

To: Cabinet
Date: 13 December 2023
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Review of Glyphosate Use by Oxford Direct Services to Manage Weeds on Behalf of Oxford City Council

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations for Cabinet consideration and decision
Key decision:	No
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Lucy Pegg, Scrutiny Committee Chair
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies
Corporate Priority:	Pursue a Zero Carbon Oxford
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices	
Appendix A	Draft Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee

Introduction and overview

1. The Scrutiny Committee met on 04 December 2023 to consider a report concerning the Review of Glyphosate Use by Oxford Direct Services to Manage Weeds on Behalf of Oxford City Council. The report, which is due for Cabinet consideration on 13 December 2023, recommends that Cabinet approves the continued use of Glyphosate for its current limited purposes, to be kept under periodic review until such point as the Government changes its advice on use of the herbicide, or another viable, economical and effective treatment emerges; and approves the usage of Glyphosate to manage weed intrusion in paved surfaces uniformly across the City.
2. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Chapman (Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies), Tina Mould (Head of

Sustainability) and Laura Harlock (Parks and Open Spaces Service Manager – Oxford Direct Services) for attending the meeting to answer questions.

Summary and recommendations

3. Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies introduced the report. The report set out recommendations over the use of Glyphosate by Oxford Direct Services (ODS) to control weeds on behalf of Oxford City Council following a review of its use and possible alternative options, which was undertaken by ODS in August 2023.
4. The Committee asked a range of questions, including questions relating to aligning the work of ODS and local community groups in terms of weed and plant management; communications; areas of the City which had currently ‘opted-out’ of Glyphosate application in their areas; the annual timetable for Glyphosate application; where Glyphosate was used to control weeds; and possible alternative options to Glyphosate usage.
5. In particular, the Committee referenced community gardening groups which had planted various plants along areas adjacent to the public highway with agreement from the Council and ODS. The Committee agreed that it was key that the Council and ODS were aware of these areas and that ODS, in the absence of a ward-based ‘opt-out’ option, approached these areas with caution when applying Glyphosate to avoid treating plants which had been purposefully planted. The Committee also discussed the possibility of community gardening groups and other interested individuals or groups being able to register for updates on the timetable for Glyphosate application so that this work could be synchronised with other work undertaken by groups within the community each year.

Recommendation 1: That the Council works with Oxford Direct Services to compile a list of areas within the City where local community groups have purposefully planted plants, which should be approached with caution by Oxford Direct Services when applying Glyphosate so as not to cause unwanted damage.

Recommendation 2: That the Council provides a means for community groups and interested individuals to register for updates related to when Glyphosate application will take place in particular areas across the City, to enable the synchronisation of works undertaken by those groups and Oxford Direct Services.

6. The Committee noted that, as referenced in the report, there were currently a number of areas within the City that had ‘opted-out’ of Glyphosate application. However, the report stated that going forward the proposal was to apply Glyphosate uniformly across the City, with no option to ‘opt-out’. In response to questions, the Committee was advised that councillors would be a key communication channel for local areas which had currently ‘opted-out’, to ensure that they were aware that Glyphosate usage in those areas would recommence. The Committee raised concerns that councillors were not necessarily aware of areas which had currently ‘opted-out’ and it would be useful for the Council to publish a list of those areas to

ensure councillor awareness. The Committee also agreed that a communications plan should be developed for areas which had 'opted-out' currently and the public more broadly, to help manage expectations and any potential tensions which may arise as a result of the proposed changes.

Recommendation 3: That the Council publishes a list of those areas of the City which have currently opted-out of Glyphosate application, to ensure councillors are aware of areas in their respective wards and can access the information freely.

Recommendation 4: That the Council develops a communications plan for those areas of the City which have currently opted-out of Glyphosate application and the public more broadly to ensure awareness and understanding of the proposals regarding Glyphosate usage going forward.

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