



CABINET

21ST MARCH 2019

AGENDA ITEM (9)

REDUCING SINGLE USE PLASTICS

Accountable Member	Councillor Sue Coakley Cabinet Member for the Environment
Accountable Officer	Claire Locke Group Manager - Council Advisory Services 01285 623427 claire.locke@cotswold.gov.uk

Purpose of Report	To update Cabinet on the current and planned actions to reduce avoidable single use plastics, following the Motion in May 2018.
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet notes the update and endorses the actions being taken forward to reduce avoidable single use plastics.
Reason(s) for Recommendation(s)	To ensure that the Council continues to take positive steps to reduce avoidable single use plastics and perform a key community leadership role.

Ward(s) Affected	All
Key Decision	No
Recommendation to Council	No

Financial Implications	Where there are significant financial implications for a switch to alternative products, which cannot be covered within budget, separate reports will be submitted to Cabinet.
Legal and Human Rights Implications	At present, there is no legislative requirement to reduce avoidable single use plastics.
Environmental and Sustainability Implications	Covered within the main body of the report.
Human Resource Implications	The overall objective to reduce avoidable single use plastics will be overseen by the Council's Energy Projects and Resources Officer.
Key Risks	None associated with this report.
Equalities Analysis	Not relevant

Related Decisions	Cabinet, May 2018 - Agreement to take forward motion on single use plastics
Background Documents	Single Use Plastic Audit
Appendices	None

Performance Management Follow Up	Performance in delivering actions will be reported to the Cabinet Member
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Options for Joint Working	<p>WODC and FODDC are also taking forward similar initiatives to reduce single use plastics which offer the opportunity for joint working and sharing of best practice.</p> <p>FoDDC is working with Coleford Town Council to pilot a project for the town to become Plastic Free. If successful learning and examples of best practice will be shared and a toolkit produced which could be rolled out in other Communities.</p>
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Background Information

1. General

1.1 In May 2018 Cabinet agreed to actions in response to a Motion on Plastics which had been submitted to Council in February 2018. The Motion noted the considerable environmental impacts of plastic usage and sought a commitment from the Council to a number of actions, including an audit of single use plastics used by the Authority and education and promotion on reducing plastic waste and increasing recycling.

1.2 The Council decision as a result of this Motion was:

(a) The Council commits to eliminate all Single Use Plastics within District Council managed buildings and facilities by 2020, and seeks to encourage the elimination of Single Use Plastics within its supply chain by 2025;

(b) this Council asks the Gloucestershire Joint Waste Partnership to consider how they could promote the reduction of Single Use Plastics across the county and to highlight areas of further lobbying to central government by both collection and waste disposal authorities.

2. Defining the Plastic Problem

2.1 Plastics are mostly synthetic materials which are malleable and therefore can be moulded into almost any shape. Due to the versatility of plastics, they have become an important material in our economy and modern daily life. However, they can have serious downsides on the environment and health as the majority of plastic is made from fossil fuels such as crude oil and most is not biodegradable.

2.2 Single use plastics are specifically designed to be used once and then thrown away. 400 million tonnes of plastic are produced globally every year and the largest sector is plastic packaging. The Institute for European Environmental Policy defines single use plastic as any disposable item which is designed to be used once. Single use plastics items are often used in packaging, consumer products, cosmetics and healthcare e.g. light-weight plastic bags, disposable utensils, beverage containers, coffee capsules, wet wipes and razor blades. Some facts and figures include:

- There are more than 5 trillion pieces of plastic floating in our oceans;

- Worldwide, 73% of beach litter is plastic, including filters for cigarette butts, bottles, bottle caps, food wrappers, grocery bags and polystyrene container;
- As of 2015, more than 6.3 billion tons of plastic waste has been generated and 9% is recycled, 12% incinerated and 79% is landfilled or remains in the environment;
- More than 40% of plastic is used just once then thrown away (Statistics from National Geographic UK).

3. Policy and Legislation

3.1 The problem created by single use plastics has received significant media attention in the last couple of years and there is now national and international focus through legislative change aimed at reducing this type of waste. The Council will be working towards the targets set out, and initiatives being proposed, as the new statute emerges. The Council already has a very successful kerbside recycling scheme which collects and recycles single use plastics. The recycling service will be further enhanced when service changes are introduced in Autumn 2019 and will need to be flexible to changes in the future as new initiatives are brought in, such as the bottle deposit scheme.

3.2 In December 2017, 193 members of the UN signed a resolution committing to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds by 2025 and to prioritise policies and measures to avoid marine litter and micro plastics entering the marine environment.

3.3 The "European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy" was adopted in January 2018. The plastic strategy will transform the way products are designed, produced, used and recycled in the EU. Under the new strategy, the European Union will:

- Improve the recyclability of plastics used on the market and increase the demand for recycled plastic content;
- Implement new plans on other single-use plastics and fishing gear, supporting national awareness campaigns;
- Restrict the use of micro plastics in products, and fix labels for biodegradable and compostable plastics;
- Impose new rules on port reception facilities which will tackle sea-based marine litter, with measures to ensure that waste generated on ships or gathered at sea is not left behind but returned to land and adequately managed there;
- Provide guidance for national authorities and European businesses on how to minimise plastic waste at source;
- Work with partners from around the world to come up with global solutions and develop international standards.

3.4 The United Kingdom launched "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment" in January 2018. The Plan has a working target of elimination avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042 as well as significantly reducing and, where possible, preventing all kinds of marine plastic pollution - in particular material that came originally from land.

3.5 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) launched the Resources and Waste Strategy in December 2018. Key points from the strategy related to plastics are highlighted below:

- Invoke the 'polluter pays' principle where producers pay full net costs of managing packaging waste at the end of life;
- Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for single use drink containers;
- Consider how to reduce the environmental impacts of disposable cups;
- Tax on plastics packaging not containing at least 30% recycled content and increase carrier bag charge to 10p and extended to small shops;
- Consult on ban on problem plastic, e.g. cotton buds;
- Improve the regulation of waste movement;

- Standards for bio-based and biodegradable plastics;
- Research and development to tackle plastics;
- Overarching objectives - zero available waste by 2042;
- Removal of single use plastics from central government estate by 2020.

3.6 UK Plastic Pact is an initiative by WRAP involving business, government and charities to create a circular system to keep plastics in the economy and out of the natural environment. The targets to 2025 include:

- 100% plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable;
- 70% plastic packaging to be recycled or composted;
- 30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging;
- Action to be taken to eliminate problem and unnecessary single use plastics.

3.7 At a local level, how waste will be managed (including plastic waste) is set out in the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy for Gloucestershire.

4. Education and Promotion

4.1 The Council already promotes the recycling of plastics through a range of communication channels, including its website, and recycling campaigns which are often targeted at events or seasons such as Christmas and Easter. The Recycle for Gloucestershire website also has tips on reducing waste, such as taking shopping bags with you and refillable water bottles.

4.2 The Council's launch of the new waste service in Autumn 2019 will include a communication campaign which focuses on the service changes but can also be used to heighten awareness of waste reduction and reuse. Signposting to advice on reducing single use plastics will be incorporated into communications wherever possible.

5. Campaigning for Change

5.1 Since the Motion and subsequent Cabinet decision, DEFRA have published the Waste and Resources Strategy. The proposed changes set out in that Strategy would have a significant impact on the way in which single use plastics are used. The Council has already responded to the call for evidence in support of the Strategy and will continue to respond to the numerous consultations that are being published. The Council's focus will be on supporting a shift change in the use of packaging and the way in which waste is managed, to reduce environmental impacts and the burden on the tax payer.

5.2 The Council has already worked successfully with the Mid-counties Co-operative store in Bourton-on-the-Water to reduce waste and increase reuse and recycling, with a focus on a reduction in single use plastics. The store is switching to alternative products and seeking to reduce packaging whilst encouraging customers to bring in their own reusable containers for certain foods they wish to purchase. The Council intends to support and encourage other supermarkets to develop similar initiatives.

6. Results from Plastic Audit

6.1 An Audit has been completed to identify single use plastics used with CDC. Data was collated internally from Property Services, Waste and Environmental Services, and Finance; and externally from contractors including waste service providers Ubico and leisure service providers SLM. All provided examples of single use plastics they procured and where possible quantities.

6.2 The audit outcomes were:

	Bin liners & plastic bags/sacks	Plastic cups	Food and drink packaging	Cleaning products	Plastic covers for planning notices
CDC	X	X	X	X	X
Contractors	X		X	X	

7. Opportunities to Reduce our Single Use Plastic Consumption

7.1 A number of actions have already been completed or are underway to reduce plastics consumption:

- Cotswold's leisure provider, SLM, has taken action to remove plastic straws from their leisure centre cafes.
- CDC has signed up to 'Refill' where the public can refill their water bottles in reception. 'Refill' aims to reduce plastic pollution at source by connecting people with water on the go.
- CDC procures relatively few single use plastics but there is an opportunity to review whether non-plastic alternatives are available and the cost implications for switching to those alternative products. This work is already underway. In some cases, a switch in product may not be feasible but the Council can ensure options for recycling are maximised. For example, Publica purchase milk from a local dairy that is delivered in plastic milk bottles. A switch to glass bottles has been explored with the dairy but the noise impact on nearby residents of early hours deliveries and the risk of glass breakages has meant a change will not be made. However the dairy do use plastic bottles which are 100% recyclable - this includes the label and the lid.
- Develop a partner-wide sustainable procurement policy to encourage suppliers of goods and services to reduce their overall waste generation including plastics and improve their recycling.
- Encourage CDC contractors to sign up to the 'Refill' scheme.
- Awareness raising of single use plastics internally and externally through a communication campaign.

7.2 There is already some consideration of products being purchased to ensure that their environmental impact is minimised - for example, sacks issued to some garden waste customers are brown paper compostable sacks. The Council also tries to reuse or recycle plastic products it uses - for example, unwanted waste receptacles are collected in, refurbished and re-issued to other customers. Any that are in poor condition and can't be refurbished are then recycled.

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