



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Council: Wednesday 28 October 2020
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 16
Subject	Motion: Firework Displays
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Alaa Al-Yousuf, Chairman Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Email: alaa.alyousuf@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Keith Butler Head of Democratic Services Tel: 01993 861521 Email: keith.butler@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the motion proposed and seconded at Council on 26 February 2020, in the context of the comments and recommendation of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Annexes	Annex 1 : Minute from the Council meeting held 26 February 2020 Annex 2 : Draft minute from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held 1 October 2020
Recommendation	That the Council considers and determines the motion in the light of the recommendation from the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Corporate priorities	Not applicable.
Key Decision	N/A
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	None

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. At the meeting of the Council on 26 February 2020, the following motion was proposed and seconded by Councillors Toby Morris and Suzi Coul respectively:

“This Council resolves:

- (a) To ask for 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*
- (b) 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*
- (c) To write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the **environmental impact and** maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays*
- (d) To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock **climate-friendly and** ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display”.*

- 1.2. The text in **red** reflects additional text incorporated into the motion by the proposer and seconder during the discussion at Council, the minute of which is attached at [Annex 1](#).

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The Council agreed to refer the motion to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
- 2.2. The Committee subsequently considered the matter at its meeting held 1 October and the draft minute from that meeting is included in [Annex 2](#).
- 2.3. After a full and detailed discussion, the Committee’s recommendation to Council is that the motion be approved, subject to the Council also working with Town and Parish Councils on the matter, as referenced in the draft minute.
- 2.4. The Council is invited to consider the recommendation made by the Committee, and is of course free to decide the matter as it sees fit.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. Not applicable

6. ALTERNATIVES/OPTIONS

- 6.1. Not applicable.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1. None

**Extract from the minutes of the Council meeting
held 26 February 2020**

NOTICE OF MOTION – FIREWORK DISPLAYS

The following motion had been received in the names of Councillors Toby Morris and Suzi Coul, namely:-

“This Council resolves:

- (a) To ask for 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*
- (b) 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*
- (c) 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*
- (d) To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display”.*

Councillor Morris proposed the motion and explained that the matter had been brought to his attention by local residents who had been made aware of a similar proposal by the RSPCA. He added that as a dog owner himself, he was sympathetic to the intentions of the motion and whilst he did not wish to advocate being a ‘kill-joy’ considered it was one the Council should support. Councillor Morris explained that most public displays would already be advertised in advance, but the requirement to implement a maximum noise limit was due to the majority of private displays not being advertised to local residents and he hoped for these reasons, Council would support the motion.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Coul.

Councillor Postan expressed the view that whilst fireworks were a part of British history, they were, in his view, an uncontrolled and unlicensed nuisance which caused risks to livestock and pets. He added that he considered the activity was one that should be licensed and he therefore supported a review of the Council’s licensing system, should the motion be supported, to ensure firework displays were included as part of that system.

Councillor Bolger commented that whilst she supported the intentions of the motion, she wished to propose an amendment to recommendations (c) and (d) of the motion so as to read; “(c) To write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the environmental impact and maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays”; and “(d) To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock climate-friendly and ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display”.

Councillors Morris and Coul confirmed that they were happy to accept the amendment as proposed by Councillor Bolger.

Councillor Leffman informed the Council that whilst she agreed with the views of Councillor Postan, she considered that the main issue was with private displays and was unsure how lowering the decibel level would address this issue. Councillor Leffman therefore proposed that the motion be referred to the Council’s Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Morris and Coul confirmed that they were content for the motion, as amended, to be referred to that Committee, and it was -.

RESOLVED: That the revised motion, having been duly proposed and seconded, be referred to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment and advice.

**Extract from the draft minutes of the
Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 1 October 2020**

MOTION: FIREWORK DISPLAYS

The Committee considered the motion proposed by Councillor Toby Morris and seconded by Councillor Suzi Coul, as amended following comments from Councillor Bolger, at the meeting of the Council held 26 February 2020:

“This Council resolves:

- (a) To ask for 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*
- (b) 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*
- (c) To write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the environmental impact and maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays*
- (d) To encourage local suppliers of fireworks to stock climate-friendly and ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display*

The Committee was asked to consider the matter and agree on any comments or recommendations to be submitted to Council.

The seconder of the original motion, Councillor Coul, addressed Members and reiterated the difficulties that animal owners experienced when unexpected fireworks were set off. It was noted that discussion on the motion had been delayed due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequential postponement of scrutiny meetings.

The Committee accepted that many organised, public displays were adequately advertised and noted that the District Council did not have a statutory duty to regulate firework displays.

It was felt that the Council could do more to work proactively with event organisers, town and parish councils, and to educate residents to encourage them to consider their neighbours when arranging celebrations. The Committee was also supportive of the proposal to write to businesses and encourage them to stock fireworks with lower decibel levels.

Councillor Leffman proposed that the motion be amended to include specific reference to the Council contacting Parish and Town Councils with a view to them publishing communications in their parish newsletters and advising them of Members’ desire to protect people and animals.

The Committee agreed that this should be included and the proposition was put to the vote and was carried.

RECOMMENDED: That the Council works with Parish and Town Councils and

- (a) asks for 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;
- (b) actively promotes 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;
- (c) writes to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the environmental impact and maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays; and
- (d) encourages local suppliers of fireworks to stock climate-friendly and ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display.