

**Extract from the notes of the Conservation and Environmental Sustainability Task and Finish Group meeting of 28 October 2019**

**Use of Glyphosates Herbicide Update**

Richard Block, Assistant Director Environment, provided an update on the position in respect of the use of glyphosates herbicides. He had raised the issue with Idverde, who were the Council's contractors for grounds maintenance. Idverde were also the grounds maintenance contractors for a London Borough in which they used a hot foam treatment, so had some experience in alternatives to glyphosate herbicides. The costs of using alternatives to glyphosate herbicides were being looked at so that an informed decision could be made, but it was clear that would be a significant cost implication to ending their use.

In discussion it was suggested that there were ways of reducing the costs involved in a hot foam system, such as reducing the number of applications in a season, a joint contract or sharing equipment with other authorities. Idverde were also the contractor for Babergh and West Suffolk so there was some potential for a shared approach. However, it was highlighted that the contractors were contracted to provide a service. How Idverde approached that or delivered the service was a matter for them, and whilst the Council could nudge them to approach service delivery in a certain way, it could not compel them.

Members of the Group felt that if a recommendation was made to Cabinet to cease the use of the glyphosate herbicides, Cabinet needed to have firm information about the costs implications so that it could take an informed decision. When the issue had previously been considered, it was calculated that moving to an alternative solution would result in an ongoing revenue cost of approximately £80,000 per annum. The Council would obviously seek to negotiate on the additional costs to ensure best value to the tax payer. It was highlighted that glyphosate herbicides were sprayed on Housing Revenue Account land. Colchester Borough Homes would not be in a position to bear the costs of this and would therefore need to pass the cost on to its tenants, unless it received additional funding.

A member of the Group suggested it would be more appropriate for Cabinet to consider all the recommendations from the Group together, rather than consider this issue in isolation. Cabinet could then take an informed view of which issues it should prioritise and devote resources to. However, the consensus of the Group was that as this issue raised potential health and safety implications it would not be appropriate to wait and that the recommendation should be considered by Cabinet at the earliest opportunity.

The Group was of the view that if Cabinet agreed in principle to cease the use of glyphosate herbicides, then a phased approach should be taken to ending their use. For example, areas in which they were used where there was a high risk of human contact should be considered as priorities. Such an approach also needed to take account of the need to encourage biodiversity and encourage alternative sustainable practices, such as reducing the number of times when weed control measures were used and allowing verges and other grassed areas to grow. It was noted whilst the Council could act to control the use of glyphosate herbicides on its own land, this would not prevent their use throughout the borough. They were also used by Essex County Council and by a number of private management companies. It was the view of the Group that the Council should show leadership and use its influence to work with Essex County Council and other organisations and companies who used glyphosate herbicides to encourage them to cease their use also.

*RECOMMENDED TO CABINET that:-*

- (a) Colchester Council commits to cease the use of glyphosate herbicides, by a phased approach based on the nature of the sites where herbicides are used, the need to encourage biodiversity where possible, and the availability of alternative sustainable practices.
  
- (b) Colchester Borough Council will work with other authorities, organisations and companies who use glyphosate herbicides within the borough to encourage them to cease their use of them.