

## **EXMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL**

### **Town Maintenance Overview Working Party**

Notes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021 via Zoom.

#### **Present**

Councillor Ian Kirvan	IK	Exmouth Town Council (Chair)
Councillor Maddy Chapman	MC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Frank Cullis	FC	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Olly Davey	OD	Exmouth Town Council
Councillor Steve Gazzard	SG	Exmouth Town Council (ex-officio)
Chetna Jones	CJ	Deputy Town Clerk, Exmouth Town Council

#### **Apologies**

Councillor Brian Bailey and Councillor Tony Woodward

#### **1. Welcome and apologies**

IK welcomed members to the meeting and apologies were received as above.

#### **2. To approve the notes of the last meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were approved.

#### **3. Matters arising**

Item 3 - To review the grass cutting regime carried out by EDDC and agree whether this or any part of this is to be implemented on the areas requested by Exmouth Town Council

IK confirmed the ongoing grass cutting issues in Bradham Lane and Salterton Road remain uncut and unmanaged, particularly, around the flower towers.

**Action: CJ/ to contact EDDC Street Scene to confirm the cutting schedule of these areas and if they are to remain uncut to arrange for the Town Council's own team to cut them.**

Grass cutting generally in Exmouth is to be discussed later in the meeting.

Item 4 - Japanese Knotweed on Marine Way bank

CJ confirmed that the front (roadside) of Marine Way bank was scheduled to be cut on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October and the Town Maintenance team will be assisting. The reduced cost to cut only this section was provided by the contractor on the basis that the Town Council's maintenance staff trim areas that the remote mower was unable to reach.

CJ confirmed she had written to the Environment Agency regarding the Japanese knotweed and that a standard response was sent by the EA with a link to guidance notes. CJ also wrote to DCC, as the landowner, to obtain confirmation in writing to proceed with the work on the front of the bank.

It was noted that no work will be done by the Town Council to the back of the bank, nor will it take any responsibility of the Japanese knotweed. SG confirmed the back was extremely overgrown. MC added it is likely that County Councillors will arrange for the back to be cut.

#### Item 5 – Phear Park Compound area

OD confirmed he had chased East Devon District Councillor Paul Hayward regarding ETC's concerns at Phear Park but had not received a response other than to say he had encountered a similar issue at Newton Poppleford.

#### **4. To receive details of a recent Freedom of Information Request and response provided**

A freedom of Information request on the use of pesticides was received on 27<sup>th</sup> September and a response was provided on 4<sup>th</sup> October. Details of both were discussed by the working party.

#### ***Re: Herbicide Use – Requests for information under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and/or the Freedom of Information Act 2000***

*I would like to know if we use of glyphosate-based herbicides in our area*

*I respectfully request environmental information, which I make in accordance with the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (the “EIR 2004”) and/or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the “FOIA 2000”). Where the Information Sought is available online, I am happy to receive that information by way of link to the respective online source.*

#### ***Information Sought***

*I request the following information:*

- 1. Which glyphosate-based herbicides[1] are currently used by or on behalf of the Council and/or on land owned by, managed by, or under the control of, the Council?*
- 2. For the most recent 12-month period for which information is available, please could you tell me the amount and brand of each glyphosate-based herbicide in question, as well as the size of the area over which they were used.*
- 3. Please could you explain the basis for (i) the Council's choice of product(s), and (ii) the Council's decision to use glyphosate-based herbicides rather than alternative methods. Please could you provide me with copies of any policy or other document which informs that decision-making.*
- 4. I understand that, if the Council uses, or instructs other to use, plant protection products (including glyphosate-based herbicides) then the Council is required by law[2] to ensure that[3]:*
  - all reasonable precautions are taken to protect human health and the environment.*

- *the application of the plant protection product is confined to the crop, land, produce, buildings, contents of buildings, materials or other areas intended to be treated.*
- *and when the product is used in places of heightened concern (which includes, among others, areas used by the public or vulnerable groups[4], areas in the close vicinity of healthcare facilities, and on or along roads, railway lines, very permeable surfaces, or other infrastructure close to surface water or groundwater) that the amount used and the frequency of use are as low as reasonably practicable.*

*5. Please explain how the Council ensures that it complies with the requirements set out above in paragraph 4, particularly in terms of operational decision-making by the Council?*

*6. Please provide me with copies of any policy or other document which informs the Council's decision-making in relation to compliance with the legal requirements set out in paragraph 4 above. Please also provide copies of evidence of the Council's decision-making over the past 12 months relating to the records of decisions taken to ensure the amount of plant protection products used and the frequency of use are as low as reasonably practicable.*

*Thank you for your request for information regarding our use of herbicides. We have reviewed our records and can provide the information requested by answering the 6 questions you sent in your email dated 27<sup>th</sup> September.*

*1. The Town Council's primarily role, through its Town Maintenance team, is in assisting Devon County Council and East Devon District Council in keeping side roads clear of weeds and overgrowth in the outlying areas of Exmouth. Although it is not a statutory duty it was agreed to do this at the request of residents.*

*2. The recommended pesticide for the CDA lance is Roundup Pro V and over the last 12 months we have weed sprayed for a total of 17 days, approximately 5.5 hours per day, using 6.564L in total. When out weed spraying the side roads we only target individual weeds so it is hard to determine the exact area in m<sup>2</sup> as we do not spray in one continuous area, as you would do in a field. Records (example attached) are kept by the individuals each time they are out weed spraying and are reviewed on a regular basis.*

*3. The Town Council has over the last few years acquired alternative products to help with the road weed clearing. The Town Council purchased a road weed clearing machine which is used regularly to clear the weeds. Details of the machine can be found here:*

[Mosquito II - Overton UK \(overtonukltd.com\)](http://overtonukltd.com)

*These machines are designed to remove weeds and detritus resulting longer periods before regrowth occurs.*

Where possible the Council avoids using pesticides unless circumstances prevent us from removing unwanted weeds. This can be for several reasons but mainly due to access with cars parked very tightly preventing the machine from being used, or the state of the road surface being very poor and using the machine would cause more damage or the roots are so deep that it was not possible to pull out without damaging the surface.

In these circumstances, if used, only a minimal amount is used using a CDA lance and generally it is only used once before and after we complete the road weed clearing.

The RIVERLYNX Eradicator **spray** hand lance is a Rotary Atomiser and Controlled Droplet Application (CDA). The CDA eradicator lance is also environmentally friendly as the innovative CDA system reduces spray drift compared to conventional sprayers. The **CDA** system reduces **spray** drift which not only helps preserve the environmental surroundings but also means application is more effective than conventional sprayers as far less, if any **spray** is lost through drift. Click on the link below for more information: [CDA Eradicator Spray Lance | CDA Sprayers & Accessories | Amenity Choice](#)

4 and 5. The two members involved in weed spraying both attended training on use of pesticides and are licensed users meaning they are aware how to use pesticides safely and in the right conditions. Details of the course attended is available using the link [Safe Use of Pesticides PA1 & PA6 - Bicton College](#)

Spraying only ever takes place on dry days when the wind speed is a steady force 2 light wind. Users are provided with all the appropriate safety gear when using the CDA lance.

6. Decisions to reduce the use of pesticides by purchasing the above equipment were ratified by the Town Maintenance Overview working party (formerly the Town Maintenance Contracts TAFF). An Environmental Policy (attached) was developed by the Climate and Ecological Emergency working party with input from the Town Maintenance Overview working party which also highlights the Council's proposal to limit the use of pesticides.

FC confirmed this was an excellent response. He asked if the amount of pesticide quoted was a diluted amount. CJ confirmed it was the actual amount used and the CDA lance only applied tiny amounts as droplets directly on to the plant.

## **5. To receive an update on Town Maintenance work**

CJ confirmed that annual grass cutting has commenced in areas highlighted previously. Considerable time was spent cutting the bank at Pound Lane and raking the arisings. Attempts were made to remove roots for bramble and other unwanted

plants, but it will require another visit to the site in a few months to treat these as they start to come through.

CJ added that the team have been spending one week on grounds maintenance and the second week on road weed clearing and they are currently in Brixington. Watering has continued due to the recent dry weather.

Marine Way bank roadside will be cut on 15<sup>th</sup> October and although several enquiries were made to dispose of the arising none have provided a suitable outcome. For this reason the arisings although raked through will be collected and spread at the bottom where there is a level strip running all the way along the whole bank.

The winter planting plan will be available for planting in early November to replace the summer planting (perennials to stay in-situ). The flower in the towers will be replaced at the same time.

OD agreed it was a sensible idea to spread the arisings at the bottom of the bank and thanked CJ for arranging for the quote to be split to only include the roadside cut. He confirmed that he will refer any complaints about the back to DCC.

FC asked if the issue with the debris in the water tank at Kings was resolved. CJ confirmed that it was not possible for Kings to change the set up but now that the problem was known precautions will be taken to keep the filters and pump clean on our water bowser and lance.

IK highlighted that according to the DCC grass cutting schedule, visibility grass cutting was due in September and asked if DCC can be contacted to determine when they will be doing this. He added that EDDC were also behind and only completed 3 cuts this year. It was agreed that CJ will email DCC NHO and set up a meeting with EDDC Streetscene area manager.

**Action: CJ to email DCC NHO to ask if another visibility cut will be taking place and arrange a meeting with EDDC Streetscene.**

## **6. To receive an update on Phear Park compound area**

CJ gave an update on the Phear Park compound area.

CJ has emailed Mark Williams, John Golding and Tim Childs to seek assistance. This has resulted in a response and explanation being provided by EDDC Officer Rob Harrison.

Unfortunately, most of the changes proposed by ETC for the heads of terms were not agreed by EDDC other than extending the break clause from 6 months to 12 months and allowing the condition survey to be added to the lease agreement. They also added an additional clause which seemed to contradict the obligation to repair and maintain the gate and boundary walls.

Should members want to proceed with acquiring the compound area they will need to assess the level of risks and determine whether these are acceptable.

It was suggested that only minimum improvements be carried out initially.

MC suggested that the Town Hall Relocation Working Party find suitable premises with garden space to use as a depot space and reiterated she was against acquiring the compound area.

SG suggested that a meeting be held on-site with Rob, Tim and possibly Mark and OD agreed that EDDC could be asked openly about the likelihood of being asked to leave. It was agreed that CJ email an invitation to a meeting on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October.

**Action: CJ to email EDDC Officers with an invitation to attend a site meeting on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October at 10am.**

#### **7. To receive an update on work vehicles**

Unfortunately no update was available at the time of the meeting. CJ confirmed that as soon as information was available it will be circulated to all members.

#### **8. To discuss grass cutting contract for 2022**

Most grass cutting areas have been mapped using pear mapping. This information will be useful in putting together a specification of work, frequency of cutting and standard.

To date there has not been a formal contract in place with EDDC and work has not been consistent.

Various options were discussed on how grass cutting can be carried out in 2022 and onwards. With the Corona virus impacting staffing levels, availability of material and increasing costs, there was concern that a full tender exercise may not provide a suitable outcome.

It was agreed that once a specification of work is defined, EDDC should be approached initially to discuss the concerns and the lack of control of the work.

**Action: CJ to set up a meeting with Streetscene area manager and IK to discuss grass cutting.**

#### **9. To discuss and agree proposals for cleaning of bus shelters and traffic islands**

IK raised the issue of weeds growing on the traffic islands and the state of the bus shelters and suggested that EDDC's seasonal worker be asked to clean these as per last year with help from the Town Maintenance Team for the bus shelters.

#### **10. Any other business**

No items were raised.

**Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

The meeting finished at 12.10 pm.