

Memo

21 February 2017

To: Ōrākei Local Board Members
cc: Adam Milina, Relationship Manager
From: Mike Tucker, Head of Health & Safety, Quality Assurance and Environment, Community Facilities

Subject: Response to the Ōrākei Local Board weed-spraying resolution (OR/2016/163)

1. Weed Management Policy

In 2013, the Auckland Council Weed Management Policy was developed to guide the management of weeds in Auckland's parks and open spaces, including the road corridor.

As part of the implementation of the policy, an operational review of current weed management and vegetation control practices were completed in 2015 to identify where improvements could be made. Changes underway or completed include:

- Improved information on the council website about how and why the council controls weeds
- Work is well progressed on the development of a new centralised No-Spray Register that will be utilised by Auckland Council and CCOs. This register will ensure consistency of practice and provide contractors and the public with a clearer process.
- The current practice of restricting weed control within children's playgrounds to manual and mechanical removal will be retained.
- A project to improve implementation and reporting on delivery against the objectives of the weed management policy
- Building the objectives of the weed management policy into the Community Facilities contracts
- Establishment of the Best Practice Reference Group made up of external technical experts and community representatives as per the policy action plan.

2. Ellerslie No-Spray Policy

A "30 year legacy ban that existed in Ellerslie" has been referenced by the local board members. Apart from references in the legacy Auckland City Council Weed Management Policy, staff have not been able to find any documentation that supports details of a comprehensive Auckland City Council Ellerslie "ban" on herbicide use. Similarly, the legacy Auckland City Council Weed Management Policy makes reference to an "Ellerslie 'No Herbicide Use' Policy", however a search of legacy policy documents has been unable to verify that a policy of this nature had been approved by any committees of the Auckland City Council.

The Auckland City Council Weed Management Policy does reference a limited trial of non-herbicide maintenance at Michaels Avenue Reserve and Ellerslie Domain, and this 'non-chemical' maintenance practice has continued at Michaels Avenue Reserve under Auckland Council maintenance operations. As below, the policy includes a cost evaluation of herbicide use from a trial at Michaels Avenue Reserve and Ellerslie Domain. The trial found that non-herbicide maintenance of sports fields were considerably higher than the cost at sites where herbicides were utilised:

Table 24: Cost evaluation of herbicide vs non-herbicide sports parks management

	Herbicide		Non-herbicide	
	Cost (\$)	Cost (\$/ha)	Cost (\$)	Cost (\$/ha)
Fertiliser	2646.50	778.38	3096.52	910.74
Irrigation	5550.60	1632.53	6803.40	2001.00
Weed Eradication/ Removal	978.20	287.71	1950.00	572.53
Mowing	9797.60	2881.65	11254.00	3310.00
Line Marking	2765.40	-	4144.80	-
Edge Maintenance	1069.44	-	8414.64	-
TOTAL	22,807.74		35,663.36	

As quoted, “there appears to be a significant difference between herbicide and non-herbicide management of sports parks, based on the above summary of costs”. Please note that edge maintenance and line marking are a substantial part of the increase in costs, and this is relevant for all local and sports parks maintenance.

It was referenced in the December letter to the Ōrākei Local Board that all sports parks in Ellerslie were maintained through non-herbicide methodology; however the legacy Auckland City Council Weed Management Policy stated:

“In the Tamaki/Maungakiekie Ward the management contracts for sports parks contain little detail on the methods for achieving the performance outcomes required, but contractors are expected to maximise their use of mechanical weed removal and minimise their use of herbicide”.

Therefore, the legacy maintenance contracts incorporated the use of herbicides across the ward area.

Auckland Transport has also verified that it has continued to use the same weed control methods as were used by the legacy council organisations at the time of amalgamation.

It is important to remember that the Auckland City Council Weed Management Policy was considered when the new Auckland Council Weed Management Policy was being drafted. This new policy has been adopted by governing body members and therefore the legacy policy is no longer in effect.

Through the Project 17 process, the Ōrākei Local Board is able to create an Ellerslie No-Spray Area with additional locally driven initiatives funding, but there is no historical maintenance evidence regarding this area wide ban for staff to use as a comparison.

3. Hot water spraying vs standard weed spraying

For the Ōrākei Local Board’s reference, I attach a summary of weed control options from a PWC report (please see the “Weed Control Methodology Table” attachment). This report states that there is significantly increased pricing for hot water spraying methods over standard weed spraying practices. This report was released several years ago based upon activities, and volumes of activities, at that time and consideration must be given for potential price variations since it was written.

4. Project 17 maintenance contracts – weed management conditions

The new Community Facilities Maintenance contracts have been designed to reflect the objectives of Auckland Council’s Weed Management Policy. Although the Auckland Council Weed

Management Policy objectives include minimising the use of agrichemicals, these new contracts will take this further by requiring a reduction in agrichemical usage, in addition to mandatory reporting from the contractors on chemical usage. Please see the attached memo for further information on the conditions that will be included in the contracts (“Weed Management Update to all EMS”).

5. Next steps

Community Facilities staff will be meeting with the Ōrākei Local Board members in March 2017 to discuss the levels of service conditions in the new Project 17 maintenance contracts before they are signed off by the Finance and Performance Committee.

If the weed management conditions within the approved maintenance contracts do not meet the expectations of the local board members, then there is the possibility to allocate locally driven initiatives funding towards increased or alternative weed management solutions.