

**Report to:** Lead Member for Resources

**Date of meeting:** 25 June 2019

**By:** Chief Operating Officer

**Title:** Balloon releases

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

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lead Member for Resources is recommended to:

1. agree to banning the release of balloons on Council owned and leased land and buildings; and
  2. delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer to take any action they consider appropriate to give effect to or in consequence of recommendation 1.
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### 1 Background

- 1.1 The County Council has recently received a query from the RSPCA about whether the County Council has any bans or motions in place to prevent the release of sky lanterns and balloons on council land. In October 2014 the Council agreed to ban the release of Sky Lanterns on Council owned land but does not have a similar ban on balloon releases.

### 2 Supporting information

- 2.1 Balloons considered within this report are those made of latex or foil that are inflated with helium gas and are generally 25cm – 30cm in height. These balloons may be released for various reasons, including at weddings and memorials. However, there are no specific uses of balloon releases from County Council land.
- 2.2 A 2013 report for DEFRA and the Welsh Government considered the overall impact of balloons released into the environment to be negative but relatively small. Impacts include:
- Animal welfare: this can relate to fright caused by airborne balloons as well as potential ingestion of the balloons once they reach ground or water.
  - Litter: the degradation of different balloon materials in different environments is not well understood. However, the Marine Conservation Society UK recently reported a rise in balloon litter found during beach cleans.
  - Travel: aviation and rail can be impacted by balloon releases. Network Rail has raised concerns, including the risk of balloons becoming tangled around overhead high voltage wires. This occurred recently in the West Midlands, resulting in travel delays and associated economic costs.

- 2.3 Organisations that support a ban include the Marine Conservation Society, RSPCA and National Farmers Union, and various Councils around the country have banned the release of balloons on their estates including Lewes District Council.
- 2.4 It is acknowledged that a ban may be difficult to enforce in some instances, such as on larger land assets. However, Property is supportive of the introduction of a policy to ban 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 and environmental sustainability;
  - It would be reasonable to assume that a ban would receive public support.
- 2.5 The ban would initially be implemented via the following mechanisms:
- Inclusion in Council Asset policy documents;
  - Inclusion within new leases, licences and other agreements relating to third party occupation of Council owned land and buildings;
  - Communication of the ban to users of Council land and buildings, including schools and tenants;
  - Inclusion within country parks notices at the point they are next reviewed;
  - Refusal of requests to release balloons on Council land.
- 2.6 The recommended ban on the use of helium balloons on Council owned and leased property will have no anticipated revenue impact as it is not proposed to support the policy change with any specific enforcement measures for which the Council has no budget.

### **3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

3.1 The recommendation is that approval is given to a policy banning the release of balloons on Council owned land and buildings 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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