

Brighton & Hove City Council

Council

Agenda Item 32

Subject: Council Minutes - 28 March 2024

Date of meeting: 24 October 2024

Ward(s) affected: All

Officer Amendment

That the relevant changes are made to the following paragraphs in the Minutes as shown below in ~~strike through~~ and **bold italics**:

24 Petition for Debate - Glyphosate

24.1 The Mayor stated that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at the council meeting. There was one petition which had reached that threshold. The petition concerned Keep Brighton and Hove Free of Toxic Weedkillers and she invited Elspeth Broady on behalf of Clara Usiskin to join the meeting and to present the petition.

~~24.2 Elspeth Broady thanked the mayor and stated that the petition had been signed by over 1200 people. The petition stated to propose looking at ways to make the school travel free for all children, following example of London where all bus travel for under 16s is free of charge.~~

24.32 Councillor Rowkins replied. ***Thank you very much, Elspeth, for presenting your petition. I understand you're standing in for Clara. I know she's been following this very closely and I imagine you have as well, along with many other residents. I'm sure you'll be aware that this was definitely not an easy decision for us.***

I want to start just by making a couple of small corrections if I may. The petition states in the body of the text that the Council began a three-year phase out of glyphosate use on pavements and roads in 2019, but that's not accurate. The Council decision in 2019 was, and I'm quoting from the committee report that that documents the decision, to end the use of glyphosate by Brighton & Hove City Council's City Environment Management services with immediate effect.

Now, whilst well-intentioned, this was contrary to the advice of the Pesticide Action Network who recommend, as you suggest, a phase out. But not just a phase out. You can't just gradually stop using herbicides and not replace them with anything. The absence of any proper strategy for managing weed growth in the years since 2019 has, I'm afraid, led to a situation where in some parts of the city, the situation is out of control and we've been forced to act.

The petition also suggest that the Council will be using herbicide on grass verges, but that is not the case. I just want to reassure you of

that. The committee decision in January this year actually explicitly states that we will not be treating any parks at green spaces or verges. Now it is my firm belief that the cliff-edge ban, and the absence of a strategy to manage the problem in years following 2019, has led to the situation in which we now find ourselves. Look, you know, if you ask me the simple question, 'do you want to use glyphosate?', my answer is an easy no. But we don't have the luxury of taking such a simplistic view. We also have to consider our duty to maintain safe and accessible pavements for all of our residents.

I just want to address a few specific points made in the body of the petition. Firstly, I completely agree that creating and maintaining biodiverse green spaces is crucial and, as I said earlier, there will be no treatment from the city's green spaces.

We'll continue to create biodiverse habitats at various locations around the city, including bee banks and of course on the South Downs where we are implementing a landscape-scale intervention to restore wild chalk grassland and move farming practises to a more sustainable future.

Secondly, I just want to pick out one particular line: 'we believe that an effective organic integrated weed management strategy is possible'. Now I think you're probably right, but trying to implement that after five full years of unchecked growth with well-established roots now gearing up for their sixth season is just not realistic. We need to reset the situation back to a manageable level and then begin to implement a more integrated approach alongside a reduction in the use of herbicide.

The control droplet application approved at committee in January mitigates the concerns that you raise and, we believe, strikes a balance between protecting biodiversity as much as possible whilst enabling us to get the problem back under control. Let me assure you that we will be seeking to ultimately phase out the use of herbicides but in a managed and responsible way that does not risk the city streets becoming inaccessible and unsafe.

Thank you again for being here today.

24.43 Councillor Davis **Pickett** moved an amendment on behalf of the Green Group which was formally seconded by Councillor Hill **McLeay**.

24.54 Councillor Hogan **Theobald and Earthey** spoke on the matter.

24.6—The Mayor congratulated Councillor Hogan on her maiden speech.

24.75 Councillor Muten **Rowkins** responded to the debate and did not accept the Green Group amendment.

24.86 **RESOLVED:**

1. That the petition was noted and referred to the relevant decision making body for consideration.

Paragraph 24 to read as follows:

24 Petition for Debate - Glyphosate

- 24.1 The Mayor stated that where a petition secured 1,250 or more signatures it could be debated at the council meeting. There was one petition which had reached that threshold. The petition concerned Keep Brighton and Hove Free of Toxic Weedkillers and she invited Elspeth Broady on behalf of Clara Usiskin to join the meeting and to present the petition.
- 24.2 Councillor Rowkins replied. Thank you very much, Elspeth, for presenting your petition. I understand you're standing in for Clara. I know she's been following this very closely and I imagine you have as well, along with many other residents. I'm sure you'll be aware that this was definitely not an easy decision for us.

I want to start just by making a couple of small corrections if I may. The petition states in the body of the text that the Council began a three-year phase out of glyphosate use on pavements and roads in 2019, but that's not accurate. The Council decision in 2019 was, and I'm quoting from the committee report that that documents the decision, to end the use of glyphosate by Brighton & Hove City Council's City Environment Management services with immediate effect.

Now, whilst well-intentioned, this was contrary to the advice of the Pesticide Action Network who recommend, as you suggest, a phase out. But not just a phase out. You can't just gradually stop using herbicides and not replace them with anything. The absence of any proper strategy for managing weed growth in the years since 2019 has, I'm afraid, led to a situation where in some parts of the city, the situation is out of control and we've been forced to act.

The petition also suggest that the Council will be using herbicide on grass verges, but that is not the case. I just want to reassure you of that. The committee decision in January this year actually explicitly states that we will not be treating any parks at green spaces or verges. Now it is my firm belief that the cliff-edge ban, and the absence of a strategy to manage the problem in years following 2019, has led to the situation in which we now find ourselves. Look, you know, if you ask me the simple question, 'do you want to use glyphosate?', my answer is an easy no. But we don't have the luxury of taking such a simplistic view. We also have to consider our duty to maintain safe and accessible pavements for all of our residents.

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Thank you again for being here today.

- 24.3 Councillor Pickett moved an amendment on behalf of the Green Group which was formally seconded by Councillor McLeay.
- 24.4 Councillor Theobald and Earthey spoke on the matter.
- 24.5 Councillor Rowkins responded to the debate and did not accept the Green Group amendment.
- 24.6 **RESOLVED:**
 - 1. That the petition was noted and referred to the relevant decision making body for consideration.