

# CABINET

## Clean and Green Places : Weed Control

4<sup>th</sup> October 2016

### Report of Chief Officer (Environment)

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To provide Cabinet with a proposal to reintroduce cyclical weed spraying.				
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Officer Referral
				<b>X</b>
Date Included in Forthcoming Key Decision Notice		NA		
This report is public				

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That cyclical weed spraying is reintroduced.

##### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2016-20 includes the priority of 'Clean and Green Places'.
- 1.2 For the purpose of this report the term 'public realm' is defined as any publicly owned streets, pathways, parks, publicly accessible open spaces.
- 1.3 In the Lancaster District some of the public realm is the responsibility of the County Council and some the City Council. As part of its ethos the City Council recognises it has responsibility for the stewardship of the District. This means the need to ensure amongst other things the environmental wellbeing of the area. Also that irrespective of where the responsibility lies the City Council has a role in ensuring that the public realm of the District is managed and maintained in the way that our residents would generally want it to be.
- 1.4 There are many excellent examples of City / County working together to be found including the city centre improvements in Lancaster, town centre improvements in Morecambe, improvements in parks as well as day to day maintenance of the public realm.
- 1.5 The City Council also recognises the important role that local communities have in improving local areas, parks and open spaces. The hard work of community groups, friends of groups, Elected Members, Parish / Town Councils and individuals who are involved in improving the District's public realm is very much appreciated.
- 1.6 Reduced funding and budget pressures in recent years have meant that in some cases levels of service have been reduced which have then impacted on residents, businesses and visitors. The cessation of cyclical weed spraying in the District is a case in point.

## **2.0 Proposal Details**

- 2.1 In general terms, the responsibility for the physical maintenance of roads, paths etc. including weed management rests with the owner of that land. Therefore the decision as to how to deal with weeds rests with the landowner. The maintenance of the vast majority of roads and pavements in the District is the responsibility of the County Council. Due to the budget position the policy in this year was changed to one of spraying problem areas rather than cyclical weed spraying. In changing this policy the County Council liaised with the City Council on how the budget that was available would be allocated to deal with safety issues like maintenance of highway trees, mowing of safety swathes and sight lines etc.
- 2.2 The City Council has continued to spray its land and the County Council has also spot sprayed problem areas. However, weed growth has been prolific in many areas, no doubt encouraged by the ideal growing conditions the weather has provided this summer. This has impacted negatively on the environment and place for residents, businesses and visitors.
- 2.3 In many areas of the District the community has taken ownership by removing weeds themselves. These efforts are greatly appreciated. However this is not practical or possible in all areas. Spraying with a systemic weed killer is currently the only safe and practical option available to Councils for widespread control of weeds. Spraying should only be seen as a control measure.
- 2.4 Taking into account the views that have been put forward discussions have taken place with the County Council and based on amendments to the public realm agreement (an arrangement whereby the County Council funds the City Council to maintain some of the public realm for which it is responsible) arrangements will be made so that cyclical weed spraying will resume in the next growing season across the whole District.
- 2.5 By amending the public realm agreement and making some operational changes cyclical weed spraying can be delivered within existing budgets from the start of the growing season in 2017. As an example we are currently looking at the feasibility of fitting some of street sweeping vehicles with chemical sprayers. In the meantime we will continue to support the efforts of communities and continue to direct the community payback team that is funded by the Council to hand weed problem areas.

## **3.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)**

- 3.1 **Option 1** - to instruct officers to work with County to resume cyclical weed spraying for the 2017 growing season, within existing budgets.
- 3.2 **Option 2** - to instruct officers to deal with this issue in a different way.
- 3.3 The officer preferred option is Option 1.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 The report sets a proposal that is in line with the Corporate Plan and Cabinet priorities.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK**

As outlined in the report.

#### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

The proposal outlined will improve the appearance of the District.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Legal have been consulted and have no further comments to make

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is currently a 'Public Realm Agreement' in place with Lancashire County Council in which the latter contribute an annual amount towards the City Council's delivery of various activities on their behalf. Such activities include grass cutting and tree/hedge maintenance but also previously included the treatment of weeds. In 2015/16 the County Council's contribution amounted to £167K plus £16K for leaf clearance, which has subsequently been reduced to £138K in 2016/17 following a County decision to reduce their contribution. As detailed in the report, recent discussions have taken place with the County Council and cyclical weed spraying will resume in 2017/18. This will involve some redirection of funds away from other activities covered by the agreement. Any in-house operational changes for the City Council will managed within existing budgets.

#### **OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

##### **Human Resources:**

None

##### **Information Services:**

None

##### **Property:**

None

##### **Open Spaces:**

As outlined in the report

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

#### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

none

**Contact Officer:** Mark Davies

**Telephone:** 01524 582401

**E-mail:** mdavies@lancaster.gov.uk