

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL

Report

Subject : Use of Glyphosate
Committee : Services Committee
Date : 17 October 2016
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1. Report Summary:

- 1.1. This report sets out a recommendation from the Parks Working Group concerning the use of glyphosate herbicides by the Council in its parks and open spaces, following further consideration of the issues. This issue was considered by the Parks Working Group at their meeting on 20 September 2016.

2. Background:

- 2.1. There are mounting concerns about glyphosate, a herbicide used to kill weeds. It has been linked to a variety of health problems. Studies have also reported negative environmental impacts.
- 2.2. Glyphosate is a mass-produced, global herbicide; and has been used to manage & control weeds and grass in towns and cities since it was re-patented as such in 1969.
- 2.3. It is the main active ingredient in Roundup®, the world's best-selling weed-killer – and is widely-used by local authorities, the agricultural industry and the domestic market.
- 2.4. Roundup® is a broad-spectrum herbicide, meaning that it has negative effects on nearly every plant with which it comes in contact. It is used for spot treatment of gardens, lawns, paved areas, and some agricultural crops. Although it is toxic, the active chemical, glyphosate, binds with soil. This means that glyphosate that comes in contact with the ground will not run off into water systems and becomes inactive. The substance also appears to be mostly nontoxic for mammals, including people, who eat food which was near plants treated with Roundup®.

3. Health Concerns:

- 3.1. The scientific evidence available at present is at best contradictory.
- 3.2. In March 2015, the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer *IARC* classified glyphosate as 'probably carcinogenic to humans'
- 3.3. However, another World Health Organisation *WHO* study concluded that it was 'unlikely to pose a carcinogenic risk' – an indication of the contradictory findings on the carcinogenic risks of the chemical.
- 3.4. A 2016 United Nations and World Health Organisation report concluded that there was no cancer risk to using glyphosate.
- 3.5. The European Commission has adopted the extension of the current approval of glyphosate for a limited period until the European Chemical Agency (ECHA) concludes its review
- 3.6. Defra, Public Health England, the Health and Safety Executive at present consider the chemical safe

4. International and National Glyphosate Concerns:

- 4.1. There are now high profile, international campaigns asking for bans on glyphosate because of the concerns shown above.
- 4.2. In Europe, Holland, Denmark & Sweden have banned or restricted the use of glyphosate herbicides by local authorities – and a total of 7 EU states already have extensive bans in place.
- 4.3. In American states such as California and New York have also banned the pesticide, in some cases entirely, but in others just in public parks and golf courses.
- 4.4. Nationally the pressure group 38 Degrees and the Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN-UK) have launched anti-glyphosate campaigns in the United Kingdom, encouraging pesticide-free towns and cities.
- 4.5. Councils in Brighton, Hammersmith and Fulham, Bristol, Glastonbury, Frome, Erewash, Aberdeen and Edinburgh have all either stopped or restricted the use of glyphosate weed killers.

5. Glyphosate Usage at Salisbury City Council:

- 5.1. Glyphosate (Roundup®) is currently used in a limited capacity in our parks and open spaces.
- 5.2. It is a broad-spectrum herbicide and is used for spot treatment of grassed areas (mainly around trees), and general weed control for some beds and borders and hard standing paved areas.

6. Alternatives to Glyphosate:

- 6.1. Glyphosate is a very effective broad spectrum weed killer. Unfortunately there is not an alternative, completely safe product. There are some *organic type* weed killers offered as an alternative to glyphosate, these are mainly vinegar/salt/soap based products. Results obtained vary with a consensus that they are not very effective. There is also concern that the vinegar (acetic acid) and salt products are actually potentially harmful.
- 6.2. There are alternative methods of weed control:
 - 6.2.1. **Hand Tools** – labour intensive but can be very effective
 - 6.2.2. **Hot Foam** – mixed reviews regarding effectiveness
 - 6.2.3. **Mulching** – initially labour intensive, can be effective, only suitable for beds and borders.
 - 6.2.4. **Plastic sheets** – effective, have to be left in place for a long period of time, only useful in certain limited locations.
 - 6.2.5. **Flame** (gas gun) - kills leaves only, plants can regrow quickly.

7. Implications for Salisbury City Council if Glyphosate Usage is Discontinued:

- 7.1. SCC are preparing Queen Elizabeth Gardens for a Green Flag award which requires strict adherence to environmental friendly management techniques. Consequently we have not used glyphosate in the Gardens this season.

- 7.2. The Parks Team have mulched the majority of the beds/borders to suppress weed growth and where require fitted tree guards to enable us to trim up to the tree without damage thus dispensing with the need to spray around the trees. Hand tools have been used to clear the hard standing areas.
- 7.3. In summary this alternative approach to weed management has been reasonably successful with the exception of the areas of hard standing which are just too labour intensive to keep looking clean, tidy and weed free throughout the growing season.

8. Recommendations

8.1. It is recommended that the Committee agree the recommendations of the Parks Working Group below:

- 8.1.1. That the Queen Elizabeth Gardens weed management regime is adopted across all of Salisbury City parks and open spaces. In practical terms this will mean the cessation of the spraying of Glyphosate in any green areas – beds, borders, lawns, open grassland and woodlands. Limited spraying will only take place on areas of hard standing.
- 8.1.2. That the use of Glyphosate is kept under continuous review and action taken accordingly based on any new scientific information.

9. Wards Affected: All

10. Background Papers: Nil

11. Implications:

- 11.1. **Financial:** None in relation to this report
- 11.2. **Legal:** None in relation to this report
- 11.3. **Personnel:** None in relation to this report
- 11.4. **Environmental Impact:** To be kept under review
- 11.5. **Equalities Impact Statement:** None in relation to this report