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Meeting	Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Date	30 January 2023
Present	Councillors K Taylor (Chair), Daubeney (Vice-Chair), Cuthbertson, Hook, Kilbane, Pearson and D Taylor
In Attendance	Councillor Vassie (Chair of Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee) Councillor Cullwick (Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee Member) Councillor Cuthbertson (Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee Member) Councillor Wann (Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee Member) Councillor D'Agorne (Executive Member for Transport) Councillor Widdowson (Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change) Dave Atkinson (Head of Highways and Transport) James Gilchrist (Director of Transport, Environment and Planning) Ben Grabham (Head of Environmental Services) Andrew Leadbetter (EV Strategy Transport Systems Team Officer)

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## **12. Declarations of Interest [17.35]**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, including Members of the Climate Emergency Policy and Scrutiny Committee who had been invited to attend the meeting.

## **13. Public Participation [17.36]**

The Chair reported he had received a late registration to speak from the Pesticides Action Network and as Chair he could accept late registrations. The registration had been withdrawn and he had spoken with the network regarding the points they wished to raise. The Executive Member for Transport suggested that the network should have been invited to the meeting and the Chair noted that it was an opportunity missed. There were no further registrations to speak under the Councils Public Participation Scheme.

## **14. Weed Management Update [17.38]**

The Chair advised that only Members of the Economy and Place Policy and Scrutiny Committee were eligible to vote at the meeting. Members considered a report that provided an overview on how the council manages weeds on the highway and open spaces. Head of Environmental Services, Director of Environment, Transport and Planning and Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change were in attendance to present the report. The Head of Environmental Services gave an overview of the report. The Chair highlighted the councils cross party commitment to remove glyphosate and the commitment made at Full Council in respect of this.

In response to Member questions, the Head of Environmental Services, Director of Environment, Transport and Planning and Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change explained that:

- Regarding the eradication of glyphosate from the streets, this was about appraising the different types of weed treatment along with the management of highways. There were manual methods for the treatment of weeds such as burning and the hot foam method (noting the hot foam method had an environmental impact). The Head of Environmental Services undertook to look into The Guardian article on the links between glyphosate and cancer. The Director of Environment, Transport and Planning noted that as the Highways Authority, the council had 4,000 miles of highways to maintain.
- Asked why the Dringhouses and Woodthorpe Ward did not enter the pilot, the Executive Member (Ward Member for that Ward) explained that Ward residents did not want their Ward spraying and she added that the concentration of the weed killer was being phased down. She noted that she had been contacted by residents whose Wards had been entered into the pilot without being asked.
- There had been an error on the second spray at Hazel Court and the trial had started again.
- A number of councils were trialling hot foam and with mixed results.
- A weed wipe was a wipe put on thistle heads to stop seeds developing and spreading.

- There was no breakdown for the percentage of weeding done manually. Crews undertook manual weeding in parks and open spaces.
- Regarding how much glyphosate needed to be applied, the contractor provided the breakdown for this. The amount used would not be stronger as it was a treatment.
- It was clarified that Wheldrake Ward was included in the pilot.
- It was confirmed that Cllr Vassie's Wheldrake Ward report was included at Annex 6 of the report.
- Glyphosate was sprayed from quadbikes and was used as a spot treatment for the outbreak of plants such as giant spotweed.
- Concerning the mechanical prevention of weeds growing on curbs, six sweepers of different size were used in the city and it was explained how roads were swept on different frequencies. In the department there had been a restructure and the new operations manager would be looking at this.
- Concerning whether a suction approach for weed control would be an option, mechanical sweepers were used across the city and the challenge was maintaining this across the highway network in York. It was a matter of political choice where money was spent.
- The council had not talked to other European places that used less pesticides and York needed to be looked at in its own context when looking at examples. Different settings brought their own challenges and solutions.
- The toleration of weeds on the highway depended on the type of weeds.

[At this point in the meeting, the Chair noted the comments of the Pesticides Action Group].

- The council was in the second year of the contract with the option to extend for two years. The reference to phase out glyphosate was to make contractors aware of what they would be tendering for. Regarding the 2024 re-procurement of the contract, officers would work with the administration in place at that time.
- As part of the continued trial, the council had made a commitment to sweep pilot Wards twice a year.
- The quad bike was the industry standard method of application for weed management and complaints from

residents could be investigated using the GPS data from the contractor.

- Weed killer was not sprayed in playparks and may be sprayed on the highways outside schools.
- The council was looking to use the right weed control in the right place and when the pilot was complete there would be an evidence base for this.
- In principle there could be a potential trial of reducing Glyphosate and replacing with sweeping in the Fishergate Ward but the cost of this needed to be considered.

Following consideration of the report and responses from officers and the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change, the Committee then;

Resolved:

- i. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change to work with Corporate Communications on resident engagement highlighting why Council has committed to phasing out glyphosate and informing them of low maintenance ways for residents to support the pollinator strategy from their own homes/gardens.
- ii. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change that the Council works with any Wards involved in weed control pilots to see if there are better times to undertake mechanical road sweeping as a means to prevent weed growth.
- iii. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change that the areas where glyphosate spraying for weed control takes place, and how often, be added to the York Map.
- iv. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change that glyphosate exclusion areas around sensitive areas (including but not limited to schools, parks, waterways) be considered as part of the efforts to phase out glyphosate.
- v. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change to work with Officers to discuss with Wards their interest in completely opting out of glyphosate sprays and what alternative methods of weed control would involve, pending budgetary considerations.

- vi. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change that if the Council seek to put a new weed control contract out to tender again in 2024 it must go beyond merely clarifying its commitment to phasing out glyphosate, and include requirements to do so in that contract, with timescales.

Reason: To improve the care and maintenance of the local environment including roads and streets, the city centre and parks and green space.

[The meeting adjourned from 19.05 to 19.13]

## **15. Public Electric Vehicle Charging Network [19.13]**

Members considered a report that provided an update on the Public Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Network. The EV Strategy Transport Systems Team Officer, Director of Transport Environment and Planning, Head of Highways and Transport and Executive Member for Transport were in attendance to present the report. The EV Strategy Transport Systems Team Officer outlined the report which detailed the delivery to date.

During discussion, a number of Members suggested that EV charging on terraced street should be part of public provision. In response to Member questions, the EV Strategy Transport Systems Team Officer, Director of Transport Environment and Planning, Head of Highways and Transport and Executive Member for Transport explained that:

- The report referred to public charging within the council's own network. The council had engaged with the Energy Saving Trust on the public EV charging strategy, along with the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV). The work with the Energy Saving Trust was and OZEV detailed.
- The council was working on a hyperhub in the city centre and as technology emerged, changing technology would provide different solutions.
- The challenges faced in introducing on street EV charging.
- The Chair of the Climate Emergency and Policy Scrutiny detailed an Oxford gully EV charging trial. Officers explained the complexities of type of EV charging noting that it was not clear how it met electricity regulations. They added that

information in the public domain reinforced a number of concerns regarding the product.

- Regarding cables running across highways, this had occurred in York and within the OZEV group of authorities there was concerns with a number of authorities not looking at taking that technology forward at present. The council was taking a watching brief on trials taking place.

[The EV Strategy Transport Systems Team Officer left the meeting at 19.49]

- Officers offered Members reassurance that the council was looking at different EV options.
- At the moment the EV strategy was through the public network and the council was investigating options for on street EV charging.
- With reference to a suggestion from a Member that it was felt that terraced areas were being left behind by the current strategy, officers explained that the strategy at present said that EV charging should take place in public car parks.
- A Member referred to a pilot in Hampshire where cables were run across the pavement. Officers advised that energy companies did not allow this. They noted the purpose of pilot studies and the Chair suggested that there were inconsistencies in the approach to trials.
- The Chair of the Climate Change Policy and Scrutiny Committee suggested two recommendations in respect of EV charging. This was to consult with residents on terraced streets and to organise a trial of gulley EV charging on terraced streets.
- There was a regulatory environment (framework)? being developed for EV charging and officers from the council sat on the steering groups for this.
- Officers asked Members if there were any terraced streets in particular they could undertake consultation on EV charging with. Members suggested streets in Fishergate and South Bank.
- Regarding the price of electric vehicles, officers advised that the government had offered subsidies for business users of EV. The impact of rising electricity costs was noted.

Following consideration of the report and responses from officers and the Executive Member for Transport, the Committee then;

Resolved:

- i. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Transport that there be consultation on EV charging with residents in terraced streets (and other locations where off-street parking is not available) to establish what charging infrastructure would encourage them to switch to electric cars.
- ii. That it be recommended to Executive Member for Transport that there be trials on EV charging on terraced streets (or other locations where off-street parking is not available) with input invited from Ward Members or a Members Steering Group.

Reason: To improve access to EV charging.

Cllr K Taylor, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.34 pm and finished at 8.46 pm].

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