

Stronger Communities Committee

Date: 18th November 2019

Title: Pesticide Policy

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer John Hickman

Background

Earlier in the year, in response to a significant amount of dead bees, the Leader of the Council temporarily stopped the use of pesticide on all WTC owned land. Subsequently the Council declared a Climate Emergency. Both these actions have resulted in the Council needing a pesticide policy.

Action Taken

Initially the ban on pesticide usage was for 2 weeks whilst the Leader sought guidance, however this transpired into a much longer period. The lack of being able to maintain sports pitches, bowls greens without the use of chemicals became an issue and it was agreed that pesticides could be used on sports pitches and bowls greens only, whilst a pesticides policy for these facilities was drawn up.

STRI were requested to draw up a pesticide policy along with a new maintenance specification for these areas in order to reduce the requirement to an absolute minimum on all of Witney Town Councils Sporting Facilities.

It is intended that this policy will form the basis for a Pesticide Policy across the entire WTC Estate.

Current situation

A new Sports Pitches & Bowls Maintenance Specification & Pesticides Policy has been drawn up and was presented to the Halls and Green Spaces Committee on 11th November 19 and adopted.

It is hoped that the attached pesticide policy could be adapted to suit the rest of the estate. It has become clear that pesticides will need to be used under exceptional circumstances. Such as dealing with the boundary wall at St Marys to prevent future damage from ivy, tree roots etc. as requested by the Diocese, wasps nest etc. if a danger to the public and not able to deal with the risk by any other method.

The Pesticide policy limits use of pesticides by thresholds these can be set by council and the requirement to then seek permission from either a Council Appointed Officer in the cases of emergencies or Council in any other case.

The Operations and Estates Officer could bring a Draft Pesticides Policy to Stronger Communities for consideration for all other areas outside Sports Pitches & Bowls Maintenance to the next meeting.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates. By controlling the application of pesticides on WTC estate by setting a Pesticide Policy council is able to ensure pesticide application can only be carried out with its approval except in an emergency application where no other risk control measure is available.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Recommendations

Councillors are invited to note the report and consider a draft Pesticide Policy for all areas outside Sports Pitches and Bowls Maintenance at the next meeting.