

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Executive Committee – 8 October 2014

Proposed Smoke Free Zone

Report of the Strategy Officer

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Stock-Williams)

1. Executive Summary

This report relates to the decision made by Full Council on 10 December 2013 to sign up to the Local Authority Declaration on Tobacco Control, and the associated report.

It is proposed that Smokefree South West utilise the grassed area of Castle Green to pilot a Smoke free zone and relevant signage in Taunton Deane.

2. Background

- 2.1 A successful pilot was carried out in Sedgemoor to introduce signs to encourage a voluntary smokefree code in children's play parks. The pilot demonstrated a significant reduction in people smoking. Following this, Taunton Deane Borough Council has now implemented voluntary smoke free signs in children's play parks across Taunton Deane.
- 2.2 We know that smoking prevalence in Somerset is considerably lower than the national average at around 17.5% and that Taunton Deane stands at 12.8% which is the lowest in Somerset. Therefore 87.2% of people in Taunton Deane choose to be non-smokers. Added to this we also know that 70% of smokers wish to give up.
- 2.3 Research shows that reducing child exposure to smoking decreases the uptake of smoking amongst young people in the long term by promoting positive role modelling. A smokefree environment also creates a supportive environment for those who are interested in cutting back or stopping smoking.
- 2.4 The majority of cigarette filters are not bio-degradable and must be disposed of in landfill sites. In Taunton Deane around 57 million cigarettes are smoked each year resulting in approximately 10 tonnes of waste annually. Of this, more than 2 tonnes of cigarette waste is discarded on the streets as litter and collected by Taunton Deane street cleaning services.

- 2.5** Smokefree South West, an organisation funded through public health to drive down smoking prevalence, has recently commissioned several surveys across the South West. Both smokers and non-smokers were interviewed to explore attitudes towards a smokefree voluntary code in public outdoor spaces. Smokefree South West tested four different designs for signage and key messages, resulting in the production of a sign and a key message that resonates with smokers. The sign uses positive and emotional language that focuses on keeping our town healthy and clean, thus appealing to the desire of most people for a clean environment and to protect our children.
- 2.6** The next stage is to run a 6-8 month pilot to test the effectiveness of the signs in areas around the South West and to test whether the smokefree zone enhances the area for families, young people, businesses, smokers and non-smokers.

3. Proposal for a Smoke Free Zone Pilot in Taunton Deane

- 3.1** Smokefree South West has approached the Council to propose using the grassed area within Castle Green as a pilot site.
- 3.2** The pilot would involve Smokefree South West carrying out the following programme:

Timescale	Action
20 Oct - 7 Nov 2014	Carry out pre-evaluation survey - gather baseline information using face to face interviews in the area with members of the public.
24 Nov – 28 Nov 2014	Install signage.
24 Nov – 28 Nov 2014	Deliver communications plan - including local businesses and media.
1 December 2014	Voluntary smoke free zone comes into effect.
1 Aug 2015	Pilot ends.
3 Aug – 10 Aug 2015	Carry out post-evaluation survey.
September 2014	Present results of pilot to TDBC Scrutiny and Executive Committees.

- 3.3** It is suggested that a sign with a 'heritage' type design is tested that will complement the historic surrounds of Castle Green whilst still standing out to deliver the key message. Please refer to an example of the proposed signage in appendix A.

4 Benefits

- 4.1** In response to the enormous and on-going damage smoking does to our communities in December 2013 TDBC Full Council agreed to sign a Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control. The declaration states that TDBC is committed to take action and makes a statement about TDBC's dedication to protecting local communities from the harm caused by smoking. By taking part in this pilot TDBC is acting on the commitments that it has made.
- 4.2** Smoking is the greatest cause of health inequalities. While overall smoking prevalence is low in Taunton Deane, it stands at 29.2% among routine and manual workers. It is only through a comprehensive approach to tobacco control such as reducing exposure of people smoking in public that we can begin to reduce this divide.
- 4.3** If the pilot is successful and members of the community choose to not smoke in this area of Castle Green smoking related litter will be reduced improving the look and feel of the area.
- 4.4** Smokefree South West will be piloting smokefree signs in two other sites across the South West. By taking part in a larger pilot exercise TDBC will benefit from robust evaluation of the pilot and clear evidence of the effectiveness of smokefree zones in public spaces.
- 4.5** Smokefree South West will support the development of a communication plan to prepare the public and businesses ahead of the sign installation along with template press releases and PR.

5. Risks

- 5.1** There are currently a range of issues at Castle Green that have been raised by businesses. These are being dealt with holistically through the creation of an action plan led by the Assistant Director - Business Development, Ian Timms in conjunction with Mark Edwards, Deputy Leader of the council.
- 5.2** There are a number of unresolved issues with one being of particular concern to businesses. That issue is alleged anti-social behaviour linked to excessive use of Castle Green by skateboarders, especially in the night time hours. Evidence is being collected to enable the council to consider whether appropriate legal remedies should be applied. A range of other actions are also being considered around positive use of the space. The council is therefore trying to act positively to resolve the issues of businesses and to ensure the space is a place that may be enjoyed by all residents.
- 5.3** The introduction of a voluntary ban on smoking creates a reputational risk. It may be the perception of local businesses and the community that the

Council is not dealing with the existing issues and are merely adding to them for businesses. This could damage the relationship that the Council is trying to build with local businesses as we attempt to resolve the existing problems. Until the ongoing issues are resolved it seems inequitable to create a restriction on businesses in the area albeit one which is voluntary.

- 5.4 The placement of any signs would need to follow a Health and Safety risk assessment to ensure they do not pose a trip or fall risk to members of the public.
- 5.5 Due to the relationship between alcohol and incidents of vandalism there is potential that the signage may be vandalised due to their proximity to 3 licenced premises in the area. Smokefree South West would need to cover the costs of any ongoing repair and maintenance of the signs.

6. Finance Comments

- 6.1 Smokefree South West have committed to providing the resources for this pilot. This includes staff time to conduct the pre and post evaluation, production costs for the signage, consultation with local businesses and development of the communication plan. Somerset County Council public health will fund production costs for the signage.
- 6.2 As a financial gesture it is proposed that the Council DLO services install the signage and provide any materials required for their installation.
- 6.3 It is likely that there will staff resource requirements from the Council's Public and Media Relations Lead to deliver the communications plan.

7. Legal Comments

- 7.1 The Smoke Free Zone will not be legally enforceable and compliance will require members of the public to voluntarily refrain from smoking on the grassed area of Castle Green.

8. Links to Corporate Aims

- 8.1 As stated in the Corporate Business Plan 2013 the Council has an aim to have a "Vibrant Social, Cultural and Leisure Environment", delivery of this aim includes an action to "Reduce health inequalities in Taunton Deane and address agreed health issues".

9. Environmental and Community Safety Implications

- 9.1 The council has received feedback from members of the public on the environmental impact of smoking related litter on the grassed area of Castle Green. The successful delivery of the pilot should have a positive impact on the look and feel of the area.

- 9.2** The implementation of a smoke free zone should reduce the smoking air pollution in the area, protecting both non-smoking adults and children from second hand smoke.
- 9.3** There have been a number of studies that show links between smoking and alcohol and drug abuse both of which have further links to crime and antisocial behaviour. Smoking also presents a fire hazard with careless disposal of cigarettes.

10. Equalities Impact

- 10.1** There will be a positive impact for people in communities who either stop or reduce smoking as a result of the pilot and the positive messages being delivered to support people in not smoking.
- 10.2** Statistics indicate that smoking prevalence is relatively high for people with severe mental illness, lower socio-economic groups, Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people and younger adults.
- 10.3** The promotion of the voluntary smoke free zone aims to give a positive message to encourage people not to smoke. This will go some way to help to reduce health inequalities caused by smoking.

11. Recommendation

We recommend that the Executive agrees for the Council to offer the grassed areas of Castle Green as the area for a Smoke Free Zone Pilot in Taunton and supports the pilot with resources as stated in this report.

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