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**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 16 August 2012

**Subject:** Voluntary Code for Smokefree Play Areas

**Report of:** Director of Public Health    **Wards Affected:** All

**Is this a Key Decision?** Yes

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?**  
Yes

**Exempt/Confidential**

No

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### **Purpose/Summary**

1.1 Inform members of the proposal to make public play areas in Sefton smokefree

1.2 Provide members with an opportunity to comment on the proposal

### **Recommendation(s)**

That the proposal for a voluntary code to make children's play areas in Sefton smokefree be approved.

### **How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Objectives?**

	<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2	Jobs and Prosperity		√	
3	Environmental Sustainability		√	
4	Health and Well-Being	√		
5	Children and Young People	√		
6	Creating Safe Communities		√	
7	Creating Inclusive Communities		√	
8	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening Local Democracy		√	

**Reasons for the Recommendation:**

**What will it cost and how will it be financed?**

**(A) Revenue Costs- All revenue costs (such as signage) will be funded through Heart of Mersey on behalf of the Cheshire and Merseyside Tobacco Alliance and NHS Sefton.**

**(B) Capital Costs- None**

**Implications:**

The following implications of this proposal have been considered and where there are specific implications, these are set out below:

<b>Legal</b> Smokefree play areas is a voluntary code so the authority will not be open to a legal challenge. It is not intended that the smokefree 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.	
<b>Human Resources</b>	
<b>Equality</b>	
1. No Equality Implication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Equality Implications identified and mitigated	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Equality Implication identified and risk remains	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Impact on Service Delivery:** None

**What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?**

A survey of 205 adult visitors to four Local Authority parks during March 2012. Findings from this survey demonstrate high levels of support for a voluntary code.

The Head of Corporate Finance and ICT has no comments on this report because the contents of the report have no financial implications for the Council (FD 1685/12) and Head of Corporate Legal Services (LD1023/12.) has no comments on this report because the contents of the report have no legal implications for the council.

**Are there any other options available for consideration?**

None

## **Implementation Date for the Decision**

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting a launch date will be set to ensure that we inform both staff and the public of this initiative.

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## **Background Papers:**

The following papers are available for inspection by contacting the above officer(s).

Smokefree Playground Briefing Paper- Sefton

Smokefree Playground Survey Results- Sefton

## **1 Introduction/Background**

1.1 This report sets out a proposal to implement a voluntary code to make children's play areas smokefree. The initiative aims to reduce the exposure of young children to smoking behaviour and hence reduce the likelihood of them becoming smokers in the future.

## **2 National and Sefton context**

2.1 It is estimated that 15% of adults in the borough smoke. Whilst this level has decreased over recent years the level within our most deprived wards has not decreased at the same rate, and remains above the national average at 23%. Sefton's rate of early death caused by smoking remains significantly higher than the national average. Reducing the rates of illness and death caused by smoking is one Sefton's key Public Health priorities. To achieve this objective there is a need to reduce the number of people who smoke. Data illustrates that young people continue to take up smoking, thereby replacing those who quit or die from addiction to tobacco. To overcome this issue we need to ensure that we help prevent Sefton's children from becoming the next generation of smokers.

2.2 Nationally it is estimated that 6% of 11-15 year olds are current smokers. In the North West 22% of 14-17 year olds have tried cigarettes; in Sefton 20% of young people have experimented with cigarettes with 13% becoming regular smokers (Trading Standards 2011). The vast majority of individuals start smoking before they are 19 with two thirds starting before 18 – now the legal age of sale.

2.3 Children become aware of cigarettes 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. 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. National statistics have revealed that children who live with other smokers are more than twice as likely to smoke regularly compared to those living in non-smoking households. Children who experiment with cigarettes can quickly become addicted to nicotine in tobacco and can show signs of addiction within four weeks of starting smoking. Symptoms of nicotine dependence can develop soon after trying their first cigarette.

## **3 Smokefree Playgrounds**

3.1 Research in social psychology and behavioural economics highlights that influencing the adult world in which children grow up is pivotal to reducing their rates of smoking uptake. This is why we are proposing the implementation of a voluntary smokefree code within park play areas. This will reduce children's exposure to smoking and help to denormalise tobacco use within the community. In the long term this will assist in decreasing the uptake of smoking amongst young people. One of the short term benefits of this initiative is that it will also reduce levels of unsightly cigarette litter such as cigarette butts and empty packets in play areas.

3.2 Public support for smokefree 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. NHS Sefton in partnership with Heart of Mersey conducted a survey during February and March 2012 with 205 adult visitors to play areas in four parks across Sefton to evaluate levels of public support for the introduction of a voluntary code. The parks were located in Crosby, Bootle and Southport to ensure a wide range of residents were canvassed for their views. Almost all of those surveyed supported the introduction of a voluntary smokefree code within the immediate play area (193/205; 94.2%). Support for this measure was high amongst both smokers (92.5%) and non-smokers (94.7%).

- 3.3 Smokefree Playgrounds proposal has been presented to Sefton Health and Wellbeing Board who support the implementation of this measure within the immediate play area, to protect children from exposure to smoking and to prevent them from becoming smokers in the future.
- 3.4 There has been a legal ban on smoking in all enclosed public places in the UK since July 2007 which has seen high levels of compliance across Sefton. It is important to note however that 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 smokefree laws in creating environments free from secondhand 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".*
- 3.5 Local Authorities that have already implemented a voluntary code within play areas include Halton, Wirral, Knowsley and Warrington.

#### **4. Proposal**

- 4.1 The proposal is to introduce a voluntary smokefree code within all playground areas of council owned parks. It is not intended that the smokefree playgrounds initiative be perceived as a smoking ban. The scheme will be promoted as a polite request for adults to voluntarily refrain from smoking in play areas.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that, as with the smokefree laws covering enclosed public spaces, the scheme will require minimal policing as it has high levels of public support. There is no intention to actively enforce no-smoking in playgrounds as there is no legal basis to do so. However community members and park staff can be trained to issue advice and guidance to the public to encourage them to support the scheme.
- 4.3 The smokefree requirement will cover all 61 children's play areas managed by Sefton Council. The public will be free to smoke in the park and open space outside the play area. The survey conducted by NHS Sefton revealed that there was some support for a voluntary smokefree code for entire parks, but this is much lower than support for smokefree play areas with only 54% of respondents agreeing with the proposal.
- 4.4 The scheme is being funded by Heart of Mersey and NHS Sefton. Although the scheme will require the on-going support of community wardens to advise the public the authority is not required to finance the scheme. Heart of Mersey will also fund the signage production, publicity material and training for any staff working within the parks and volunteers.
- 4.5 In summary the code will be voluntary so the authority will not be open to legal challenge, it will apply to only the designated play areas within local authority parks, will be externally funded so there are no significant financial implications for the authority and there is strong support from local park users to this measure.