

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Scrutiny of Health Committee

18 December 2024

Use of Glyphosates and Neonicotinoids in Operational Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To support the committee in its consideration of a Notice of Motion referred from full Council.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 At the meeting of full Council on 21st February 2024, the following amendment was moved by Councillor Andy Brown (seconded by Councillor David Noland) in relation to the recommendations for the Council's Revenue Budget for 2024/25.

“To reduce the budget for mowing and spraying by at least £100,000 a year and to cease all purchases of any products containing glyphosate or neonicotinoids.”

- 2.2 Following debate at full Council, the amendment was withdrawn on the basis that it would be referred to a scrutiny committee for further consideration and a recommendation consequently brought back to full Council. In setting the context for the amendment, Councillor Brown had referred to the human health impacts of these herbicides and the recent financial claims made in the civil courts in the USA against companies and organisations that had supplied and used these products.
- 2.3 The issue was considered by Scrutiny Board members, in liaison with Councillor Brown, and it was agreed that the matter would be referred to the Scrutiny of Health Committee as the concerns raised were primarily health-related. A further discussion was held at the committee's Mid-Cycle Briefing in April with Councillor Brown and Jonathan Clubb, Head of Parks and Grounds, to establish some key parameters for the further exploration of the issue. These included the following:
- a) Checking whether NYC makes use of neonicotinoids as part of its spraying programme;
 - b) Clarity on the publicised Bayer litigation case in the USA, particularly for example whether this was around inaccurate or inconsistent labelling;
 - c) Researching other councils that have banned use of glyphosates, the ensuing results and implicit costings of using alternatives;
 - d) Reviewing how widespread the use of glyphosates (and neonicotinoids if applicable) is by the Council, how much is used, why we are favouring this over other products and the costs incurred;
 - e) Consideration of potential public health risks, for example to workers exposed to the treatments used and the view of NYC Public Health; and
 - f) Reviewing the possible alternatives to using glyphosates around the county and whether accurate costings are available.
- 2.4 While Parks and Grounds have led on taking this research forward, the multi-faceted nature of this issue should be noted and as such the resulting feedback report provided at Appendix A brings together input drawn from Highways, Parks and Grounds and Public Health in response. The report will be presented by Jonathan Clubb (Head of Parks and Grounds), Richard Marr (Area 4 Manager, Highways) and Victoria Turner (Public Health Consultant). Appendix B provides the committee with a summary of glyphosates usage

across the county. Appendices C and D provide an Equality Impact Assessment and initial Climate Change Impact Assessment, respectively.

3.0 ROLE OF THE SCRUTINY OF HEALTH COMMITTEE

- 3.1 The enclosed report provides the committee with a foundation for considering further the proposal put forward during full Council in February 2024 and its implications. The exercise undertaken by officers in BES and Public Health was intended to provide in outline the information requested at the Mid-Cycle Briefing in April, in order that Members have a clearer picture of the current scale of use and cost to the council of using glyphosates (and neonicotinoids where applicable), the potential risks to human health of such use and whether as a result alternative treatments should be considered. While there is undoubtedly an environmental element to this matter, it should be emphasised that the committee is only able to undertake to consider within its remit the impact to human health.
- 3.2 It is the role of the committee, rather than the report authors, to reach a view on the collated observations and research in providing a recommendation for full Council. However, Members will note that the report authors have indicated that further harmonisation and standardisation of services as a result of local government reorganisation – which is ongoing - alongside a greater drive to work in harmony with the environment, presents a nascent opportunity to continue to reduce the Council’s usage of and spend on glyphosates. It should also be noted that the research undertaken has highlighted potentially substantial additional costs which could be incurred by the authority with a wholesale move to an alternative treatment, based on similar projects undertaken elsewhere.
- 3.3 In determining the recommendation to be made, Members will as such want to consider any potential risks posed to health by the council’s usage and whether the level of risk presented necessitates the cessation of all products purchased containing glyphosates and neonicotinoids and the exploration of an alternative approach.
- 3.4 Taking account of the information within the appendices and the issues raised at the committee meeting on 18th December, the Committee is invited to consider its recommendation to full Council, which will principally be around considering the following options. It is ultimately the decision of the Chair as to how the committee proceeds:

Agree the amendment/proposal –

Agree no further information is required at this stage, the referral as worded is agreed by the committee and a recommendation to this effect will go to the next meeting of full Council in February 2025 (see 2.1 for the wording of the referral put forward).

Not uphold the amendment/proposal –

Agree no further information is required at this stage and that the referred issue is not progressed as worded, for example because of the balance of risk, gradual reduction in glyphosate usage and potential cost implications on an alternative treatment.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Financial implications arising are explored at section 9.1 of Appendix A to this report.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Legal implications arising are considered at section 10 of Appendix A to this report. There are no further legal implications arising from this covering report.

6.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is provided and the report notes as a result at section 11 that “No potential for discrimination or adverse impacts has been identified in this report.” There are no further equalities implications arising from this covering report.

7.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment has been completed and section 12 of Appendix A summarises the conclusions around this. There are no further implications arising from this cover report.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is asked to:

- (a) note the report reviewing the council's current use of glyphosates and neonicotinoids; and
- (b) agree its recommendation to full Council in February 2025.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Use of Glyphosate in Operational Services
Appendix B: Glyphosate Usage
Appendix C: Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix D: Initial Climate Change Impact Assessment

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None.

Barry Khan
Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Democratic Services
County Hall
Northallerton
9 December 2024

Report Author: Diane Parsons, Principal Scrutiny Officer.

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.