

Smoking to be banned from play parks

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SMOKING is to be banned from play parks across the Capital under new plans being drawn up by the council.

‘No smoking’ signs will be “prominently displayed” at children’s outdoor play areas and school playgrounds, as well as car parks, courtyards and entrances to city-owned buildings, as part of an expanded “smoke-free” policy for Edinburgh.

Council-run fetes, fun days and community festivals have been included, with city chiefs revealing that a decision on introducing a smoking ban would be taken at the planning stage for each event.

It has emerged that the regulations will also cover e-cigarettes, despite the lack of evidence that they are directly harmful to health.

Council leaders said the policy was in response to the Scottish Government’s national tobacco control strategy, which recommends that local authorities extend restrictions to outdoor areas within their jurisdiction, particularly if they are popular with children.

But opposition leaders today slammed the development and said comprehensive data should have been gathered before it was agreed.

Councillor Cameron Rose, Conservative member for Southside-Newington, said: “First of all, the [council’s] report acknowledged that there was not strong evidence that using e-cigarettes was detrimental to people’s health – in other words, that the evidence was uncertain. But, notwithstanding that, the administration decided to go ahead and, extraordinarily, called for further evidence, or a report on developing evidence, presumably in the hope that evidence for the decision they were taking might materialise in future.

“And I think we felt it was just over the top to impose this in parks and playgrounds. There’s an example-setting issue but that’s a matter of judgement.

“It’s another case of [the council] trying to impose a particular lifestyle on people.”

However, NHS leaders have welcomed the expanded policy as a boost to efforts aimed at improving residents' health.

Professor Alison McCallum, director of public health and health policy at NHS Lothian, said: "Smoking is the most common single, preventable cause of ill-health and early death in our communities.

"The health risks associated with breathing in second and third-hand smoke are well known and I welcome the extension of the council's smoke-free policy which will help protect the local population and council staff from the hazardous effects of smoking."

<http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/health/smoking-to-be-banned-from-play-parks-1-3886746>