

REPORT TO CABINET

Open		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards		Be entirely within Cabinet’s powers to decide		YES	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		NO	
Lead Member: Cllr H Humphrey E-mail: cllr.harry.humphrey@west-norfolk.gov.uk			Other Cabinet Members consulted:		
			Other Members consulted: Cllr Brian Long		
Lead Officer: Martin Chisholm E-mail: martin.chisholm@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial: 01553 616650			Other Officers consulted: David Morton, Nathan Johnson, Mark Whitmore		
Financial Implications NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES If YES: Pre-screening	Risk Management Implications YES	Environmental Considerations YES

Date of meeting: 15th November 2022

BALLOON, SKY LANTERN & FLYING RINGS

Summary

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

Plastic flying rings, when used on the beaches and inadvertently left or lost present a risk to marine wildlife and in particular, seal pups as they may become trapped around the neck of the pups and may, in time, cause strangulation of the pup as they mature/grow if they are not caught, and the ring removed.

Both of the above are a potential source of litter and waste in our environment.

Recommendation

1. To continue to prohibit the mass release of balloons and sky lanterns on council land and beaches through terms and conditions of hire.
2. To continue to discourage any mass release of balloons and sky lanterns through funding or officer time.
3. To prohibit the use of flying rings on council beaches and proactively discourage their use in other areas where there is a chance they could end up in the sea.

4. To sign up to the Norfolk County Council Balloon and Sky Lantern Charter
5. Use available opportunities to promote these practices and encourage environmentally friendly alternatives, some of which can be found on the RSPCA website [Eco-Friendly Alternatives to Balloon Releases & Sky Lanterns | RSPCA](#).
6. To acknowledge that the extent of the powers available currently are to warn, inform and engage with land users in the hope that they comply, currently there are no associated resource to patrol the affected areas nor powers to penalise anyone failing to comply.

Reason for Decision

The recommendations enable the council to raise awareness of balloons, sky lantern and flying ring releases as an avoidable animal welfare, financial and safety issue, and prevent release on Council land.

1 Background

In August 2016, Cabinet resolved to prohibit the mass release of balloons and sky lanterns through the terms and conditions of hire of Council land.

A code of conduct was also agreed for adoption to discourage staff and members from supporting mass balloon and sky lantern releases.

In September 2020 a further report was made to the Environment & Community Panel to present an update and to consider extending the ban on balloons and sky lanterns a ban of flying rings on Borough Council Beaches.

The release of balloons and sky lanterns in the outdoor environment poses a threat of harm to wildlife and livestock from ingestion, entanglement, entrapment and possibly cause the animals to panic. The flame within sky lanterns can also pose a fire hazard and, when released out to sea, pose a risk to the proper and effective operation of coastal rescue Services.

Flying rings are a potential danger to sea life and in particular, sea lion pups as they may become trapped around the neck of the pups and may cause strangulation of the pup as they mature / grow, if they are not caught and the ring removed.

This has been highlighted in the local press via the Friends of Horsey Seals who have been touring the coastline towns of Norfolk and Suffolk highlighting the danger of flying rings.

All of these items are also a source of waste in the environment.

The present ban only applies to those people/groups 'hiring' and/or using Borough Council land inc. beaches.

At the meeting in September 2020, it was recommended that:

- The Code of Conduct be amended to include a ban on mass release of balloons and sky lanterns by anyone on Borough Council land.
- The Terms and Conditions of Hire include the ban on mass release.
- The Borough Council sign up to the Norfolk County Council Balloon and Lantern Release Charter.
- The Council provide and promote links to alternatives to the mass release of balloons/sky lanterns such as those provided by the RSPCA
- Flying rings be banned on Borough Council Beaches and that liaison with friends of Horsey Seals take place to encourage public and retailer education.
- A Code of Conduct be established for the ban on flying rings

2 Options Considered

A total ban has been considered but there are no powers to enforce this. Control via hire agreements where in place and education and advice is as far as we can practically go for the time being.

3 Policy Implications

None

4 Financial Implications

None

5 Personnel Implications

None

6 Environmental Considerations

These actions seek to improve environmental conditions both in terms of reducing the potential danger to wildlife and habitat and by reducing waste.

7 Statutory Considerations

None

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

(Pre screening report template attached)

Completed

9 Risk Management Implications


Clearly there is a reputation risk when birds, seal pups and other wildlife is found to have become entangled with any of the items in this report. It should be noted however, that those that appear on our beaches and land won't always have been associated with balloons, sky lanterns or flying rings that have been discarded from our land.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

None

11 Background Papers

E&C report

Question	Answer	Comments			
Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment	Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk				
Name of policy/service/function	Balloon, Sky Lantern & Flying Rings Policy				
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 is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations	The policy aims to clarify the Council's stance on the release of balloons and sky lanterns and the use of flying rings on Council land.				
Question	Answer				
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? Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			✓	
	Disability			✓	
	Gender			✓	
	Gender Re-assignment			✓	
	Marriage/civil partnership			✓	
	Pregnancy & maternity			✓	
	Race			✓	
	Religion or belief			✓	
	Sexual orientation			✓	
	Other (eg low income)			✓	

[illegible]