
Briefing to Overview and Scrutiny Board

Date: 3rd March 2020

Subject:

A sensible approach to Firework Displays

For Discussion

Report of:

Neil Crabtree – Head of Public Protection

Portfolio holder: Cllr A Shah
Cabinet member for Social Justice and Communities

Sign-off:

Helen Lockwood – Deputy Chief Executive

Summary of the issue:

On the 8th January 2020 full Council debated the following motion:

- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) says the law is failing. It does not prevent or sufficiently reduce the risk of fireworks causing distress, injury or anxiety to people, as well as death, injury or distress to animals.
- That further research is needed to properly understand the impact of noise on animals and people. In the meantime, several things can be done to improve the situation for wildlife and people at risk of being affected by firework explosions.
- Applying the same Challenge 25 legislation to fireworks as there is with Alcohol will ensure that less young people will be injured by fireworks.
- Review of the licensing all public firework displays is needed, ensuring displays are better advertised to the public informing of noise levels and how it may affect people and animals.

The Council meeting resolved to refer the motion and the following resolutions to Overview and Scrutiny for further consideration

- Ensure all public firework displays within Oldham Borough to be advertised in advance of the event, with appropriate advertising for the size of the display, allowing residents to take precautions for people in their care and pets.
- 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.

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- Encourage local suppliers of fireworks to separate 'quieter' fireworks from the loud ones so people can choose which ones they prefer with animal and people safety in mind. And give large labels to sticker the products with: green for quiet, red for loud.
 - Applying Challenge 25 legislation to the sale of fireworks in Oldham Borough. Challenge 25 is a scheme that encourages anyone who is over 18 but looks under 25 to carry acceptable ID when they want to buy alcohol. With the danger that Fireworks carry, the same policy should be applied for people who want to possess fireworks.”

Recommendations to Overview and Scrutiny Board:

It is recommended that:

- a) The content of this report is noted for context;
- b) Officers from Public Protection work in partnership with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue and the Council's Community Safety team to develop an action plan that can be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny for further consideration and recommendations.

1. Report details

- 1.1 As background and for context in response to the detailed options debated at full Council there are a number of options that can be further developed in conjunction with partner agencies.
- 1.2 Local suppliers of fireworks and their premises are licensed by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue colleagues for the storage and subsequent sale of the products. Officers from Trading Standards and Licensing deal with the underage sale issues from these premises and the safety of the products themselves, while colleagues from the Community Safety team coordinate with Greater Manchester Police and other agencies the yearly intensive 'Operation Treacle' plan that targets these premises and coordinates all of the above actions. This work is pulled together prior to November each year and this gives an ideal opportunity to embed other options or initiatives at that stage.
- 1.2 For information the Challenge 25 scheme that is operated by the Trading Standards and Licensing team is a nationally recognised voluntary scheme that is not embedded in legislation that can be enforced, however this scheme could be adapted to suit the purpose in an attempt to educate the firework retailer of their responsibilities.
- 1.3 It would seem appropriate to task a small group of officers from across the agencies detailed above so that the Council motion can be developed into an action plan for consideration and recommendation.

2. Options (including recommended option)

- 2.1 At this early stage it is difficult to expand on the options available without the input from partner agencies and it is recommended that this piece of work is commenced and reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny board for consideration.
- 2.2 Therefore it is recommended that Officers from Public Protection work in partnership with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue and the Council's Community Safety team to develop an action plan that can be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny for further recommendations