

REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :		
Any especially affected Wards	Discretionary	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide	YES	
		Need to be recommendations to Council	NO	
		Is it a Key Decision	NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Brian Long E-mail: cldr.brian.long@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted:		
Lead Officer: Nathan Johnson E-mail: nathan.johnson@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 782075		Other Members consulted:		
Other Officers consulted: Chris Bamfield, Emma Duncan, John Greehalgh, Allison Bingham				
Financial Implications NO	Policy/Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications NO

Date of meeting: 2 August 2016

PROPOSED BAN OF MASS BALLOON AND SKY LANTERN RELEASES

Summary

The release of balloons and sky lanterns in the outdoor environment poses a significant threat of harm to wildlife and livestock from ingestion, entanglement, entrapment and through the panic they can cause. The flame within sky lanterns can also pose a fire hazard and, when released out to sea, a significant risk to the proper and effective operation of coastal rescue services. Both are also a potential source of litter and waste in our environment.

Recommendations

- 1) Prohibit sky lantern and mass balloon releases through the terms and conditions of hire of Council owned land;
- 2) Adopt a code of conduct that discourages staff and members from supporting sky lantern and mass balloon releases through funding or officer time

Reason for Decision

The recommendations enable the Council to raise awareness of sky lanterns and mass balloon releases as an avoidable animal welfare, financial and safety issue, and prevent releases on Council land.

1. QUESTION TO COUNCIL

- 1.1 At the Council meeting on the 28th April a question was asked as detailed below;
- 1.2 There is a risk of harm to wildlife and livestock from released balloons, primarily mass releases of lighter than air (helium-filled) latex and mylar (foil-coated & painted) balloons and sky lanterns. Unextinguished sky lanterns pose a fire hazard and a significant risk to the proper and effective operation of coastal rescue services. Both are also a potential source of litter and waste in our environment and the metal framework in sky lanterns has also caused damage to farm machinery.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Internationally a number of countries including Spain, Malta and Austria have banned the use of sky lanterns.
- 2.2 In 2012 Defra commissioned a desktop review of the evidence on sky lanterns and helium balloons. The findings were that there are risks from both. However, the report suggested that robust evidence is sparse; particularly impacts on the marine environment and Defra have therefore made the decision not to ban at a National level for the time being leaving the decision to organisations and local Councils.
- 2.3 More recently Suffolk Coastal District Councils' Cabinet took the decision to ban these types of release from Council owned land and to adopt a code of conduct. This follows on from other councils across the country who have introduced bans.
- 2.4 There is evidence to show that releases of sky lanterns present an avoidable fire and safety risk as well as a risk to animal welfare. There is also evidence to indicate that mass balloon releases are a risk to livestock and wildlife. Both are a contributor to the defacement of land by litter and waste.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 A prohibition against sky lanterns and mass balloon releases within terms and conditions of hire would reinforce the Council's commitment, to the environment and encourage community action to reduce waste going to landfill and littering of the natural and built environment.
- 3.2 Resources required to deliver this ban are low level in terms of officer time to state the negative impact of balloon and sky lantern releases, communicate the code of conduct (Appendix A) and encourage adherence to it and include a clause within hire agreements with the Council.

3.3 If terms of hire are found to have been breached i.e. if someone reports a release on Council land then the enforcement would be delivered through refusal to allow that person/organisation to hire or use the area in the future.

4. Options Considered

4.1 It is unlikely that there will be a national ban on sky lanterns and balloon releases in the near future. The Council could determine to do nothing and allow use to continue.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

Background Papers

DRAFT CODE OF CONDUCT

There have been cases of livestock or other animal loss, including cattle, horses, sheep and goats as a result of ingestion of parts from sky lanterns and balloon debris. Entrapment and panic are also issues affecting livestock and wildlife. Unexpired sky lanterns pose a fire hazard and a significant risk to the proper and effective operation of coastal rescue services.

The Council value and want to make sustainable use of our environment, support our rural economy and do not want to encourage activities which could negatively impact on coastal.

The Council also has a legal obligation to tackle litter and waste defacing publicly owned land and is committed to actively support and encourage community action to reduce waste going to landfill and littering the natural and built environment.

For these reasons we are banning sky lanterns and mass helium balloon releases from the land we hire out for events and encouraging alternative fund raising, celebratory, promotional or memorial activities.

We would in addition encourage other land owners to consider the potential impact of sky lanterns and mass releases of balloons on our rural economy and environment. More information can be found on http://www.mcsuk.org/what_we_do/Clean+seas+and+beaches/campaigns+and+policy/Don%27t+let+go+-+balloons+and+sky+lanterns

Additional Clause for Hire Agreements

For the benefit and protection of the surrounding land environment and wildlife and to avoid the risk of damage from fire thereto [the Hirer] agrees that it will not release or permit anyone on the land of the Council pursuant to this [Agreement] to mass release balloons or release any sky lanterns whatsoever.



Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Name of policy/service/function	Proposed Ban of Mass Balloon and Sky Lantern Releases				
Is this a new or existing policy/ service/function?	New				
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service rigidly constrained by statutory obligations	Prohibit sky lantern and mass balloon releases on council land through hire terms and conditions as they can cause harm to wildlife and livestock, as well as harm to the environment.				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			X	
	Disability			X	
	Gender			X	
	Gender Re-assignment			X	
	Marriage/civil partnership			X	
	Pregnancy & maternity			X	
	Race			X	
	Religion or belief			X	
	Sexual orientation			X	
Other (eg low income)			X		
Question	Answer	Comments			
2. Is the proposed policy/service likely to affect relations between certain equality communities or to damage relations between the equality communities and the Council, for example because it is seen as favouring a particular community or denying opportunities to another?	No				
3. Could this policy/service be perceived as impacting on communities differently?	No				
4. Is the policy/service specifically designed to tackle evidence of disadvantage or potential discrimination?	No				
<p>5. Are any impacts identified above minor and if so, can these be eliminated or reduced by minor actions? If yes, please agree actions with a member of the Corporate Equalities Working Group and list agreed actions in the comments section</p>	No	<p>Comments: Could be some negative feedback if part of a planned charity event already arranged.</p>			
		<p>Actions agreed by EWG member: Allison Bingham</p>			
<p>Assessment completed by: Name Allison Bingham</p>					
Job title: Building Technician	Date: 4 July 2016				

Please Note: If there are any positive or negative impacts identified in question 1, or there any 'yes' responses to questions 2 – 4 a full impact assessment will be required.