

CABINET – 14TH OCTOBER 2021

Report of the Head of Cleansing and Open Spaces

Lead Member: Councillor Bokor

Part A

ITEM MOTION ON NOTICE - GLYPHOSATE-BASED HERBICIDES IN OPEN SPACES, PLAYGROUNDS AND PARKS

Purpose of Report

To consider a motion concerning Glyphosate-based herbicides in open spaces, playgrounds and parks, which was referred by Council to Cabinet on 26th April 2021.

Recommendations

1. That the continued use of Glyphosate is approved.
2. That the use of Glyphosate is monitored on an ongoing basis.
3. That a further review of the use of Glyphosate is conducted prior to the extension or renewal of the Management of Open Spaces Contract. The initial term of the current contract expires in March 2024.

Reasons

1. To ensure that the Council's open spaces are properly maintained at an affordable cost to residents.
2. To ensure that use of glyphosate by the Council is monitored and that the information on year by year usage is available to councillors.
3. To investigate the use of alternatives to glyphosate in the future and establish whether any of the alternatives are more viable.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Full Council Procedure 9.12 in the Council's Constitution sets out the arrangements for dealing with motions on notice.

The Council's Corporate Delivery Strategy states that "Our parks and open spaces are award-winning and treasured by our communities and we will continue to care for them so they can be enjoyed by everyone. We will also continue to develop and improve our open spaces, supported by our pledge to ensure 100,000 trees are planted."

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

This decision will have no impact on existing operations and will therefore be effective immediately, although it is subject to call-in.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no budget implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Excessive use of glyphosate	Unlikely (2)	Significant (2)	Low (4)	Glyphosate usage monitored Operatives carry the appropriate licences
The use of glyphosate is prohibited in the future	Unlikely (2)	Significant (2)	Low (4)	A review of the use of glyphosate is carried out prior to the renewal or extension of the existing contract.
Litigation by a park user or grounds maintenance operative	Remote (1)	Minor (1)	Very Low (1)	No cases have been brought in the UK. Litigation in the USA has been against the manufacturer.

Sustainability

The Council is investigating ways to increase the biodiversity of its open spaces by looking at alternative grass cutting regimes. A report on this matter will be presented to Cabinet in the near future.

Key Decision: No

Background Papers: None

Officers to contact: Matt Bradford
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Part B

Background

1. A motion on notice was submitted by Cllr Ward to the Council meeting on 26th April 2021, as follows:

“This Council notes that:

- *The use of glyphosate in public and open spaces is banned in a number of European countries, including France and Italy. EU member states relicensed glyphosate in 2017, with the additional condition that member states ‘minimise use in public spaces such as parks, public playgrounds and gardens’. Currently there is no legislation to reflect this in the UK. However, a number of local authorities in the UK have taken voluntary action to stop their own use of glyphosates, the nearest example being Erewash.*
- *Glyphosate is shown to have a detrimental impact on soil and plant health, beneficial insects (such as bees) and earthworms, aquatic micro-organisms and amphibia, as well as on pets who ingest grass that has been sprayed with the substance, such as dogs, cats or horses. In 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer declared glyphosate to be genotoxic (causes DNA damage), carcinogenic to animals and a ‘probable’ carcinogenic in humans.*
- *There are numerous design, mechanical and cultivational practices as well as non-chemical herbicides that can be used as an alternative to glyphosate herbicides.*

This Council believes that:

- *The use of chemical herbicides such as glyphosate is neither advisable, appropriate or necessary in our public spaces.*

This Council resolves to:

- *Stop the use of glyphosate-based herbicides in public parks and gardens, playgrounds and open spaces managed directly by Charnwood Borough Council, or by third parties on the Council’s behalf.*
 - *To adopt the use of the aforementioned non-chemical practices that can be used as an alternative to glyphosate herbicides as soon as possible.”*
2. In accordance with Full Council Procedure 9.12 (f) in the Council's Constitution, the motion is now submitted to the Cabinet for consideration accompanied by a written report from the appropriate officers setting out key legal, financial, service and corporate implications.
 3. Glyphosate is the most frequently used herbicide worldwide and within the EU and UK. It is currently licensed for use in the UK until 15 December 2022 under

EU legislation, which is likely to be extended to 2025 to allow the development of the new UK active substance renewal programme.

4. There has been much debate in recent years regarding its safety to humans and the environment. Opponents such as the Pesticide Action Network UK claim that long term exposure to pesticides is linked to the development of many serious illnesses and diseases such as: cancer including leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; Parkinson's; asthma; depression and anxiety; and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The International Agency for Cancer Research (IARC), a division of the World Health Organisation, classified glyphosate as a carcinogenic substance in Group 2A as "probably carcinogenic to humans" based on studies published in the Lancet Oncology journal in March 2015. However, a subsequent peer-review of the IARC assessment in September 2016 concluded that glyphosate is "unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk to humans."
5. Glyphosate has been thoroughly assessed over many years by organisations such as the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and there is an extensive body of research including more than 800 scientific studies confirming that glyphosate and glyphosate-based formulated products can be used safely and do not cause cancer when used as directed. Glyphosate has been considered to be very safe toxicologically and environmentally, because it does not leach through soil and has low mammalian toxicity.
6. Despite the reassurance of safety from these competent institutions, some local authorities in the UK are coming under pressure from members of the public to reduce the use of glyphosate and are therefore choosing to trial alternative methods of weed control for their parks, open spaces, streets and housing areas. There are few alternatives to glyphosate and even those which are considered to be alternatives are often still in a pilot phase and are much more expensive to use. Considering the budget constraints we are working under, this does not make them a very attractive proposition.
7. The Council's contractor, idVerde, uses glyphosate to manage weeds within its contractual areas including on hard surfaces, in hedge bases and shrub beds, along wall and fence lines and around obstacles in grass areas and tree bases. Operatives using glyphosate are required to obtain the appropriate licences.
8. Officers have investigated the use of a variety of alternative chemical treatments, including acetic acid. The alternative chemical treatments are considered to be much less effective than glyphosate and much more expensive. Glyphosate application is considered to cost in the region of £35 per hectare, and the alternatives all ranged between £165 and £562 per hectare. Some of the alternative treatments were considered to be more harmful to the environment than glyphosate.
9. Several thermal methods of weed treatment have been investigated including hot water foam, electric shock treatment and flame weeding. These methods all had significant compromises in effectiveness, safety and for the environment. For example, hot water/foam treatment required a vehicle mounted petrol/diesel

powered water heater. This provided poor access to harder to reach areas and has a negative impact on our carbon management.

10. Officers have investigated the use of non-chemical treatments (manual removal). These methods combined would cost an additional £250k per annum and residents would be required to have an additional tolerance for weeds as they would not be as effective as the methods currently deployed. The additional costs cannot be absorbed into the Council’s existing or future budgets. A summary of the additional resources required for manual removal is provided below.

Application	Resources
Grass perimeter areas	Additional seasonal strimmer operatives with each of the grass cutting teams (three mowing teams, two open spaces teams and two cemeteries teams: seven in total) from April to September, to maintain growth around obstacles, fence lines
Shrub beds	For the shrub beds and other planted areas, deployment of two teams of two seasonal operatives from March to October, each team using a 3.5t single-cab tipper vehicle and hand tools.
Hard Surfaces	Increased sweeping regime of two teams working from March to October, with each team consisting of two operatives, one 3.5t tipper vehicle and Powered

11. Officers are working on methods to increase the biodiversity value of council owned green spaces and will present a report on this in the near future.