

Report of the Chief Executive

BONFIRES1. Purpose of report

To advise Committee, as requested, of the work relating to bonfires carried out by the Environmental Health team within the Public Protection Division.

2. Detail

The use of bonfires to get rid of waste, predominantly but not exclusively garden waste, is a practice which has been undertaken for centuries. However, with increased knowledge of the detrimental effects on health and the environment of all kinds of smoke, the use of bonfires to get rid of garden and other waste is perhaps seen as less socially acceptable than it once was.

Bonfire smoke can have a harmful effect on people with health problems, especially people with pre-existing lung conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema and bronchitis.

Burning can also harm the environment by releasing harmful gases, grit, ash and dust. Ash can contain harmful chemicals which can be washed into the ground when it rains. If plastic is burned, rubber and oils are released which results in black smoke that is particularly hazardous when breathed in. There are much more sustainable ways of getting rid of waste including composting and recycling.

In addition to harming human health, it can also be a nuisance, preventing people from having windows open and using their gardens. Bonfires are inconsiderate to neighbours and can exacerbate existing tensions.

Bonfires cause significant distress to people and this has been made worse by people who have had to remain at home or who are suffering from Coronavirus symptoms.

Further information, including common misconceptions, number of complaints received, advice given and options available for action are contained in the attached appendix.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the contents of the report.

Background papers

Nil