

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Subject: Update Report on the Quiet Firework Policy

Date: 22 April 2024

Author: Head of Environment

Purpose

The purpose of the report is to update Scrutiny members with information on the application of the Council's Quiet Fireworks policy in relation to firework displays held on Council owned land.

The report follows a Council motion on 27 January 2021, regarding the adverse effects that loud noise from fireworks can have on the welfare of vulnerable people and animals. The Council resolved to launch a public campaign to raise awareness of these impacts in the Borough, encourage advance advertising of planned firework events and promote alternative forms of activity such as quiet fireworks or other light displays. It also resolved to look at how fireworks are used at Council events with a view to move away from loud fireworks.

Recommendation:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- **Note the report and makes comments as appropriate**

Background

- 1.1 On 27 January 2021, the Council was asked to consider a motion under Standing Order 12 to resolve to:
- 1.2 Require all public firework displays within the local authority boundaries to be advertised in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people.
- 1.3 Actively promote a public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.
- 1.4 Write to the UK Government and Gedling Borough's two local Members of Parliament urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays and to support the RSPCA in their campaign to ensure the safety of all animals.
- 1.5 Encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display.

- 1.6 Write to the Leader and Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council inviting and encouraging them to also take the action outlined in points 1.1 – 1.5 above.
- 1.7 Work with Nottinghamshire County Council and all other relevant authorities to ensure existing legislation regarding purchase of and setting off fireworks is enforced across our borough and county.
- 1.8 The motion was approved.
- 1.9 With only three Borough Council authorised events that have fireworks as part of their event programme, it was recognised that an important role demonstrating the local authority's stance as a community influencer, through positive communications, would have a key role to play in encouraging local councils, community groups and individual residents adopting similar stances in the future.

Update on Implementation of the Policy

- 2.1 Noise controls on firework displays announced by Broxtowe Borough Council in July 2020, Nottingham City Council in January 2021, and Rushcliffe Borough Council in March 2021 were received positively by residents and the policy has been well received in Gedling since its' introduction in January 2021.
- 2.2 Local fireworks suppliers are being encouraged to stock quieter fireworks, limited to the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays. To help minimise the disruption of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people, low/reduced noise fireworks are now commonly available on the UK domestic sales market with Asda, Tesco, Morrisons and Aldi all stocking low noise varieties. In 2019, Sainsbury's took the decision to ban firework sales entirely.
- 2.3 Most commercial display companies offer low/reduced noise fireworks as a customisable option on professional displays. There is no significant price premium for reduced noise options. Low noise fireworks, i.e. those under 90dB are not completely silent but are restricted to a comfortable prescribed level.
- 2.4 All public displays on council owned land are advertised in advance to actively promote public awareness about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people to allow residents to take precautions for them, and the Council will actively promote the RSPCA's public awareness campaign: #BangOutOfOrder campaign to raise awareness of the impact of fireworks on animals, highlighting precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks at key times of the year such as Bonfire Night, New Year, Chinese New Year and Diwali. An example 'Record of a Decision' to hold such an event is attached at Appendix 3. Your attention is drawn to paragraph point 5 of the 'Record'.
- 2.5 Partnership work with other relevant authorities is ensuring that existing legislation regarding the purchase of and setting off fireworks is enforced across our borough and county and the council continue to work with community groups to ensure the rules around only using quiet fireworks are adhered to.
- 2.6 The UK Government and Gedling Borough's two local Members of Parliament have been written to, to urge them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays and to support the RSPCA in their campaign to ensure the safety of all animals.

2.7 The Leader and Chief Executive of Nottinghamshire County Council have been written to, to invite and encourage them to consider application of a similar policy to the Council's, to be applied Countywide.

3 **Proposal**

That the committee note the report and makes comments as appropriate.

4 **Alternative options**

The committee could choose not to note the report and give any comments, but this would go against their wish to review the delivery of the motion.

5 **Financial implications**

No additional council resources were utilised specifically for the motion.

6 **Legal implications**

None.

7 **Equalities implications**

The Quiet Fireworks initiative supports vulnerable people at risk of being disturbed by loud noises held at such firework events and helps them combat panic, isolation and loneliness.

8 **Carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications**

There are no immediate carbon implications as a direct result of this report.

9 **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Quiet Firework Policy.

Appendix 2: List of firework events held in the Borough, including those held on Council owned land.

Appendix 3: Example Record of Decision made by an Officer to give permission for a community group, the Warren Action Group, to hold their Annual Free Fireworks Display at Muirfield Recreation Ground.



Gedling

Borough Council



Quiet Fireworks Policy

M Cryer - Head of Environment
Review: April 2024

If you wish to use council-owned land for a function or event, you will only be permitted to allow the release of silent/quiet fireworks. This also applies to any events supported by the council, including those not on council land.

Loud noise from fireworks can have an adverse effect on the welfare of vulnerable people and animals:

- Children and adults with sensory processing disorders or who are on the autistic spectrum can have hyper sensitivities to sound, light, touch, taste, smell and pain which stimulate anxiety and feelings of being overwhelmed or confused. These feelings are also common for people with conditions that affect the brain or nervous system, such as Dementia.
- People with hearing conditions such as hyperacusis, which can cause a difficulty in tolerance and volume of sounds that would not be considered loud by individuals with normal hearing.
- People with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) may have difficulties with loud sounds such as an exaggerated startle response, fear of sound (phonophobia) or aversion to specific sounds (misophonia), which may trigger flashbacks or panic attacks.
- People with respiratory conditions such as asthma, COPD and lung disease may also experience adverse impacts of the air pollutants and particulate matter expelled by fireworks, though air quality degradation is short-term.
- Significant fear and distress can be caused to all animals due to the sudden noise.

Fireworks are often used throughout the year to mark different events, and while they can bring much enjoyment, for some they can be stressful, especially for vulnerable people, pets, livestock and other wildlife. Not only can they cause psychological stress, they can also lead to serious injuries as they attempt to run away or hide from the noise.

All public displays on council owned land will be advertised in advance to actively promote public awareness about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people to allow residents to take precautions for them, and the council will actively promote the RSPCA's public awareness campaign: #BangOutOfOrder campaign to raise awareness of the impact of fireworks on animals, highlighting precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.

Working in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council and other relevant authorities, we will ensure existing legislation regarding the purchase of and setting off fireworks is enforced across our borough and county. Local fireworks suppliers will be encouraged to stock quieter fireworks, limited to the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays. This will help minimise the disruptions and the council will be working with community groups to ensure the rules around only using quiet fireworks are adhered to.

List of firework events held in the Borough, including those held on Council owned land.

Public displays held annually within the Borough:

Muirfield Road Recreation Ground - bonfire event, 5 November **[GBC owned land]**

Killisick Rec – Scouts Bonfire **[GBC owned land]**

Woodborough Village Fireworks, 5 November – 5pm

Elwes Arms, Carlton, 5 November – 6pm

Mellish RFC bonfire and Fireworks, Mapperley, 6 November – 6pm

Bonfire Bonanza at Notts Maze, Arnold, 4 November – 6.30pm

4th Carlton Scout Groups Firework and bonfire night at KGV, Standhill Rec, Carlton, 6 November – 7pm **[GBC owned land]**

Bonfire Night, Top Club, Calverton, 6 November – 7.30pm

Papplewick YFC Bonfire and Fireworks Display, Ravenshead Farm Shop, 5 November

Record of Decision made by an Officer

1 **TITLE**

Event: Warren Action Group (WAG) Annual Free Fireworks Display

2 **PURPOSE OF DECISION**

To give permission for WAG to organise a firework display at Muirfield Recreation Ground on Friday 3rd November between 5:30pm to 8:30pm (fireworks to start at 7:30pm)

10 **IS THIS A KEY DECISION**

No

11 **DECISION MADE BY**

Head of Environment

5 **DECISION**

That WAG be allowed to run their event at Muirfield Recreation Ground on the above dates and times. Estimated attendance up to 500. **WAG have liaised with the Firework company to ensure the reduction of the decibels of the fireworks and will market the event widely within the area ensuring residents have prior knowledge of the event.**

This decision is dependent on correct insurance and the issue of a user licence agreement indemnifying Gedling Borough Council in the event of accident for any activities held on the park. WAG will have also consulted the Nottinghamshire Safety Advisory Group to assist with an event management plan having full regard for health & safety at the event. The management plan will be approved prior to the event.

6 **REASON FOR DECISION**

To encourage use of the Council's Parks and Open Spaces.

7 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

Not to hold the event.

8 **PRINCIPAL GROUPS CONSULTED**

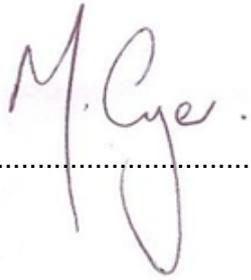
e.g. The Environment Portfolio Holder, Corporate Director and Ward Members.

9 **DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED**

Insurance Certificate, GBC user licence agreement issued by legal section and an Event Management Plan approved by the Notts Safety Advisory Group.

10 **DECLARED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

None.



SIGNED: DATE: 23rd June 2023