AGENDA 8c, Enc xi) NOTE ON ALLOTMENT FIRES – To update Committee and seek views

1. Current Situation

Plot holders often have small garden fires on their allotment, for example to burn off waste. This summer, because the weather was so hot and dry, some of these fires got out of control.

We think this kind of hot, dry summer may now happen more often, not just this once. We'd like to hear what members of this committee think about that, and any ideas for how we deal with it.

There are rules on fires under 'normal' circumstances. Sites not managed by ATC adopt their own. On ATC managed sites the rules are as overleaf. The tenancy agreement is clear that ***"For any Tenant who wilfully breaks the bonfire and burning rules, their behaviour will be treated as Gross Misconduct."***

2. High Market and Wansbeck Road Allotment Associations

Before this summer's hot weather, the Allotment Officer supported associations at High Market and Wansbeck Road to change their own rules about burning. This came about because people had been complaining about burning on these sites.

The new rules started in spring this year. They have gone down well, and there have been no complaints since.

3. Seaton Hirst Allotment Association

More recently, the Allotment Officer has been working with the Seaton Hirst Allotment Association and local residents, supporting the association to change its own rules. New rules will now be brought in on this site too.

4. Government Alert – No Fires

Many people will remember the alert sent to mobile phones this summer, warning of a very high risk of fires and telling people not to light fires. This applies to allotments too, and we hope everyone understands how serious the risk is.

This risk became real at Woodhorn Road allotment site, where a garden fire got out of control and took hold.

5. Going Forward

We need to keep this changing weather in mind, as it means an ordinary garden fire can turn into something much more serious. We'd welcome the committee's thoughts on this, and on whether anything more should be done to keep sites safe.

Recycling efforts have been supported across sites, initiated by the Allotment Officer – this helps, but you may have other ideas.

6. Over to you…

Please share your views, including on:

- Burning rules;
- Better ways to warn plot holders about the risks and the rules;
- Anything else you think would help, given hotter, drier summers.

NOTICE

BONFIRES

Bonfires can cause unnecessary disruption and negative impact on surrounding premises and should only be used under appropriate circumstances. It is an offence to allow smoke from a bonfire to cause nuisance.

- Consider if it is necessary to burn on your allotment – alternatively the material can be composted, recycled, or taken to the nearest household waste recovery centre which will take green waste.
- Bonfires can only be lit weekdays Monday to Friday, no bonfires should be lit on weekends or bank holidays.
- Only burn dry garden or green waste in a considerate manner and be aware of neighbouring properties and how smoke may affect them. Locate your fire away from trees, fences, footpaths, roadways and buildings.
- DO NOT BURN household rubbish, tyres or anything that would give rise to dark smoke, such as materials containing plastic, foam or paint.
- Do not light fires when the wind is blowing towards local houses or business premises. Be prepared to put the fire out should the wind change direction while you are burning.
- Never use fuels or spirits to help light a fire – you could risk damage to your health as well as the environment.
- Never leave a fire unattended or leave it to smoulder – put the fire out before you leave.

Please be aware that fires on allotment sites have the potential to cause smoke nuisance to nearby premises.

If Northumberland County Council receives a complaint about burning on the allotments, the Council has a duty by law to investigate the complaint. You may be asked to extinguish your fire should it be deemed that your fire is causing a smoke nuisance.

The Council has a statutory duty to take formal action if a nuisance is found to exist, if this is necessary it may also affect your allotment tenancy.

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL