

Council – 23 April 2019

Report of the Brooke Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Reducing single-use plastics

1. INTRODUCTION

On 27 February 2018, Council considered a motion submitted on notice by Councillor Douglas and seconded by Councillor Mrs New as set out below.

“Rugby Borough Council’s new Corporate Priorities include ‘continue to improve the efficiency of our waste and recycling service’. In light of the recent trends to tackle the reduction in plastics and a drive that includes improving the quality of the dry recycling bins along with maximizing the amount of household waste that is reprocessed.

The Council should seek to:

- 1. Lead the way by undertaking an audit, within existing resources, of single use plastics used by the Authority and seek to replace with sustainable or reusable alternatives where practicable.*
- 2. Work in greater partnership with local environmental groups and engage with local businesses and residents to help educate about plastic waste.*
- 3. Adopt the ambition as outlined by the Waste and Resources Action Programme known as WRAP to reduce plastic waste.”*

In accordance with Council Standing Order 11, the motion stood referred to a scrutiny committee.

2. SUMMARY OF THE WORK UNDERTAKEN

On [28 June 2018](#), the Committee considered the motion and requested that an audit of individual service areas was undertaken and reported back to the committee.

On [7 February 2019](#), the Committee considered the audit findings and requested that a council-wide single-use plastics policy was drafted and presented at the next meeting of the Committee. Additionally, the Committee requested for a progress report to be presented in six months’ time on the progression of acquiring suitable alternative for replacing single use plastics identified in the audit.

On [11 April 2019](#), the Committee considered the draft council-wide single-use plastics policy. The Committee agreed the draft policy presented at the meeting subject to the comments made by members.

The relevant reports are available to [view](#) on the Council’s website.

3. RECOMMENDATION

The appended Single Use Plastics Policy for Rugby Borough Council be adopted.



Single Use Plastics Policy

April 2019

1. Context

Plastics can be very useful in everyday life, but the Council recognises that poorly managed waste plastics pose a threat to the global environment, both on land and the sea.

The UK government estimates that there are currently more than 150 million tonnes of plastic in the world's oceans, and 100,000 sea mammals and one million birds die from eating or becoming tangled in plastic waste each year, but the unseen effects are equally concerning: Once in the environment the larger plastics break down into very small particles over hundreds of years and become microplastics which do not biodegrade but instead accumulate in the environment.

In January 2018, the Government published the UK's 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment. This outlined ways to reduce the use of plastics that contribute to pollution, and broader steps to encourage recycling and the more thoughtful use of resources. The Government's aim is to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042. Rugby Borough Council's aim is to stop using single use plastics, where it is financially viable to do so, with immediate effect.

2. Purpose

Rugby Borough Council is concerned about the impact which single use plastics are having and this policy aims to set out how we will reduce our own impact on the environment and encourage others to do the same.

In delivering this policy, the council commits to note and adhere to the 'Waste Hierarchy', which ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal (e.g. landfill).

3. Definitions

The Institute for European Environmental Policy defines single use plastics as: "single use plastics can include any disposable plastic item which is designed to be used only once".

Single use plastics are often used in packaging, consumer products, cosmetics and healthcare. Examples include: light-weight plastic bags, disposable utensils, stirrers, beverage containers, coffee capsules, and wet wipes.

4. Principles

To support a reduction in our environmental impact, through the reduced use of single use plastics, the Council commits to:

Council Services

- Work with staff to ensure that single-use plastics are eliminated across our services, wherever possible.
- Work with our event organisers to eliminate single-use plastics across all events held on or in council assets
- Where the use of plastics is unavoidable, the Council will encourage the use of recycled plastics, where practicable.

Community Leadership

- Support our communities in their efforts to reduce consumption of single use plastics
- Support communities and litter-pick initiatives to ensure our parks and open spaces are free from plastic litter
- Work with partners in initiatives and projects for reducing single-use plastic waste
- Share best practice and information about plastic free initiatives, to residents, businesses, visitors and beyond through the council's social media and communication channels
- Use government legislation that regulates against the use of single-use plastics to support our efforts where we can
- Enable town centre visitors to reduce their reliance on disposable bottles by supporting the implementation of the National 'Re-fill' scheme.

Procurement

- Require all our suppliers to minimise the use of single-use plastics in their service provision and find sustainable alternatives (where appropriate)
- Support greater awareness and action from our suppliers and contractors in finding sustainable single-use plastics replacements wherever appropriate

Staff Awareness

- Explore further opportunities to recycle more types of plastic from our own buildings and provide clear guidance to staff on the types of plastic that can be recycled.
- Ensure Staff are aware of the environmental impacts of plastic use and provide guidance on how to reduce their impact at home and at work.

5. Monitoring

To monitor progress, we will:

- Periodically carry out audits to monitor the single use plastic items being used by Council services.
- Monitor the number of single-use plastic items avoided/ reduced
- Monitor the number of new plastic recycling streams introduced
- Monitor the financial impact of switching to more sustainable materials