

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services

Date of Meeting: 5th November 2012
Report of: Head of Health Improvement
Subject/Title: Voluntary Smoke Free Areas
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Janet Clowes

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 This report is recommending the implementation of a voluntary code of smoke free practice in children's play areas on land owned by Cheshire East Council. The Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Control Alliance in partnership with Heart of Mersey are working together with Local Authorities to introduce a voluntary code of practice within play areas on council owned land across the sub region. This decision has been taken at this point of time when any extension to the smoke free legislation for public places and worksites under the Health Act 2009, can only be taken at national level. A voluntary code of practice empowers communities to change smoking behaviour and supports self regulation. This will be implemented at local level through working with partners and various council services.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services approve the adoption of a voluntary code of smoke free practice in all play areas under the control of Cheshire East Council.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To reduce the numbers of children and young people taking up smoking, or being harmed by second hand cigarette smoke.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All wards

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All ward Members

6.0 Policy Implications including carbon reduction and health

- 6.1 The proposal for a voluntary code for smoke free play areas will have a positive implication to improve health as it will reduce the level of exposure to smoking

within the community and de-normalising the habit of smoking amongst young children.

- 6.2 It will have an implication for carbon reduction as it will contribute towards a reduction in non-biodegradable cigarette litter within the play areas.

7.0 Financial Implications (Director of Finance and Business Services)

- 7.1 Revenue costs will be £2,295 (to place signage in each park). £1500 will be funded through Heart of Mersey on behalf of the Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Alliance. The remainder will come from the Health Improvement budget.

8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

- 8.1 The voluntary code of smoke free practice will not be legally enforceable in outdoor areas, but it will empower the community to influence the behaviour of smokers within the play areas.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 There may be a negative reaction in the media to the proposal. This will be mitigated through a robust media launch that highlights the harms caused to children and emphasises the voluntary nature of the proposal.

10.0 Background

- 10.1 The rate of smoking in young people in the Northwest is higher than the national average with 18% of 14-17 year olds smoking. Children become aware of cigarettes and smoking at an early age. Three out of four children are aware of cigarettes before they reach the age of five, irrespective of whether or not their parents smoke (ONS, 1996). Research highlights that influencing the adult world in which children grow up is pivotal to reducing their rates of smoking uptake (DH, 2011).
- 10.2 The proposed implementation of smoke free playgrounds will reduce child exposure to smoking and de-normalise tobacco use within the community. In the long term this will assist in decreasing the uptake of smoking within the youth population. It will also reduce the levels of unsightly litter created by discarded cigarettes, wrappers, matches in the play areas and reduce the risk of harm from toxic cigarette butts (ChaMPs Public Health Networks. Top Tips for a Healthy Planned Environment, July 2010)
- 10.3 Public support for smoke free play areas within England is high. A YouGov survey undertaken by Action on Smoking and Health in March 2010 found that 73% of the general population backed a smoking ban in children's play areas.
- 10.4 Cheshire East Council carried out a survey across 17 local parks during the Summer of 2012. 162 people were asked for their views on the introduction of a voluntary code of smoke free practice. The parks were located in

geographically diverse areas to ensure a wide range of views. The results highlights overwhelming public support for the introduction of a voluntary smoke free code to the play areas in Local Authority parks (97.5%). Nearly all the participants agreed that it was important not to smoke in front of children (98.8%). A large percentage of the participants agreed with the extension of the smoke free area to include a 10 metre perimeter of the play area, however only 56.8% were in favour of introducing a smoke free voluntary code for the whole of the park. Appendix A details the results of the survey.

10.5 Friends of Sandbach Park have contacted the Council for assistance in implementing a voluntary code of smoke free practice in the recently refurbished play areas in Sandbach Park.

10.6 This voluntary code has been adopted by Councils in the Northwest including Knowsley, Halton, St Helens, Warrington, Sefton and Wirral.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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