

Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Single-Use Plastics

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Sean Fielding, Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise

Cllr Arooj Shah, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods Services

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Purpose of the Report

To report on progress to date in respect of responding to a full Council motion on single-use plastics and proposals for discussion to inform further work on developing a strategy and supporting action plan for submission to the Board in October, 2018.

Executive Summary

At a meeting of full Council on 28 March, 2018 the following motion was referred to Overview and Scrutiny Board:

“Council notes that:

- The introduction of the 5p bag charge has already seen use of single-use plastic bags drop by 85%.
- However, most families still throw away about 40kg of plastic per year, which could otherwise be recycled.
- The amount of plastic waste generated annually in the UK is estimated to be nearly 5 million tonnes, which has a catastrophic effect on our environment, particularly our marine environment

Council welcomes the commitment of some major businesses to reduce their use of plastic packaging and encourages all local businesses to respond positively to the Government's recent call for evidence on reducing plastic waste.

However, Council recognises that it is only in eliminating single-use plastic materials that we can achieve a significant reduction in plastic waste.

Council therefore resolves to ask the Cabinet to:

- Develop a robust strategy to make Oldham a 'single-use plastic-free' authority by the end of 2018 and encourage the Borough's institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures;
- End the sale and provision of single use plastic products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in council buildings, or council supported venues, wherever possible; promoting the use of non-plastic recyclable alternatives e.g. paper straws to ensure our venues remain accessible to those with additional needs.
- Encourage traders across the Borough to sell re-usable containers and invite customers to bring their own.
- Consider the merits and practicalities of introducing a 'window sticker' scheme to accredit local businesses that are committed to reducing plastic waste through, for example, offering free water bottle refills.
- Investigate the possibility of requiring pop-up food and drink vendors at council supported events to avoid single use plastics as a condition of their contract; with a view to phasing out all single use plastics at markets and events in the Borough by the end of 2018.
- Work with tenants in commercial properties owned by Oldham Council to encourage them to phase out single use plastic cups, bottles, cutlery and straws."

This report sets out preliminary work undertaken in respect of the above for discussion and input to inform further work on development of a strategy and supporting action plan. It is proposed that a draft of these be brought to the October meeting of this Board.

Recommendation

The views of the Board are sought on work undertaken to date and are requested to input further considerations to be taken into account as we continue to develop the draft strategy and action plan.

Single-Use Plastics

1 Background

- 1.1 As referred to above, at a meeting of full Council on 28 March passed a motion in respect of a strategy for a 'single-use plastic free' authority to be developed by the end of 2018. The strategy would not only ask that the Council adopts new practices but also challenge other organisations, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 An officer project team has been established with representatives from the following teams and services:

- Strategy, Partnerships and Policy;
- Waste Management;
- Public Health;
- District Partnerships;
- Corporate Landlord & Facilities Management;
- Property Management;
- Marketing & Communications;
- Procurement; and
- Town Centre Management

- 2.2 Since the broadcast of the BBC's Blue Planet programme highlighting the effect of plastic pollution in seas, oceans and on beaches this has become a much-debated topic with high levels of public interest. The issue of single-use plastics and how to reduce, reuse and recycle them has been very much a part of the Authority's work around waste reduction over many years.

- 2.3 Across Council sites, single-use plastics are used for a variety of reasons and occasions. Types of plastic include: bags; bottles; cups; straws; stirrers; plates; bowls; cutlery; milk cartons; individual tea bags; sachets of coffee and cling film. To fully inform the strategy, an audit has been undertaken to gather information and understand why different types of single-use plastics are procured by services. The following sites and services were audited:

- Civic Centre – council offices with a high number of staff on-site;
- Choices - catering service based at the Civic Centre;
- QE Hall – large function hall regularly used by council staff and external parties;
- Oldham Library – high number of users visit six days a week; and
- Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre – variety of training sessions and community events delivered throughout the day.

Based on this information and early engagement, the project team are now looking at key areas of focus for an effective strategy for the Authority and also opportunities for the Council to engage and leverage change through its processes, partners and relationships with both businesses and residents.

There are some key issues identified from this Audit and the wider work of the project group in respect of procurement, recycling and communications all of which require further work in order to develop a strategy and informed action plan.

2.3 There has been direct engagement with, and support for, reducing single-use plastics across a number of services as below:

Oldham Community Leisure sites
QE Hall
Council sites, including markets

2.4 Communication to inform our workforce, residents and businesses is key and will form an important strand of the final action plan. Some promotion has already started as the issue of single-use plastics and importance of reducing usage has been highlighted in the Green Oldham campaign; which is a year-long campaign launched in June, 2018.

2.5 Desktop research and good practice is being identified and drawn upon to inform proposals and options and useful links are included in paragraph 6 of this report.

3 **Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss**

3.1 Alternatives to single-use plastic products might be higher cost or not available? How could this be managed?

It is important that any communication around single-use plastics supports and complements the wider work around waste reduction and recycling.

How can behaviour change be brought about?

4 **Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider**

4.1 What should a single-use plastic strategy for Oldham cover in respect of the Authority and the Borough?
What are the key messages that need to be communicated internally and externally to bring about behaviour change to reduce the use of single-use plastic?
What are some of the barriers to eliminating single-use plastic and how should a strategy address these?
What is the role of, and opportunity for, schools and young people?

5. **Links to Corporate Outcomes**

5.1 Links to key areas in the council's Environmental Policy -

Through our cooperative approach, taking the lead whilst encouraging and influencing others to do their bit so that the whole community can realise the benefits of excellent environmental stewardship.

To maximise waste management performance through the continued implementation of viable waste reduction, reuse and recycling initiatives. Preventing pollution at source through training, measurement and good management.

Working co-operatively with our volunteer Eco Champions, employees, key partners and the community, to inform and enhance what we do.

6 **Additional Supporting Information**

6.1 <https://www.plasticfreegm.com/> - launched in March, 2018 the GM Mayor, Andy Burnham, aiming to make Greater Manchester the first UK-region to ditch single use plastics by 2020.

<https://www.plasticfreepledge.com/> - Mission is to
Put an end to the senseless waste that is single use plastic
We have created an incredibly versatile and durable material, so why use it for products used only once?
And even worse, why allow it to pollute our oceans?
Through campaigning, education and political lobbying, we can create institutional change and put an end to this growing problem.

<https://www.penzancecouncil.co.uk/community-information/plastic-free-penzance> - first town to achieve Surfers Against Sewage – Plastic Free Coastline status, Penzance had to demonstrate achievement against five targets:

- **Strategic.** The Town Council committing to tackling single use plastics at a strategic level
- **Business.** Lobbying and encouraging local businesses to ban single use plastics or switch to sustainable alternatives
- **Communities.** Engaging with and encouraging other communities, groups and organisations to take action on single use plastics.
- **Education.** Rolling out 'Plastic Free Schools' across our town
- **Positive action.** Holding beach cleans, fundraisers and other awareness raising events.

(nb – this approach has been referenced by Rochdale in its work to become a SUP-free Borough).

<http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/> - Plastic Pollution Coalition is a growing global alliance of individuals, organisations, businesses and policymakers working toward a world free of plastic pollution and its toxic impacts on humans, animals, waterways and oceans, and the environment. This site also include information on plastic free schools.

.7 **Consultation**

- 7.1 Initial consultation with officers from the Single-Use project team, officers from Civic Centre ie CivicReception; Organisational Development; Choices; QE Hall; Oldham Library and Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre and Stuart Lockwood (OCLL).

8 **Appendices**

- 8.1 Preliminary Audit report

Single-use plastics update

Findings from Preliminary Audits at a number of Council sites

Report author: Justine Addy, x3439

Date: 16 May 2018

Background

At full Council on 28 March, 2018 a motion was referred to Overview and Scrutiny which asked for a 'single-use plastic-free' strategy to be developed for the Authority by the end of 2018. The strategy would not only ask that the council adopts new practices but also challenge other organisations, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures. Across council sites single-use plastics are used for a variety of reasons and occasions. The type of plastic considered as part of audit included: bags; bottles; cups; straws; stirrers; plates; bowls; cutlery; milk cartons; individual tea bags; sachets of coffee and cling film. Plastic items such as Biro's, folders, wallets, etc were not included in this audit as they are used more than once.

Audits

The audits were an opportunity to gather information and understand why different types of single-use plastics were procured by services. The following sites and services were audited:

1. Civic Centre – council offices with a high number of staff on-site;
2. Choices - catering service based at the Civic Centre;
3. QE Hall – large function hall regularly used by council staff and external parties;
4. Oldham Library – high number of users visit six days a week; and
5. Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre – variety of training sessions and community events delivered throughout the day.

Findings

1. Civic Centre

- PHS Water machines (in rooms used for meetings with attendees outside the organisation) – with paper cups (and some plastic cups as old stock slowly being used and replaced by paper cups) at the following locations:
 - Civic Reception;
 - Lees Suite;
 - Crompton Suite;
 - Opposite the meeting rooms (A-F) on Level 4;
 - Training and Development on Level 4; and
 - Room 222 (Elections/Youth Council).

NB Cups are not placed near all other water machines located around the Civic Centre. Staff are expected to use their own glass/cup/bottle.

- Coffee machine (Civic Reception) – Polystyrene cups (6 in triangle) and wooden stirrers provided.
- Vending machine (Brodericks) – plastic cup that can't go in the plastic recycling bin.

Training and Development (Internal training on Level 4) – hot and cold drinks provided for training attendees:

- Paper cups, plastic film coated;
- Plastic stirrers;
- Individually plastic wrapped tea-bags
- Plastic sachets of coffee;
- Sugar (paper sachets); and
- Milk (Tetrapak).

Members Lounge

- Milk cartons;
- Plastic sachets of coffee; and
- Individually plastic wrapped tea-bags.

Access Oldham – Unity Partnership purchase tea, coffee, sugar and milk for their staff. Tea, coffee and sugar are ordered in large containers and milk is delivered (and collected) in bottles by a milk man. No single-use plastic used evidencing that it can be achieved in organisations.

2. Choices

Food and refreshments are provided in/on the following:

- Plastic cups (cold drinks);
- Polystyrene cups (hot drinks);
- Plastic plates;
- Plastic bowls;
- Plastic cutlery (knives, forks, dessert spoons, tea spoons);
- Milk cartons;
- Plastic sachets of coffee;

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- Individually plastic wrapped tea-bags;
 - Sugar (paper sachets); and
 - Cling film (packaging food on plates and in bowls).

NB Metal spoons and crockery have disappeared in the past when used for refreshments.

3. **Oldham Library** (Managed by Kier/Kajima)

- Plastic stirrers;
- Plastic cups (cold drinks);
- Polystyrene cups (hot drinks);
- Plastic spoons;
- Vending machine – soft drinks (predominantly plastic bottles) x1;
- Vending machine – hot drinks (plastic cups) x 3;
- Vending machines – snacks x 1; and
- New books delivered to site on pallets and shrink wrapped.

4. **QE Hall** (Oldham Council building)

The QE Hall hosts large scale events for the council as well as for external parties. These events can attract up to 600 attendees. For 80% of all events, drinks are served in glassware; the remaining 20% in plastic due to health and safety reasons. NB Staff have recently purchased 500 ceramic cups for serving tea and coffee at events such as tea dances.

Exemptions

The QE Hall has a licence (from the council's Licencing Team) to serve alcohol. As part of the licence agreement there are stipulations regarding the health and safety of visitors at the venue. John Garforth (Trading Standards & Licensing Manager) has noted, 'Following an update of the licence some ten years ago the Police requested the use of plastics instead of glass for dispensing alcohol from bars, particularly when sporting events are on.' To comply with the licence, glass (and polycarbonate) is not used at certain events eg theatre-style layout for 600 people, children performing in musicals/concerts. With the style of layout and number of attendees there is a risk of broken glass/shattered polycarbonate (producing shards of plastic). Therefore for these types of events only certain types of plastics (single-use) are used.

Special Circumstances

Outside caterers are used at the venue so attention needs to be made to contracts with external parties ensuring that they comply with council policies.

Food and refreshments are provided in/on the following:

- Plastic cups (cold and alcoholic drinks);
- Glass (cold and alcoholic drinks);
- Polystyrene cups (hot drinks);
- Ceramic cups (hot drinks);

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- Plastic plates, bowls and cutlery (events and weddings); and
 - Cling film.

5. Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre (inc. info from other LLC sites)

- Water machines are located at all Lifelong Learning Centres. A mix of single-use plastic cups and reusable plastic cups are available at the centres depending upon course being delivered. NB Water is always offered to people attending fitness sessions.
- At some sites ie Turf Lane, Coldhurst and Oldham (managed by Kier/Kajima) there is a hot drinks vending machine. The plastic cups dispensed cannot go in the plastic recycling bin.
- Plastic stirrers used at Turf Lane.
- Plastic cups (hot and cold drinks) used at the annual Christmas fair.
- Course Leaders are encouraging trainees to bring a reusable bottle/cup along to training/learning sessions; however cups are available if requested.

6. Other information

Staff – Across all sites and services staff bring single-use plastic on to site. It could be breakfast, lunch or snacks. We cannot restrict staff from doing this but we can highlight the benefits (health, environmental and financial) of bringing in a homemade lunch or snacks. We could possibly give out reusable (possibly branded) bottles/cups at future Staff Conferences as part of #Our Bit #Your Bit #Result campaign.

Cleaners – have an understanding of materials that can be recycled so support the campaign.

Co-operation and Support – Promotion and communication is key to ensure that everyone works together to make the campaign a success. Link to #Our Bit, #Your Bit, #Result campaign. Key officers include:

- Administration officers who procure items – they make procurement decisions on a day-to-day basis;
- Choices officers – sharing facilities ie the dishwasher at the Civic Centre;
- All staff – accepting changes and not taking spoons, cups, plates, etc.

GM Initiatives – Rosie Barker has recently met with Waste and Recycling colleagues across GM. Stockport Council has banned buying coffee water cups for staff and Rochdale Council's Waste Team has provided their crews with refillable water bottles (this has been done more for health reasons because they have removed the fizzy drink vending machines). NB There is work going on at a GM level through the Mayor's office on this. Looking at local authorities other public sector organisations' use of single-use plastics, including water bottles and coffee cups.

Globally – How are other countries tackling single-use plastics?

- Chile - recently approved a bill that will see plastic bags banned across the country.

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- Kenya - Set in August 2017, anyone producing, selling or even carrying a plastic bag faces up to four years' imprisonment or fines of \$40,000.
 - Germany - A deposit return scheme was introduced in 2003, with customers paying a 25 cent deposit on every bottle of soft or alcoholic drink. The move has seen almost 99% of the country's plastic bottles returned for recycling and, since the introduction of the scheme; an estimated 1.2 billion containers have been diverted from landfill. Glass bottles are also subject to the scheme and typically have a deposit of between 8 and 15 cents added to their cost. Once they are collected, they are typically sent back to manufacturers for cleaning and refilling.
 - Norway - Another nation to have seen success with a deposit return scheme, with 95% of the nation's plastic bottles having been returned for recycling since its introduction in 2014. Since implementing the scheme, the Norwegian government has set up more than 3,500 reverse vending machines and 11,500 registered collection points across the nation to encourage residents to recycle. This improvement in recycling infrastructure was paid for by packaging manufacturers, with the government taxing firms both for producing single-use packaging and for covering the cost of waste collection and recycling.
 - France - In 2016, France became the first country in the world to ban the manufacture and sale of single-use plastic cups, cutlery, plates and takeaway food boxes. The law requires all disposable tableware to be made from 50% bio-sourced materials that can be composted at home by January 2020, rising to 60% by 2025. France also banned shops from distributing plastic bags in 2016 in a bid to reduce the 17 billion which are used nationwide annually.

The Packaging Regulations

NB Local authorities are exempt from the regulations but it is good to have an understanding of how this piece of legislation (imposed in 1997) impacts on companies.

The UK Packaging Waste Regulations were introduced with the aim of:

- Reducing the amount of packaging waste going to landfill;
- Controlling the amount of heavy metals used in packaging; and
- Ensuring packaging fulfils its essential requirements.

The Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations 2007

These regulations affect any organisation that owns packaging, supplies it to other legal entities and:

- Has a UK turnover in excess of £2 million per year;
- Handles more than 50 tonnes of packaging per year; and
- Performs a relevant activity on any packaging handled (raw material manufacturer, converter, packer/filler, seller, importer).

Companies must show that they have paid for their obligation for recovery and recycling of the packaging. This is achieved through the Packaging Recovery Note (PRN) System. Under the Packaging Waste Regulations the so-called 'packaging chain' is divided into four activities, each with a different percentage responsibility:

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- **raw material manufacturer: 6%** Manufacturing of packaging raw material, e.g. manufacturer of steel for baked beans cans.
 - **converter: 9%** Manufacturing of a recognised packaging item, e.g. manufacturer of the steel can for the baked beans.
 - **packer/filler: 37%** Putting a product into packaging or applying packaging to a product, e.g. the company which fills the can with baked beans.
 - **seller: 48%** Supplying the packaging to the end user of that packaging, e.g. the supermarket which sells the baked bean can to the consumer. **OR** The wholesaler who sells boxed cans of beans would have the selling obligation on the boxes removed by the supermarket.

Companies who directly import packaging, packaged goods or packaging materials are also obligated. The level of their obligation depends on the stage of the chain at which the packaging is brought into the UK but, in every case, they pick up the rolled-up obligations for all stages carried out before the packaging or packaging materials reach the UK.

The legislation stipulates that companies who are obligated under the Regulations must prove they have paid for the requisite amount of tonnes to be recovered each year. Reprocessors are licensed to issue a Packaging Recovery Note (PRN), for each tonne of specific material they have recovered. Regulated companies must buy the appropriate quantity of PRNs for the appropriate materials as proof they have fulfilled their obligations. For a percentage of each tonne of packaging waste generated, a PRN is required as proof that a tonne of that material (wood, paper, glass, plastic, aluminium or steel) has been recycled. The price of PRNs is set by the reprocessors according to the availability of material being recycled.

Plastic bottle deposit scheme (update from IEMA)

The government's deposit return scheme (DRS) for single-use drinks containers will be given the green light in England, subject to consultation later in the year. The scheme is aimed at cutting down littering and pollution, and encouraging more efficient recycling, by giving a small cash sum to those using the DRS. The products are purchased, used and returned to the retailer; the sum of money is paid to the consumer; and the retailer then recycles the product.

NB Only 43% of plastic bottles in the UK (a total of around 13 billion) are recycled. The method of returning planned for UK use is widely believed to be a 'reverse' vending machine, where the product is inserted and the cash provided. Iceland has become the first UK supermarket to install a 'reverse vending machine'. Iceland's vending machine accepts any plastic beverage bottles bought in the supermarket, and repays customers with a 10p voucher to be used in store for each bottle recycled. The reverse vending machine is being trialled in Fulham for an initial six-month period, with the intention to gain a better understanding of consumer perceptions and appetite for the technology.

Recommendations

In light of the impact plastic has on the environment as shown on Blue Planet II and the reaction globally to these images Oldham Council there is a need and opportunity for the Council and the Borough to reduce its reliance on the material. Unity Partnership has clearly demonstrated an alternative way of providing refreshments to its staff without opposition. We need to clearly explain to staff and visitors that changes have to be made to ensure Oldham Council continue to take its environmental responsibilities seriously. Staff and visitors can still have refreshments just not in single-use plastic containers, except in special circumstances. This can be promoted under the '#Our Bit, #Your Bit, #Result' campaign.

As a leading GM authority in GM on environmental issues there is the opportunity to support the GM Campaign and also demonstrate leadership across the Borough encouraging partners, businesses and residents to also play their part.

The findings of this audit to be considered by the officer project group and members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to inform discussions on the strategy and action plan which should include short, medium and longer term actions and targets.