

WEED CONTROL TRIAL

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Committee with an update on the weed control trial that has been undertaken by Officers within the Economic Development Directorate in response to a Scrutiny recommendation to Cabinet from the Environmental Scrutiny Committee's Inquiry into 'Managing Biodiversity and Natural Environment in Cardiff'.

Background

2. At their meeting held on 19th March 2019, the Environmental Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into 'Managing Biodiversity and Natural Environment in Cardiff' and established a Task and Finish Group to take this forward.
3. The Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed as follows:

To provide Members with the opportunity to explore and consider how the Council can support and help improve the biodiversity in Cardiff. In particular this will include scrutiny of:

- *The development of Cardiff's Biodiversity Forward Plan, for example, its structure, aims and objectives;*
- *The ongoing implications of Cardiff's Biodiversity Forward Plan, for example, future reporting and monitoring of the document;*
- *The approach taken by other Welsh local authorities to develop biodiversity forward plans and to identify best practice in this area;*

- *The Council's current role, obligations and statutory / legislative requirements for supporting and improving biodiversity;*
 - *The importance of Cardiff's biodiversity and ecosystems;*
 - *The resources available to support and improve biodiversity in Cardiff;*
 - *Community collaboration and other partnership working approaches to understand how they help support and enhance biodiversity in Cardiff;*
 - *The importance of raising awareness of biodiversity issues in Cardiff – internally,
with key stakeholders and the public;*
 - *Cardiff's Green Infrastructure Strategy – including the benefits of green infrastructure and ecosystem services;*
 - *Green Infrastructure Management – including the Green Infrastructure Group;*
 - *Cardiff Green Infrastructure SPG and Planned Development;*
 - *The Green Infrastructure Spatial Strategy;*
 - *Green Infrastructure Implementation Programme (Pollinators Action Plan, Individual Park Management Plans, Local Nature Plan, River Corridors, Tree Strategy, Cross border initiatives, other plans & projects);*
 - *Sustainable drainage – links with the SuDS Approval Body process.*
4. The final report, findings and recommendations was presented to Cabinet on the 23 January 2020.¹ A full response was then agreed by Cabinet on the 19 November 2020² and presented to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration at their meeting held on 2 March 2021.³

Scrutiny Recommendation

5. The scrutiny report made a series of key findings recommendations which were subsequently presented to Cabinet.

¹ [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 23rd January, 2020, 2.00 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

² [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 19th November, 2020, 1.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

³ [Agenda for Environmental Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 2nd March, 2021, 4.30 pm : City of Cardiff Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

6. One of these recommendations was related to the use of Herbicides and Pesticides and stated the following:

Herbicides & Pesticides – Glyphosate

Where practically possible, the Council should limit the use of pesticides such as glyphosate across its estate. Local authorities such as the Vale of Glamorgan have managed to become herbicide free in a number of parks by using alternative weed control and management practices. The Council should look to learn from this and publish details of how, where and why herbicides and pesticides will be applied across the Council estate.

7. At their meeting on the 19th of November 2020, Cabinet partially accepted this recommendation stating:

The Council implements a range of cultural and biological methods of control methods across its estate as an alternative to the use of pesticides. Where there are no economically viable alternatives, the use of pesticides is limited to those approved by the regulatory bodies for use in the public realm. The benefits of alternative products will be further explored, including the potential for an initial and affordable financial outlay to support a small pilot. Findings will inform more detailed exploration of options and their potential costs.

8. The Cabinet subsequently committed to undertaking a review of weed control products available as an alternative to the glyphosate-based herbicide that is currently used to control weeds in the public realm. During 2021 a trial to investigate the viability of two alternative weed control applications, which are currently licenced for use to control weeds on hard surfaces, was undertaken in partnership with the Council's Specialist Weed Control Contractor. A number of data sets were collected through the year which have been made available to an independent consultant to allow them to undertake an assessment of each application against key factors. This will then be used to produce a detailed report which will be provided to the Council in February and to inform decision making moving forward.

9. Attached at Appendix A is a PowerPoint presentation from the Directorate detailing the weed control trial. This will be complemented by a short presentation by Officers at the meeting.

Way Forward

10. Cllr Michael Michael, Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling and Environment, Councillor Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure and Councillor Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport have been invited to make statements. Jon Maidment, Operational Manager, Parks, Sports and Harbour Authority, Mark Tozer, Parks Development & Asset Management Officer and Dr. Dan Jones of Advanced Invasives have also been invited to answer questions and assist the Committee in its consideration of the item.

Legal Implications

11. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

12. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters, there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Consider the information in this report, its appendix and the information presented at the meeting;
- ii) Determine whether they would like to make any comments, observations or recommendations to the Cabinet on this matter; and
- iii) Decide the way forward for any future scrutiny of the issues discussed.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance & Legal Services

7 January 2022