

Pesticide Free Town Action Plan

Background

On 10th June 2019 Faversham Town Council declared an Environmental Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency and pledged to make Faversham carbon neutral by 2030, to work with Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council to determine and implement best practice methods.

As Faversham Town Council is not responsible for the open spaces within the town, we do not ourselves use pesticides. The Facilities Manager has investigated the use of pesticides by the county and borough councils, housing associations, schools and allotment holders.

On 18th May 2020 it was resolved that the Town Council write to KCC to inform them of our goal to become a pesticide free town and to carry out further investigations for an action plan to become pesticide free.

What are Pesticides and how are they used?

Pesticides are chemical substances designed to kill pests and are commonly used to control or eliminate a variety of pests. The most common forms of pesticides are:

1. Insecticides – kills insects
2. Herbicides – kills plants
3. Rodenticides – kills rats and mice
4. Fungicides – kills fungus, mould and mildew
5. Bactericides – kills bacteria

According to Pesticide Action Network (PAN UK) a survey carried out in April 2018 revealed that there are 38 different types of pesticides used in UK towns and cities. PAN UK states there is increasing concern from residents, local authorities and governments about the impact of pesticides on human and environmental health. As a result, towns and cities across the UK are considerably reducing, if not completely eradicating the use of pesticides in urban spaces and are switching to non-chemical methods of weed control.

PAN UK works with local councils to develop a policy framework for a transition to non-chemical alternatives and have successfully worked closely with councils like Bristol, Brighton and Lewes and more to achieve this. There are also a number of town councils in the south west who have declared pesticide free status, although as

they are in a unitary authority they are largely responsible for the parks and open spaces in their areas.

What are the benefits of going Pesticide free?

A range of benefits can result from adopting a pesticide-free approach, with environmental being the main advantage. Overview of benefits:

- Safeguarding of the general public's health by reducing their exposure to potentially harmful pesticides.
- Potential financial savings for councils due to reduced spending on chemicals and compulsory training for staff applying pesticides.
- Improved health for council employees and contractors due to reduced exposure to pesticides.
- Positive message for the public.
- Compliance with environmental and health legislation.
- Better habitats for bees, pollinators and other wildlife.
- Reduced contamination of water bodies which could lead to safer water for the public.

Proposed Action Plan to becoming a Pesticide Free Town

Becoming a pesticide free town will need to be achieved in stages, due to the reliance on third parties. The first steps to going pesticide free are:

Stage 1

Faversham Town Council agrees to become a Pesticide Free Council
Investigate what existing pesticides are being used.

- What products are being used, where, how often and why
- Who uses them? Is it a contractor, a sub-contractor or in-house staff?
- Write to Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council advising the Town Council's desire for Faversham to become a pesticide free town. Request a meeting to discuss their current procedures for maintenance contracts and what they specify in terms of pesticide use.

Stage 2

Faversham Town Council actively encourages the Community to look at alternative methods.

- Get support from the community
- Raising public awareness is key to the success of going pesticide-free and ensuring clear communication of the plan of action, and their reasons for change, to the public. If local residents understand the health and

- environmental benefits, they are much more likely to support the initiative and accept a higher level of wilding.
- Utilise the Town Council newsletter, website and social media to raise awareness about the benefits of going pesticide free.
- Increasing understanding of the value of 'weeds' which are fundamental to halting the decline of bees, birds and other wildlife.
- Promote any existing good work being undertaken to reduce pesticide use in Faversham, including publicising any areas that are already pesticide-free.
- A simple on-line poll publicised in the newsletter for Facebook, or a face-to-face questionnaire/ consultation can be useful in gauging community support of a pesticide free approach.
- Talk to other Town and Parish Councils who have already made the move.
- Organise a Full Council debate about making Faversham pesticide-free.
- Develop a Motion, put before the council, calling for an end to the use of pesticides on all areas of land under council control (allotments)

Stage 3

Faversham Town Council continues discussions with KCC and SBC to work towards using alternative methods in Faversham.

- Develop a clear pesticide policy. The policy should contain a schedule of how the council intends to go pesticide free which should include:
 - a) When and where pesticides are used.
 - b) The times, location and circumstances of any ongoing pesticide application.
 - c) The benefits of going pesticide free.
 - d) Any information about reductions in pesticide use to date or alternatives already in use.
 - e) Plans for trialling pesticide free approaches – e.g. methods, locations and how success will be evaluated.

Stage 4

Phased approach, with initially a reduction of pesticides in Faversham
Implementing the Policy:

- Consider a phased approach. There is no one technique which will control weeds (or other pests) across assets.
- Enlist the support of community volunteers/groups for pesticide-free tasks such as hand weeding, or for pollinator friendly activities such as creating wildflower areas.

- Keep the community informed. Make sure staff and contractors are able to respond positively to enquiries from the public.
- Alternatives to pesticides in public spaces. There are a range of different approaches available. The effectiveness of each method will vary greatly depending on the local context and environment and, in most cases, a range of different approaches will be required to replace pesticides.

Recommendation

Faversham Town Council recognises the importance of the health and wellbeing of our residents and recommends:

1. Faversham Town Council agrees to become a pesticide free council.
2. Faversham Town Council will impose a voluntary cessation of the use of pesticides within the town boundary, including all Town Council assets.
3. Actively encourages, promotes and educates the community to use alternative methods to pesticides and to continue to take steps towards becoming a Pesticide free Town.
4. Build a relationship with KCC, SBC, schools and housing associations, and their contractors, to reduce the amount of pesticides used in Faversham. Encouraging a phased-out approach in parks and public open spaces.