

## **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.

---

Chair