

**Decision Session - Executive Member for
Environment and Climate Change**

14 December 2022

Report of the Director of Transport, Environment and Planning

**Weed Management of Highways and Associated Areas – Pilot
wards feedback and next steps**

Summary

1. This report provides feedback on the Weed pilot undertaken in 2022. The report includes feedback from ward members whose wards participated in the Weed pilot in 2022 together with a suite of images captured from this years' weed spraying programme.
2. The report also outlines feedback received from other bodies and organisations regarding weed treatment and details proposed options for 2023 and possible further work.

Recommendation

3. The Executive Member is asked to:
 - i. Consider the report and the recommendations contained within the report and determine the approach to the treatment of weeds in 2023.

Reason: The Executive Member is asked to consider the report and decide on the preferred option(s) set out in the report for weed treatment in 2023.

Background

4. At the Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change meeting on 12 January 2022 it was agreed that for the next two years the Council would:
 - Continue to spray around obstacles in verges e.g., lampposts, street signs, trees, around communal drying areas and some parks and garden path edges.
 - Continue to spray kerbs, footpaths / pavement joints, wall bottoms and back lanes, the bar walls upper footpath, bridges

and supporting structures. This takes place 3 times a year – (i) April/May, (ii) June/July and (iii) September/October (subject to weather conditions)

5. Following the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (Calling In) on 7 February 2022 the Executive Member agreed that
 - Ward Members could choose to be a ‘pilot’ ward and opt out of some of the glyphosate treatments for 2022, and,
 - The Council would continue to work with partners, such as Defra, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and PAN (Pesticides Action Network), to further explore and evaluate alternative weed management approaches to enable the successful phasing out of glyphosate.

Weed Pilot 2022

6. In early March 2022, all ward councillors were written to and asked if they wished to take part in the Weed pilot 2022 which would see a reduced spraying regime for their ward. Members were asked to respond by 30 March 2022 to indicate if they wanted their ward to be considered for the Weed Pilot.
7. The following wards came forward to take part.

Ward	Area
Guildhall	Whole ward
Osballdwick and Derwent	Whole ward
Hull Road	Whole ward
Micklegate	Whole ward
Holgate	Defined areas to be omitted from spray
Fishergate	Whole ward
Rural West	Whole ward to be omitted from apart from Skelton.
Wheldrake	Defined area only to be omitted from spray

8. Those wards that participated in the Weed pilot had no 3rd spray (undertaken in October) and had the 'normal' spraying around highway obstacles (lampposts, trees, road signs etc) replaced with strimming. In Holgate and Wheldrake, two communities agreed to have no spraying at all and were omitted from all operations. Members from the Pilot wards were issued with a proforma feedback sheet and asked to respond by 31 October 2022.
9. At the end of the season, two ward members from the pilot wards have provided feedback / observations; this is included in Annex 1.
10. In support of the Weed pilot, officers have taken photographs illustrating the impact of the ward choices. This information is included in Annex 2.

Contractor Performance

11. Over the course of the last few months, officers have checked on the work of the approved weed contractor. Broadly, there is clear evidence where the contractor has sprayed and evidence of the glyphosate killing weeds; thus protecting the highway network.
12. There have been a couple of minor issues with the contractor performance on defined streets which were exacerbated by residents requesting areas not to be sprayed. The main area where high weed growth was noted was on Victor Street, Kyme Street and Buckingham Street. These streets did receive a follow up visit from the weed contractor and further remedial work has taken place to address the situation.

Work with Other Agencies

13. Over the course of the last few months, officers have worked with and sought information from other agencies regarding weed treatment.
14. A meeting was held with PAN (Pesticides Action Network) in May 2022 where PAN shared a number of case studies where they have worked with other authorities. This information is included in Annex 4
15. Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT). The conversations with YWT confirmed that their estate is very different from the highway network that the Council manages. As such they have limited need

for chemical weed treatment and can rely on volunteer work parties to address invasive weeds on their reserves.

16. Environment Agency. Discussions with the local Biodiversity Officer confirmed that the Environment Agency continue to use glyphosate to treat problem weeds along their river network. Conversations also confirmed that whilst they are keeping an eye on developments in the industry that there are no alternative methods being trialled at this moment in time and no plans to move away from the use of glyphosate as their treatment method.
17. Defra. Despite a number of approaches to Defra there was no reply to the Council's request to meet.
18. Other Local Authorities. Information has been sought from a number of local authorities regarding the treatment of weeds. It is fair to say that a number of authorities have pledged to reduce or end their use of glyphosate but very few areas that have delivered these aspirations. Meetings were held with Manchester City Council officers who contract their spraying out but they have developed a community network where they allow groups to treat weeds in their communities. Broadly, this has worked but there are a number of areas where the Council has had to intervene to address problem areas and weed growth.

Outcomes and Suggested Way Forward

19. Feedback from two of the pilot wards has indicated that broadly there is support for the removal of one of the three sprays to reduce glyphosate usage (i.e., to reduce to two sprays).
20. From the observations by officers there are noticeably less weeds in those wards which received three sprays compared to two. This is particularly evident where the road sweepers can't compensate for reduced spraying i.e. along wall bottoms.
21. It should be noted that a reduction in spraying from 2 to 3 occasions will not produce a 1/3rd reduction in the use of glyphosate. With more weeds being present from the omission of the previous treatment, more glyphosate will be needed to treat what has been left to grow.
22. Anecdotal evidence suggests that where there has been no 3rd spray the resulting weeds are continuing to grow into November and catching winter leaf fall, which in turn may increase the growing medium for next year's weeds. See Annex 3.

23. The long-term impact on highway repairs and maintenance remains an issue we have not been able to ascertain data on.
24. One consideration that needs to be borne in mind is that the weed pilot in 2002 has assessed the impact in that year alone and what is unknown at this stage, is whether not having a third spray will have an impact on the level of weed growth and weed coverage in those areas at the start of the next spraying regime in 2023. This will only be able to be answered in April/May 2023.
25. Therefore, the principal options open to the Executive Member are to consider the following:
 - a) To have a common approach to weed treatment across all wards across the city with no deviations
Why – this will ensure there is a universal approach across the city and remove any uncertainty of treatment effectiveness particularly where streets cross ward boundaries.
 - b) To offer wards the opportunity to opt out of a third spray in 2023 (i.e. not receiving spray 3 in September/October)
Why – this will allow Ward members to decide on the approach in their ward and decide if they wish to reduce the sprays in their areas from 3 to 2.
 - c) To offer wards the opportunity to opt out of a second spray in 2023 (i.e. not receiving spray 2 in June/July)
Why – this will allow Ward members to decide on the approach in their ward and if they wish to reduce the sprays in their area from 3 to 2. It would also enable the Council to understand the impact of missing the summer spray which has not been tried up to this moment in time). in their areas from 3 to 2.
 - d) To cease spraying by Public Realm teams around trees within the highway verge
Why – broadly this is shown to be unnecessary as it has minimal impact – this would reduce the in house usage of glyphosate by approx. 5-10%.
26. Options a) to c) can be accommodated in the existing spraying contract which has a further 12 months to run. The experience from 2022 and, potentially 2023, would the inform the next spraying contract which will need to be retendered in the winter of 2023/24. Option d) above is not part of the contracted-out operations and is therefore an internal consideration only.

Council Plan

27. This proposal supports and contributes to the following Council Plan priority - a greener and cleaner city.

Implications

28. **Financial** - None.
29. **Public Health** – None
30. There are no Legal, Property, Human Resources, Crime and Disorder, or Information Technology implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

31. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy the main risks that have been identified in this report are that a decision is not made on a proposed weed treatment option which could in turn damage the Council's image and reputation. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score has been assessed at "Low". This means that the risk level is acceptable.

Contact Details

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Report Approved	✓	Date: 06/12/2022
Specialist Implications Officer(s): N/A		
Wards Affected:	All	✓
For further information please contact the author of the report		

Background Papers:

Decision Session Executive Member for Environment and Climate Change 12 January 2022 Weed Management of Highways and Associated Areas

Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee (Calling In) 7 February 2022 – Weed Treatment Options

Weed Management of Highways and Associated Areas – Pilot wards Officer Decisions 18 May 2022

Annex 1 – Pilot ward member feedback

Annex 2 – Example weed growth

Annex 3 – Winter leaf build up

Annex 4 – PAN Documents