

Media Release

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Borough backs tobacco control

Thurrock Council was one of the first authorities in the country to agree to the Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control and on Wednesday (8 January) Leader Cllr John Kent put pen to paper.

Smoking is a killer and particularly so in Thurrock where it accounts for more early deaths than any other cause.

Representatives from Thurrock's public health team were at the House of Commons in December for the national launch of this initiative and the Declaration - endorsed by the country's leading public health organisations - is a statement of a local authority's commitment to tackling harm from smoking.

It includes commitments to have a local plan, to support national action on tobacco and to protect local health policy from tobacco industry influence.

Cllr Kent said: "I am not a smoker, but having worked for many years in the print industry I have seen the effects of smoking first hand – friends and colleagues suffering and dying.

"It's not just lung cancer, there are many different ways smoking affects people and families, not least in the pocket!"

He said: "Anything this council can do to tackle this problem has to be good and will have my full support."

Cllr Barbara Rice, the council's portfolio holder for health, said: "I put forward a motion to council that we should sign up to this declaration and it's a pleasure to see that it's being done.

"I understand we're the 22nd local authority to sign up which again shows Thurrock takes its public health responsibilities very seriously indeed. We want to do away with the inequalities in health that we see between different wards in our borough, but more importantly we want Thurrock to be a healthy place for everyone who lives here.

"That's what we're working towards, and tackling the evils of tobacco is one of the simplest ways of doing this. Stop smoking and immediately you increase your chances of a longer life."

Dr T Nimal Raj, interim accountable officer at NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, added: "As a GP I fully endorse the Declaration on Tobacco. I see every day the crippling effects of smoking on patient's lives.

“GPs realise that people try and fail in quitting smoking, just as they do in diet, exercise and other worthwhile lifestyle changes. But it's part of my job to encourage them to try again.

“There are excellent local NHS stop-smoking services in Thurrock that can be tailored to lifestyle habits. With medication and the support of these services, smokers are four times more likely to give up successfully.”

Andrea Atherton, the council’s director for public health, added: “I am absolutely delighted the council has made this commitment to take strong action to reduce smoking.

“By making this declaration Thurrock Council is acknowledging how important tobacco control is to improving population health.”

At the Westminster launch, Luminita Sanda, Medical Officer at the World Health Organisation said: “This Declaration is a world first. No other country has so embedded the commitments in the WHO treaty on tobacco control at a local level. It is particularly welcome to see a strong pledge to protect health policy from tobacco industry influence.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

Photograph available showing Leader of the Council, Cllr John Kent, signing the Declaration watched by Cllr Barbara Rice, portfolio holder for health, and Kevin Malone, public health manager, who was at the House of Commons for the launch.

To view a copy of the Local Government Declaration, go to www.smokefreeaction.org.uk/declaration/

In November last year, Thurrock Council unanimously supported a motion from Cllr Barbara Rice which stated:

In May Newcastle City Council passed a declaration setting out their commitment to tackle the harm smoking causes their communities. This has become known as the Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control and been endorsed by, among others, The Public Health Minister, Chief Medical Officer and Public Health England.

This Council will sign up to the Declaration and commit to:

- Reduce smoking prevalence and health inequalities
- Develop plans with partners and local communities

- Participate in local and regional networks
- Support Government action at national level
- Protect tobacco control work from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry
- Monitor the progress of our plans
- Join the Smokefree Action Coalition.

For further information, please contact Joy Joses at joy.joses@swessex.nhs.uk or 07813 457024.