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| Subject: | Reducing the use of Pesticides | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 26th November 2019 | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture | | |
| Contact Officer: | Name: | Robert Walker | Tel: 01273 294349 |
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| Ward(s) affected: | (All Wards); | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report outlines the current position on efforts to reduce the use of pesticides in our city parks and open spaces and on our city's pavements and highways. .
- 1.2 Pesticides cover a range of chemicals that kill pests and include insecticides (kill insects), herbicides (kill weeds) and fungicides (kill fungus). In recent years, there has been a general decline in the quantity of many pesticides used and the range of uses they have been put to. However, the use of glyphosate has remained high.
- 1.3 This report seeks permission from the committee for City Environmental Management services (covering City Clean and City Parks) to phase out most pesticide use by 2022. It should be noted that the proposed future reductions would not cover pesticides used elsewhere in the council, such as by the pest control team where pesticides will be used to treat pests that pose a significant direct health risk, or the few pests that Cityparks treat pests which pose a significant health risk. The report also asks that pesticide use continues where we are tackling invasive plant species or to kill tree stumps. Any restrictions agreed by committee for Cityparks and Cityclean will cover contractors engaged by these sections of the council to work on the land they are responsible for

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees to end the use of glyphosate by Brighton & Hove City Council's City Environmental Management services with immediate effect, other than in exceptional cases to kill invasive plant species, such as Japanese Knotweed or to kill tree stumps.
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees that City Environmental Management will not engage with contractors to use glyphosate on any land managed by these departments.
- 2.3 That Committee approves to City Environmental Management working with other departments to phase out glyphosate use across the council and to work towards phasing out other pesticide use by 2022.

- 2.4 That the Committee notes that the removal of weeds in parks and on hard surfaces will be undertaken manually as an alternative approach to using pesticides.
- 2.5 That the Committee agrees that an update report should be brought back to committee in autumn 2020 to update members on progress and the results and to review this approach to weed removal.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Glyphosate

- 3.1 In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) published a report which stated that glyphosate was “probably carcinogenic to humans”. Since then, there has been a significant debate about whether herbicides, including glyphosate, are safe to use.
- 3.2 The Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) (appendix 1) recently provided a briefing to its members on glyphosate. Some notable points:
- There is no right or wrong answer to the question is it safe to use glyphosate products
 - National agencies across the world have declared glyphosate to be safe to use; however, some countries have now decided to ban glyphosate or severely curtail its use; the UK continues to say glyphosate based products are safe to use
 - There are over 18,400 lawsuits in US courts alleging links between Roundup pesticide and cancer
 - The use of glyphosate-based products is still legal in the UK so local authorities cannot be prosecuted for using these products
 - There are few alternatives to glyphosate and those which are seen as alternatives are often still in a pilot phase and much more expensive to use
 - Some local authorities have taken to ban glyphosate and glyphosate-based herbicide use totally, or at least in specific areas such as schools, playgrounds, parks and pavements
 - The Health and Safety Executive enforce regulations relating to the advertisement, sale, storage, supply and use of pesticides
 - There may be a need for the public to accept higher levels of weeds if the use of glyphosate is banned
- 3.3 Of particular note, APSE says “it may be prudent for all local authorities to carefully consider the scale of glyphosate use, the likely risks arising, the potential to limit the reliance on glyphosate-based products and the ability to find a suitable alternative product to prepare for the future”.
- 3.4 Ending the use of pesticides on hard surfaces will be likely to mean that there will be more visible weeds for longer periods of time. However weeds do contribute to biodiversity by provide a habitat and source of food for bees and other insects.

City Parks

- 3.5 Traditionally, City Parks has used pesticide for a range of purposes and in most cases, pesticide use has been reducing steadily as horticultural practices are being adopted that increasingly reduce or eliminate pesticide use:
- In all parks and housing estates, woodchip from our arboriculture operation is used to suppress weed growth in shrub beds and around some trees.
 - Plants are selected for their resistance to pests and diseases. For example, the Preston Park Rose Garden is not treated with fungicide or insecticide, whereas a traditional rose garden depends on a fungicide and insecticide spraying regime
 - At The Level, these techniques have been combined with a number of other environmentally sensitive management techniques to deliver a high quality, pesticide-free park that has won awards for both its general condition and specifically for environmental practices.
- 3.6 New landscaping is being designed to reduce the need to use pesticides. The new Victoria Garden (phase one and two) is being set out with dense herbaceous planting that will provide few chances for weed growth, once established.
- 3.7 Over the last three years, no insecticide has been used in City Parks. However, there will be a need to use insecticide to treat Brown Tail Moth or Oak Processionary Moth should there be an outbreak. Both present a risk to people with asthma, and the latter is a very serious health threat causing rashes and respiratory problems. The use of fungicide has reduced with more emphasis now on cultural control on fine turf and a reduction in the number of bowling greens in the city.
- 3.8 It is recommended that herbicides continue to be used to control invasive species. In Brighton & Hove, the only invasive weed we currently treat is Japanese Knotweed.

Hard Surfaces and Highways

- 3.9 Traditionally, a contractor has been used to complete weed spraying twice a year to manage weeds on the city's highways and pavements. These contractors are procured using the council's procurement process which includes ensuring appropriate risk assessments and health and safety arrangements are in place. They use glyphosate. The contract expired in 2018 and cost £0.036m. In 2019 no weed-sprays have been completed.
- 3.10 Managing weeds on pavements and highways is challenging without the use of pesticides. Failure to manage effectively can lead to damage on pavements and roads and weeds can become obstructions and/or trip hazards, leading to injuries and litigation against the council.
- 3.11 In looking to alternative methods, this year's spraying did not take place which is why residents and Members may see an increased number of weeds across the city. Instead, the budget has been diverted to non-glyphosate removal by manual weeding using hoes and by brushing and ripping weeds. Roads and pavements subject to weed spraying were reviewed and two approaches adopted:

- In low footfall areas, six additional operatives were employed for six weeks (using the existing weed spraying budget) to complete manual weeding.
 - In high footfall areas, such as the town centre, where roads and pavements are swept on a daily basis, existing operatives continue to manage and sweep weeds.
- 3.12 The cost of carrying out manual weeding for a full season has been calculated to be £0.070m which includes the cost of employing six additional seasonal staff on temporary contracts for a six month period and other associated costs such as the cost of additional vehicles and tools required to undertake the task. The council budgeted an additional £0.033m for 2019/20 for keeping the city clean and tidy. With the existing budget for weed removal this means that the additional costs of manual weed removal can be covered. The experience of a limited amount of weed removal this year has enabled City Clean to identify areas where manual weed removal will need to focus next year and where no/or very little weed removal will be required for next year. Plans are being drawn up to target resources and improve the levels of manual weed removal for 2020.
- 3.13 It should be noted that a number of community groups have also been involved in weed removal as part of tidying up their neighbourhoods.
- 3.14 Officers have been researching alternative technologies and will continue to do so. A demonstration of hot foam treatment was carried out in September 2019 but while this killed the weed, it does not appear to have effectively killed the roots and we understand to do so most weeds would require several applications making the treatment across all highways time consuming and costly. Most alternative technologies require heat and this generates an additional carbon cost and in some cases air polluting emissions. However these technologies are advancing at pace and will be reviewed as part of the update report in autumn 2020.
- 3.15 For this reason it is recommended that in 2020 a manual weeding approach is adopted and extended while officers continue to explore and test alternative technologies.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 New technologies are being introduced as an alternative to glyphosate but as stated in the APSE report, these are more expensive and sometimes not as effective. Please see Appendix 2 for an analysis and consideration of these. It may be that a combination of approaches is adopted to manage weeds in Brighton & Hove.
- 4.2 In reviewing alternatives, consideration needs to be given to not only their effectiveness, but also the carbon costs of doing so. It is reported that alternative techniques, such as hot water, burn more energy than traditional weed killers.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The council is aware of a growing concern from residents about the use of pesticides in the city which is demonstrated by a large number of enquiries via councillors, MPs and residents themselves.

- 5.2 There is a campaign running to make Brighton and Hove a pesticide free city, supported by the Pesticide Action Network.
- 5.3 As part of the review in autumn 2020 a survey will be done to seek the views of residents.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 While the question as to whether glyphosate is safe to use continues to be debated, Brighton & Hove City Council has committed to become pesticide free by 2022. Services within City Environment have made good progress to meet this ambition: City Parks continues to adopt horticultural practices that reduce or eliminate pesticide use; and Cityclean is exploring a number of options. There are budget and resource implications that need to be considered when deciding the most appropriate treatment.
- 6.2 This is an area of developing technology and the council is committed to the continued monitoring of alternative solutions to pesticides.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 As acknowledged in Appendix 1, the alternatives to pesticides may 'come at a cost'. There is both additional recurring funding of £0.033m and existing budgets for pesticides can be applied to alternatives. The financial impact of the alternatives to pesticides will be kept under review as part of budget monitoring and setting and, if required, pressure funding will be requested.

Finance Officer Consulted: Jess Laing

Date: 13/11/19

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 It is noted in the report that weeds can become obstructions and trip hazards on roads and pavements. As Highway Authority, the Council has a duty to maintain publically adopted highway and this duty requires that the highway is kept in a safe condition.

Lawyer Consulted: Hilary Woodward

Date: 19/9/19

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 In addition to what is in the main body of the report, it is reported that glyphosate can have a detrimental impact on animals, birds and insects.

Public Health Implications:

7.5 Information is contained in the body of the report and appendix one

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

1. Glyphosate – where do local authorities stand by the Association of Public Service Excellence
2. Analysis and consideration of weed management alternatives

Background Documents

1. Evaluation of five organophosphate insecticides and herbicides by the International Agency for Research on Cancer available at <https://www.iarc.fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/MonographVolume112-1.pdf>
2. Make our city pesticide free by the Pesticide Action Network available at <https://www.pan-uk.org/brighton-and-hove/>
3. Impacts of pesticides on the environment by the Pesticide Action Network available at <https://www.iarc.fr/featured-news/media-centre-iarc-news-glyphosate/>