

## **Internal Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting to be held on Friday, 27 September 2019

Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions);
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### **Reducing Single Use Plastics in Lancashire - Update Report**

Contact for further information:

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#### **Executive Summary**

In January 2019, the Internal Scrutiny Committee published a task and finish group report on reducing single use plastics (SUP) in Lancashire following a Notice of Motion at Full Council. In May 2019 the committee received a response to the recommendations made by the task group by the relevant cabinet members.

This report details an update on progress by the various services involved in the delivery of this work and the development of a strategy for Lancashire County Council to become a SUP free authority, where possible and feasible.

#### **Recommendation**

The Internal Scrutiny Committee is asked to receive and comment on the update.

#### **Background and Advice**

On the 22 February 2018 a Notice of Motion was submitted to Full Council asking the county council to take a lead on reducing single use plastics (SUP) in Lancashire. An Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group was established to review the matter and subsequently a report of the task and finish group and their recommendations was shared with the committee in January 2019. Cabinet Member responses to each of the recommendations were provided to the committee in May 2019.

This report presents an update from each of the services involved in the delivery of this work and details progress made on the recommendations as agreed by the Internal Scrutiny Committee. A bite size briefing for councillors has been arranged for the 9 October 2019 to inform councillors about the issues of plastic waste and what is being done to address this and the role that councillors can play.

The remit of this work, as defined by the Notion of Motion was to:

- i. Developing a robust strategy to make Lancashire County Council a 'single use plastic-free' authority and encourage the county's institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures;
- ii. Ending the sale and provision of SUP products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in council buildings, events and services;
- iii. Encouraging schools and social care facilities to adopt measures, with the aim of phasing out single use plastic, for example containers and cutlery in their premises;
- iv. Ensuring that the County Council, via its procurement of goods and suppliers, has integrated the aim to end the use of SUP products by suppliers wherever feasibly and appropriate;
- v. Exploring measures to encourage District and Borough Councils and other statutory partners of Lancashire County Council within Lancashire to adopt rigorous enforcement policy on disposal of SUP products.

**(i) Developing a robust strategy to make Lancashire County Council a 'single-use-plastic-free' authority and encourage the county's institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures.**

**Update provided by Director of Strategy and Performance** - Work to develop a strategy in line with the council's objectives has commenced. This will reflect opportunities emerging from the thematic work taking place and also take account of national policy, legislation and emerging best practice.

The strategy will be linked to an action plan and targets for the county council to help it become a SUP free authority, where possible and feasible and will detail how the county council will aspire to work with and encourage its district councils, businesses, schools, community groups and citizens to work together to make Lancashire plastic free, where possible.

The strategy will be used to highlight a series of key messages that will further promote this work within the authority and externally in Lancashire. The development of the key messages will be used to deliver a number of the recommendations of the task group report.

The Director of Strategy and Performance has taken responsibility for the development of the strategy. The Internal Scrutiny Committee will have the opportunity to review and make comment on the strategy before it is finalised.

**(ii) Ending the sale and provision of SUP products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in council buildings, events and services;**

**Update provided by Facilities Management:** Over recent months we have introduced more compostable and recyclable products at all our sites that provide catering products. We also advertise the items and work we have done at all our

sites to raise awareness of the action the county council is taking to support the removal of all SUPs.

We continue to work with suppliers and our colleagues in procurement to source alternative products that can be introduced across the service in future months. These include: food packaging, soft drinks in recyclable packaging, stationary, recyclable containers, recyclable cutlery.

An additional challenge for manufacturers of compostable products has recently come to our attention, as they have been informed that compostable products will also be banned in 2021 due to the lack of recycling sites able to cope with these products in the United Kingdom.

The service has recently introduced compostable items in the new Sustain range to combat single use plastics and will keep this under review and seek advice from waste colleagues in this regard as and when more information comes available.

Total items now recyclable or compostable that we have introduced over recent months replacing SUPs now stands at 20 items. The additional cost is still a concern but these are reducing as new manufacturers introduce alternatives.

The table below illustrates the cost impact of the changes to alternative products, still showing a relatively low financial impact, but slightly reduced from the previous report of £2,300 to the current anticipated increased annual cost of £2,150.

#### **2019/20 Estimate based on 2018/19**

<b><u>Product</u></b>	<b><u>Current Annual cost (£)</u></b>	<b><u>Revised Annual cost (£)</u></b>
Sustain Kraft Hot Cup	3,050	2,745
Sustain Kraft Hot Cup Lid	697	1,743
Wooden Stirrers	186	186
Kraft Standard Sandwich Wedge	261	294
Kraft Deep Sandwich wedge	33	37
Sealable individual cake pack	26	26
Squat Food Container with Lid	70	105
Square Bagasse Clam Shell	69	96
Hot Wrap Cover – Medium & Large	45	78
Soup container	98	98
Rectangle Bagasse Clam Shell x 4	583	824
Protein Pots	42	52
Fresh fruit Salad Pots	44	55
Sustain Knives (Reusable 8 times)	672	941
Sustain Fork (Reusable 8 times)	750	1,200
Sustain Dessertspoons (Reusable 8 times)	254	282
Sustain Teaspoons (Reusable 8 times)	268	536
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,148</b>	<b>9,298</b>
<b>Annual Increase</b>		<b>2,150</b>

The cost of using glasses for water instead of disposable plastic cups has shown to be cost neutral, against the additional increase in labour time taken to wash the glasses. Cost increases are being managed in general through price increases passed on to the customer, which were introduced in April/May as part of our annual price increases to avoid any adverse customer reaction. Future cost increases will depend on the manufacturers increased cost and Government legislation along with the effects of Brexit.

**(iii) Encouraging schools and social care facilities to adopt measures, with the aim of phasing out single-use plastic, for example containers and cutlery in their premises.**

**Update from Schools & Residential Care Catering** - Governor Services have raised the subject of the campaign at the Chair of Governors Forum and are considering forming a working party of Governors who will take the lead in assessing reduction plans and any implications therein.

A further communication is scheduled to appear within the next Core Agenda publication so that all Governors are made aware of the campaign.

Schools & Residential Care Catering are to attend the forthcoming Primary Heads at the Lancashire Executive meeting taking place on 8 October 2019, where the matter of SUPs will be discussed with the Executive. The intention is to update the Executive on progress made within the Service to encourage greater emphasis on the need for schools to ensure appropriate recycling facilities are readily available.

Additionally, secondary school Operations Managers have begun engagement with school leaders to agree local plans for the reduction of SUPs. Each local plan will account for the nature of the schools food service, practical limitations, options for recycling and engagement with pupils on each school's SUP reduction strategy.

The intention is to engage with school leaders and pupils alike to increase engagement and to gain a unilateral approach being taken across each school.

Schools & Residential Care Catering has developed a bespoke 6 week training course for primary school aged children. The course focusses on food education, the effect food has on the body (high fat, salt, sugar foods etc.), food miles, packaging and environmental factors and seasonality and sustainability. The course underpins schools requirement to teach children about food and healthy lifestyles and also delivers key messages around calorific intake, eating a healthy balanced diet and understanding where food comes from and when and how it grows. The course will be made available to schools late October 2019.

Schools & Residential Care Catering has operated against a sustainable procurement strategy for the past decade which considers environmental, social and economic factors when making purchasing decisions. Elements of the strategy are embedded within procurement tenders and are used as levers to affect positive changes.

A recent example of the benefits of the strategy includes the introduction of a central distribution hub which will see a reduction in the number of vehicles delivering food across Lancashire (removing 3,000+ per week) which reduces Co<sup>2</sup> emissions, particularly around busy towns and cities, and which requires suppliers to adhere to strict SUP packaging limitations.

All food tenders require tendering organisations to outline their commitment to environmental factors which ensures that pre-delivery waste and other environmental factors are adequately scrutinised and scored as part of the tender exercise.

The Service is working closely with the Procurement Service in relation to discussions with suppliers re alternative products and the following provides an update on current known position in relation to school catering supplies for fresh and cooked meats, soft drinks and stationary:

- 65.73% of all catering disposables used by Schools Catering are already recyclable or compostable. The remaining range is currently being worked through for recyclable or compostable alternatives. A number of non-recyclable/non-essential products have already been delisted.
- Replacement of the majority of black (non-recyclable) plastic trays, used for packaging fresh meat, which have been replaced with clear recyclable alternatives. This will see the removal of 3-4,000 non-recyclable trays per week or 175,000 per annum. Cooked meats are already supplied in clear recyclable trays.
- 70% reduction of stationary used within school kitchens by introducing e-tablets to all operational kitchens.
- The specification of a range of secondary school drinks, sold in bottles contain 51% recycled plastic and are 100% recyclable themselves.
- Unilateral agreement (from all contracted fresh food suppliers) to adopt a policy of only supplying recyclable or compostable packaging which can be guaranteed as widely recyclable/compostable.
- All fresh fruit and vegetable and bread deliveries made in reusable trays are returned to suppliers for reuse. The same trays are used by the produce supply chain (delivery/backhaul) which reduces unnecessary packing.
- Further work is underway to evaluate biodegradable alternatives to SUP food packaging.

**(iv) Ensuring that the County Council, via its procurement of goods and suppliers, has integrated the aim to end the use of SUP products by suppliers wherever feasible and appropriate.**

**Update provided by Procurement Service** - The Procurement Service is continuing to work with suppliers to review current contracts and where possible is providing new catalogue items to replace SUP products and alternative packaging where appropriate.

In respect of medium term recommendations, the Service is in discussions with suppliers over the following contracts with updates as follows:

**Fresh meat** – as part of a new framework that is currently out to tender and is proposed to commence on 1 December 2019, appointed supplier(s) will be required to pro-actively work with the council and the council's contract distributor to ensure that all product packaging, whether intrinsic to the product or transportation, has the least environmental impact possible and is widely recyclable and/or compostable.

**Cooked meat** –The specification of the new contract which commenced on 1 July 2019 requires that packaging is recyclable.

**Soft drinks** – discussions are ongoing with catering services and school units to identify alternative items.

**Stationery** – this will be picked up as a part of the forthcoming tender exercise (contract ends 31/1/2020), to identify alternative products where possible and with a focus around packaging.

In relation to longer term recommendations the Service is continuing discussions with other suppliers over the following contracts and when alternative products are available on the market, for these to be considered:

**Cleaning Materials** – No alternative packaging has been identified from review of supply chain currently due to the nature of the product being stored. This will be reviewed again as part of the forthcoming contract extension discussions in February/March 2020.

**First Aid and Medical** – Currently limited or no alternatives to disposable aprons/gloves available across the supply chain. The position remains as reported previously.

**Cheese packaging** – Manufacturers have not confirmed any alternative to plastic bag packaging to date. The position remains as previously reported.

These issues are being addressed proactively and will be featured in tender specifications as the relevant contracts come up for renewal. We will do all we can to influence and improve the supply range to limit single use plastics.

**(v) Exploring measures to encourage District and Borough Councils and other statutory partners of Lancashire County Council within Lancashire to adopt a rigorous enforcement policy on disposal of SUP products.**

**Update provided from Waste Management Service** - The Waste Management Teams (WMT's) role in addressing the issue of SUPs focussed largely on widening the amount of plastic that could be recycled.

At Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) hard plastic such as garden furniture or children's toys was problematic. The WMT has therefore trained up staff to better filter hard plastics, which were often problematic because they were combined with other materials, to increase the consistency of the material. This, and new signage and literature on plastics for customers, saw new contracts sourced and hard plastics being collected. All HWRCs now collect all forms of plastic.

It has long been the ambition to increase the range of plastics doorstep collected too. In the government's recently published waste and resource strategy, currently out for consultation, pots, tubs and trays were one of the essential doorstep materials to be collected. Lancashire has historically resisted collecting any plastic other than bottles for reasons of processing capacity, because of contamination concerns and due to material types (limited markets for certain plastics).

To overcome these obstacles new technology and processes were trialled at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF - where the bulk of the doorstep collected co-mingled recyclate goes). New markets were sought and existing recyclers contacted over widening the plastics they would take. This led to agreement with districts to include clean plastic pots, tubs and trays in with the doorstep collected recycling from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019. This is really positive news that has been well received by the public and district councils. It will result in much more plastic being kept from landfill or incineration. Another positive aspect of this is that the secondary processing at the MRF is on track to be halved (from 20% of everything brought into the MRF, which was above the national average to 10% which is below the national average). This means that there is now half as much rejected recycling (items that don't get sorted into material for recycling), much of it plastic, as there was twelve months ago.

Other important changes expected next year, regarding plastic, will occur as a result of the formal adoption of the draft government resource and waste strategy. Single use plastic that is hard to process (such as dark coloured plastic) or hard to recycle (such as Type 3 – PVC, Type 6 –Styrofoam and Type 7 -mixed) will be banned or taxed more heavily. This should see the composition of plastic coming into the MRF become more uniform in the future.

**Update from Corporate Communications** – As detailed above, from 1 October 2019 residents within the Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council boundaries will be able to recycle pots, tubs, trays along with their plastic bottles. A communications campaign has been developed to promote the awareness of this change to residents across the area to maximise the potential of people who currently recycle, informing them of the full range of household items that they could be recycling.

The Communications Service is working closely with the Waste Service and councils in their role as bin collection authorities to ensure everyone promotes a consistent message, using the right channels in a timely way.

Artwork has been designed and a campaign toolkit produced for partners to ensure consistency across all organisations. Lancashire County Council along with partner authorities will be informing residents of the changes from 16 September 2019 in the following ways:

- Stickers appearing on recycling bins
- Media relations
- Information on websites
- Social media messages on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram
- Paid for digital advertising
- Information in bus timetable leaflets
- Messages on bin collection vehicles
- Council newsletters
- Waste and recycling collection calendars
- Roadshows
- Leaflets
- Posters

The campaign will run from October 2019 through to October 2020 with both Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council and districts councils continuing to promote messages in a timely way during the year.

The target audience for the campaign is young families who are existing recyclers who could do extra to be more effective (i.e. people who are already recycling but have the potential to recycle more). This is based on evidence from WRAP who highlight that younger families provide the opportunity to help embed learned behaviours and capture people at moments of change.

The Communications Service is currently exploring running a 'jingle' competition with schools to harness the pester power young people can have on their parents. The objective of the campaign is to recycle between 2,000 and 7,000 tonnes during the 12 month period.

### **Consultations**

A copy of the task and finish group's report was shared with district and borough councils. District councils were also consulted on in relation to litter reinforcement.

### **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

This report has no significant risk implications. The necessary legal and financial implications will need to be considered for any changes that will occur as a result of the desire to reduce SUPs across the authority.

## **Financial**

The small increase in costs outlined within the report are being managed within the existing revenue budget for the facilities management service.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Report of the Reducing Single Use Plastics Single Use Plastics in Lancashire Task and Finish Group	18/01/19	Misbah Mahmood/01772 530818
Cabinet Members Responses to the Recommendations of the Reducing Single Use Plastics in Lancashire Task and Finish Group Report	17/05/19	Misbah Mahmood/01772 530818
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		