



GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR

Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy

(Revision 002)

1. Introduction

In recent years outdoor balloon and sky lantern releases have become a more common event at summer fairs, fundraising events, opening of new stores, or part of commemorative and celebratory occasions. However, what is less known is what happens once these items have been released and the potentially harmful consequences for wildlife and property that can occur as a result of this form of celebration.

The Marine Conservation Society (MSC) - an internationally recognised charity for the protection of seas, shores and wildlife has produced a thorough and detailed Pollution Policy and Position statement on Balloons and Sky Lanterns, asking UK Local Authorities to recognise balloons and sky lanterns as a form of littering and to ban all outdoor releases. This stance is actively supported by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), the National Farmers Union (NFU) and many other public organisations.

2. Objective

The objective of this policy is to discourage and, if possible, to prevent the intentional outdoor release of balloons and sky lanterns as an act of littering in the parish of Gillingham and to prohibit releases from Town Council owned land and premises.

3. Parameters

This policy covers the release of balloons and lanterns within the parish of Gillingham and the Town Council's position in relation to the release of balloons and lanterns from Town Council owned land and premises.

The policy covers all types of balloon and lantern materials. The main types of balloon are latex (rubber) and foil (also known as Mylar) and can include other materials. Latex balloons, whilst biodegradable, may persist in the environment for several years and sky lanterns typically contain a metal frame.

4. Policy

Gillingham Town Council prohibits the release of balloons and lanterns from Town Council owned land and buildings. This applies to Town Council run events and events run by third parties.

The Town Council considers the release of balloons and lanterns from any land or buildings as potential littering and will act, when advised to do so, under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, where appropriate.

5. Litter

Where balloons and lanterns are released intentionally outdoors and are not disposed of responsibly, they litter the environment and could be considered as a potential offence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Where the Town Council receives evidence of littering through the release of balloons and lanterns, which are not disposed of responsibly, the Town Council may consider exercising its powers under the appropriate legislation.

6. Permitted Releases

Piloted hot air balloons are not covered by this policy. Helium balloons may also be permitted when used for research purposes, for example, weather balloons, if supporting evidence is provided, identifying any risk and/or any hazards to the environment and with any appropriate mitigation.

7. Monitoring, Assessment and Review

The Town Council will inform event organisers of the Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy by means of including relevant information within booking forms and other promotional material.

The Town Council will include details of this policy within any new letting agreement or leases of land/buildings where permitted events take place.

The Town Council will promote the awareness of the potential harm of balloon and sky lantern releases, where appropriate.

8. Review

The Balloon and Sky Lantern Release Policy was presented to the Finance and Policy meeting held on 16th May 2022, for approval and adoption and ratified at the Full Council meeting on 23rd May 2022, minute no. 770d

Signed:
Mayor of Gillingham

Date: