

# **Opt-out Guidance for Town and Parish Councils**

## **1. What's happening?**

Cornwall Council's Cabinet has instructed the Highways and Environment Service to improve weed management and the overall condition of the public realm. Over the next three years, our contractor, Cormac Solutions Ltd, will deliver a recovery programme that includes:

- Spot mechanical or hand clearance in areas with significant weed growth
- Enhanced environmental maintenance to better manage urban green spaces within housing developments
- Targeted, carefully controlled chemical treatment on urban highways only, and only where weeds are present

Further details are provided in the enclosed Member Briefing and FAQ document.

All town and parish councils are 'opted in' by default unless an opt-out application is submitted.

## **2. Can we opt out of Cornwall Council's treatment programme?**

Yes — but only for whole parish areas and where a town or parish council can demonstrate that it can maintain standards equivalent to or better than those planned by Cornwall Council.

Councils choosing to opt out will need to enter into an agreement similar to existing grass-cutting agreements.

Please note opting out of chemical treatment also means opting out of the proposed spot mechanical clearance & enhanced environmental maintenance.

### 3. Will funding be provided if we opt out?

Cornwall Council will provide funding equivalent to the cost of chemical treatment that would otherwise have been applied locally — provided the Town or Parish council demonstrates through the application process that it will deliver an equivalent level of treatment and customer complaint management.

For 2026/27, the expected contribution is £343.45 per km.

Additional costs, such as increased manual clearance, must be funded by the Town or Parish Council.

Please note that if councils intend to deliver a lower standard than Cornwall Council (2 effective treatments per year and arising waste collected) they will not receive funding.

### 4. How do we apply to opt out?

We recognise that time is limited ahead of the planned start date. For this reason, we propose an initial notification with a temporary hold, followed by a formal agreement process.

**Initial notification** – due by 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026: submitting the enclosed opt-out form by this date will place a temporary hold on Cornwall Council carrying out treatment in your area.

**Formal agreement** – due by 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026: to confirm the opt-out for the 2026/27 financial year, councils must submit an operational plan by this date including:

- a marked-up plan showing streets that will be maintained by the Town/Parish
- proposed method(s) of treatment
- expected frequency of visits – minimum of 2
- how weed-related complaints will be managed
- how promptly issues will be addressed
- evidence of trained staff or contractors
- appropriate insurance
- details of safe working procedures

Submitting this information will extend the temporary hold while both parties work to finalise the agreement.

Following review, we will draft the formal opt-out agreement. An example draft is attached, though still subject to legal review. Once signed, the agreement will apply to the full financial year.

## **5. What if we cannot deliver what we are committed to?**

We will work with councils to help improve performance where needed.

However, if standards fall below the agreed level and do not improve despite support, the opt-out will be withdrawn for the following season and the area will return to Cornwall Council's treatment programme.