

Committee: **Lead Cabinet Member for Resources**

Date: **25 November 2014**

By: **Chief Operating Officer**

Title of Report: **Sky Lanterns**

Purpose of Report: **To seek Lead Member approval to introduce a general ban on the launching of sky lanterns from County Council owned land and property.**

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**RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Cabinet Member is recommended to:**

- 1. agree to banning the use of sky lanterns on Council owned and leased land and buildings; and**
  - 2. delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to take any action he considers appropriate to give effect to or in consequence of recommendation 1.**
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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1. The recommended ban on the use of sky lanterns on Council owned and leased property will have no revenue impact as it is not proposed to support the policy change with any specific enforcement measures for which the Council has no budget.

**2. Supporting information**

2.1. As part of the periodic review of policies relating to the use of its property assets, Property has been giving consideration to the issue of Chinese style sky lanterns. At least 27 local authorities in England have introduced an outright ban on their use on the grounds that they represent a significant fire hazard and a threat to marine and wildlife, especially when released in large numbers. Police and coastguards also suffer a loss of resources whilst having to deal with lantern sightings being mistaken as something else such as a distress flare.

2.2. The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) have been forthright in urging Fire and Rescue services to discourage their use, especially since a major incident in the West Midlands in 2013 where a lantern was proven to have caused £6m fire damage at a waster recycling plant. In his capacity as Chair of the Business Safety Group for the CFOA the Assistant Chief Fire Office of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is supportive of the CFOA's position.

2.3. Bans are supported by the RSPCA, Marine Conservation Society, Women's Food & Farming Union (WFU), Soil Association and National Farmers Union (NFU).

2.4. Whilst further hard evidence of the risks and dangers of lanterns is scarce and it is also the case that for some of our larger land assets where a ban would be most relevant, e.g country parks, a ban would be difficult to enforce, Property is nevertheless supportive of the introduction of a policy to ban on their use on the following grounds:

- A clearly communicated policy to ban their use should act as a deterrent to anyone wishing to use them;
- It would demonstrate political leadership and commitment to the effective stewardship of our assets, fire risk reduction and environmental sustainability;
- Whilst only a small number of public requests have been received of which we are aware it would be reasonable to assume that a ban would receive wider public support in our predominately rural county.

2.5 In practical terms the ban would be introduced through the following measures:

- Inclusion in policy documents relating to the general use of Council Assets;
- Written communication of the ban to schools, tenants and other users of Council land and buildings;
- The refusal of specific requests to use Council land for such purpose, e.g events;
- The inclusion of a provision within new leases, licences and other forms of agreement relating to the third party occupation of our land and buildings;
- In our country parks portfolio, through the inclusion of suitable provisions within notices relating to access and public safety at the point they are next reviewed.

### 3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

3.1. The recommendation is that approval is given to a policy banning the use of sky lanterns on Council owned land and buildings until such time as more evidence is available of the risks and impacts of their use, and that officers are mandated to implement the ban including through the measures set out above.

**KEVIN FOSTER**  
**Chief Operating Officer**

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None