

# Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

Meeting of Council 30 July 2020

## Public Questions

Number	Question by	To be answered by	Subject
1	Mr Jonathan White	Councillor Bramhall, Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services	Use of Helium Balloons on Council sites

**Mr Jonathan White** asked the **Executive Member for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Mrs Bramhall** the following question. The Leader of the Council provided a response on behalf of Cllr Mrs Bramhall.

**Question: Use of Helium Balloons on Council sites**

Will the council please consider a ban on the use and distribution, by third-parties, of small promotional helium balloons at events held on its land?

These kind of balloons are quite frequently given out by various organisations from their stands at events such as those in Priority Park for instance.

The reason for my request is that many of the balloons are deliberately or accidentally released and many then end up in the sea becoming part of the microplastics problem presenting a danger to birds and other sea life and, can end up the food chain.

As an example of the kind of thing the council may be able to do I refer to resolution passed by the Council of the Isles of Scilly, a coastal community affected by the problem.

They resolved that the intentional release of balloons, sky lanterns and non-biodegradable streamers are prohibited as part of any event on council land and property and for any council event held on non-council land, including the marine environment, or any event endorsed by the Council.

I should make it clear that I am not asking for any policy that is agreed to be subject to active enforcement, simply inclusion in the rules for use of council land backed up by written reminders to the hirers concerned if not followed.

In the scheme of things it is a small step but more public authorities taking similar action could begin to make a difference.

**Response:**

Thank you, Mr White, for your question.

We already do not permit the release of balloons or sky lanterns from any of our parks or open spaces. I agree that micro-plastics are a real issue in any environment and that anything that can be done to reduce this will of course be beneficial. The impact of both balloons and sky lanterns on the environment, and in particular to both wildlife and livestock, is well known. I speak from some experience having seen the impact that sky lanterns have on birds and wildlife if they are accidentally eaten or they get themselves tangled in them, as well as the impact sky lanterns can have in creating fires. We have seen a number of fires which have burnt out of control this summer and in previous summers.

I will ask officers to investigate what additional measures we can take and also to ensure that hirers of any of our public spaces understand that we do not permit the release of balloons or sky lanterns from our open spaces and to look at what other measures we can take.

One of the options that we should look at is putting notices in our parks as it is not just those people that hire our spaces, but it is also those people who come along and release balloons themselves.

We've also seen this year that there was a suggestion that residents should release sky lanterns to celebrate the NHS and all that workers have done. I'm pleased to say that both the NHS and multiple residents of this borough were very clear that that was not something that they found acceptable.

I think Mr White for his question.