

## Motion submitted by Councillor Tim Taylor

### WEEDS

In April 2023, with neither consultation nor (so far as we are aware) notice, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) decided to cease all cyclical spraying to suppress weeds on our pavements, roads and in our gullies.

On September 8th a letter was sent by Frank Jordan (Executive Director for Place & Sustainability at CCC) to all Councils in the county, recognising "that the County Council should have engaged with its partners in district and parish councils more effectively at the time when this policy change was being considered, and then when it was implemented, and that is something we wish to improve upon" and advising that CCC is "reviewing the impact of the change in both rural and urban areas" and that CCC "will be considering changes to [their] approach when [they] have the assessment results and presenting this to members" of CCC.

Many residents have complained that our roads and footpaths have already become unsightly as a result of this new policy to cease cyclical spraying on our highways. If the policy isn't reversed by CCC, this will only become worse with time.

Council notes with concern the reports in September after periods of intense rain in Manea, March and Whittlesey that road surface water did not drain as quickly as would otherwise have been possible because drains and gullies were blocked or impeded by weed and grass growth which was a direct result of the change of policy stopping cyclical spraying, creating a safety hazard for road users and increasing flood risk in adjacent properties.

Council further notes the spurious justification for the policy to cease cyclical spraying that glyphosate, the most commonly used chemical for this purpose, is unsafe. We note that the use of glyphosate as a weed suppressant is approved in the UK and by the European Union, and that a recent study showed that glyphosate is less toxic to humans than vinegar or table salt.

In failing to take preventative action to suppress weeds, a significant increase in roadside Ragwort has been noticed. Ragwort is poisonous to ruminants generally and to horses in particular. The County Council as Highways Authority is under a statutory duty to remove and prevent Ragwort, and should do so in accordance with DEFRA's best practice guidance. The resumption of cyclical spraying should be an important preventative element as part of the County's control strategy in respect of Ragwort.

Council therefore agrees to respond to CCC advising them of the contents of this motion and our desire to see cyclical spraying recommenced to suppress weeds on our roads, pavements and in our gullies.