

CULTURE, LEISURE AND TOURISM PORTFOLIO

DECISION RECORD

14 August 2007

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. at Belle Vue Community Sports and Youth Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor Victor Tumilty (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder)

Officers: Andrew Pearson, Parks and Countryside Manager
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services Officer

7. Fires on Allotment Sites – Rule Change *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Portfolio Holder to introduce a rule change to the existing allotment rules and regulations regarding fires on allotment plots.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Parks and Countryside Manager reported that the existing allotment rules did not specifically restrict fires except under the general clause about being an annoyance to the occupier of any other allotment or to the owners of property in the neighbourhood. The current guidance that permitted allotment holders to light fires after 6.00 pm was not conducive to good relations between residents and allotment holders. The guidance from the National Association for Allotments and Leisure Gardeners encouraged Local Authorities to restrict fires or implement a complete ban in the summer months. One site had already implemented a summer ban on all allotment fires which was working effectively.

Consultation had been undertaken with all allotment associations and other agencies to which support for the scheme had been received. To ensure compliance and understanding of the new rules it was proposed that all tenants would receive a copy of the approved rules and guidance, attached at Appendix 1, and that the plan be implemented upon receipt of

the letter of notification. To ensure that there were no issues with fly tipping of existing rubbish on sites it was proposed that from September all sites would receive a number of skips proportionate to the number of tenants on the site. Random site visits would be undertaken in September to check compliance with the new rules and enforce compliance through existing powers to warn or evict tenants. There were no direct financial implications associated with this rule change, however, it was noted that there may be an impact on the revenue budgets for allotments in that there may be a greater cost in the provision of skips to assist new plot holders with disposal of unwanted rubbish and structures.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted a need for officers to ensure the skips were used only by allotments holders. The implementation of the rule changes regarding fires on allotment plots was welcomed by the Portfolio Holder.

Decision

That the implementation of the rule changes regarding fires on allotment plots, be approved.

8. Town Wide Condition Survey of Allotments *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To advise the Portfolio Holder of the results of the current inspection programme for allotments and to note the improvements to the standards of cultivation and use of allotments.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

During the months of June and July all sites had been inspected (except the devolved site at Woodcroft) to determine plots that had been abandoned or were not being cultivated in accordance with current regulations. In total 1011 plots had been inspected, 81 of which were vacant or under offer, 35 were exempt from inspection and the total number of plots that received warnings for non-cultivation was 106 (10.5%). A breakdown of inspections by site was included in the report together with details of last year's inspection as a comparator. There had been significant improvements in the last eight months since the last inspection programme in certain sites. It appeared that the regular inspection programme had a positive impact upon the overall state of the allotment provision.

Progress had also been made towards establishing two allotment associations at Nicholson's Field and Haswell Avenue. It was envisaged that this would significantly impact on improving standards within these

sites. Details of the actions taken to date in relation to vacant plots and non-cultivated plots were provided.

The Portfolio Holder welcomed the report and expressed his thanks to the team for their efforts in securing the improvements to the allotments infrastructure.

Decision

- (i) That the findings of the report, be noted.
- (ii) That the efforts being made to secure a rolling programme of improvements to the allotments infrastructure, be supported.

9. Departmental Plan 2007/2008 – 2009/2010 for Adult and Community Services *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

Type of decision

Non-key

Purpose of report

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the Departmental Plan 2007/2008 to 2009/2010 for Adult and Community Services of the current year.

Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder

The Departmental Plan attached to the report contained an overview of the departmental structure, recent achievements, future priorities as well as specific actions and performance indicators by which progress would be measured during the year. The drivers for the Plan included the potential for collaboration and partnership working and various policy documents.

The Portfolio Holder thanked officers for an excellent and concise report.

Decision

That the report be received and quarterly progress reports be provided throughout the year.

J A BROWN

CHIEF SOLICITOR

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