



AGENDA ITEM 6

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

8 FEBRUARY 2011

WEED CONTROL - SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINAL REPORT

Why the scrutiny panel examined this topic

1. The condition and cleanliness of their local area is important for local residents and is one of the regular issues which is highlighted to the Council and also by ward councillors. Weed control is a service which impacts on the environmental condition and appearance of Middlesbrough and is therefore important in this context.
2. The scrutiny panel sought to examine how the weed control service operates and to assess its effectiveness.

What the scrutiny panel found

3. The panel found that changes in the chemicals that are allowed to be used by local authorities have impacted on weed treatment. Councils can no longer treat swathes of land prior to weed growth - weeds are now only treated once they appear. Although these circumstances are beyond the authority's control, this has inevitably resulted in more prevalent weed growth and is therefore likely to lead to increased complaints.
4. The panel also heard details of operational arrangements, with chemical weed control currently being carried out 'in-house'. Details were also submitted of methods of weed control that are used in addition to chemical treatments, including strimming and manual weeding. These are used as appropriate depending on the level of weed control needed - for example areas such as around the Cenotaph are maintained at 100% weed free.

Summary of the Scrutiny Panel's Conclusions:

5. The scrutiny panel's conclusions are shown in full in the **attached final report** and highlight the following:
 1. The importance of maintaining a clean and tidy local environment.
 2. The panel's support for steps that have been taken to reduce the use of harmful chemical weedkillers.

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3. The increased weed growth that has resulted from the changes in chemicals and methods of treatment used.
4. The need to highlight these changes to elected members and the public.
5. The need to continue to undertake effective and efficient weed control amid difficult financial circumstances.

Summary of the Scrutiny Panel's Recommendations:

6. The panel's recommendations are based on the conclusions outlined above. These are shown in full in the **attached final report** and relate to:
 1. Increasing public and elected member awareness of why areas may appear to suffer from an increase in weed growth.
 2. Encouraging increased public participation and ownership of their local areas, possibly in partnership with the Council, on areas such as weed control.
 3. The need to continue to maintain high standards of weed control at key sites such as the Cenotaph and Middlesbrough town centre.
 4. The use of Community Payback labour, as appropriate, to assist with a pro-active approach to weed control.

Councillor Bob Kerr

Chair of Environment Scrutiny Panel