

Labour Altered Amendment to Agenda Item 9b: Proposed by Councillor Smart, Seconded by Councillor x

Original amendment existing text ~~struck through~~, additional text underlined in black, additional amendments existing text struck through, additional text underlined in red

Council notes:

- That in 2019 the Council unanimously supported calling a Biodiversity Emergency, which has since then been put into practice with the Council's Biodiversity Strategy.
- That in 2021 the Council unanimously supported a herbicide-free trial in two wards which has since then progressed to the adoption of the council's city-wide Herbicide-Free Weed Strategy in 2025.
- ~~That Cambridge Liberal Democrats called for the Council to adopt and trial herbicide-free weed management, both through the declaration of a Biodiversity Emergency in 2019 and through a motion proposing trials in two wards in 2021.~~
- ~~That the Liberal Democrat motion received unanimous Council support and was welcomed by local environmental organisations and community groups.~~
- That Cambridge City Council has been successful in stopping the use of herbicides.
- Certain widely used formulas, such as glyphosate, have been linked by various health organisations and studies to chronic issues, including potential carcinogenic risks and hormone disruption. The World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer classified glyphosate as "probably carcinogenic to humans".
- Herbicides are therefore potentially dangerous to all plant life including edible foodstuffs, as well as animals, including pets.
- It is the policy of this Council to cultivate a healthy, nature-positive urban environment that supports local wildlife and ecosystems.
- That there has been continuing cross-party support for developing a herbicide-free approach in Cambridge.

- Recognises the important contribution made by Pesticide Free Cambridge, On the Verge and others in developing and supporting Cambridge's herbicide-free ambition.
- That the trials ~~demonstrated the environmental benefits of reducing herbicide use,~~ provided evidence supporting the environmental case for reducing routine herbicide use but also identified significant operational challenges associated with replacing chemical treatment with mechanical and manual methods.
- That mechanical and manual weed removal is more labour-intensive, is affected by weather, seasonal growth, parked vehicles and accumulated detritus, and requires repeat visits because it does not prevent regrowth.
- That, ~~following the trials and investment~~ the Council has invested in specialist equipment, the Council moved in order to extend herbicide-free weed management across the city.
- That the Council's approved 2025 Herbicide-Free Weed Management Work Programme identified an initial backlog of weed growth requiring intensive treatment before moving to a programme of regular scheduled maintenance
- That, since then, implementation has been challenging slow, reflecting the difficult and time-consuming nature of herbicide-free weed removal and the need to tackle years of accumulated detritus alongside the visible growth. Consequently, ~~a substantial number of some areas that are between~~ are still awaiting treatments, and can cause residents to be ~~are~~ understandably concerned about the condition and accessibility of streets and public spaces.
- That there is currently no sufficiently clear and publicly accessible picture of the outstanding backlog, broken down by ward and priority, or of actual delivery against the treatment programme provided in 2025.
- That responsibility for weed management is divided between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and other landowners, requiring strong ~~stronger~~ coordination and clear ~~clearer~~ information for residents.

Council believes:

- That the Council-led ambition to end the routine use of herbicides ~~remains the right approach for Cambridge and should not be abandoned because its implementation has proved more difficult than anticipated.~~ Should be maintained, while recognising that its success depends on a properly resourced, sustainable and effective weed management service.
- That herbicide-free weed management supports the Council's commitments to biodiversity, environmental protection and more sustainable management of public spaces.
- That environmental ambition must be matched by effective implementation, sufficient resources, suitable equipment and an honest assessment of what is required to deliver the service successfully.
- That Cambridge residents are entitled to streets and public spaces that are safe, accessible, properly maintained and attractive.
- That priority must be given to weed growth that obstructs footways, affects accessibility, restricts drainage, creates a safety concern or risks damage to highways and other infrastructure, though not an exclusive list
- That some vegetation can be tolerated where it does not affect safety, accessibility, drainage, infrastructure or the reasonable enjoyment of public space, though not an exclusive list
- That residents should be given clear information about the standards they can expect from an herbicide-free service, including the greater likelihood of seasonal growth and regrowth between treatments.
- That the present challenges will not cause ~~difficulties require decisive corrective action and additional support for the service, rather than any retreat from the Council's herbicide-free commitment.~~
- That the present challenges ~~difficulties require decisive corrective action and additional support for the service, rather than any retreat from the Council's herbicide-free commitment.~~ a clear recovery plan for outstanding work, followed by a sustainable recurring maintenance programme, rather than a retreat from the Council's commitment to ending the routine use of herbicides.

Council therefore calls on the Leader and Executive Councillor to:

- Reaffirm the Council's commitment to **cross-party support** for the Liberal Democrat-led ambition of ending the routine use of herbicides on land managed by the City Council.

~~Commission an urgent Officer review of the current weed management programme, identifying: Require Officers to report on delivery against the Council's approved 2025 Herbicide-Free Weed Management Work Programme, identifying:~~

- ~~the work originally planned and the work actually delivered to date;~~
- ~~the current outstanding backlog of outstanding work, broken down by ward and priority;~~
- ~~the reasons for any material delays or variance from the approved programme;~~
- ~~the staffing, equipment and financial capacity currently available and the capacity required;~~
- ~~the effectiveness and whole-life cost of the different mechanical and manual methods;~~
- ~~the frequency of repeat treatment required to maintain acceptable standards;~~
- ~~seasonal and weather-related constraints;~~
- ~~the effect of parked vehicles and other access restrictions; and~~
- ~~opportunities for better coordination with the County Council, contractors, communities and other landowners.~~
- Any additional costs to the City Council of cutting the County Council's verges on their behalf.

- ~~the reasons for departure from the original programme;~~
- ~~the extent of the outstanding work;~~
- ~~the staffing, equipment and financial capacity required;~~
- ~~the effectiveness and whole-life cost of the different mechanical and manual methods;~~
- ~~the frequency of repeat treatment needed;~~
- ~~seasonal and weather-related constraints;~~
- ~~the effect of parked vehicles and other access restrictions; and~~
- ~~opportunities for better coordination with the County Council, contractors, communities and other landowners.~~

- ~~Bring forward a costed, non-recurring recovery programme to blitz outstanding priority areas and establish a manageable baseline for future maintenance.~~
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- ~~Ensure that any short-term intervention is supported by a sustainable annual maintenance programme, so that areas cleared through the recovery work receive appropriate repeat treatment.~~
- Bring forward an options appraisal for a non-recurring recovery programme to blitz outstanding priority areas and establish a manageable baseline for future maintenance
- Bring forward an options appraisal for ~~and~~ a sustainable annual maintenance programme, so that areas cleared through the recovery work receive appropriate repeat treatment, including appropriate treatment frequencies for different categories of location.
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- Develop a risk-based approach that prioritises safety, accessibility, drainage, transport routes and the protection of public infrastructure.
- Adopt a transparent risk-based prioritisation framework, giving priority to safety, accessibility, drainage, transport routes and the protection of public infrastructure, with clear service standards and target response times.
- Continue to test and evaluate new equipment and working methods, drawing on operational evidence from Cambridge and good practice elsewhere.
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- Present ~~Bring forward~~ any necessary suggested budget bid for 2027-28, clearly distinguishing between the one-off cost of recovering the service and the recurrent resources required to maintain it, so that Councillors can make an informed decision weighing up the costs of any necessary bid with any additional savings that will need to be made elsewhere
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- Publish a clear statement for residents setting out ~~responsibilities, priorities, expected service standards, seasonal constraints and how urgent concerns should be reported.~~ the division of responsibilities between the City Council, County Council and other landowners; service priorities and standards; seasonal constraints; and how urgent concerns should be reported and escalated.
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- Introduce transparent performance reporting covering areas completed, outstanding initial treatments, repeat visits, complaints, service requests, costs and operational learning.
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- Report the findings of the review, together with costed options and a revised delivery programme, to the relevant scrutiny committee within an agreed timescale.