

Report for: Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel – 17th December

Title: Herbicide usage on Council land in Haringey

Report authorised by : Zoe Robertson, Head of Commissioning and Client Services

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Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** For information

1. Describe the issue under consideration

The panel has requested a short briefing on the usage of herbicide on council owned land in Haringey.

2. Background information

Herbicides are used on a variety of land across Haringey. In general terms the herbicides used in the borough are used on no more than four occasions in anyone year, applied by trained, qualified professionals. Chemicals used are generally less toxic than chemicals available to the amateur gardener.

All the products used by the council are licensed by the EU and based on current evidence are safe to use for their intended purposes. This situation is regularly reviewed by the licensing bodies and the council monitors any changes in this guidance and legislation.

3. Highways and Homes for Haringey Land

Weed management on streets, footpaths and gullies is delivered through the integrated waste management contract with Veolia who subcontract the work to Complete Weed Control.

The Council does not specify the type of chemical for weed control, other than it must comply with relevant health and safety/EU legislation. Glyphosate is routinely used given its proven effectiveness.

The streets in Haringey are sprayed on three occasions each year, whereas the Homes for Haringey areas are sprayed on four occasions.

4. Parks and Green Spaces

Generally, one or two applications a year are made on shrub beds and around hard obstacles. The use is kept to a minimum in line with our commitments in our Green Flag Management Plans.

The method of application is by Total Droplet Control (TDC) formulation. This method of application significantly reduces the amount of chemical used. TDC is a low volume system that virtually eliminates spray drift and run-off, making it safer for operators, bystanders, animals and the environment.

Other chemical usage includes specialist application to treat invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed. These infestations must be treated by the council by law and wherever possible any infestation is treated by direct stem injection of the chemical into the plant.

5. Exploration of Alternatives

Whilst Haringey has not been directly involved in alternative trials many of our neighbouring boroughs have and our professional networks have kept abreast of developments in this area.

Feedback on some alternative treatments to Glyphosates are:

- **Foamstream** – would costs 6 to 8 times more, is messy with foam being left all over the street, is slow and would require additional safety arrangements for operatives. This system has different environmental impacts - it requires a vehicle and a diesel generator emitting fumes and particulates, significant amounts of water and uses palm oil to create the foam.
- **Vinegar** – Not as effective as Glyphosate, washes off weeds and is odorous.
- **Hot water** – Labour and energy intensive, costly and not as effective as Glyphosate. Requires fossil fuels to heat water and increases the carbon footprint of the treatment.
- **Burning** – Requires fossil fuels to create heat and increases carbon footprint of the treatment.
- **Electricity** – requiring a vehicle and a diesel generator emitting fumes and particulates.
- **Hand Weeding** – Labour intensive and very costly.

The council is involved in a pilot working with the Friends of Tower Gardens to declare Tower Gardens a herbicide free area. In this trial the council's level of resource input is remaining the same and the Friends are increasing their work programme to cope with the hand weeding required.