

## COUNTY COUNCIL: 17TH OCTOBER 2023

### Agenda Item No. 11e) – Motion from Councillor Chris Boden – Amendment

Proposed by Councillor Shailer    Seconded by Councillor Sanderson

Additions in bold and deletions shown in strikethrough

~~Core Purpose: To draw attention to and reverse this Council's decision to halt weedkilling under all but the most extreme circumstances.~~

This Council notes the Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independent Group as the Joint Administration voted at Council in February to **initiate a trial removal of** ~~remove~~ cyclic weedkilling based on the following points in the business case:

- the delivery of a **potential** ~~permanent~~ saving of £125k a year.
- the trialling by the **Cambridgeshire** Highways and Transport Service, in partnership with ~~Cambridge City Council~~, to cease cyclic weed **killing by chemical means** ~~clearing~~ to reduce chemical use.
- the removal of only **noxious weeds**, weeds causing **a nuisance or an immediate safety hazard or as part of site preparation before works are carried out.**
- implementation will require investment in community engagement to gain buy in from town and parish councils. This will need to take place in the first quarter of 23/24. Estimated of cost of engagement work is £40k in the first year.

This Council recognises the following:

- ~~— the findings of this pilot have not been reported to members generally or the Highways and Transport Committee.~~
- ~~— evidence shows that a failure to stop weed growth will lead to increased path and road hazards for users and create an ongoing cost growth for future repairs to the council's infrastructure.~~
- ~~— there has been no engagement with parishes and towns as outlined in the business case proposed to council.~~
- ~~— residents, parishes, and towns have directly and indirectly complained about the state of the roads, cycleways and pathways.~~
- ~~— the Joint Administration's decision to halt cyclic weedkilling should have taken place following the outcome of the pilot and community engagement was known.~~

- ~~— cycleways and pathways are less likely to be used for active travel, when overgrown with weeds.~~
- ~~— cycleways and pathways, in many areas, are unsuitable for active travel directly due to the decision by the Joint Administration to change the weedkilling policy.~~
- ~~— failure to spray weedkiller prior to laying new surfaces such as footway slurry is a costly mistake.~~
- ~~— failure to have a preventative approach has led to an explosion of locations of ragwort concentrations throughout the county, which is dangerous to members of the horse family.~~
- ~~— the decision the Joint Administration made that “Only weeds causing an immediate safety hazard would be removed” was a mistake.~~
- ~~— there is a prescribed list of weedkillers available that are safe to use by operatives, with appropriate health and safety measures in place.~~
- **while there is a prescribed list of weedkillers available that are safe to use by operatives, with appropriate health and safety measures in place, it is widely recognised that even weedkillers which biodegrade in the earth can have a devastating impact on pollinating insects.**
- **the findings of the trial have highlighted concerns from residents and parish councils. These are due to be compiled into a report going to the January Highways and Transport Committee, where a decision on this council’s long term weedkilling policy will be made.**
- **combined with this ad-hoc feedback, the council has started a broad engagement campaign with towns and parishes and sent out a survey to gather feedback on the trial approach.**
- **a report on the effects of the new weed policy is due to come to the Highways and Transport Committee on the 23rd January 2024.**

This Council therefore recommends that:

- the Highways and Transport Committee ~~receive a report~~ at its next **January** meeting ~~to~~ **will consider whether to** immediately reintroduce the practice of removing all weed growth from paths and roads to be resurfaced **alongside other options.**
- **the report which is due to come to the Highways and Transport Committee in January should also be shared with all members, and a suitable report be shared with all parish and town councils who have contacted the Council to express their concerns.**
- ~~— the Highways and Transport Committee be asked to allocate sufficient resource to spray existing weeds in urban environments countywide.~~

- **the Strategy and Resources and Performance Committee be asked to allocate sufficient resource to ensure an appropriate spraying regime is in place to manage weeds in an effective way in the long term.**
- a factual statement on the actual biodegradable state of the products used, **and their impact on pollinating insects**, be published to ~~counter the incorrect perceptions of carcinogenic and dangerous and environmentally harmful products~~ **ensure discussion of this issue is based on reliable evidence.**
- City, District, Town and Parish councils and the public be informed that cyclic and preventative weedkilling will be reintroduced **wherever appropriate.**