

**To receive a report on weed spraying and consider any
actions and associated expenditure**

Report to:

Services Committee

Date of Report:

25 April 2026

Officer Writing the Report:

Town Clerk

Purpose of the report:

To update Members on the latest information received from Cornwall Council regarding weed treatment within the town and to note the Town Council's position.

Officer's Recommendations

Members are asked to note the update and that the Town Council's position is to permit the controlled and selective use of herbicides where mechanical weeding is challenging, to maintain a tidy and presentable environment. However, no herbicide use has been necessary.

Upon receipt of further correspondence from Cornwall Council regarding weed treatment on Cornwall Council highways in Saltash, the matter will be referred back to the Services Committee.

Report Summary

In March, Cornwall Council's (CC) Cabinet instructed Cornwall Highways & Environment Services to begin a new programme of weed treatment and public realm improvements across Cornwall. This decision follows evidence of declining standards since routine weed management stopped in 2013, resulting in increasing complaints, narrowing footways, damaged surfaces, and perceived reduced community pride.

CC have reviewed options and have directed Cormac Solutions Limited to carry out the following on the adopted highway network:

- **Targeted manual and mechanical weed removal** on the very worst-affected estates (one per CAP)
- **Carefully controlled, limited chemical treatment** only on the urban highway network where weeds are present, using modern Controlled Droplet Application methods to minimise quantity and footprint.
- **Improvements to amenity and environmental areas**, including enhanced cutting and better management of urban verges.
- **Partnership working with local councils and volunteers**, supporting local pride and community involvement.

Please note this directive does not apply to private areas or areas maintained via the waste contract.

The aim of this recovery programme is to restore safe, accessible streets and deliver consistent standards across Cornwall. CC want to support strong, safe, clean and well-maintained communities and to ensure Cornwall's neighbourhoods reflect the pride residents have in where they live.

The default position is that all CC maintained areas are opted in, this will include all adopted highway within urban areas as it was in 2013. An opt-out option is available for Town and Parish Councils that wish to manage their areas without chemical treatment, provided they can meet the required standards and protect asset integrity.

In the first instance Town and Parishes should send responses and Opt-out forms before the **20th of April 2026** to your Community Link Officers (CLO) who will collate responses and feed this information through to Cornwall Highways who will then pick up further contact.

CC appreciate this is short notice, given the operational need to commence weed treatment at the beginning of May. However, if meeting this deadline is not possible because you will not be able to consider this at a council meeting before this date, please can you let your CLO know the earliest you will be able to make a decision.

CC had provided Saltash Town Council an extension of time until after this evening's Services Committee meeting, however, in the meantime, the Full Council of Cornwall

Council met and a motion was raised. There was lengthy discussion and whilst many spoke against the use of glyphosate, some spoke in favour - regardless of the position on the use of chemicals there was widespread condemnation and apologies regarding how the Town and Parish sector was treated in the process.

The Cornwall Council decision on 21 April 2026 was to:

Recognise that the decision to reintroduce chemical weed treatment using glyphosate represents a significant policy reversal with ecological, public health and democratic implications for communities across Cornwall.

Pause the commencement of chemical weed treatment currently scheduled for May 2026 until a meaningful public consultation process has been completed.

Recognise the wholly inadequate three week opt out window provided to parish and town councils which included Easter and commits to extending this to 30 days after the public consultation results have been published.

Give town/parish councils more clarity on the minimum required standards of the urban network.

Urgently review the financial terms of the opt-out scheme, which as currently structured are coercive: town and parish councils that exercise their democratic right to refuse glyphosate treatment are penalised by the simultaneous removal of wider targeted estate improvement works, and are offered funding covering only the chemical treatment element (£343.45 per km), leaving them to bear the full additional cost of alternative weed management, waste clearance and public liability insurance from their own precept. Decouple the opt-out from the loss of estate improvement funding.

Cornwall Associations of Local Councils are continuing with conversations with Cornwall Council regarding the process failures with information-sharing and consultation with Town and Parish councils.

Further to this, the Town Clerk attended a Clerks' meeting at which two Cornwall Council officers were present. The officers apologised on behalf of the Cabinet for the manner in which they engaged with Town and Parish Councils on this matter and confirmed that they were there to listen to concerns.

They received the feedback provided and assured those in attendance that the comments would be taken on board, with a commitment to improving how Cornwall Council works with the Town and Parish Council sector going forward.

The officers were unable to confirm when Cornwall Council would make a decision regarding the proposed approach to weed treatment and public realm improvements across Cornwall.

It is hoped that Cornwall Council will now engage more proactively with Town and Parish Councils and recognise that towns differ in their needs, and that a tailored approach for each town may therefore be required.

The most recent Town Council resolution relating to weed treatment was made at the Services Committee meeting held on 11 December 2025 and continues to be the latest instruction adhered to by the Service Delivery Department. The resolution approved the controlled and selective use of herbicides in areas where mechanical weeding proves challenging, in order to maintain a tidy and presentable environment.

To date, the Services Department has not identified any areas where mechanical weeding has needed to be replaced with the use of herbicides. While mechanical weeding is labour-intensive and can present challenges in terms of available time and resources, it continues to deliver an acceptable and presentable standard.

Where practicable, bark mulch is applied to planted bedding areas to help suppress weed growth and facilitate easier maintenance.

Signature of Officer:

Town Clerk