



Sturminster Newton Town Council

Balloon, Sky Lantern and Drone Policy

1. Introduction

Outdoor balloon and sky lantern releases have become more common at public gatherings, commemorations and celebratory events. However, significant environmental, animal welfare and safety concerns arise from the release of these items. Research from the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), the RSPCA and the National Farmers Union (NFU) highlights the risks these objects pose once airborne.

This updated policy also includes the use, launching and flying of drones from Town Council owned or managed land. Requests for drone usage have raised concerns relating to privacy, GDPR obligations, safeguarding, interference with Council CCTV systems, nuisance and public safety.

2. Objective

This policy aims to:

- Prevent the intentional release of balloons and sky lanterns from Town Council land.
- Discourage such releases within the parish due to environmental impact.
- Provide a clear approach to requests for drone use or launching from Council land.
- Protect residents, visitors, wildlife and property by reducing avoidable risks.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All Town Council owned, managed, leased or controlled land and buildings.
- Council-run and third-party events on Town Council land.
- Individuals and organisations seeking permission to launch or fly drones.
- Balloon and sky lantern releases within the parish.

The policy covers latex, foil/Mylar and biodegradable balloons, and all forms of sky lanterns including those with metal or bamboo frames.

4. Policy Position

4.1 Balloon and Sky Lantern Releases

Sturminster Newton Town Council prohibits the release of balloons and sky lanterns from all Town Council owned or managed land and buildings. The Council considers intentional releases to be a form of littering and may act under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 where evidence of littering occurs.

4.2 Drone Launching and Flying

The launching, landing or flying of drones (UAVs) from Town Council land is prohibited unless explicitly commissioned by the Town Council.

This prohibition is due to:

- GDPR and privacy risks.
- Safeguarding concerns.
- Risk of interference with Council CCTV systems.
- Safety risks such as collisions or injury.
- Environmental disturbance and nuisance.
- Difficulty verifying CAA compliance.

Exceptions apply only where the Town Council commissions drone activity for operational purposes and full risk assessments and insurance are provided.

5. Litter and Enforcement

Where balloon or lantern releases occur within the parish and evidence demonstrates irresponsible disposal, the Council may exercise its powers under relevant legislation. Releases from non-Council land remain strongly discouraged due to environmental impact.

6. Permitted Releases

The following are not covered by this policy:

- Piloted hot air balloons.
- Research-grade helium balloons, such as meteorological balloons, where risk assessments show environmental mitigation and regulatory compliance.

Any permitted release must be authorised by the Town Clerk.

7. Monitoring, Assessment and Communication

The Town Council will:

- Include this policy in booking forms and event documentation.
- Review this policy every two years or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.

Adopted: Dec 25

Review Due: Dec 27