

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of The Executive Director of Neighbourhoods and
the Environment

To

Cabinet

On

16th January 2020

Report prepared by: Adam Penn,
Regulatory Services Manager

Agenda
Item No.

Motion to encourage the use of ‘quieter’ fireworks.

**Relevant Scrutiny Committee(s): Place Scrutiny
Cabinet Member: Councillor C Mulronev
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To respond to the Notice of Motion submitted to Council on 17th December 2019.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the motion submitted to Council on 17th December 2019.

2.2 That Cabinet resolves:

- (i) to encourage where possible that organisers of all public firework displays within the borough advertise them in advance of the event, allowing residents to take precautions for their animals and vulnerable people;
- (ii) to support public awareness about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks;
- (iii) to write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90 decibels for those sold to the public for private displays; and
- (iv) to encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display

3. Background

- 3.1 A Notice of Motion was presented to Council on 17th December 2019 with the following proposals followed by the individual responses to them.

- 3.1.1 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.

Organisers of large public fireworks display events on Council owned land, such as the Big Beach Bang that annually takes place in Shoebury, have Event Management Plans in place that include liaison with the local community. These large public displays are already advertised well in advance to encourage attendance. The Southend Safety Advisory Group (SAG) also has an input to these large events, where all safety matters are considered with the organisers.

There is no formal requirement for organisations holding public fireworks displays on their private land to register or inform the local authority, so it would be very difficult for the Council to know of these and require them to advertise the event in advance, unless it was specifically brought to their attention. However, these events would normally be advertised in advance to attract attendance.

Where the Council is aware of such events in advance or where there are regular events involving fireworks, officers will remind organisers of the issues ahead of any event where possible.

The Council's web site includes advice and a link to the HSE web site to provide advice and guidance on organising and holding a public fireworks display, as well as advice and guidance and links to RoSPA web sites, on fireworks safety.

- 3.1.2 To 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.

The Council will include advice and guidance linked to the advice provided by the RSPCA on the Council's web site through the Animal Welfare pages.

Officers will investigate what advice and information is available for vulnerable people and look to provide this on the Council's web site through the Fireworks – Noise Pollution pages.

The Council's web site already contains pages of information and links to the RoSPA web site for advice and guidance in respect of fireworks.

We will commit to making yearly safety information publicly available in the lead up to Hallowe'en; Guy Fawkes Night, New Year's Eve and Christmas as well as public celebrations such as VE Day 2020 and as part of the publicity around the BID annual fireworks displays on the central seafront.

Information, including relevant leaflets, will be circulated to Vets / Animal Grooming Parlours / Kennels / Catteries and to Doctors / Clinics / Hospitals / The Royal British Legion and other places to which vulnerable people may go

The Fireworks Regulations 2004 also places restrictions on the times that fireworks can be set off – up to 11pm generally, apart from specific exemptions around Guy Fawkes Night / New Year's Eve etc.

- 3.1.3 To write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment & Planning is happy that a lower level should be sought.

The noise from fireworks is currently restricted to 120dB and this is checked by our Trading Standard officers through the manufacturers. Many manufactures set them at 110dB for fear of 'accidentally' exceeding the 120dB level

- 3.1.4 To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock 'quieter' fireworks for public display.

Southend currently has 16 retailers with a licence to sell fireworks. Officers will promote this on visits / inspections. These are generally undertaken in the run up to events where fireworks are used, such as Hallowe'en, Guy Fawkes Night and Christmas / New Year's Eve.

4. Other Options

- 4.1 The other option is to do nothing thereby maintaining the current situation.

5. Reasons for Recommendations

To support the Notice of Motion submitted to Council on 17th December 2019.

6. Corporate Implications

- 6.1 Contribution to the Southend 2050 Road Map

The proposals within the motion are supportive of the Safe and Well theme and the outcomes therein. In particular:

4. People in all parts of the borough feel safe and secure at all times.
5. We are all effective at protecting and improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable in our community.

- 6.2 Financial Implications

None - The work described in this report is already resourced and funded through the current Council budgets

- 6.3 Legal Implications

None.

6.4 People Implications

None.

6.5 Property Implications

Where firework displays are held on Council land, there will be a formal requirement to publicly advertise them.

6.6 Consultation

There is no requirement for a formal consultation.

6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

A separate equalities assessment has been prepared.

6.8 Risk Assessment

The motion submitted seeks to increase the protection of vulnerable people and animals. The risk is that doing nothing will maintain the 'status quo' for these groups.

6.9 Value for Money

The work described in this report is already resourced and funded through the current Council budgets.

6.10 Community Safety Implications

The motion submitted seeks to increase the protection of vulnerable people and animals.

6.11 Environmental Impact

The motion submitted seeks to decrease the noise omitted by fireworks.

7. **Background Papers**

The Fireworks Regulations 2004.

8. **Appendices**

None.