

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	SMOKE FREE PLAY AREAS
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR CHRIS MEADEN COUNCILLOR BRIAN KENNY
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report reports to Committee proposals to introduce a voluntary code to make public children's play areas in Wirral Smoke Free.
- 1.2 The report provides members with an opportunity to consider the proposed policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 The Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee consider the report on a proposal for a voluntary code to make Children's play areas in Wirral Smoke Free.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 This report sets out a proposal to implement a voluntary code to make children's play areas in Wirral smoke free. The initiative aims to de-normalise smoking amongst young children and reduce the likelihood of them becoming smokers in the future and therefore improving the health of the next generation in Wirral.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 This Report has been prepared as the result of the motion agreed by council at the meeting held on October 2011 and in particular in response to point 4 (see below) of the resolution.
- 4.2 This Council:
- "A. Notes that other local authorities within the UK, such as Inverclyde and Pendle, have or are in the process of implementing smoking bans in children's play areas and that many other areas are considering it.

- B. Notes that Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Control Alliance, in partnership with Heart of Mersey are campaigning to implement a voluntary smoke-free code within playground areas on council owned land across the North West sub-region.
- C. Notes that research suggests public support for smoke-free play areas is high: A YouGov survey undertaken by ASH in March 2010 found that 73% of the general population backed a smoking ban in children's play areas.
- D. Believes that, in the long term, smoke-free play areas will assist in decreasing the number of young people who start smoking and will also help to reduce levels of unsightly cigarette litter such as cigarette butts, matches, empty packets and wrappers in children's play areas.

4.3 Therefore, Council:

- (1) States support for the principle of a voluntary smoking ban in children's play areas within Wirral.
- (2) Welcomes preparatory work undertaken to date to gauge local support for smoking bans in play areas and in parks and urges consultation with playground users to assess support for this initiative.
- (3) Requests the Leader to instruct officers to continue work, in partnership with the Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Control Alliance, to bring forward implementation plans for a voluntary smoke-free code for play areas in Wirral, with a view to introduction from early 2012 (subject to the outcome of consultations). Plans to include a smoke-free policy statement, training and enforcement programme, public awareness raising and a timetable for evaluation of the effectiveness of the smoke-free code.
- (4) Instructs the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to prepare a report for the Health and Wellbeing, Children and Young People and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees as to how powers contained in the Localism Bill may facilitate the introduction of legally enforceable bans."

4.4 Over 20 diseases are caused or aggravated by smoking including cancers (significantly lung cancer), respiratory and circulatory diseases and coronary heart disease. It is estimated that in Wirral the number of smokers is above 60,000 of the population. However, overall percentages and figures hide wide local differences.

4.5 In the east of Wirral, particularly within the Seacombe, Birkenhead, Bidston and Tranmere areas, considerably more people are likely to smoke. It is estimated that in these most deprived neighbourhoods in Wirral, approx 35% of the population smoke, compared to an average of 18% across the whole of Wirral. As a result a high proportion of children in these areas also live in a household where at least one parent/guardian smokes. This places a

significant burden on the health of the most deprived population and is the leading cause of health inequalities and life expectancy in Wirral. Of 15 to 16 year olds in Wirral 23% of 15 to 16 year olds smoke and this is consistent with the North West average (22%). The results show that young females in the Wirral are more likely to smoke than males. Furthermore, smoking appears to be more prevalent amongst regular binge drinkers (2007).

- 4.6 Young people continue to take up smoking. Nationally it is estimated that 6% of 11-15 year olds are current smokers. In the North West 22% of 14-17 year olds are smokers. The vast majority of individuals start smoking before they are 19 with two thirds starting to smoke before 18 – the legal age of sale. Smokers who start before the age of 18 years are least likely to be able to give up the habit in later years.
- 4.7 Reducing the rates of illness and death caused by smoking is one of Wirral's key public health objectives. To achieve this objective there is a need to reduce the number of people who smoke. This includes initiatives that help prevent Wirral's children from becoming the next generation of smokers.

5.0 SMOKEFREE PLAYGROUNDS SURVEY

- 5.1 A survey conducted by Wirral Council during September/October 2011 of 168 park users at parks across the borough revealed that there was strong public support for a voluntary smoke free code for Children's play areas. 81.1% of respondents both smokers and non-smokers either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement; "It's important not to smoke in front of young Children".
- 5.2 Of respondents 80.6 % (both smokers and non-smokers) also "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement "I would be in favour of a voluntary code of not smoking within the immediate playground area," Whilst a greater proportion of non smokers were in favour of these policies (90.2% and 87.4% respectively), support amongst smokers themselves was also high with over two thirds in agreement (67.1% and 69.9% respectively). However less than half of the participants (41.6%) agreed with the extension of the voluntary smoke free code to include a 10 meter perimeter of the play area and support was notably lower amongst smokers (13.7%)
- 5.3 These results illustrate high public support for the implementation of a voluntary smoke free code within the play areas of Local Authority parks in Wirral
- 5.4 In the UK Inverclyde council in Scotland made all of their play areas smoke free with 90% of residents supporting the initiative. Pendle council in Lancashire prohibited smoking in their 57 outdoor play areas and skate parks in 2010.
- 5.5 Internationally, smoking in public play areas and parks is already prohibited in Spain, Hong Kong, Latvia, and Singapore and in cities in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA, including New York and San Francisco.

6.0 WIRRAL SMOKE FREE PLAY AREAS INITIATIVE

- 6.1 The Wirral Smoke Free Play areas initiative is being undertaken as a partnership between Wirral Council, Halton BC, Halton and St Helens PCT, The Heart of Cheshire and the Cheshire & Merseyside Tobacco Alliance (CMTA). Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley Council's are currently consulting the community with a view to implementing a similar scheme in their area.
- 6.2 Children from Oakfield primary school in Widnes have designed signs and slogans that will be used for the smoke free play areas in Wirral. It is intended that the design for these signs will eventually be used across Merseyside by authorities who adopt the scheme.(example see Appendix 1)
- 6.3 It is anticipated that as with the smoke free laws covering enclosed public spaces – the scheme will require minimal policing. There is no intention to actively enforce no-smoking in playgrounds as there is no legal basis to do so. However Park Staff will be trained to issue advice and guidance to the public to encourage them to support the scheme.
- 6.4 The smoke free voluntary code will cover all children's playgrounds and multi use games areas (e.g. football / basket ball courts and Skate board and BMX parks) There are 73 Children's playground areas and 31 Multi use games areas and kick about areas on Wirral.
- 6.5 The public will be free to smoke in the park and open space areas outside the play areas. A recent survey conducted by Wirral Council of 187 park users and revealed there was limited support for a voluntary smoke free code for the entire parks – 18% of smokers/non smokers agreed with the proposal whilst 57.3 % of smokers/non smokers were against a smoke free code covering entire parks.
- 6.6 Wirral's Communications and Marketing department will be requested to design a publicity campaign to promote the scheme in partnership with the PCT and Heart of Mersey.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Smoke free Wirral is a voluntary code and is not enforceable by law. There is a possible risk of confrontation should a member of the public challenge someone who fails to abide by the voluntary code. It is anticipated this will be controlled through the training given to park staff to help them intervene in disputes and communicate the purpose of the scheme to park users.

8.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 None

9.0 CONSULTATION

- 9.1 The proposal has been underpinned by the survey undertaken and described in section 6.0 above.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

10.1 None.

11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

11.1 The scheme is being part funded by Environmental Health smoke free budget (£1,500) and match funded by the Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Alliance (£1,500). Although the scheme will require the ongoing support of Park Staff to advise the public the authority is not required to fully finance the scheme. In total the scheme will cost approximately £3000 to launch – this represents the cost of producing signage 50% of the cost will be met by the Heart of Mersey.

11.2 The Heart of Mersey and The Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Alliance will also fund the graphic design for the signs, production of publicity material and training for Park Staff.

12.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Although there has been a legal ban on smoking in all enclosed public places introduced by the Health Act 2006 in the UK since July 2007, there is no legal basis to formally ban smoking in open public areas. However the Government's Tobacco Control Plan for England published in March 2011 states "local communities and organisation may also wish to go further than the requirements of smoke free laws in creating environments free from second hand smoke" for example in children's playgrounds, outdoor parts of shopping centres and venues associated with sport and leisure activities, Initiatives such as these can also help to shape positive social norms and discourage the use of tobacco.

12.2 It is not intended that the smoke free playground initiative is perceived as a "smoking ban". The scheme will be promoted as a polite request for adults to voluntarily refrain from smoking in play areas, supported by child friendly signage

12.3 It is anticipated that as with smoke free laws covering enclosed public spaces there will be a high level of compliance. There is no intention to actively enforce no smoking in playgrounds as there is no legal basis to do so. However Park Staff will be trained to issue advice and guidance to the public to encourage them to support the scheme.

12.4 Children become aware of cigarettes at an early age and 3 out of 4 children are aware of cigarettes before they reach the age of 5 irrespective of whether or not their parents smoke. Research suggests that if young people see smoking as part of normal everyday life they are more likely to become smokers themselves. Young people are exposed to a mix of personal, social and environmental influences that serve to normalise the habit and encourage the onset of smoking.

13.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There is not considered to be any equality or diversity issues associated with his voluntary code

13.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
(a) Is an EIA required? No

14.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

14.1 None arising from this report

15.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Children and Young People in Wirral

The scheme aims to de-normalise smoking amongst children and young people and make them less likely to become smokers in the future.

15.2 A Healthy Wirral

The scheme contributes to the key public health priority of preventing ill health and early deaths caused by smoking. Smoke free play areas will complement local and national initiatives that aim to create an environment that makes it less likely that children will grow up to become smokers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Proposed Signage
Wirral Smoke Free Heart of Mersey survey

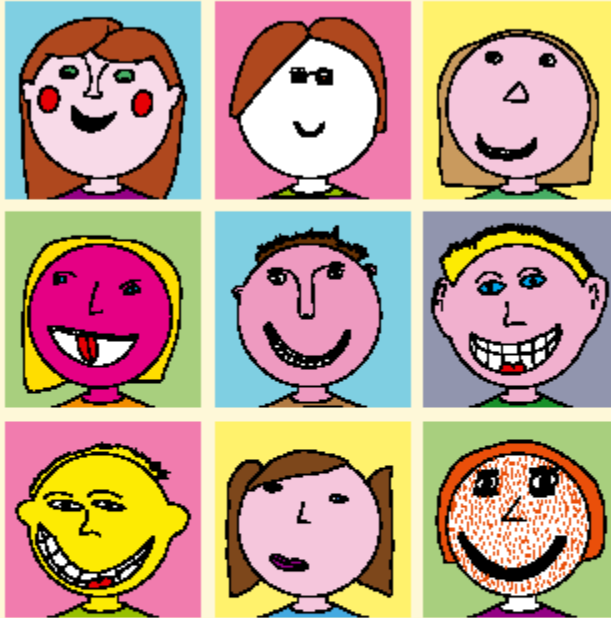
REFERENCE MATERIAL

Wirral Council Survey Results

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date

Play Smokefree



And Keep Our Community Smiling



Working in partnership with your Local Council

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