

Policy for the use of drones and model aircraft in parks and green spaces or other Council owned land

Policy review – Cabinet Member briefing – 19th March 2025

1. Policy for the use of drones and model aircraft in parks and green spaces or other Council owned land was introduced in September 2016 [a copy for reference can be found via this link; [https://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Drone-Policy- Sept-16.pdf](https://loveyourchelmsford.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Drone-Policy-Sept-16.pdf).] The policy has been reviewed as follows.
2. The original policy decision and reasons take into account:-
 - a. The close proximity of many of the Council's parks and open spaces or other Council owned land adjacent to neighbouring residential properties and the potential risk of causing alarm, distress or harassment to said occupants.
 - b. Potential risk of accident, injury to other visitors to the parks and green spaces or Council property (including buildings and natural features) as a result of user or drone error.
 - c. Potential risk of causing alarm, distress or harassment to the wildlife and biodiversity within the Council's parks and green spaces.
 - d. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) "Drone Code" specifying that drones must not be flown within 50m from people, vehicles and buildings and/or over congested areas.
 - e. Granting permission could leave the Council liable for subsequent actions brought about by drone activity when operated from land in the Council's ownership (including over flying land in the Council's ownership, even from and to, a destination which may not be in the Council's ownership).
3. The Policy provides for exemptions as follows;- "Exemptions will rarely be given but may be considered in special circumstances, such as a professional service, e.g. festivals or events. Any exemptions will be subject CAA guidelines and permissions".
4. There have been a small number of challenges to the policy by individuals wishing to fly drones within parks and green spaces for informal recreational purposes and these have been managed in accordance with the policy and no consent has been granted since the introduction of the policy.
5. A small number of exemptions have been granted for professional drone services such as marketing, communications, promotions and inspection purposes. All followed routine risk assessment and management processes and CAA guidelines/requirements. The scope, take-off and landing sites and fly paths were agreed with Chelmsford City Council in advance.

6. Taking into account the implementation and use of the policy in the past years, any challenges to the policy to date and the recently updated CAA Drone and Model Aircraft Code [published in October 2019 and updated in March 2024]; the policy has now been reviewed and remains proportioned and appropriate for the City Council to maintain.
7. It is proposed to update one item in the policy as follows; The existing item *"The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) "Drone Code" specifying that drones must not be flown within 50m from people, vehicles and buildings and/or over congested areas"* is to be replaced with the proposed *"The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) "Drone and Model Aircraft Code" specifying to keep away from residential, recreational [including parks and green spaces] commercial and industrial sites and that drones must not be flown within 50m from people, vehicles and buildings and/or over congested areas* [<https://register-drones.caa.co.uk/drone-code/where-you-can-fly#keep-150m-away>]