

REPORT TO: Health Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 13 September 2011
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Communities
SUBJECT: Smoke Free Play Areas
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 Inform members of the proposal to make public play areas in Halton Smoke Free and provide Members with an opportunity to comment on the proposal.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION That: Members consider the report on a proposal for a voluntary code to make children's play areas in Halton Smoke Free.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

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

3.2 26% of adults in the borough smoke. Whilst this level has decreased over recent years the level is still above the national average. Halton's rate of early deaths caused by smoking remains significantly higher than the national average. Reducing the rates of illness and death caused by smoking is one of Halton's key public health priorities. To achieve this objective there is a need to reduce the number of people who smoke. This includes initiatives that help prevent Halton's children from becoming the next generation of smokers.

3.3 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.

3.4 Children become aware of cigarettes at an early age - 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.

- 3.5 A survey conducted by Halton and St Helens Primary Care trust revealed that there was strong public support for a voluntary smoke free code for Children's play areas. 82% 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".

82% of respondents (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 fenced playground area". 69% of the respondents who were smokers either "agreed or strongly agreed" with the same statement".

- 3.6 Internationally, smoking in public play areas and parks is already prohibited in Spain, Hong Kong, Latvia, Singapore and in cities in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA, including New York and San Francisco.

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.

- 3.7 The Halton Smoke Free Play areas initiative is being undertaken as a partnership between 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 their residents with a view to implementing a similar voluntary scheme in their area.

- 3.8 Children from Oakfield primary school in Widnes have designed signs and slogans that will be used for the smoke free play areas in Halton. It is intended that the design for these signs will eventually be used across Merseyside by authorities who adopt the scheme.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Although there has been a legal ban on smoking in all enclosed public places 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 organisations 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 sports and leisure activities. Initiatives such as these can also help to shape positive social norms and discourage the use of tobacco"

- 4.2 It is not intended that the smoke free playgrounds 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.
- 4.3 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 Community Park Wardens will be trained to issue advice and guidance to the public to encourage them to support the scheme.
- 4.4 The smoke free requirement 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 39 children's playgrounds and 32 multi use games areas.
- 4.5 The public will be free to smoke in the park and open space areas outside the play areas. The survey conducted by Halton and St Helens PCT revealed there was limited support for a voluntary smoke free code for entire parks – 38% strongly agreed with the proposal whilst 37% strongly disagreed. 62% of smokers were against a smoke free code covering entire parks.
- 4.6 Halton'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 Cheshire.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The scheme is being funded by The Heart of Cheshire, The Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Alliance and Halton and St Helens PCT. Although the scheme will require the ongoing support of Community Wardens to advise the public the authority is not required to finance the scheme. In total the scheme will cost approximately £4000 to launch – this represents the cost of producing signage.
- 5.2 The Heart of Cheshire and The Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Alliance will also fund the graphic design for the signs, production of publicity material and training for Community Park Wardens.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

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

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

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.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Smoke free playgrounds is a voluntary code and is not enforceable by law. There is a possible risk of confrontation should a member of the public or a park warden challenge someone who fails to abide by the voluntary code. It is anticipated this will be controlled though the training given to park wardens to help them intervene in disputes and communicate the purpose of the scheme to park users. There is strong public support for the scheme even amongst smokers so the risk of confrontation should be minimal.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There is not considered to be any equality or diversity issues associated with this voluntary code.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.