

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission – 3 October 2016 - Public Forum items



STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS RECEIVED AS AT TIME OF DISPATCH – FRIDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2016. A COMPLETE SET OF PUBLIC FORUM STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS (TOGETHER WITH ANSWERS) WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE 1 HOUR BEFORE THE MEETING.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS have been received as follows:

- 1. Harriet Williams – Pesticide Safe Alliance**

QUESTIONS have been received as follows - A copy of the answers will be made Available 1 hour before the meeting.

- 1. Harriet Williams – Pesticide Safe Alliance**
- 2. Councillor Charlie Bolton – Pets In Council Properties**



Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission, 3rd October 2016 – Statement submitted by the Pesticide Safe Bristol Alliance

Received wisdom about how to control weeds in public spaces has changed considerably since our Alliance formed in October 2015. Public opinion in the UK and all over Europe has hardened towards the routine use of potent weed killers in highways, housing estates, play areas and parks, following a large awareness-raising campaign orchestrated by leading civil society organisations including Greenpeace, Avaaz and 38 Degrees.

In 120 British towns and cities, citizens have started petitions to get glyphosate, the most widely used and contentious of these substances, banned in their local area. 38 Degrees confirm that 78,000 people have signed a petition so far. Bristol's petition, with very nearly 7,000 signatures¹, is one of the largest. But while other Councils have moved ahead with glyphosate-free weed control policies, Bristol City Council has merely adopted a year-long trial of unproven methodology, in the ward of Cotham.

At the political level, there has been significant shift too. The EU was expected to issue a 15-year renewal of the license to use glyphosate this year. This has not happened. Over 1 million EU citizens asked for the licence to be refused, on grounds that glyphosate is linked to serious human health impacts. MEPs voted for restrictions on glyphosate use, including a ban in public spaces. Unable to extract a final decision from member states, the European Commission has issued an emergency 18-month extension of the existing licence². In short, the regulatory future of glyphosate very uncertain (bear in mind EU decisions here could continue to apply to the UK, in certain Brexit scenarios).

The sensible response from BCC is surely to end the use of glyphosate and other toxic weed killers, and adopt 'no harm' or 'less harm' methods of weed control, as practised in many European cities already (including other Green Capitals).

The legal status of glyphosate is far from the minds of the average PSBA supporter here in Bristol. Our supporters are motivated by immediate concerns for the health of children, pets and local wildlife, and want to see a reduction in the use of all pesticides across the city, not just of glyphosate. We urge BCC to show leadership in this area and to proactively reduce pesticide use. We note Marvin Rees' manifesto commitment to reducing pesticide use, and urge the mayor and councillors to implement this promise as soon as possible.

The questions attached to this statement request updates on the Council's overall strategy regards the future of weed control, and upon its trial of vinegar and hand-weeding as alternatives to glyphosate in the ward of Cotham. There has been much scepticism regards the methods and efficacy of this trial, so with at least one round of weed control behind us in 2016, it seems timely to ask whether these methods are working.

¹ <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-spraying-monsanto-glyphosates-on-bristol-streets-and-parks>

² <http://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/commission-prolongs-glyphosate-licence-by-18-months/>

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission, 3 October 2016 – Questions submitted by the Pesticide Safe Bristol Alliance

Regarding the Council's trial of glyphosate-free weed control in Cotham ward,

- i) Can BCC please **provide an update on the progress of this trial**, in particular how it has been evaluated against the performance and measurement criteria the Council outlined in its response to scrutiny commission questions of 22 February? (See Appendix)
- ii) Have any **aspects of the trial methodology changed**, in particular the range of alternatives to be trialled, the location and area of sites to be treated?
- iii) Who is **chiefly responsible for delivering the alternative weed treatments**, is this done by BCC employees or by external weed control contractors?
- iv) How many **public comments** been received regarding the trial, and of these, how many have been complaints and how many supportive?
- v) Related to this, what **communication effort** has BCC undertaken to the residents of Cotham in order to raise awareness of the trial and secure public support (this was still under consideration in February)?

Regarding the use of weed killers in the city overall,

- vi) Can the Council **provide details of the quantities of weed killer** applied across Bristol in the year 2016 to date, by its employees and contractors? Does this represent an increase or reduction on previous years? A similar breakdown to that presented in BCC's report of Jan 2016, Weed Control on Amenity Land, (Appendix 2: 'Quantified use of herbicides on BCC land') would be appreciated.
- vii) Are any other parts of Bristol being **incorporated in the glyphosate-free trial** (formally or informally)?
- viii) Is the Council making attempts to **reduce the use of non-glyphosate pesticides** in Bristol as well (e.g. 2,4-D)? We would wish to avoid a scenario where the use of other potentially harmful pesticides increases to substitute for glyphosate, and rather prefer that 'no harm' methods are pursued instead.
- ix) Is the Council **in touch with other local authorities** – in the UK or beyond – who have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, glyphosate-free weed control, with the aim of a learning exchange?

Appendix – Cotham trial summary, as issued by BCC in response to questions at the 22 February Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Work area	Performance outcome	Measurement
Maintenance of hard surfaces within the (Highways) weed spraying contract.	As with glyphosate	Cost. Time taken. Staffing. Environmental inputs and outputs.
Control of invasive weeds (Japanese knotweed)	Continue with Glyphosate control	N/A
Within green spaces - maintenance of hard surfaces	As with glyphosate	Cost. Time taken. Staffing. Environmental inputs and outputs.
Within green spaces - removal of growth around obstacles to reduce demand on staff resources	Maintain current resource level. Accept potential for lower performance.	Visual comparison with control site(s). Enquiries and complaints.
Within green spaces - control of weed growth in bedding and shrub features	Maintain current resource level. Accept potential for lower performance.	Visual comparison with control site(s). Succession growth. Enquiries and complaints. Volunteer activity
Within green spaces - sterilising sites intended to be sown as floral meadows and new planting (e.g. floral displays).	Withhold spraying. Accept potential for lower performance.	Visual comparison with control site(s). Species success. Succession growth. Bloom longevity.

Question 2 – Councillor Bolton – Pets in Council Properties

Q: Can I ask what council policy on this actually is, please?

Many homeless people keep dogs for security as well as comfort. Currently only 9% of hostels for homeless people in the UK are dog-friendly, meaning that many dog owners are denied access to shelter and support, simply because they have a dog. Likewise, rules on dog ownership for council housing or housing association tenants vary from place to place, with many councils forcing people to give up their pets to rescue centres or remain homeless.

It is NOT okay to tell people they cannot have emergency housing because they have pets. It is NOT okay to leave them in cold with these pets. It's callous. It's discriminatory. This would NEVER happen to someone with kids. To thousands of people, their pets ARE their kids. People like Hillary Barrows in Canterbury have had to live in their cars in minus degree weather because they could not have emergency help because of their dogs. You must understand the importance of pets to the homeless, the bond, the love that is exchanged. Do not take that away from them and make them suffer.

Please tell me, what is our council's position on this issue? Does our council provide emergency housing for people with dogs? Do we provide council housing for people with dogs? If so, what percentage of our emergency and council housing allows dogs? And what quantity of our emergency accommodation and council houses allow dogs?