

## **CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL BIODIVERSITY AND HERBICIDE POLICY**

Adopted Date: 28 August 2025  
Next Review Due: August 2026

### **What is Biodiversity**

The WWF defines biodiversity as all the different kinds of life in one area. This includes animals, plants, fungi and microorganisms such as bacteria that together form our natural world. Each of these species and organisms works together in ecosystems to maintain balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive including food, clean water, medicine and shelter.

Biological diversity refers to the variety of life on Earth at all levels from genes to ecosystems. It encompasses the evolutionary, ecological and cultural processes that sustain life. Biodiversity includes not only species we consider rare, threatened or endangered but also every living thing from humans to organisms such as microbes, fungi and invertebrates. Healthy biodiversity ensures a greater variety of species and a resilient ecosystem that can better withstand and recover from disasters.

As human activity puts increasing pressure on the planet through higher resource use, we risk upsetting the balance of ecosystems and losing biodiversity. The Global Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services reported that one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, the highest number in human history. Restoring nature is critical to reversing the loss of biodiversity. This can be achieved through tree planting, habitat restoration and community-led conservation projects which benefit both people and the natural world.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 introduced a duty for all public authorities to have regard to biodiversity conservation. Section 40 of the Act states that every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Chigwell Parish Council recognises the importance of protecting biodiversity both locally and globally and is committed to shaping its policies and practices to safeguard the parish's natural environment. The Council will also encourage Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council to respect and follow this policy when working in Chigwell.

### **Policy Objectives**

Chigwell Parish Council is taking direct action to protect and enhance biodiversity within the parish. This includes habitat restoration to provide essential food sources and shelter for pollinating insects, birds and other wildlife. The Council will promote verge management, habitat creation, reduced maintenance regimes, elimination of herbicides and pesticides and the adoption of new maintenance methods and technologies.

### **Planting**

When planting on parish-owned land the Council will give preference to native trees, shrubs and plants that are suited to the local environment. Drought-resistant species will be prioritised to ensure long-term sustainability and reduce the need for additional watering. Species that require frequent or ongoing watering will not be planted. Planting schemes will aim to provide food and shelter for wildlife throughout the year and will be designed to improve the ecological value of the parish. Where possible, wildflower seeding will be used to enhance biodiversity.

## **Verges and Mowing Procedure**

Many road verges and roundabouts appear to be ordinary strips of grass but are in fact valuable ecological habitats. Even small verges can support more than 20 species of wildflowers and grasses. Managed properly, they become vital spaces for pollinators and other wildlife and help form important ecological corridors. With Britain having lost the majority of its wildflower-rich grasslands, managing our verges and smaller areas of land as mini-meadows is a practical step toward reversing biodiversity loss. This approach also reduces maintenance costs and increases opportunities for residents to connect with nature.

To support biodiversity, verges and other similar areas of land will be managed as follows. Mowing will not take place between April and late August or early September. This allows plants to flower and set seed, supporting bees, butterflies and other pollinators. Taller vegetation also creates shelter and feeding grounds for insects, birds, hedgehogs and small mammals.

An annual cut will take place between late August and early October with all cuttings removed to prevent nutrient build-up which encourages rank growth and reduces wildflower diversity. One third to half of the verge will be left uncut during the annual cut with uncut areas rotated each year to maintain habitat continuity and provide shelter for overwintering species.

Where full summer growth is not practical, for example on Station Green or at the Cemetery, mowing will take place more regularly. If space allows, varied mowing frequencies will be adopted in different sections of the verge to maximise habitat variety, for example the area adjacent to a road such as Courtland Drive, Lee Grove, etc. may be mowed every 4-8 weeks. If diversity is low, the Council may alter these routines and sow native wildflower seed or add plug plants from locally appropriate sources.

The Council will aim to work with local ecological groups to survey selected verges, record species present and review results annually. Residents will be encouraged to observe and photograph wildlife on verges and submit sightings to local recording schemes. Public involvement will be encouraged in cutting and clearing vegetation, promoting understanding of the ecological value of meadow-style verges and participating in surveys and educational events.

To avoid misunderstandings, clear signage will be installed and maps published online to explain the purpose of the reduced mowing regime. Residents will be informed about the benefits through Council and community communication.

## **Herbicide and Pesticide Use**

Chigwell Parish Council has already ceased the use of glyphosate and other non-selective herbicides on parish-owned land. Herbicides and pesticides will not be used for routine control. Only in exceptional circumstances, such as the treatment of dangerous or highly invasive species, may alternative approved treatments be considered and these will be selected to minimise harm to biodiversity.

The Council will continue to encourage Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council and their contractors to adopt the same approach when carrying out works in Chigwell.

## **Chigwell Parish Council Approach**

The Council acknowledges the loss of biodiversity within the UK and is committed to reversing this trend. It will identify parish-owned land for habitat creation and planting that supports wildlife. It will restore and manage habitats through targeted planting, wildflower seeding and reduced

mowing. It will commit to native and drought resistant tree planting in both urban and rural areas to improve the environment and help counter climate change.

The Council will maintain its ban on glyphosate and other non-selective herbicides.

## **CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL – BIODIVERSITY AND HERBICIDE POLICY**

### **A Simple Guide for Residents**

Chigwell Parish Council has made a commitment to help wildlife thrive, protect our green spaces and reduce the use of harmful chemicals. We are taking a different approach to the way we manage grass verges, small public areas and planting. This is to bring more colour, life and resilience to our local environment, even if it sometimes means things look a little less “perfect” than a neatly mown lawn.

#### **Why we are doing this**

Chigwell is surrounded by farmland, but most of it is used for intensive single-crop farming (monoculture). While this produces food, it does very little for wildlife. A healthy environment needs a mix of plants, insects, birds and mammals to support each other in a balanced way. Grass verges, hedgerows and small public spaces can become vital homes and feeding grounds for these species if we manage them carefully.

#### **What will change**

We have stopped using glyphosate and other strong weed killers on Parish land. These chemicals can harm insects and other wildlife and removing them helps more plants and creatures to flourish.

We are changing how we mow verges and small grassy areas. From April until late summer, many areas will be left to grow so plants can flower, set seed and provide food and shelter for bees, butterflies, birds and small mammals. Cutting will happen later in the year, with some areas left uncut to give wildlife a place to hide over winter. This may mean that grass looks longer and less “tidy” for part of the year but this is exactly what nature needs to recover.

We will also plant and seed with native and drought-resistant species. These are better suited to our soil and climate, need little or no watering and provide food for local wildlife throughout the year.

#### **What this means for Chigwell**

We know some residents prefer neat, short grass and open spaces. But short grass has little to offer wildlife. By allowing some areas to grow naturally at certain times of the year, we can create a patchwork of habitats across the parish that supports a far greater variety of life. In the long run, this approach will make Chigwell greener, more colourful and better for everyone’s wellbeing.

We will continue to look after public spaces so they are safe and enjoyable, but our mowing and planting will now be guided by biodiversity as well as appearance.

#### **How you can help**

- Plant native flowers and shrubs in your garden
- Reduce the frequency of mowing your own lawn
- Avoid using weed killers or pesticides where possible

- Enjoy and appreciate the wilder areas of Chigwell - they are working hard to keep our environment healthy

By working together, we can make Chigwell a place where both people and nature thrive.

**Reassurance notice** that could go on signs around longer grass areas, explaining to residents why it is being left to grow. That could help reduce complaints during the summer months.

### **Why is the grass longer here?**

This area is managed to support local wildlife by allowing plants to flower and provide food and shelter for bees, butterflies, birds and small mammals. While it may look less tidy for part of the year, this helps protect biodiversity and makes our Parish greener and healthier for everyone. Thank you for your understanding.