations we will need to watch and wait until better safer products are available.

In summary, we find that the fast decline in the use of pesticides can continue at a similar pace for the next two or three years using current approaches.

Although we understand that the other two departments are different, we recommend this incremental, uncontroversial, very local approach to the Parks and Highways departments. Because of the success of the Estates approach, we are not recommending the development of a grand strategy or plans, major consultations for further reducing the use of pesticides. Experimentation should continue in specific places and if necessary further trials of new products providing these do not delay incremental action and innovation in specific situations.

### **Accountability and measuring results**

Having reviewed progress so far, we are not recommending major changes in leadership of the pesticide reduction programme even though there are three separate departments responsible, and some coordination is needed. Nor are we asking for what, in this context could be time wasting, production of big strategies, action plans or widespread consultations. We want to build on what is being achieved and enable change to continue in incremental, experimental, specific local initiatives.

We recommend that the reduction in the use of pesticides scrutinised by this panel is continued and overseen by the three departmental cabinet members. They will need to report to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Greening the City who will hold accountability for the overall reduction of the use of pesticides and improving biodiversity. We recommend the Cabinet consider a full report of progress annually, starting in November 2024 and for the report and cabinet decisions be then reported to Full council.

Each department should report on achievements since 2022, planned reduction in the coming year and achievements against targets. Parks department needs to break these figures down into their different land uses.

The main reason for eliminating the use of pesticides is to improve biodiversity. We recommend the council develop a methodology for measuring changes in biodiversity

over and above the land use' mapping that will be part of the new Biodiversity legislation that will apply to our Local Plan to be enforced in 2024.

We recommend the Cabinet to take advice from local environmental groups such as Portsmouth Friends of the Earth, RSPB, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust etc to develop an approach that involves local residents – such as annual or more frequent small- scale surveys (of vegetation, wildlife and soil quality) that would, if started soon, provide a baseline and enable scientific monitoring or the effect of reducing the use of pesticides and other greening policy. This would enhance other observations by professionals and others.

### **Recommendations for the Parks departments**

We recommend the Parks and Highways departments continue to increase the use of non-mechanical ways of controlling unwanted plants and/or further increase the areas of land left untreated or with much reduced treatment. We are grateful for the evaluation of the trials of alternative methods of controlling unwanted plants and note the advantages of the use of vinegar (acetic acid) for use in specific situations. We request that the departmental staffing structure be reviewed to ascertain whether additional staff members are required. This process to conclude prior to the 2024/25 budget setting process, in order that any additional costs incurred (both for the 2024/25 financial year and taking into account the longer-term sustainability of any additional staffing in future financial years) can be considered for the relevant budget as part of the budget setting process.

We recommend that further work is done to enable the Parks department to ascertain where pesticides are used at the moment and what reductions are planned in each situation. In this way the reduction in use in specific situations can be closely monitored. We recommend that this is completed by November 2024 for inclusion in the annual Cabinet report of progress.

We applaud the use of information posters on site to explain changes in park management in some places especially where parks department staff communicate with the public about this. We recommend increasing the number of notices to explain other changes in land management including planting, biodiversity and the use of pesticides in future.

Regarding allotments, we recommend a target date of 2026 for the elimination of the use of pesticides following a full consultation with allotment associations and their members including the development of a city-wide policy and acceptable monitoring arrangements.

### **Recommendations for the Highways department**

We recommend further discussions with Colas about increasing the use of non-mechanical ways of controlling unwanted plants and reduce the areas of land left untreated or with much reduced treatment, within the existing contract as far as possible. When new contract arrangements are considered reducing the use of pesticides should be central to our requirements.

### **Recommendation for Estates**

Keep up the good work. At the right time when more estates have been 'greened' consider publicising the Portsmouth approach in the housing and environmental press, encourage site visits. Our success is worth sharing.

### **Recommendation for land where services are externally procured.**

We recommend that reducing the use of pesticides (and enhancing biodiversity) should be added to the council's social, environmental and economic policy as part of its Social Value statement and policies. Anyone working with the city council including contractors, leaseholders, will be expected to comply and report on progress.

We recommend that the November 2024 report to cabinet should include a review of contracts and leases regarding compliance and progress in reducing pesticide use.

### **Other landowners including NHS, University, Business and homeowners.**

Wildlife does not respect land ownership and arguably all our efforts to improve biodiversity can be undermined if a neighbour is using pesticides. We therefore recommend that the city council develops and publishes a clear ambition to make Portsmouth a biodiverse city which is pesticide free.

Our survey of other landowners and managers revealed that most of those who responded are reducing the use of pesticides. We did not learn anything new from their experiences but gained some reassurance about progress. We recommend that the council should lead the way in influencing and persuading external agencies to reduce the use of pesticides hand in hand with 'improving biodiversity' and that members and officers representing the city in bilateral and collective meetings with these agencies routinely include city policy on biodiversity/ elimination of pesticide use in order to influence them. (See Communications below)

The Local plan has a chapter on biodiversity and now needs to include new government legislation on increasing biodiversity on new developments by January 2024. We recommend that the use of pesticides is taken into account in this as far as possible.

### **Public Health**

We found that the council is generally very careful in its use of pesticides however we know that other some other agencies still engage in "unrestricted spraying of pesticides" and recommend that the council (Director of Public Health) is asked to include information about the risks to health of using pesticides on our website and to contribute to the November 2024 Cabinet report on progress.

### **Communication with the public – residents and businesses**

Having taken advice about communication with the public and recognising the need for public support, understanding and involvement we recommend

1. The use of 'low cost' existing channels such as Flagship to inform people about improving biodiversity including reducing pesticides - what the council is doing and what residents and businesses could do.
2. Raising biodiversity and elimination of the use of pesticides at forums such as Shaping future Portsmouth, Hive. Meetings of landlords, registered social landlords etc (19)
3. The creation of a website page providing a regular source of information and advice about improving biodiversity including reducing pesticides (including health and safety risks of use). This to include gardening advice for homeowners and those wanting to care for tree pits etc in their neighbourhoods. It should also include, after discussion with allotment associations, advice for allotment holders as we move towards a ban of pesticide use there by 2026.

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4. Communication with all council officers, community workers and voluntary organisations who may be approached by residents who are concerned about changes in local landscapes and land management so that they can inform and reassure them.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Pace of change**

- 1.1. To continue to work at pace. Even if none of the recommendations in this report are accepted by the Cabinet continuing as now will be significant.
- 1.2. To aim for continued reduction in the use of pesticides on Portsmouth city council owned and managed land at the same rate as 2021 to now to 25% by November 2024. Accept slower progress in 2025 and aim to achieve a reduction to 5% of 2021 use in 2026.
- 1.3. To monitor the development and marketing of safe affordable alternatives and adopt as quickly as possible.
- 1.4. To replicate the success of the Estates Department with no additional costs, continuous communication with residents, learning new ways of working together and experimentation on the job. Using other methods to reduce the prevalence of unwanted plants, by reducing the extend of ground requiring weed control (such as replacing paving with planted areas, changing the type of planting and reducing the frequency of some operations). Accepting green areas that are generally wilder and therefore better for biodiversity.

### **2. Accountability and measuring results**

- 2.1. The reduction in the use of pesticides should be continued to be overseen by the three departmental cabinet members. They will need to report to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Greening the City who will hold accountability for the overall reduction of the use of pesticides and improving biodiversity.
- 2.2. The Cabinet should consider a full report of progress annually starting in November 2024. The report and cabinet decisions should be then reported to Full council.
- 2.3. Each department should report on achievements since 2022, planned reduction in the coming year and achievements against targets.
- 2.4. Parks department needs to break these figures down into different land uses.
- 2.5. The main reason for eliminating the use of pesticides is to improve biodiversity. The City council needs to develop a methodology for measuring changes in biodiversity (over and above the land use' mapping that will be part of the new Biodiversity legislation that will apply to our Local Plan to be enforced in 2024).
- 2.6. The Cabinet to take advice from local environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth, RSPB, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust etc to develop an approach that involves local residents – such as annual or more frequent small scale surveys (of vegetation, wildlife and soil quality) that would, if started soon, provide a baseline and enable scientific monitoring or the effect of reducing the use of pesticides and other greening policy. This would enhance other observations by professionals and others.

### **3. Recommendations for Parks department**

- 3.1. The Parks and Highways departments continue to increase the use of non-mechanical ways of controlling unwanted plants and/or further increase the



areas of land left untreated or with much reduced treatment. Vinegar (acetic acid) should be used in specific situations.

- 3.2. The cabinet request further analysis in time to include the additional cost of two or three staff to the department's 2024/25 budget of possible.
- 3.3. Further work should be done to enable the Parks department to ascertain where pesticides are used at the moment and what reductions are planned in each situation. In this way the reduction in use in specific situations can be closely monitored. We recommend that this is completed by November 2024 for inclusion in the annual Cabinet report of progress.
- 3.4. To increase the number of notices to explain changes in land management including planting, biodiversity and the use of pesticides in future and enable staff on site to explain to people what is happening.
- 3.5. Regarding allotments, set target date of 2026 for the elimination of the use of pesticides following a full consultation with allotment associations and their members including the monitoring arrangements.

#### **4. Recommendations for Highways department**

- 4.1. Development of a city-wide policy
- 4.2. Further discussions with Colas about increasing the use of non- mechanical ways of controlling unwanted plants and reduce the areas of land left untreated or with much reduced treatment, within the existing contract as far as possible.
- 4.3. When new service/contract arrangements are considered reducing the use of pesticides should be central to our requirements.

#### **5. Recommendation for Estates**

- 5.1. Keep up the good work. At the right time when more estates have been 'greened' consider publicising the Portsmouth approach in the housing and environmental press, encourage site visits. Our success is worth sharing.

#### **6. Recommendation for land where services are externally procured**

- 6.1. Reducing the use of pesticides (and enhancing biodiversity) should be added to the Council's social, environmental and economic policy as part of its Social Value statement and policies. Anyone working with the city council including contractors, leaseholders, will be expected to comply and report on progress
- 6.2. In the November 2024 report, the cabinet should conduct a review of and amendments to contracts and leases regarding compliance and progress in reducing pesticide use.

#### **7. Other landowners including NHS, University, Business and home owners**

- 7.1. Wildlife does not respect land ownership and arguably all our efforts to improve biodiversity can be undermined if a neighbour is using pesticides. Cabinet should agree that the council should develop and publish a clear ambition to make Portsmouth a biodiverse city which is pesticide free
- 7.2. The council should lead the way in influencing and persuading external agencies to reduce the use of pesticides hand in hand with 'improving biodiversity' and that members and officers representing the city in bilateral and collective meetings with these agencies routinely include city policy on biodiversity/ elimination of pesticide use in order to influence them. (See Communications below)

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7.3. The Local plan has a chapter on biodiversity and now needs to include new government legislation on increasing biodiversity on new developments by January 2024. The use of pesticides should be taken into account in this as far as possible.

## **8. Public Health, safety and risk**

8.1. The council (Director of Public Health) be asked to include information about the risks to health of using pesticides on our website and to contribute to the November 2024 Cabinet report on progress.

## **9. Communication with the public – residents and businesses**

9.1. Use 'low cost' existing channels such as Flagship and social media to inform people about improving biodiversity including reducing pesticides - what the council is doing and what residents and businesses could do.

9.2. Raise biodiversity and elimination of the use of pesticides at forums such as Shaping future Portsmouth, Hive. Meetings of landlords, RSLs etc

9.3. Create a website page providing a regular source of information and advice about improving biodiversity including reducing pesticides (including health and safety risks of use). This **is** to include gardening advice for homeowners and those wanting to care for tree pits etc in their neighbourhoods. **It** should also include, after discussion with allotment **associations**, advice for allotment holders as we move towards a ban of pesticide use there by 2026

9.4. Communicate with all council officers, community workers and voluntary organisations who may be approached by residents concerned about changes in local landscapes and land management so that they can inform and reassure people.

## **Integrated Impact Assessment**

An integrated impact assessment would be carried out when the Cabinet makes its decisions based on the recommendations set out in this report.

## Budget and policy implications of the recommendations

The following table highlights the budgetary and policy implications of the recommendations being presented by the panel:

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<u>Pace of Change</u>			
1	To continue to work at pace. Even if none of the recommendations in this report are accepted by the Cabinet continuing as now will be significant.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	None
2	To aim for continued reduction in the use of pesticides on Portsmouth City Council owned and managed land at the same rate as 2021 to now to 25% by November 2024. Accept slower progress in 2025 and aim to achieve a reduction to 5% of 2021 use in 2026.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	Will require additional operative resource
3	To monitor the development and marketing of safe affordable alternatives and adopt as quickly as possible. To replicate the success of the Estates Department with no additional costs, continuous communication with residents, learning new ways of working together and experimentation on the job.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	To replicate Housing approach will require additional operative resource
4	Using other methods to reduce the prevalence of unwanted plants, by reducing the extend of ground requiring weed control (such as replacing paving with planted areas, changing the type of planting and reducing the frequency of some operations). Accepting green areas that are generally wilder and therefore better for biodiversity.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	Cost of works to introduce changes

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<u>Accountability and measuring results</u>			
5	The reduction in the use of pesticides should be continued to be overseen by the three departmental cabinet members. They will need to report to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Greening the City who will hold accountability for the overall reduction of the use of pesticides and improving biodiversity.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Cabinet Member Decision meeting	Staff time
6	The Cabinet should consider a full report of progress annually starting in November 2024. The report and cabinet decisions should be then reported to Full Council.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Cabinet and Full Council meeting	Staff time
7	Each department should report on achievements since 2022, planned reduction in the coming year and achievements against targets.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Cabinet Member Decision meeting	Staff time
8	Parks department needs to break these figures down into different land uses.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	Staff time
9	The main reason for eliminating the use of pesticides is to improve biodiversity. The City Council needs to develop a methodology for measuring changes in biodiversity (over and above the land use' mapping that will be part of the new Biodiversity legislation that will apply to our Local Plan to be enforced in 2024).	Across council - Public Health (Green and Healthy City), Planning, CL&RS, HNB and Regeneration	New policy	May require additional resource to apply any methodology across council land

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
10	The Cabinet to take advice from local environmental groups such as Friends of the Earth, RSPB, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust etc to develop an approach that involves local residents – such as annual or more frequent small-scale surveys (of vegetation, wildlife and soil quality) that would, if started soon, provide a baseline and enable scientific monitoring or the effect of reducing the use of pesticides and other greening policy. This would enhance other observations by professionals and others.	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>
	<u>The Parks Department</u>			
11	The Parks and Highways departments continue to increase the use of non- mechanical ways of controlling unwanted plants and/or further increase the areas of land left untreated or with much reduced treatment. Vinegar (acetic acid) should be used in specific situations.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Service	Within existing framework	Will require additional operative resource if to increase manual treatment
12	To request that the departmental staffing structure be reviewed to ascertain whether additional staff members are required. This process to conclude prior to the 2024/25 budget setting process, in order that any additional costs incurred (both for the 2024/25 financial year and taking into account the longer-term sustainability of any additional staffing in future financial years) can be considered for the relevant budget as part of the budget setting process.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	Staff time

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
13	Further work should be done to enable the Parks department to ascertain where pesticides are used at the moment and what reductions are planned in each situation. In this way the reduction in use in specific situations can be closely monitored. We recommend that this is completed by November 2024 for inclusion in the annual Cabinet report of progress.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	Staff time
14	To increase the number of notices to explain changes in land management including planting, biodiversity and the use of pesticides in future and enable staff on site to explain to people what is happening.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	Within existing framework	Cost of signage
15	Regarding allotments, set target date of 2026 for the elimination of the use of pesticides following a full consultation with allotment associations and their members including the monitoring arrangements.	Culture, Leisure & Regulatory Services	New policy (or amendment to Allotment and Leisure Garden Rules)	Staff time
	<u>Highways Department</u>			
16	Development of a city-wide policy.	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>
17	Further discussions with Colas about increasing the use of non-mechanical ways of controlling unwanted plants and reduce the areas of land left untreated or with much reduced treatment, within the existing contract as far as possible.	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>
18	When new service/contract arrangements are considered reducing the use of pesticides should be central to our requirements.	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	<u>Estates Department</u>			
19	Keep up the good work. At the right time when more estates have been 'greened,' consider publicising the Portsmouth approach in the housing and environmental press, encourage site visits. Our success is worth sharing.	Phil Bentley, Head of Estate Services  Use Housetalk to promote the good work.	Within HRA	Within existing resource levels
	<u>Land where services are externally procured.</u>			
20	Reducing the use of pesticides (and enhancing biodiversity) should be added to the council's social, environmental and economic policy as part of its Social Value statement and policies. Anyone working with the city council including contractors, leaseholders, will be expected to comply and report on progress.	Across council (contracted services)	New policy (amendment to Social Value statement and policies)	Staff time
21	In the November 2024 report, the cabinet should conduct a review of and amendments to contracts and leases regarding compliance and progress in reducing pesticide use.	Across council, Regeneration	New policy (amendment to contracts and leases)	Staff time to manage compliance reporting
	<u>Other landowners including NHS, University, Business and homeowners.</u>			
22	Wildlife does not respect land ownership and arguably all our efforts to improve biodiversity can be undermined if a neighbour is using pesticides. Cabinet should agree that the council should develop and publish a clear ambition to make Portsmouth a biodiverse city which is pesticide free.	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
23	The council should lead the way in influencing and persuading external agencies to reduce the use of pesticides hand in hand with 'improving biodiversity' and that members and officers representing the city in bilateral and collective meetings with these agencies routinely include city policy on biodiversity/ elimination of pesticide use in order to influence them. (See Communications below).	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>
24	The Local plan has a chapter on biodiversity and now needs to include new government legislation on increasing biodiversity on new developments by January 2024. The use of pesticides should be taken into account in this as far as possible.  <u>Public Health, safety and risk</u>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>
25	The City Council (Director of Public Health) be asked to include information about the risks to health of using pesticides on our website and to contribute to the November 2024 Cabinet report on progress.	Director of Public Health.	Basic information on the potential harm of pesticides to population health can be included on the PCC website as part of BAU public health advice.  For detailed advice on using individual pesticides for the public, additional resources may be	Officer time in Public Health and Communications to complete and maintain.



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
			needed, as resources are finite.	
	<u>Communication with the public – residents and businesses</u>			
26	Use 'low cost' existing channels such as Flagship and social media to inform people about improving biodiversity including reducing pesticides - what the council is doing and what residents and businesses could do.	Marketing and communications to produce Flagship article and social media using information provided by relevant directorates.	Refer to the next column.	Resources needed will depend on the scale of activity required. If an on-going campaign is required, additional resources may be needed, or priorities for marketing and comms will need to be reviewed and updated as resources are finite.
27	Raise biodiversity and elimination of the use of pesticides at forums such as Shaping future Portsmouth, Hive. Meetings of landlords, Registered Social Landlords etc	Action to be taken by directorates that engage with relevant forums as BAU.	<i>To be added</i>	<i>To be added</i>
28	Create a website page providing a regular source of information and advice about improving biodiversity including reducing pesticides (including health and safety risks of use). This is to include gardening advice for homeowners and those wanting to care for tree pits etc in their neighbourhoods. It should also include, after discussion with allotment associations, advice for allotment	Marketing and communications to create web page and supporting materials, using information provided by relevant directorates.	Refer to the next column.	Resources needed will depend on the scale of activity required. If an on-going campaign is required, additional resources may be

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action By</b>	<b>Budget &amp; Policy Framework</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	holders as we move towards a ban of pesticide use there by 2026.			needed, or priorities for marketing and comms will need to be reviewed and updated as resources are finite.
29	Communicate with all council officers, community workers and voluntary organisations who may be approached by residents concerned about changes in local landscapes and land management so that they can inform and reassure people.	Marketing and communications to produce information for staff, community groups and VCS organisations, using information provided by relevant directorates.	Refer to the next column.	Resources needed will depend on the scale of activity required. If an on-going campaign is required, additional resources may be needed, or priorities for marketing and comms will need to be reviewed and updated as resources are finite.

## Appendix One

Meeting Date	Witnesses	Documents Reviewed
13 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services</li> <li>• Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager</li> <li>• Martin Lavers, Assistant Director of Regeneration</li> <li>• Eric Brangier, Managing Director, Ensign</li> </ul>	<p>Scoping document</p> <p>Use of Pesticides on City Council Land report - first published for the Cabinet meeting 22 March 2022.</p>
8 June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services</li> <li>• Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager</li> <li>• Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical)</li> </ul>	<p>The Pesticides Action Network Local Authority Tool Kit (PAN LA Tool Kit).</p>
13 July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness.</li> <li>• Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services</li> <li>• Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager</li> <li>• Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical)</li> </ul>	<p>PAN Guide for Local Authorities.</p> <p>Paper showing glyphosate use over the last five years by the three maintenance teams.</p>
25 July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Steve Pitt, Leader &amp; Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure &amp; Economic Development.</li> <li>• Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Cabinet Member for Transport.</li> <li>• Eric Brangier, Managing Director, Ensign</li> <li>• Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager</li> <li>• Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical)</li> </ul>	<p>Approaches taken by other local authorities.</p> <p>Local organisations' views on pesticide use - completed questionnaires.</p> <p>Local Government Association (LGA) information.</p> <p>Notes from the site visit taken on 14 July 2023.</p>
22 September 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillor Kimberley Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change &amp; Greening the City.</li> <li>• Charlotte Smith, Assistant Director Corporate Services.</li> </ul>	<p>Discussion paper on communicating pesticide changes.</p> <p>Approaches taken by other local authorities and the guidance given by the LGA.</p> <p>Glyphosate use in the Parks Service.</p> <p>Weed control trials report.</p>

		<p>The LGA guidance on allotments.</p> <p>Glyphosate use in the Parks, Housing and Highways Services.</p> <p>Pesticide use - green &amp; clean service.</p> <p>A review into Biodiversity enhancement in Urban Portsmouth - scrutiny report.</p> <p>Guiding principles for developing recommendations for the pesticide scrutiny report.</p>
10 November 2023	The report was signed off.	

## Appendix Two

### Scoping Document.

<b>Scrutiny Panel</b>	Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel
<b>Topic</b>	Reducing the use of pesticides on council land.
<b>Purpose of enquiry inc. potential outcomes.</b>  <b>(The remit to be clear and concise as this statement forms the backbone of the enquiry).</b>	<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). The steps the council is currently taking to reduce and minimise the use of pesticides The trials of alternative methods of weed removal. 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 nonchemical 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 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>

<b>Enquiry format</b>	Scrutiny review
<b>Relevant Cabinet Members</b>	Cabinet Member for Traffic & Transportation Cabinet Member for Housing & Preventing Homelessness. Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Economic Development. Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Greening the City.
<b>Relevant officers</b>	To include: Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager Martin Lavers, Assistant Director, Regeneration.
<b>Consultees and stakeholders</b>	Colas Ltd. University of Portsmouth Portsmouth Friends of the Earth
<b>Start date</b>	March 2023
<b>Target Completion Date</b>	December 2023

## **Appendix Three**

### **Minutes of the meetings.**

#### **TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Monday, 13 March 2023 at 11am in the Executive Meeting Room in the Guildhall.

#### **Present**

Councillors Simon Boshier  
Charlotte Gerada  
Mark Jeffery  
Russell Simpson

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor Simon Boshier was appointed Chair for this meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)**  
Apologies had been received from Councillors Dave Ashmore and Gemma New.
2. **Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**  
No declarations of interest were declared.
3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)**

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

4. **Scrutiny review into reducing the use of pesticides on council land. (AI 4)**

#### **Also Present.**

Phil Bentley, Head of Estate Services  
Martin Lavers, Assistant Director of Regeneration  
Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager  
Eric Brangier, Managing Director, Ensign

During the discussion with officers about the scope of the review, members noted the following points:

- It would be useful to understand how other big landowners in the city manage their use of pesticides e.g. Portsmouth Hospitals' NHS Trust.
- The views of local groups and organisations would be sought.
- The aim is for the scrutiny report to go to Cabinet in January so that any changes to weed control that are agreed can be implemented in time for the start of the season in April 2024 where possible. A phased approach would be necessary for some recommended changes.
- The report will consider the phasing in of changes, plus the capital and revenue cost implications particularly in regard to the ending of the PFI contract and the 2024 budget.

- The range of alternatives to pesticides available will increase over the next 12 - 18 months.

In response to questions from members, officers noted that:

There are a number of elements to consider when reviewing the options, including the cost and time to secure any new equipment, legal and technical factors, the needs of the users of different areas and the potential long-term cost implication of leaving weeds to grow e.g. weeds on highways can lift the pavement.

Discussions regarding the February budget start in the August of the preceding year.

**RESOLVED that the scoping document be agreed.**

The panel considered the report on the council's use of pesticides that was considered at Cabinet in March 2022 and gives an overview of the position at that time.

In response to questions from the panel, officers explained that:

- There are no records for glyphosate products usage by the Green & Clean team before 2020.
- The pandemic had no real impact on the service provided by PCC teams. However, Colas did less because of the concern some people had about the operatives working outside during the lockdowns.
- It is hard to quantify the cost implications of over-planting (explained in 3.4.2, fourth bullet point). The initial cost is higher because more flowers are planted but less weeding is required at a later point.
- No Mow May can be difficult to manage because it is difficult to catch up in the following month.
- It is important to consider the general amenity of each site rather than apply a blanket policy.
- Strands of work noted in the March 2022 Cabinet report are ongoing.
- Parks glyphosate 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. Since the March 2022 report, the reduction in actual use across all parks areas now maintained in-house is estimated at over 50%.
- Native plant species are planted where possible but there is no policy to identify and remove non-native ones.
- Officers are talking to the Department for Transport and to other local authorities about reducing pesticide use particularly on the highway network.
- Some products do not contain glyphosates but are just as harmful to the environment.
- Trials were carried out last summer.
- The council has been advised to use a selective herbicide at one of its wild meadows to reduce the grass that has become dominant.
- The use of pesticides has reduced since the report came to Cabinet in March 2022.
- Trials of methods of weed control in different areas will be carried out over the summer. The effectiveness, appearance and costs will be analysed.



Members suggested that officers contact the Pesticide Action Network which has carried out a lot of research.

Members noted that one of the recommendations could be that the policy on weed management be reviewed in two years' time to take into account the new products and methods that come available.

The meeting concluded at 12:05pm.

## **TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday, **8 June 2023** at 9am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

### **Present**

Councillor Judith Smyth (in the Chair)  
Jason Fazackarley  
Graham Heaney  
Mark Jeffery

#### **5. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)**

Apologies were received from Councillors Simon Boshier, Chris Dike and Charlotte Gerada (Councillor Graham Heaney deputised for her).

#### **6. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

No interests were declared.

#### **7. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2023 be noted.**

#### **8. Scrutiny review into reducing the use of pesticides on council land (AI 4)**

The following documents were circulated with the agenda:

- The PAN Local Authority Tool Kit (PAN LA Tool Kit)
- The scoping document.
- A draft timetable.

Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager gave a summary of the progress made on this:

The three years given in the Notice of Motion to reduce pesticides use is a realistic timeframe. The aim is to eradicate use where possible. There may be scenarios where officers report back along the journey regarding the management of sports pitches or incidents of Japanese Knotweed.

Three departments cover parks, green spaces and public realm areas; each has its own challenges and contractual constraints.

The March report to Cabinet had more information on the practices used in the Housing and Parks departments and not much on Highways. The conclusion was that trials of alternative weed removal techniques were required. It was clear that in some scenarios, pesticides use would need to continue. The council is fully committed to find alternatives and assessing them in terms of costs, resources and effectiveness.

Glyphosate use was driven by cost and resources but has been significantly reduced. It may be necessary to accept that some areas will not be kept at the same standard in terms of appearance.

Pesticides are sprayed once a year where needed.

The number of environmental enhancements and green corridors across sites continues to increase. Mowing frequency has reduced where appropriate.

To prepare a wild meadow, the ground is scarified, and yellow rattle (a grass parasite) is sown. The wildflower seeds are sourced from nearby countryside sites and are therefore more compatible.

When a request is made for a change in the maintenance regime, the Countryside Officer reviews the site and suggests suitable enhancements.

The analysis of the trials at Kingston Cemetery will be ready at the end of the year.

Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services included the following points in his summary:

The supply of pesticides has been used up. Weed management is carried out with by scraping, strimming and mechanical sweeping.

Operatives have reported that the battery powered trimmers were not effective for tall weeds. They had to go back to using petrol trimmers which are not as good in terms of hand to arm vibration.

Japanese Knotweed is treated with injections as recommended in PAN LA Toolkit.

The meadow at the junction of Lake Road and Kingston Road is the only one that has required intervention as it was struggling. On the advice of the wildflower supplier selective herbs were sown and the meadow recovered.

Richard Stock, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical) gave the following update:

The Highways Act sets out a duty for LAs to properly maintain the public realm. The aspect must be maintained to prevent degradation of the surface caused by weeds.

The concentration of glyphosate sprayed has reduced; in 2018 860 litres were used across the network and in 2022 it was 560 litres. A trial of a new product is being carried out this year this has a concentration of 360g per litre. The previous concentration was 490g per litre.

Targeted spraying is carried out, rather than blanket spraying; this is more effective.

The regulations stipulate that pesticides must not be used around areas where vulnerable people are likely pass including schools, hospitals, shopping centres and playing areas.

Detritus is removed from drainage channels as it provides a habitat for weeds. It is not possible when a car is parked over it.

The trials carried out prior to 2021 using alternative weed removal methods was not entirely successful. Some public realm footways are relatively narrow.

Officers monitor the techniques other local authorities are using and see where these can be adapted and used here.

He suspects that there is no silver bullet and that the management techniques will continue to evolve.

Footfall keeps vegetation down.

Colas has the PFI tender to maintain the highway and subsequently if the methods change substantially, they are likely to ask the council to reimburse them for additional costs.

In response to questions from the panel, Phil Bentley explained that residents' gardens have evergreens and shrubs with seasonal flowering. Residents would not want them to be full of weeds.

During the discussion that followed, members noted:

The motion was more ambitious than reflected in this review's scoping document. It was proposed that the purpose of review was to scrutinise progress made on reducing the use of pesticides across Portsmouth.

It is important for the report to be published before the budget is considered.

The way land is managed depends on its use.

It is the council's role to consult residents for this new way of land management. Information about the process for creating a communications strategy will be considered as part of this review.

Hard surfaces should be taken up where possible.

Using alternative weed management techniques will lead to better outcomes and less work for the contractor. Their reputation may be enhanced by using greener methods.

It is not for this panel to seek public opinion on pesticides use.

More people are creating wildflower areas in their gardens.

A summary of the feedback that has been received by officers regarding weed management will be included in the panel's report.

Portsmouth was recently recognised again as a Tree City of the World for its commitment to planning and caring for trees in the city. This is commendable, particularly given that it is an urban, densely populated city where opportunities for planting is limited.

It is essential that the council learn from other local authorities' trials.

Adrian Rozier explained that prior to the report that went to Cabinet last March, officers contacted more than 40 Local Authorities for information on their land management policies. They reached out again following the previous panel meeting. He noted that authorities have different set ups e.g. Fareham Borough Council deals with parks but Hampshire County Council is responsible for its highways.

Within the team in the Parks department, the maintenance of public open space comes under either the in-house grounds operatives, or the countryside officers. However, all the team work together, led by him and the Parks Operation Manager.

Richard Stocks asked the panel to note that the Highways department carries out one series of spraying per year and therefore a trial could not start before next year. A complaint had recently been received about long grass that was making it difficult to children to play.

Last year several panels reviewed recommendations from past reviews and reported their findings to the Scrutiny Management Panel.

The timetable for meetings was agreed:

**13 July at 3pm**

- Invite the relevant Cabinet Members.
- Discuss the PAN LA's Toolkit.
- Discuss what a Pesticide-free city would look like.

**25 July at 5pm**

- Cabinet Members who could not attend the earlier meeting would be invited to this meeting.
- Summary from officers about land management techniques used by other local authorities.
- Review the responses to the questionnaires.

**22 September at 3pm**

Review the alternative land management trials undertaken by the council.

**13 October at 5pm**

Receive any further evidence.

Review the draft report and draw up conclusions and recommendations.

**22 October at 5pm**

It was agreed that a questionnaire be sent to the organisations below seeking details on their land management policies.

Baffins Pond Association  
BH Live  
The Bowls Association  
Allotment Associations  
Gunwharf Quays  
Lakeside Estate Management  
Portsmouth Football Club  
Housing Associations  
Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust  
University of Portsmouth  
Port Solent Residents Management Company.

Portsmouth Friends of the Earth  
Portsmouth Disability Forum  
Portsmouth Cycle Forum  
Portsmouth Pensioners Association  
Neighbourhood Forums  
H&loW Wildlife Trust  
Portsmouth Tree Wardens  
Portsmouth Climate Action Board  
Greenpeace Portsmouth  
Friends of Victoria Park  
Sustrans.

#### Actions

1. The March 2022 Cabinet report will be circulated to the panel.

The following information will be brought to a future meeting:

2. The changes in the amount of pesticide used from year to year and projected use in terms of areas and concentrations.
3. The Local Government Association's views.
4. Lewis District Council and two London Boroughs' policies.

#### **9. Future Items for the Panel's Work Programme (AI 5)**

The panel discussed possible topics including how the police update Ward Councillors on local crime statistics. It was noted however that an annual report comes to the Health & Wellbeing Board, joint meetings are held and information is readily available upon request.

**RESOLVED that this item be discussed at the next meeting.**

## TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on **Thursday, 13 July 2023** at 3pm at the Civic Offices, Portsmouth

### Present

Councillor Judith Smyth (in the Chair)  
Charlotte Gerada  
Chris Dike  
Jason Fazackarley  
Mark Jeffery

#### 10. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)

Councillor Simon Boshier sent his apologies for absence and Councillor Mark Jeffery sent his for arriving late to the meeting (he arrived at 4:30pm).

#### 11. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)

No interests were declared.

#### 12. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.**

#### 13. Scrutiny review into reducing the use of pesticides on council land. (AI 4)

Information on glyphosate product usage over the last five years by the three maintenance teams was circulated to the panel. Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical) explained that Highways/ Colas has used 100 litres so far this year and he expects that usage will continue to decrease. In response to questions, he explained that:

- It would be difficult to break down the usage by area as spraying is only carried out where it is required.
- Colas is considering using a less concentrated product. The effect would not be as immediate but the impact on the environment would be reduced. The same objective would be achieved.
- Pesticides are not sprayed near schools in accordance with the guidance.

In response to a question, Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that equipment is not currently shared, but this could be considered. This is not necessarily practical as in the example of mechanical sweepers, these would be used on a fairly constant basis by one team. In response to the suggestion that teams could share a foam-stream machine if the council were to be pesticide-free, he explained that the aim of the trials is to see which method works best and the outcome may not recommend the council invest in this

During the discussion that followed, the panel raised the following points:

- Although the PAN Toolkit was published in 2016, it is still relevant and will be useful for this review.
- The toolkit reports that some local authorities imposed an immediate ban. However, the council decided not to do this.

- The panel was pleased that use is reducing.
- Colas works for other LAs too.
- There must be a change in attitude to appreciate that although some areas will be less neat, unwanted plants are beautiful in their own way. It is important to take residents along with us in the journey.
- Instructions regarding land management must be clearly communicated to operatives on the ground.
- It is important that Cabinet has the opportunity to consider the report so that it can feed into next year's budget.
- It is important to understand that certain areas may still require pesticide treatment.

The panel discussed what a pesticide-free city would look like and made it clear that no-one is suggesting that that unwanted plants would run wild on pavements. There are many alternatives to using pesticides to remove them. It is important that these alternatives are identified and trialled.

Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness outlined the overall strategy in his portfolio:

- The table circulated - which showed housing using 0.03 litres of pesticides this year - shows the diligence of the team in reducing pesticides.
- The Pesticide-Free Britain Website includes councils that have adopted a phased reduction in pesticide use, which is what this council and many other authorities are doing.
- There are some practical issues to consider. In housing, some workers are less well paid; he wants to tackle that.
- He has instructed the team to just do it in a practical, realistic and sustainable manner as part of reducing the environmental impact of the service, such as the decarbonisation of housing stock and the introduction of more recycling in the council estate.
- He is very pleased that the panel is going on a site visit to the Buckland housing area.
- Different parts of the council have different issues and have high-profile areas, such as the flower bed near Southsea castle, where looking good may be more important than having a mixture of plants. That difference should be understood when making conclusions and looking at the different rates at which pesticide use has been cut.
- The housing department has a separate budget, that has helped it a wider ecological, pragmatic approach to reducing the impact of its activities.
- In Brighton some pensioners sued the council after tripping on unwanted plants that were growing in the pavement.
- He was pleased that there had been a significant reduction in vibrations experienced by workers when using strimmers.
- The Baffins Pond Association has received the questionnaire.
- There are some fine examples of rewilding in the city.
- He was recently asked by a resident to remove unwanted plants in the road because they looked untidy. This shows that people's perceptions of what is acceptable vary.

In response to questions, he explained that:

- All members of the council should have an open discussion about what being pesticide-free means in practice.
- The impact on the tourist industry must be considered.
- He accepts that some people want to see all areas as wild as possible.
- The best alternative method should be used rather than the cheapest.
- There have been no complaints from residents about unwanted plant management.
- The remit of this review is quite narrow.

In response to questions, Phil Bentley, Head of Estate Services explained that:

- Unwanted plant growth is controlled by scraping except for Japanese Knotweed and grass control on the wildflower meadow.
- Cleaners have been given long handled scrapers to use if reasonable to do so.
- Staff are fine with the changes. Battery powered trimmers are used where possible and the petrol ones when the stems are thicker.
- The pesticide usage figures for housing (0.03L) shown in the table covers council stock houses in Portsmouth and the Havant Borough.
- Some alternatives come with as many issues as the glyphosate that is being replaced. The service will continue to seek alternatives.
- There is no integrated pesticide management plan.
- Work is planned but flexible depending on weather conditions.

Councillor Chris Dike left the meeting.

Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that selective herbicide as a treatment is used on golf courses and sports pitches. The amount of pesticides used varies from year to year depending on the environmental conditions.

Councillor Sanders added that complaints are regularly received from the golf course users about unwanted plant management. The impact of the herbicides on the environment must be considered.

#### Future Reviews.

The panel discussed the following possible topics:

- At the last meeting community policing was proposed as a possible topic. Members noted that this area comes under the remit of the Health & Wellbeing Board.
- There is a notice of motion that will be considered at the following week's Full Council meeting regarding improving accessibility in Portsmouth taxis for disabled people.
- The council's progress in expanding plastics recycling. Phil Bentley informed the panel that work is being carried out in Portsea to ensure that the council is ready for the changes in law that are coming.
- The council's progress towards its Carbon Zero target. It was noted that it is important to know the baseline to be able to measure progress. Councillor Sanders suggested that the panel speak to the Principal Strategy Adviser for Carbon Management to understand how she might be able to support a review.



Rachel Hudson, Portsmouth Friends of the Earth suggested that the biodiversity in key areas could be monitored annually. She also recommended a book on pavement plants that had recently been published by the Pesticides Action Network.

#### Actions

1. A breakdown on pesticide use will be considered at a future meeting.
2. Colas will be invited to the next meeting to discuss:
  - Their company's policy on pesticide use.
  - How the reduction in pesticide use was achieved.
  - What alternative methods of wild plant management / removal they use in other local authorities.
  - Whether they work with any local authorities that have banned the use of pesticides.
3. A link to the Pavement Plants book will be sent to the Chair.

*The meeting ended at 4:45pm*

### **TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Tuesday **25 July 2023** at 5pm in the Guildhall, Portsmouth

#### **Present**

Councillor Judith Smyth (in the Chair)  
Charlotte Gerada  
Simon Boshier  
Jason Fazackarley  
Mark Jeffery

#### **14. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)**

Apologies were received from Councillors Chris Dike and Kimberley Barrett. Councillor Smyth also gave her apologies for being late to the meeting.

#### **15. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

No interests were declared.

#### **16. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 July 2023 be agreed as a correct record.**

#### Matters Arising.

Councillor Jeffery asked the panel to note that he felt the possible future topic he had put forward, community policing was suitable for this panel to review.

#### **17. Scrutiny review into reducing the use of pesticides on council land. (AI 4)**

Councillor Charlotte Gerada chaired the meeting.

Eric Brangier, Managing Director of Ensign gave an overview of Colas' approach to weed management. They do use products that contain glyphosate to kill weeds. However, over the last two years, usage has reduced as they are using less concentrated products. There are three visits a year and the use is targeted but the amount used depends on weather and climate. Some weeds are resistant and therefore must be removed manually. In response to questions, he explained that:

- Colas is responsible for maintaining the verges.
- Reducing costs is not a factor in weed removal around trees.
- Colas does not carry out weed maintenance anywhere else.
- He is aware that some other local authorities are pesticide-free. However, a full ban seems to be quite difficult. He is not sure whether that would be acceptable to the public.
- The trials of other methods are encouraging.

### Action

Information on whether pesticides have been increasingly used around trees will be sent to the panel.

Councillor Steve Pitt Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development portfolio gave an overview of the (Parks & Recs department's use of pesticides.

- Trials are being carried out now to try to reduce pesticide use.
- Pesticide use increased as previously contracted-out areas were brought in-house and has since reduced. There is scope for further reduction.
- Strimming around the base of trees has proven to kill young trees. Manual weed removal is always better. Parks take care not to hit trees, but it is not always realistic to expect them to take the necessary time to trim around the trees, particularly as they are not very well paid.
- The council has a legal duty to remove all Japanese knotweed on its land. Glyphosate is injected directly into the root base. No viable alternative to this method has been found yet.
- The report that was published with the agenda shows that out of 51 local authorities, 33 are still using glyphosate especially for specific treatment of invasive species. Two went pesticide-free and then decided to reintroduce it. Of the eight that have declared themselves to be pesticide-free: only one of these is a city and some of the others do not manage their own land and therefore never used it in the first place. He suggested that the validity of this data should be taken with a pinch of salt.
- The parks service only uses pesticides when necessary.
- One resident recently contacted the council to praise the weed management trials taking place in Highland Cemetery. They reported that the numbers of butterflies had increased significantly since this new method was introduced.
- Countryside wardens are in place now and can map the different management techniques happening in various areas.
- The verges on the Common were left unmown for as long as possible. These were mowed last week as the common is now required for large events.
- Most parks have rewilded areas. Wildflowers have come up by themselves and are more drought resilient.
- Grass left to grow pose a significant danger to dogs if the seeds get onto their coats. The darts burrow into the skin and make their way into vital organs, leading to the death of the dog. The council therefore ensures that there are clear paths

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for people and dogs to follow. This also shows that certain areas have been deliberately left unmown rather than just neglected.

- Some authorities pour acids, especially vinegar onto land. There are serious implications to doing that. A balanced approach is required.
- The potential cost of using alternatives need to be understood. If parks do more manual removal, additional staff will be required. Recruitment has been difficult this year, especially for this type of work.

In response to questions, Councillor Pitt explained that:

- Purchasing a new vehicle and recruiting at least two new operatives would cost in the region of six figures.
- There is further work to be done as parks are still carrying out trials.
- Manual weed removal would not be possible on bowling greens or golf courses. These need to be treated as special cases.
- Last year the Isle of Wight removed its ban on using glyphosates and then used beach buggies to speed up and down spraying them.
- Care must be taken in reaching a decision to ensure any ban is feasible. A u-turn would be worse.

Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson gave an overview of the strategy in the Transport portfolio:

- The PFI contract extends verge to verge not just highways or pavements.
- Insecticides are not used.
- Weedkillers are used when weeds are blocking roads, paths or drains or are causing a slipping hazard.
- The advantage of a weedkiller is that it kills the roots rather than just the green above ground parts of the plant. Alternatives do not kill the roots and therefore repeat treatments are required.
- Alternatives including freezing, burning and hot oil have been looked into. The aim is to minimise pesticide use as the council learns more.
- It would be unrealistic to remove pesticides completely, but it is very useful and the right process to reduce their use to a minimum.
- It is important not to go from one extreme to another. The council can do things that cost money and get us on the journey. It may not be possible yet to go pesticide-free, but that should not stop us from trying to get down that road to improve things.

In response to questions, Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that:

- Westminster is the city council that states it is glyphosate free.
- He is unsure how to quantify the amount of product used within the different types of open space because its use is targeted.
- One of the council's golf courses is leased out and the other is maintained in-house.
- Burning off Japanese knotweed can be done but the ground needs to be excavated afterwards. A specialist will advise on the appropriate treatment and will carry it out. Of all the local authorities that are pesticide-free that he tried to contact, the vast majority have an exemption particularly for Japanese knotweed. The council may need to accept the need for pesticides in exceptional cases. The specialists were asked about electric shock treatments for Japanese knotweed but advised against using it as there are a number of associated safety issues particularly if it is used in a public place.

- Operatives using pesticides have specific training and wear PPE. Spot treatment is only carried out when appropriate e.g., not in windy conditions.
- He is not aware of any other plants that may need specific treatment of pesticides.
- A London council is using pesticides to eradicate processionary moth caterpillars.
- Local authorities are looking to reduce their use as much as possible. Portsmouth is in line with them and is not expecting a different outcome from the trials. Each local authority is set up differently. Some contract out the maintenance, for some county councils manage elements of their land.
- The way the land is managed has changed, as well as the number of applications.
- Some local authorities moved too quickly to become pesticide-free and initially had to use staff from other departments to cover the shortfall in order to manage the workload. Now, in addition to having an in-house team, they contract out work at peak times.

In response to a question, Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager explained that:

- Japanese knotweed is a very specific plant and an invasive species. A barrier is erected out it when it's being treated to keep people at a distance.
- Highways has had a significant reduction in its use of pesticides last year: 900 to 560 litres. It will probably have used 400 litres by the end of this year.
- Previous product used 490 chomes per litre. The current one contains 360 per litre. It is not more aggressive. It is a weaker solution.
- The figures show the actual litres used.
- They are always monitoring what else is coming out. As soon as something suitable comes on the market, it will be looked into.

During the discussion, the panel noted that:

- Exemptions may well be necessary, if the city is to go pesticide-free until an effective alternative is found.
- The possible impact on large developments if a non-glyphosate treatment is used on Japanese knotweed must be considered.
- The housing department has done a lot to reduce the volume of pesticides used without increasing costs and has received no complaints. The meadows required herbicide treatment to rebalance them.
- Members are aware of the difficulties in different parts of the Parks portfolio. Farlington Marshes, the golf courses and Southsea Common require tailored approaches.
- The report will include details of expected capital and revenue costs and the impact of any recommendations on the PFI contract which has 7-8 years left to run.
- A golf course in Basingstoke uses a different type of grass that requires a different type of treatment.

The panel noted the completed questionnaires that had been returned.

#### Actions

- A list of the organisations that had been sent the questionnaire will be resent to the panel.
- The University of Portsmouth be asked again for its views.

### **18. Future Items for the Panel's Workprogramme. (AI 5)**

The panel discussed possible future reviews and noted that:

- As the panel has carried out reviews on the environment and transport, it may be appropriate to do one on community safety.
- Officers could help with choosing a topic, but the panel decides the scope.
- It is important that any review is manageable within the timescale.

The meeting concluded at 6:45pm

## **TRAFFIC, ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY PANEL**

Minutes of the meeting of the Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel held on Friday, 22 September 2023 at 3pm in the Guildhall.

### **Present**

Councillor Judith Smyth (in the Chair)  
Charlotte Gerada  
Chris Dike

#### **19. Apologies for Absence. (AI 1)**

Councillors Jason Fazackarley, Mark Jeffery and Simon Bosher sent their apologies.

#### **20. Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

Councillor Charlotte Gerada declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest; she is a member of the RSPB.

#### **21. Minutes of the Previous Meeting. (AI 3)**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 July be agreed as a correct record.**

#### Matters Arising

At the previous meeting, Councillor Pitt stated that members of the public had raised concerns about the council's Estates Services' greening proposals in Cosham. The Chair had looked into this and determined that it had concerned public green open spaces under Portsdown Hill and was now resolved.

#### **Action**

The location be sent to Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services so he can look into this.

#### **22. Reducing the use of pesticides on council land. (AI 4)**

It was agreed that the panel is aiming to complete this review at its meeting in October if possible, and submit it to Cabinet during November to allow any new expenditure to be considered as part of the 2024/ 25 budget-setting process.

#### **Councillor Kimberley Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Greening the City**

Councillor Barrett asked the panel to note the following points.

Many people are discussing this important issue which is a priority for the council.

*Colas*

Some residents have reported that when asked, Colas has left the base of their garden walls unsprayed.

Areas where it is safe to stop weeding have been identified.

There has been some good work with community groups.

Pesticide use has significantly decreased in Estates Services and Parks. Highways is working towards to further reduce their use.

Building up the evidence base is key to ensure the resources are deployed in the correct locations and that the money is there in future budgets.

In response to questions, she explained that:

Felicity Harris, Green and Healthy City Co-Ordinator is very keen to increase biodiversity and green spaces etc. She is working on biodiversity policies and strategies and an updated Greening Strategy will go to Cabinet on 3 October. This will be updated as and when changes happen. It is important that the council's policies are aligned.

There are discussions about including a Biodiversity Policy in the Local Plan.

Work was a little siloed in the past but will be under one umbrella going forward.

She was the Nature Champion for two years, but this role was removed because it was duplicating work that was already being carried out.

As Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Greening the City she works with many departments.

She tries to inform Opposition Spokespersons about what is going on as much as possible. The opposition monthly briefings are not held in public. The spokespersons attend portfolio briefings and decision meetings. Other members can make deputations or just talk to Cabinet Members. She encourages public deputations and is happy for these to be read out. She would be happy for more information to be made public. Public involvement is very important as they do not have all the answers.

She receives many emails from residents with concerns regarding pesticides use and requests for their streets to opt-out of spraying.

More research is required to establish whether there is a link between the reduction of pesticide use and increased biodiversity.

Milton Park is beautiful especially with the changing of the plants during the seasons. However, some complaints were made about the wilding and no-mow areas in the park.

An email from Felicity Harris was read out which included the following points:  
Every local authority has a duty with regard to improving biodiversity. The council is looking into having a biodiversity paper / strategy which will recognise the importance

of being evidence-based and will look at different strands including having a soil policy. It is important that plants being put in now will be resilient to the changing conditions over the next few years.

Felicity Harris is running a workshop on 17 October for officers across many departments.

### **Action**

More information from Felicity Harris is available upon request.

The Greening Strategy will include pesticides use and the results of this panel's findings.

It is important to take people along with us in the journey.

Depaving in Buckland was very successful.

The council is looking into identifying what can be done to encourage and support residents to adopt tree pits. It is important to consider that the responsibility for maintenance would revert to the council if the person no longer able / wants to look after it. The tree pits furthest from the highway would be easier to maintain.

Some residents would like to have wild plants growing at the base of their front walls, but their landlords do not permit this.

More advice can be given to garden owners and allotment holders to reduce pesticide use and increase biodiversity.

The council's Climate and Greening website page can include more information.

During their discussion, the panel raised the following points:

There is an appetite for a new way to manage wild plants. People have noticed more wild plants on front walls and that does not bother them. Care must be taken that paths are kept safe of course.

The management of wild plants without using pesticides may cost less because the council would be doing less.

Seafront noticeboards about the changes of planting have been well received.

This can only progress as part of a wider, integrated strategy.

There may be a need for engagement rather than a big consultation.

Westminster Council encourages residents to adopt tree pits and are advised to attach green ribbons on the trees to show that the pit should not be sprayed.

The Planning Committee can now add a condition to require a permeable surface be laid if a front lawn is being removed to make space for parking.

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### **Discussion paper on Pesticide Changes.**

*Councillor Dike left the meeting at 4pm.*

Charlotte Smith, Assistant Director for Corporate Services introduced the discussion paper that had been published with the agenda and in response to questions, explained that:

Information from national guides could be repurposed to create local guides for residents. Interest in the information provided on the website and social media channels would be evaluated to ensure that it is relevant.

Members agreed that engagement regarding pesticide use would need to be integrated with the rest of the communication strategy. It would focus on information, education and celebration and feature what residents have done.

### **Other local authorities' use of pesticides.**

Councillor Smyth noted that it had been very difficult to obtain a clear picture of what other local authorities are doing and a number have made false steps. The Notice of Motion to Full Council's aim was to eliminate pesticide use. This review has demonstrated that a significant reduction has already been achieved. Care must be taken when referring to eliminating pesticide use, as residents cannot be prevented from using them in their own gardens.

This panel was unable to obtain information from the big landowners Portsmouth Hospitals' NHS Trust and the University of Portsmouth. It is important to consider how the council can work more closely with these partners

In response to questions, Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that:

As glyphosate is effective for a long period of time, less repeat treatment is required.

This is not an exact science; trials are analysed and lessons learnt.

Some alternatives including acetic acid are still treated as hazardous substances and are not as effective as pesticides. Non-spraying methods are therefore preferable if looking at alternatives. However, alternatives could possibly be trialled in different environments.

At the start of their shift, operatives collect their spraying kit and glyphosate, then go to the sites on the list. Glyphosate use is not measured per site, so it is not possible to provide more granularity.

Next year, if glyphosates are still being used, the service is looking into getting a better level of data on the different approaches on sites and the monitoring of outcomes.

Members agreed that a breakdown of glyphosate use in different sites would be very useful and that a method for doing that should be found. Additionally, if glyphosate treatment did continue to be used on Japanese Knotweed, the panel would not want this to continue indefinitely. The market should be monitored regularly for alternatives.



### **Draft Weed control in the Parks Service trial report**

The panel noted this report and commented that many visitors manage the wild plant growth themselves to a small extent.

### **Growing in the Community report by the Local Government Association**

In response to questions, Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager explained that:

There are approximately 2,000 allotment holders.

The council could work with the allotment association to review what products are stocked and influence the advice they give to allotment holders.

Empty plots are generally cleared and strimmed as quickly as possible because there is a long waiting list.

Members agreed that a further piece of work would be needed regarding allotments with consultation and involvement of allotment holders.

### **Glyphosate usage in the Parks, Housing & Highways Services.**

In response to questions, Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services explained that:

If people enquired, we talked about what we were doing but people are happy with the approach taken. There had been no complaints about the area around a housing block in Paulsgrove when two maintenance cycles had been missed and the grass was ankle high. There seems to be an acceptance of having more greenery in estates.

Cleaners scrape hard surfaces near housing blocks. Gardeners strim or use weed ripper machines for larger areas.

Members were impressed with the approach taken by Estates Services.

### **Glyphosate use by Highways.**

This report was not available for this meeting but is attached to these minutes as an appendix.

Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical) gave a brief update on the progress made in reducing pesticide use in highways.

Usage in 2018 was 860 litres and in 2023: 550- 600 litres. This is a reduction in the quantity used, this year Colas are also trialling the use of a reduced concentration herbicide. This will not reduce the volume being sprayed but the amount of Glyphosate entering the environment until an effective alternative can be found.

The alternatives were covered previously and included mechanical methods, electrocution, foam, flame, steam and high-pressure water. There are issues associated with most of these and also a potential increase in carbon emissions.

Colas is keen to keep up to date with the changes in the market and will trial alternatives when they come up.

The costs that would be incurred if the PFI were amended as a result of an instruction from the council to reduce pesticide use are not easy to calculate due to the nature of the contract and would be commercially sensitive.

The council and Colas are monitoring how other local authorities manage wild plants.

Acetic acid has been trialled but there were complaints about the possible impact on bees and plants.

There is 450km of carriageway and twice as much when footways are included.

Colas will attend the biodiversity workshop that was mentioned earlier in the meeting and are actively engaging with the Council on biodiversity.

Planting at the base of trees in tree pits needs to be carefully managed. There are instances where growth at the base of a tree has been implicated in minor accidents due to reduced visibility.

There has been discussion with Colas about the letters that they send to owners of hedges that overhang too far onto pavements. These have been amended to state more clearly what is expected of the residents and how much should be cut back.

#### **A review into biodiversity improvements in urban Portsmouth 22 March 2022**

Members had already seen the Cabinet's response to this biodiversity report and therefore agreed that their current review's recommendations should align with those made in the biodiversity review.

#### **The guiding principles for the drafting of the recommendations**

Members discussed these principles and agreed that the review should be put in context with what other local authorities are doing.

## **Appendix Four**

The LGA's Growing in the Community guidance for local authorities.  
Consulting with plot holders (page 42).

*Effective communication and consultation with allotment associations and individual plot holders (both present and future) is an essential component of good practice. This is particularly the case when an allotments strategy is to be prepared which will chart a new course for the development of the service. For many plot holders allotments are havens of tranquillity, places towards which they have a strong sense of ownership. Changes (or rumours of changes) which threaten to disturb that tranquillity or other aspects of the established order may not be popular, particularly if they are made without prior consultation, explanation or warning. No single group can reasonably expect to exercise a veto over how a resource for the whole community is used. It is important however to respect the fact that without the continuing enthusiasm of existing plot holders, sometimes in the face of discouraging circumstances, allotments may not have survived as a resource with so much potential for the future. The allotments manager should always try to handle relations with plot holders with the utmost consideration and courtesy, and in accordance with the local authority's policies on customer care.*

*A consultative framework, such as an Allotments Consultative Panel (as in Bristol and the London Borough of Bromley – usually with representative membership), or an allotments forum (as in Worcester, Swindon and the London Borough of Brent – usually with open membership), enables effective communication between the authority, the plot holders and their associations. Such a body requires a constitution or document defining its terms of reference and its structure. Consultation can also be with federations of allotment associations, which can be a very effective voice for allotment gardeners, in part because of the wider perspective that they can command. The active federations in the Wirral, Manchester and Brighton are all good examples with particularly useful websites:*

[www.wirralfedallotments.20m.com](http://www.wirralfedallotments.20m.com)

[www.amas.org.uk](http://www.amas.org.uk)

[www.bhaf.org.uk](http://www.bhaf.org.uk)

*Meetings should be open wherever possible, the press and public permitted to attend, and agendas and minutes of the meetings should be published and made available to those wishing to see them. Additionally, an annual general meeting will allow the authority to report its performance directly to the plot holders, and provides them with an opportunity to express their views and opinions – something that can also be achieved using regular opinion surveys.*

**Appendix Five**

Use of Pesticides on City Council Land.

<https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s44820/Use%20of%20Pesticides%20on%20City%20Council%20Land%20report%20to%20Cabinet%20-%20March%202022.pdf>

**Appendix Six**

Review into Biodiversity Enhancement in Urban Portsmouth

<https://democracy.portsmouth.gov.uk/documents/s37569/A%20REVIEW%20INTO%20BIODIVERSITY%20ENHANCEMENT%20IN%20URBAN%20PORTSMOUTH.pdf>

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