

List of Public Questions for 27 June Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee

Public Questions - Agenda Item 4 – Pesticide Free Cambridge

1. During the most recent Herbicide-Reduction Working Group in March 2024 (1), it was agreed that working group meetings would continue on a regular basis. Since March we have been trying repeatedly to schedule a follow-up meeting, to no avail. Can the council confirm please whether there are still plans to continue the Working Group and when the next meeting will be held? There are a number of action points from the last meeting which remain stalled, and on which we would like an update please.
2. It was agreed that the City Council would launch an effective communications plan to inform residents about the dangers of personal use of pesticides, how this might conflict with current policy; how residents and businesses should not, for instance, be using pesticides on the pavement or road outside private properties (not only does this compromise the Herbicide Reduction Plan (HRP), it is also, in our understanding, illegal); and to share information about non-synthetic alternatives. The comms plan also included plans for signage/information boards on selected unsprayed verges to explain and celebrate the HRP, so as to avoid potential negative feedback of the kind that led to the reversal of the County Council's own herbicide-free policy earlier this year. Can the council clarify what is happening with the Comms plan and whether Pesticide-Free Cambridge will, as agreed, be offered the opportunity to collaborate on this?
3. Further to what was agreed at the March meeting, has the City Council communicated with other stakeholders such as the County Council, the County Highways Green Team, University of Cambridge Colleges, and contractors from energy firms and so on? We contacted you several times earlier in the Spring to report on evidence that herbicide is still being used in various locations around the city in complete contradiction to the city council's policy, and we are concerned not to have received a response from you.
4. In March, the City Council announced that they had approved the budget for the purchase of new machinery with which to better manage vegetation on roads and pavements in a range of environments (2). Has this equipment been purchased and is it now in use around the city? In this regard, it is notable that there are large quantities of vegetation, including some big plants, that

have built up on roads (e.g. in Trumpington) which does little to inspire confidence in the HRP.

5. We would greatly appreciate clarification as to following the roll out of herbicide-free methods across the city in March 2024, whether City Council housing outwith the original four trial wards is now also being managed in a herbicide-free way or if, as was stated in spring 2023, they continue to be treated twice-yearly with herbicides. It would seem completely anomalous, not to mention a wasted opportunity, should they not be subsumed within the herbicide-free management programme.

References:

1. <https://www.pesticidefreecambridge.org/post/record-of-our-meetings-with-councillors-schools-and-partners-groups>
2. <https://www.pesticidefreecambridge.org/post/press-release-following-cambs-county-council-return-to-use-of-herbicides>