

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet Member for Communities

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	20 July 2015
<b>Report of:</b>	Steph Cordon, Head of Communities
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Raising Awareness of Dangers of Sky Lanterns
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Les Gilbert- Cabinet for Communities

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### 1. Report Summary

- 1.1. Cheshire East Council as an Enforcing Council and one that actively supports our rural communities bans the release of Sky Lanterns from land hired for events and activities that is Council owned and as part of a condition of any event licences granted by the Council. We want to remind our residents of the dangers of releasing sky lanterns and re-affirm our commitment to supporting our rural communities.
- 1.2. Chinese (or 'Sky') lanterns consist of a paper-covered wire or bamboo frame and an open flame heat source, which lifts the lantern into the air where it can float for miles from the point of release. Once extinguished the lantern falls back to earth. Lanterns pose a threat to animals, as they can cause injury, suffering, and death, through:
  - Ingestion
  - entanglement,
  - entrapment.
- 1.3. Landowners have called for a ban on Chinese lanterns in the UK, following cases of livestock injured or killed from eating lantern parts accidentally chopped into animal feed during harvest, or getting caught in wire frames that have landed in fields. Sharp parts can tear and puncture an animal's throat or stomach causing internal bleeding or death. Animals can become entangled in fallen lantern frames and suffer from injury and stress struggling to get free, or starve to death.
- 1.4. Unexpired sky lanterns pose a fire hazard and contribute to the defacement of land by litter and waste. They also cause issues with farm machinery.
- 1.5. As an Enforcing Council, we continue to encourage shop keepers to not sell these in Cheshire East using our normal visits to businesses by our Trading Standards team in particular. If people do breach the terms and conditions of the events licence then we will refuse to grant them a future licence.

## **2. Recommendations**

The recommendations are:

- To remind residents, businesses and event promoters of the dangers of sky lanterns
- To reaffirm our commitment to banning their release on Council owned land including this within any events licence granted by the Council

## **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1. Unexpired sky lanterns pose a fire hazard and also contribute to the defacement of land by litter and waste and represent a risk to wildlife and livestock. The metal from sky lanterns has also caused damage to farm machinery.

## **4. Wards Affected**

- 4.1. All wards, especially those in rural areas.

## **5. Local Ward Members**

- 5.1. Not applicable.

## **6. Policy Implications**

- 6.1 Other Councils have also successfully introduced this ban on sky lanterns. This re-affirmation of our commitment enables us as a Council to raise awareness of the harm and danger they can cause to our rural communities in particular.

## **7. Implications for Rural Communities**

- 7.1. This will have a positive impact on rural communities as it will help to prevent the release of sky lanterns which pose a fire hazard, causes litter and harm and danger to both wildlife and livestock.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1. There will be no financial implications as a result of this re-affirmation. Trading Standards Officers as part of their daily interaction with businesses will pass on the messages to shop keepers that they should promote an alternative to sky lanterns and be aware that they are banned for events on Cheshire East land and as part of events.

## **9. Legal Implications**

- 9.1. 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 in the future or to hold further events.

## **10. Risk Management**

- 10.1. There is minimal risk associated with re-affirmation and continued backing of a national campaign. It could be considered an opportunity to improve the reputation of the Council by taking positive action to protect residents, farmers, livestock and wildlife.

## **11. Background and Options**

- 11.1. Internationally Spain, Malta and Austria have banned the use of sky lanterns. In 2012 DEFRA commissioned a desk top review of the evidence to date on sky lanterns. The findings were that there are risks from both however robust evidence with regards to both is sparse. They have therefore made the decision not to ban at a National level. Organisations and Councils have been acting however. Oxford City Council established a code of conduct in 2008 stating they no longer want Chinese sky lantern releases on Council Land. Maldon District Council approved the banning of sky lanterns from their land through hire agreements in 2011. Plymouth City Council have banned balloon releases on Council Land and a note to that effect is included in event safety guidance which is sent to all event organisers. Portsmouth City Council have included a prohibition of balloon and sky lanterns releases in event terms and conditions. Rochford District Council have included a clause within their Animal Welfare Charter. Tyne and Wear Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council have also banned releases on Council land and are encouraging their partners to do the same.
- 11.2. Tesco stopped the sale of Sky lanterns in 2012. The Chief Fire Officers Association called for an urgent review on their use following a major fire in the West Midlands requiring 200 firefighters and 39 fire appliances. Video evidence showed that the cause was a Sky Lantern.
- 11.3. Although the number and type of releases locally or plans to hold them is unknown there have been such releases in the recent past and officers have noted that there are shops still selling them. There is furthermore sufficient national evidence to show that releases of sky lanterns present an avoidable fire and safety risk as well as a risk to animal welfare and defacement of land by litter and waste. Raising awareness well in advance of Christmas and New Year events and before summer as well should enable event organisers time to find alternative fun awareness raising and engagement events.
- 11.4 As an example, Tatton Park bans these through individual event agreements and on attendees at concerts through ticket conditions.

## **12 Access to Information**

- 12.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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