

Report to CABINET

Single-Use Plastics

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Sean Fielding, Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise

Cllr Arooj Shah, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services

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Reason for Decision

To present the draft Single-Use Plastics Strategy - in response to a full Council motion on single-use plastics.

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 a draft strategy and supporting action plan (see Appendix 1) to address the Council motion.

Recommendations

The Single-Use Plastics Strategy 2019-2022 is supported and fully adopted and actions detailed in the action plan are actioned by all officers across the organisation.

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:

- Corporate 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 project, 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 has now developed a draft 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 early engagement with a partner and stakeholder ie Oldham Community Leisure and QE Hall to discuss the council's proposal to reduce its reliance on plastic and understand how other organisations will address this issue. Both support the
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campaign; in particular QE Hall has already started making changes by procuring cups and saucers for specific events. Also since the start of the academic year, colleagues at our Lifelong Learning Centres have been encouraging learners to bring a reusable bottle or cup with them to their course. Learners have access to free water from a water machine.

- 2.4 Communication to inform our workforce, residents and businesses is key and forms an important strand of the draft 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 has been identified and drawn upon to inform the development of the draft Strategy and Action Plan.

3 **Options/Alternatives**

- 3.1 By implementing the Single-Use Plastics Strategy 2019-2022 Oldham Council will be making a commitment to continue to take its environmental responsibilities seriously and support other organisations, community groups and residents across the borough to do the same.

The alternative would be to carry on as usual continuing to purchase the same quantities of single-use plastic products by council sites and services. This action would visibly highlight that the council has not reviewed and assessed its responsibilities for reducing its reliability on this material and could generate negative publicity for the organisation.

4 **Preferred Option**

- 4.1 The preferred option would be to the implement the Single-Use Plastics Strategy 2019-2022.

5 **Consultation**

- 5.1 The Single-Use Plastics Strategy 2019-2022 has been discussed and developed with officers from the project team. It has been noted at the Oldham Leadership Board. It was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 4 September and 27 November where it was endorsed by members.

6 **Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.
- 6.2 Any future financial implications that may arise once the strategy has been implemented and is in place will be reported on separately as and when the need arises. (Andy Cooper/Jenny Howarth)

7 **Legal Services Comments**

- 7.1 It will be necessary to review and amend Council contracts, tenders and agreements as appropriate to achieve the proposed reductions in the use of single use plastics by the Council. (Alan Evans)

8. **Co-operative Agenda**

- 8.1 By implementing the Single-Use Plastics Strategy 2019-2022, Oldham Council is strengthening its commitments around its environmental responsibilities. The strategy seeks to adopt a co-operative approach to engage and support other organisations,
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community groups and residents across the borough to do their bit on reducing single-use plastics. (Heather Moore)

9 **Human Resources Comments**

9.1 As outlined in this report communication and engagement will be key to the success of this Single-Use Plastics Strategy. In recognition of the role our staff (the majority of whom will also be Oldham / GM residents) have to play in helping the council achieve its objectives, I would advise clear and engaging staff and Trade Union communications from the outset. I am pleased to be advised by Justine Addy that, if the strategy is approved by Cabinet, an internal communications plan will be developed in conjunction with Internal Communications and People Services. The focus will be on education and sign-posting rather than formal action / enforcement against non-compliant staff, however the internal communications plan will include actions to ensure managers make expectations clear to staff.

I am also advised that initial discussions have taken place with Green Room, the lunch-time catering service available to staff at the Civic, regarding their use of single-use plastics, and further discussions will need to take place on approval of this strategy which may increase the cost of the food on offer. (Lauren Jones)

10 **Risk Assessments**

10.1 No implications

11 **IT Implications**

11.1 None

12 **Property Implications**

12.1 None (Peter Wood)

13 **Procurement Implications**

13.1 We will review our supply chain and see which contracts/Frameworks, this applies to and see what processes are in place to eliminate or reduce the use of plastic. (Mohammad Sharif)

14 **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

14.1 Health & Safety – None (Laura Smith)
Environmental - By implementing the Single-Use Plastics Strategy 2019-2022 Oldham Council will reduce its reliance on single-use plastics and communicate the environmental importance of 'reduce, reuse and recycle' to staff and residents. (Justine Addy)

15 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

15.1 There are no community cohesion implications arising from the proposals contained within the report. (Natalie Downs)

16 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

16.1 No

17 **Key Decision**

17.1 No

18 **Key Decision Reference**

18.1 N/A

19 **Background Papers**

19.1 None

20 **Appendices**

20.1 Appendix 1: Single-use Plastics Strategy 2019 – 2022

Single-use Plastics Strategy

2019 – 2022

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1. Executive Summary

In March 2018, at a meeting of full Council, members passed a motion for the development of a strategy by the end of 2018 for Oldham to be a 'single-use plastic free' authority. The strategy would not only include actions for the Council but challenge partners, businesses, community groups and residents to adopt similar measures.

Since the introduction of a 5p charge for plastic bags there has been a drop in use of single-use plastic bags 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 and, when not disposed of properly, has an effect on our environment: blighting streets; spoiling the countryside; and damaging wildlife, seas and the coastline.

Oldham Council recognises that by eliminating single-use plastic materials we can achieve a significant reduction in plastic waste across our sites. The council has developed this strategy and action plan in line with the ambition and wider plan of Greater Manchester Combined Authority to be the first UK city-region to drive down single-use plastics.

The strategy identifies opportunities for Oldham Council to reduce its reliance on single-use plastics by:

- Ending 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.
- Encouraging traders across the Borough to sell re-usable containers and invite customers to bring their own.
- Considering 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.
- Investigating 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.
- Work with tenants in commercial properties owned by Oldham Council to encourage them to support this campaign.

The UK Government has identified several single-use plastic items that require more urgent action by banning or restricting their sale, i.e. plastic-stemmed cotton buds, plastic coffee stirrers and plastic straws, and on 22 October 2018 it was confirmed that a number of policies will be introduced, aimed at banning the sale and distribution of these items by 2020. A ban on the distribution and sale of the items will help to eliminate the 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds from the nation's waste streams.

The Council will also continue to promote the established Greater Manchester plastic bottle recycling scheme to manage this plastic waste effectively.

2. Introduction

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 already been very much a part of the Authority's work around waste reduction over many years.

At a meeting of full Council on 28 March 2018, a motion was passed in respect of a strategy for a 'single-use plastic free' authority to be developed by December 2018. The strategy would not only ask that the Council adopts new practices but also challenge other organisations, businesses, community groups and residents to adopt similar measures.

This strategy and action plan has been developed incorporating ideas and opportunities from a number of sites and services to reduce our reliance on non-essential, non-recyclable single-use plastics.

3. Objectives

From the Council motion, four objectives have been identified for this strategy:-

- a) **Reduce Council use of single use plastics** – Oldham Council committing to reducing our reliance on single-use plastics where practicably possible. Identifying sites and service areas where significant improvements can be made. Working with the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities on identifying all single-use plastic products purchased through the variety of public sector contracts. Communicating to staff, building users and visitors the role they have to play to ensure the success of the strategy.
- b) **Engage strategic partners and businesses** – Encouraging partners on the Oldham Leadership Board and businesses across the borough to also Do Their Bit on reducing single-use plastics. Disseminating the council's strategy and engaging with businesses to provide strategic leadership on how they can develop their own actions. Promoting the Greater Manchester Plastics Pledge and initiatives such as the Manchester bee paper straw.
- c) **Engage schools and community groups** – Getting schools and young people on board with this agenda. Supporting schools that are tackling single-use plastics through their eco-councils or the Oldham Pledge and working with members of Oldham Youth Council with engaging young people. Also assisting community groups e.g. people who manage allotments on raising awareness with members of the public who they engage with.
- d) **Engage residents** – Engaging with residents through the Green Oldham campaign, our webpage, social media, case studies, press releases, Borough Life and Family Life and identifying how they can contribute and Do Their Bit. Suggesting simple changes that can be made to daily routines that'll help save money, improve health and help the planet.

The Action Plan (Section 5) has actions for each of these objectives, including specific actions on communications for each objective which form an overall communications plan.

4. How the strategy has been developed to address the Council motion

To fully inform the project, audits have been undertaken to gather information and understand why different types of single-use plastics are procured by services. A mix of sites and services i.e. The Civic Centre; Choices (internal catering provision); Queen Elizabeth Hall; Oldham Library and Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre were audited to understand the scale of the challenge.

Across Council sites, a number of single-use plastic products 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.

Staff are aware of the impact plastic pollution has on our planet and sites and services are already taking action to reduce their reliance on plastics - for example, since September 2018, Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre has been encouraging learners to bring a reusable drinks bottle to classes, and staff at Queen Elizabeth Hall have invested in 600 cups and saucers, replaced plastic straws with paper ones, and are now using metal spoons and biodegradable cups.

It should be noted that there will be circumstances when plastic cups will still be used, e.g. as part of the licence agreement for Queen Elizabeth Hall, the council's Licencing Team in conjunction with GM Police have stipulated specific occasions when glass and polycarbonate cannot be used for health and safety reasons.

Where alternative products are available to replace single use plastics, it may be that these products have a higher cost per unit. As the market for these sustainable products develops, it is expected that the price will fall. However, by way of mitigation of any extra cost to the Council, staff and Members will be encouraged in the first instance to bring their own water bottles or cups, thus reducing the quantity of single-use cups required and hence the total cost of these items to the Council.

Where actions are proposed in the Action Plan to replace single-use plastic products with alternatives, it should be noted that these are 'snapshots' and it is anticipated that the market and costs associated with these replacement products will change rapidly, so the exact details in the Action Plan are likely to be obsolete in a short space of time. The principle of selecting better product options will however continue.

As part of the original motion it was suggested that a 'window sticker scheme' be established to recognise and acknowledge those businesses that have signed up to reducing single-use plastics. The Project Steering Group discussed the idea and agreed that a window sticker scheme might be complex and difficult to manage and enforce in terms of compliance and capacity, as well as requiring a plastic sticker for the scheme itself. The Group settled on a potentially more worthwhile and deliverable idea – namely, a compostable carrier bag available to local businesses and market stall holders. The bag would not only be supplied for carrying goods and produce home but could also be used to line the user's food caddy bin. Discussions are taking place with GMCA and GMWDA

around the potential to use a generic dual-use compostable bag, possibly badged with the Manchester bee, which will be available across Greater Manchester including Oldham. This is on the back of previously launched products e.g. the paper drinking straw with the Manchester bee.

At the Greater Manchester Green Summit on 21 March 2018, a campaign was launched encouraging Greater Manchester businesses and residents to make the shift away from single-use plastics to sustainable alternatives. One early benefit from this initiative is that businesses from the tourism and hospitality sectors who sign up to a pledge to stop using plastic straws have the ability to procure paper straws with the Manchester bee emblem on them, and these straws will also be available to Oldham businesses.

Council officers have raised our single-use plastics initiative with the Oldham Leadership Board. Partners have been asked if they have considered the issue of single-use plastics across their sites and services and whether their organisation would be willing to match the Council's commitment to producing a strategy and action plan.

Since July 2018 the Project Steering Group has discussed the challenge of engaging with tenants in commercial properties owned by Oldham Council to encourage them to phase out single use plastic cups, bottles, cutlery and straws. The group decided that the best way to do this would be to promote the Council's own waste service collection to tenants, highlighting the fact that the Council's grey waste bin collection, where the majority of single use plastics apart bottles must go, is taken to an energy recovery facility for thermal recovery i.e. the heat captured is used to create steam, which drives turbines to produce electricity. With private waste collections there is no guarantee that this will happen, with the possibility of waste ending up in landfill.

There may be opportunities to engage with specific tenants providing catering services to encourage them to follow the Council's lead in phasing out single-use plastics.

Since the original Council motion, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to discuss the development of this strategy on 4 September 2018, and a question was asked at that meeting as to how the Council will engage with schools. Subsequently, liaison with schools, colleges, members of the Youth Council and community groups is taking place to ensure full engagement with all members of the community on the single-use plastics agenda.

One opportunity to work with schools is through the Oldham Pledge commitment, in particular Pledge no. 12: "Contribute to Environmental Sustainability".

5. Action Plan

Action	Service Area / Responsible Officer	Timescale/deadline	Cost/Resources
Objective a): Reduce Council use of single use plastics.			
Stop procuring plastic cups for water machines used by visitors to council buildings. Procure a small quantity of paper cups (lined with polyethylene) instead.	Corporate Property / Peter Wood	April 2019.	Single-use plastic cups cost £34.95 for 1,000; white paper cup with plastic film - £40.00 for 1,000.
Procure paper cups (lined with polyethylene) for hot drink machines looking for an alternative when it becomes available.	Corporate Property / Peter Wood	April 2019.	Single-use plastic cups cost £45.00 for 1,000. Sturdy paper cup with plastic film -£63.11 for a box of 1,000.
Paper cups (lined with polyethylene) dispensed from vending machines.	Corporate Property / Peter Wood	When contracts are due for renewal.	TBC
Crockery including cups and saucers to be used by Choices (internal catering provider).	Corporate Property / Peter Wood	April 2019.	Within existing budget
Stainless steel cutlery (or alternative reusable material) to be used by Choices.	Corporate Property / Peter Wood	April 2019.	Within existing budget
Internal and external caterers to stop using cling film to cover food and use an alternative ie tin foil	Corporate Property / Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	April 2019.	Within existing budget
Internal and external caterers to stop providing tea and coffee in individual plastic sachets.	Corporate Property / Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	April 2019.	Within existing budget
Internal and external caterers to stop providing milk in individual cartons.	Corporate Property / Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	April 2019.	Within existing budget
Paper plates, bowls and wooden cutlery used by external caterers. If not adhered to a waste fee is applied to cover waste collection costs.	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	April 2019.	TBC
Promotion of the current recycling scheme across council sites to all staff	Jamie Whitehouse	April 2019.	£300.00 - design and printing.
Engagement with Recycle4GM to hold recycling awareness sessions for staff	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	April 2019.	Officer time
Internal – Promotion of the new Choices crockery	Jamie Whitehouse	April 2019	Officer time

and cutlery provision and requirements when using external caterers.			
Internal - Staff Matters - two articles on 'Plastic isn't so fantastic' and 'Have you got the bottle?'	Jamie Whitehouse	September 2018	Officer time
Staff prevented from procuring plastic plates; bowls; cutlery; individually wrapped tea, coffee, milk and stirrers.	Mohammad Sharif	April 2019	Officer time
Greater Manchester Combined Authority is working to identify all single-use plastic products purchased under different contracts within the public sector.	GMCA	TBC	Officer time
Lobby Crown Commercial Services to update the 'Environmental Issues' section of the standard Invitation to Tender template to prompt all suppliers to think about reducing their use of single use plastics explicitly.	Mohammad Sharif	April 2019	Officer time
Update the Sustainable Procurement Impact Assessment Tool to include an explicit reference to plastic.	Mohammad Sharif	April 2019	Officer time
Raise awareness of plastic issues with the Procurement Leads.	Mohammad Sharif	April 2019	Officer time
Ensure plastic cups are not supplied in hot drinks vending machines when the tender is renewed.	Peter Wood	When contracts are due for renewal.	TBC

Objective b): Engage strategic partners and businesses			
Action	Service Area / Responsible Officer	Timescale/deadline	Cost/ Resources
Raise awareness at an Oldham Leadership Board meeting challenging them to do their bit.	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	September 2018 plus follow-up	Officer time
Individual meetings with Oldham businesses on their action plans.	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	September 2018 onwards	Officer time / potential for funded project contracted out for business engagement (TBC)
Roll-out of a generic dual-use compostable bag, possibly badged with the Manchester bee available across GM.	Mark Husdan/Town Centre/Markets Team	April 2019	TBC
Promotion of a Manchester bee paper straw to bars, pubs and restaurants in the borough. NB Businesses need to sign up to the GM plastics pledge first.	Jamie Whitehouse	January 2019	Officer time
Promote cafes, bars and coffee shops that offer to refill water bottles for free. Costa Coffee has been offering this service since March 2018.	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	January 2019	Officer time

Objective c): Engage schools and community groups			
Action	Service Area / Responsible Officer	Timescale/deadline	Cost/ Resources
Engagement with primary and secondary schools	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	January 2019	Officer time
Engagement with colleges in the borough	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	January 2019	Officer time
Council's Waste Education Officer promoting and encouraging 'Reduce, reuse and recycle' across schools.	Waste Team	On-going	
Engagement with members of the Youth Council	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	January 2019	Officer time
Engagement with the Study Support Manager on the Oldham Pledge and Pledge 12: Contribute to Environmental Sustainability.	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	January 2019	Officer time
Bid to Recycle4GM to fund an engagement programme for schools and community groups	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	January 2019	Officer time

Objective d): Residents - Engage residents.			
Action	Service Area / Responsible Officer	Timescale/deadline	Cost/ Resources
Promotion of the current recycling scheme to residents	Jamie Whitehouse	As per existing Action Plan	
Explore the potential for an Oldham-badged water bottle	Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team	January 2019	TBC
Promotional channels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough Life and Family Life; • Webpage – promoted on the Green Oldham webpage; • Social media updates (Facebook and twitter); • Press release – promotion of the scheme and how people can get involved; • Case studies – videos of residents, businesses and stakeholders who have got involved in the campaign. These can then be shared on social media and embedded on the webpage; and • Waste calendar promotion 	Jamie Whitehouse	New Year April 2019 On-going April 2019 On-going Winter 2018/19	£300
Raise awareness and hold discussion sessions for community groups, people who manage allotments, etc. focussing on raising awareness with members of the public who they engage with.	Anne Fleming/Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team/Jamie Whitehouse	Spring/Summer 2019	Officer time