

Appendix One

Meeting Date	Witnesses	Documents Reviewed
13 March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services • Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager • Martin Lavers, Assistant Director of Regeneration • Eric Brangier, Managing Director, Ensign 	<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"> • Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services • Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager • Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical) 	<p>The Pesticides Action Network Local Authority Tool Kit (PAN LA Tool Kit).</p>
13 July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Darren Sanders, Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness. • Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services • Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager • Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical) 	<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"> • Councillor Steve Pitt, Leader & Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Economic Development. • Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Cabinet Member for Transport. • Eric Brangier, Managing Director, Ensign • Adrian Rozier, Park Services Manager • Richard Stocks, Highways PFI Deputy Contract Manager (Technical) 	<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"> • Councillor Kimberley Barrett, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Greening the City. • Charlotte Smith, Assistant Director Corporate Services. 	<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 & 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.

Scrutiny Panel	Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny Panel
Topic	Reducing the use of pesticides on council land.
<p>Purpose of enquiry inc. potential outcomes.</p> <p>(The remit to be clear and concise as this statement forms the backbone of the enquiry).</p>	<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>
Reason for enquiry.	<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>

Enquiry format	Scrutiny review
Relevant Cabinet Members	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.
Relevant officers	To include: Phil Bentley, Head of Estates Services Adrian Rozier, Parks Development Manager Martin Lavers, Assistant Director, Regeneration.
Consultees and stakeholders	Colas Ltd. University of Portsmouth Portsmouth Friends of the Earth
Start date	March 2023
Target Completion Date	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

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 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 Boshier 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.

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

www.amas.org.uk

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>

