



**Reigate & Banstead**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL  
Banstead | Horley | Redhill | Reigate

<b>SIGNED OFF BY</b>	Director of Place
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<b>TO</b>	Executive
<b>DATE</b>	Thursday, 25 March 2021
<b>EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b>	Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

<b>KEY DECISION REQUIRED</b>	No
<b>WARDS AFFECTED</b>	(All Wards);

<b>SUBJECT</b>	Wildlife Friendly Public Spaces – 2021 Update
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<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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- (i) **To note progress made towards the achievement of the aims set out in the September 2019 motion relating to wildlife friendly public spaces.**

<b>REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
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To note the progress made towards the motion objectives.

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
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To note the progress made towards the motion objectives.

<b>Executive has authority to approve the above recommendations</b>
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<b>STATUTORY POWERS</b>
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1. Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Council has a duty to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of its area.

## BACKGROUND

2. Surrey County Council (SCC) passed a motion on 9 July 2019, which sought to improve the management of verges for the benefit of wildlife. The motion required the production of a Pollinator Action Plan as well as a range of other measures such as the ending of the use of glyphosate on verges and less frequent cutting to allow seeding to occur.
3. In September 2019 a motion was tabled at RBBC's Full Council meeting which sought Borough-level commitment to the achievement of SCC's motion. Specifically, to adopt and implement guidance and measures that will improve habitat for wildlife and increase benefits for people using the Council's public spaces.
4. RBBC hold an agency agreement with SCC, and undertake the highways maintenance on their behalf, and to their contract specification. Any proposed deviations to the contract are ultimately the responsibility of SCC to agree.

## KEY INFORMATION

### Grass cutting reduction

5. Since RBBC's passing of the motion in September 2019, Officers have investigated and subsequently implemented altered grass cutting regimes across a number of sites, with the objective to improve habitats for wildlife.
6. These include areas within parks, countryside sites and highways verges. For example,

#### Countryside area's

Wray Common, Petridgewood Common, Tanyard Meadows, Chipstead Downs, New Pond Farm, Merstham Bund, Earlswood Common, following on from wild camomile being identified.

#### Parks area's

Radstock Way, Brooke Road, Nork Park, Ifold Road Play area (section).

#### Highway areas

High Beaches, Banstead, Kingsley Avenue, Horley, Kingsley Road, Horley, A21 central reservation, A217, SCC trial area, Firtree Road, Banstead, Woodhatch Greens, opposite St Mathews school, Roundabout green area, London Road North central reservation, Keats Avenue, Redhill, Brokes Road, Reigate (apple tree area) The Spinney, Tadworth, Waterfield Greens.

### Glyphosate reduction

7. As per the agency agreement held between RBBC and SCC to undertake the highways maintenance on the County's behalf, the contract stipulates that a minimum of three herbicide applications must be made on the borough's network of roads.

8. In agreement with SCC, in 2020 a reduction in the use of herbicides was trialled, and only two applications were undertaken borough wide.

### **Future Objectives**

9. Officers will look at further reduction as appropriate. We will continue to investigate additional areas for a reduction in grass cutting, and in addition, to explore the potential to take a more targeted approach to herbicide application, mirroring peak foliage growth rates to maximise its effect.

## **OPTIONS**

10. The options available to the Executive are set out below:

Option 1: To note progress made against the motion, and the future aspirations towards its achievement. The Council will thereby continue to undertake the planned activities associated with the motion.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

11. As identified in the Statutory Powers section of this report, the Council has the power to act in the furtherance of the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the area.
12. Consideration will need to be given to the balance between RBBC's contractual obligations for highways maintenance and the achievement of the motion's objectives, in partnership with SCC.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

13. It should be noted that glyphosate currently presents the most cost-effective means to control weed growth, and that implementation of substitute chemicals or control measures are likely to represent a significant increase in costs.
14. The alteration of a cutting regime from short, amenity grassland to that of a longer profile will result in increased cutting costs. Areas maintained as longer grass, cut annually often cost four times the amount to maintain than shorter amenity grass. This is due to the additional specialist machinery required to undertake the operation, the collection of the longer grass, its processing and disposal versus cutting short grass and leaving clippings in situ.
15. It should be noted that if the current maintenance regimes remain unchanged from that which has been implemented thus far, we are able to manage this within existing budgets. However, if any further maintenance alterations are identified for implementation in future these are likely to result in additional costs being incurred. Further discussions with our colleagues at SCC are scheduled to determine the future focus and agree funding.

## **EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

16. The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not;
  - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
- 17.
18. The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy/maternity; race; religion/faith; sex and sexual orientation. In addition, marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.
19. The Committee should ensure that it has regard for these duties by considering them through the course of its work. This should include considering:
- How policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share the nine protected characteristics;
  - Whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate.
  - Whether there is equality of access to service and fair representation of all groups within the Borough;

## **COMMUNICATION IMPLICATIONS**

20. Implications relating to the communications have been explored as part of the implementation of the motion's measures.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

21. The risks of individual initiatives and areas targeted for improvements will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. This will include considering operational risks in relation to existing Council activities, financial risks and health and safety considerations.

## **CONSULTATION**

22. In implementing the initiatives and improvements, consideration will be given to how to proactively involve communities and residents across the borough in specific projects and activities.

## **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

23. As identified, the initiatives set out within the motion would support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan objectives through providing enhancements to the local area.