

Cabinet Member Responses to the Recommendations of The Reducing Single Use Plastics in Lancashire Task and Finish Group Report

17 May 2019

General Comments

A number of Cabinet Members were involved in responding to the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group due to the work crossing over a number of Services including:

- Leader of the County Council
- Deputy Leader County Council
- Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Environment and Planning
- Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools

Cabinet Members welcomed the report from the Internal Scrutiny Committee on the important subject of reducing single use plastics (SUPs) in Lancashire.

Cabinet Members would like to thank members and officers of the reducing SUPs in Lancashire task and finish group for the time and commitment that they invested in the thorough research that they undertook as part of the group's work.

Cabinet Members have considered each of the recommendations adopted by the Internal Scrutiny Committee and the collective responses in consultation with the relevant Heads of Service are as follows:

Short Term Recommendations

1. Produces posters for display across all county buildings facilitated by Facilities Management and Corporate Communications to promote, educate and encourage the council's workforce to help with the reduction of SUP products.

Response:

Cabinet Members welcome this recommendation to promote, educate and encourage the council's workforce to help with the reduction of SUP products. Corporate Communications are in the process of working with Facilities Management to design a poster to raise awareness of the changes that have been implemented in the catering outlets, which will promote the alternatives to SUPs. It is anticipated this will be completed in May. The wider poster campaign across all county buildings will be developed by Corporate Communications as and when the key messages have been fully agreed through the development of the strategy.

2. Shares key messages from the SUP campaign with businesses and partners across Lancashire with the support of Head of Business Service Growth using social media and other methods.

Response:

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Environment and Planning supports this recommendation for key messages from the SUP campaign to be shared with businesses and partners across Lancashire once they have been developed. Business networks such as the North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses North West could also be used to help communicate the message. The Economic Development Team also hold a number of events throughout the year and this could also be a further consideration for information sharing. Once the key messages have been fully agreed through the development of a strategy they will be shared through the support of the Head of Business Services Growth.

3. Engages with the School Forum, Governing Bodies and the Head of Service for Learning and Skills to initiate discussions with schools about the SUP campaign and the need to reduce SUPs across Lancashire.

Response:

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools supports this recommendation and will work the Head of Service to initiate discussions as such. Please also refer to a wider supporting response on page 23.

4. Shares a copy of this report with District and Borough Councils to initiate and inform wider discussions about the SUP campaign in Lancashire.

Response:

A copy of the report has been circulated to each of the District and Borough Council's Democratic Service Team with a request that it is circulated wider within each authority to relevant services.

Medium Term Recommendations:

5. Develops a robust strategy to make Lancashire County Council a SUP free authority, where possible and feasible.

Response:

Cabinet Members and Heads of Service are supportive of developing a strategy to make the county council a SUP free authority, where possible and feasible. Since the task group was formed a number of changes have already been implemented in the

aim of reducing SUPs across the authority. Consideration needs to be given to a number of factors such as the need to reduce waste in general and not just SUPs. Any strategy would also need to align with the latest government advice which is still being reviewed. The development of a strategy would require a number of services to work together to support this recommendation.

6. Continues discussions with suppliers and services in regards to alternative products that can be used and an understanding of cost implications for the following contracts:

- a. **Fresh meat**
- b. **Cooked meat**
- c. **Soft drinks**
- d. **Stationary**

Response:

Cabinet Members are supportive that discussions with suppliers and services continue in regards to alternative products that can be used and a greater understanding of cost implications is considered.

The Procurement Service is working with suppliers to review current contracts and where possible is providing new catalogue items to replace SUP products and alternative packaging where appropriate. The pace at which we are able to take this forward is dependent upon a number of factors, including the various stages of existing contract agreements with suppliers and the extent that alternative products and/or packaging is available through the manufacturing/supply chain. 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.

Facilities Management will be taking every opportunity to use alternative supplies as and when progress is made through tenders and Procurement Service reviews with current contracts.

7. Holds a bite size briefing for county councillors on the issues of plastic waste and what is being done to address this and what role councillors can play.

Response:

Cabinet Members are happy to support this recommendation and a bite size briefing on the issue of plastic waste and what is being done to address this will be planned into the next round of bite size briefings.

8. Invests in moveable signs that can help deter the public from littering from their cars and reminding them to be responsible with their waste.

Response:

Whilst Cabinet Members support the principle of deterring the public from littering from their cars and reminding them to be responsible with their waste, some further work needs to be done to consider whether moveable signs are the most effective approach. As street cleansing is a district council function consideration should be given to working with district and borough councils and fast food outlets to increase the options for disposal.

9. Sets up a measureable target for reducing SUPs, internal to the county council.

Response:

Following the notice of motion early in 2018/19 the Facilities Management service reviewed all SUP products that were being used by the Facilities Management service catering outlets. The starting position was 24 SUP products, and we now have 13 further SUP products for which alternatives are required and are actively being sourced via existing contracted suppliers, with the support of the Procurement service. We are hoping to reduce the number of SUP products by a further 7 throughout 2019/20, as there is evidence that supplier contractors are making advancements with sourcing suitable alternatives. We will of course strive to replace all of our SUP products as soon as possible throughout the year, however much will depend on the supply chain being able to respond to demand.

In order to consider this recommendation further for other SUPs internal to the county council, further work is required to understand what we have achieved to date and report on this and whether there is a potential for this to be improved upon.

10. Involves and consults with The Waste Partnership Board and the District Councils so that a joined up and coherent approach to reducing SUP across Lancashire is enabled.

Response:

The report will be shared with the Lancashire Waste Partnership and its members consulted on the contents.

11. The council takes account of The Government's Resources and Waste Strategy which has just been launched and develops an approach to meet its requirements.

Response:

The Resources and Waste Strategy contains provisions to address the issue of plastic waste. These are both at local authority level and targeting producers. Whilst the strategy is currently subject to consultation the provisions of the strategy are most likely to be statutory and naturally the council will act upon any statutory provisions or similarly recommended best practice. The approach across Lancashire to meeting the requirements of the strategy has already commenced through discussion with the Lancashire Waste Partnership.

12. Investigates proposals from the Waste Management Service, whereby costs can be kept (over a five year timescale) neutral or would produce savings; and where diversion from landfill of plastic can be increased, including –

- a. Accepting all plastic at HWRCs**
- b. Working towards accepting more doorstep collected plastics**
- c. Investigating secondary processing alongside the Material Recovery Facilities (MRF)**
- d. Reducing the amount of plastics in the reject stream at the MRF**
- e. Undertaking plastic-specific education and communication campaigns during 2019.**

Response:

- a. All plastics for which there are recycling markets are already accepted at HWRCs.
- b. The integration of pots, tubs and trays into doorstep collections will be delivered in 2019-20.
- c. Secondary processing has already been introduced (on an initial trial basis) in the MRF.
- d. The secondary processing introduced addresses this issue.
- e. There is no means to demonstrate that any education programme could be delivered cost neutral or would produce savings. Particularly when the introduction of other measures through the Government strategy will influence the generation and management of plastic waste. However, we would be happy to give consideration to plastic specific campaigns as part of the waste service's general communications and education activities.

13. Considers a ban on helium balloon releases and sky lanterns on all council owned land and leased premises. The District and Borough Councils to be encouraged to do the same.

Response:

Cabinet Members support this recommendation and consideration will be given to what is required to enforce such a ban on our own land. The practicalities of enforcing such a ban on release from council owned land needs to be considered. In respect of "organised events" where prior permission is required from the council, it may be possible to impose conditions on the granting of permission for the event. The enforcement with respect to individuals or small groups presents obvious difficulties in ensuring that any ban is adhered to.

Some authorities have already implemented bans on their own land including Lancaster City Council. On the 27 March 2019 a Private Member's Bill was presented to Parliament requesting that legislation be introduced to prohibit the release of sky lanterns making it an offence to use a sky lantern. Progress on this Bill will be monitored and in support of this Bill and following the request made by Internal Scrutiny Committee on the 18 January 2019 a letter will be sent to Central Government supporting the desire of a ban on sky lanterns and helium balloon releases.

Longer Term Recommendations

14. Continuous discussions with suppliers over the following contracts and when alternative products are available on the market, for these to be considered:

- **Cleaning materials**
- **First aid and medical**
- **Cheese packaging**

Response:

The response to this recommendation is the same as Recommendation 6.

Further suggestions made by the Internal Scrutiny Committee

In addition to the recommendations detailed in the report, the Internal Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 18 January 2019 recommended the following and the committee would welcome your response on these:

In reference to the posters around CH, there was a request for more social media/graphics targeting the messages around reducing SUPs to be shared so councillors can use this avenue to further promote and share key messages more easily with constituents and other organisations.

Response:

The changes being implemented are currently internal to Lancashire County Council and reducing its use of SUPs. To go external with this message is an entirely different thing and a policy on how we were working with organisations external to LCC and how we are making it easy for the public to do the right thing would need to be considered and implemented before we could go external with any messages. The 'ask' of the general public would need to be evidence based, provide a solution to help them do the right thing, and have objectives that a communications campaign could evidence against. If for example our pledge is to rid Lancashire business of plastic straws, as an organisation we would need to be working with business to do this, collectively procure paper alternatives, have them all in restaurants, bars etc. at the same time. Our ask of the public would then be "We've done our bit to make it easier for you, please don't accept a plastic straw or buy them for your personal use'. The reality is a general message about don't use SUPs will have little cut through, cannot be measured and will not have the desired effect. External messages will only be able to be developed once the external strategy and approach is agreed.

The need for education on the issue of plastics was highlighted as being very important and there was a clear need to engage with schools and highlight the issues to them.

The overall principle of the reduction of SUPs is supported and the Service can confirm dialogue with schools is underway. In terms of the wider context the following should be noted:

- School representatives will have to consider their approach to reducing single use plastics against current packaging industry alternatives and the prevailing Food Hygiene and Food Packaging Regulations.
- Single use plastics are intrinsic in reducing the potential for food and airborne based cross contamination and for the control of allergens and intolerances. It should be accepted that certain SUP have health and wellbeing benefits which outweigh the impact to the environment.
- Alternative Tetra packaging, which is made from layers of materials including plastic, is not widely recyclable and should be considered under the same recommendations.
- The use of alternative widely recyclable glass bottles and cans for pupil drinks are either banned or limited in the majority of schools under safeguarding.
- Schools would need to consider packed lunch contents, many of which are retail influenced and contain higher proportions of SUP than school meals.

A request for the bite size briefing for Members to be moved to the short term rather than the medium term.

Response:

Cabinet Members and Heads of Service are happy to bring this request forward as soon as is practical.

Consideration be given to inviting interested parties to provide a demonstration to Members on recycling plastics following the bite size briefing session.

Response:

Cabinet Members and Heads of Service are happy to invite interested parties to provide a demonstration to Members on recycling following the bite size briefing if relevant parties are interested in doing so.

A request to revisit the issue of charging for items such as cutlery in the canteen. Members agreed this has a psychological effect on the buyer and could change attitudes.

Response:

Facilities Management have changed the cutlery in the Reflections Café to a fully compostable natural material product, which is of a higher quality for reuse than the single use plastic cutlery previously in place.

Since this change was introduced, and the awareness raised of the alternative products, the customer response has been very positive and the Service costs on replacement of takeaway cutlery is reducing. Customers have fed back they are happy to wash and reuse the cutlery, as it is of a superior quality and does not break as easily as the previous SUP cutlery, and this has a positive impact on reduction of all waste.

The Service will keep this under review, however the charging for takeaway cutlery is not immediately planned, due to the pressure on the Service to retain its customer base and concern that this may lead to losing custom, as we cannot compete with high street pricing, and the Service already have these costs factored into the takeaway pricing structure.

Consideration to be given to the issue of baby wipes and wipes in general and for this to be looked into further.

Wipes are currently purchased through two main contracts, the first aid and medical supplies contract for use in our Care Homes and the cleaning material contract used by services and schools. Discussions would need to take place with services and

suppliers to consider if it would be practical to source alternative products and to consider any cost implications.

The issue of wipes can also be taken into consideration during the key messages campaign and consideration can be given to working with United Utilities to try and ensure that the public are aware of the potential risks of flushing wipes.

In reference to Recommendation 13 – considers a ban on helium balloons and sky lanterns, this recommendation should be extended to include Parish and Town Councils as well as the District and Borough Councils and considers writing to Central Government in regards to setting out legislation for the banning of helium balloons and sky lanterns across Lancashire.

Any proposed protocol agreed by the county council on the issue of helium balloons and sky lanterns will be shared with District and Borough Councils as well as Parish and Town Councils.

A briefing note was produced early last year which considered the issues of sky lanterns. The county council's Trading Standards department have previously raised the issue with the Government and at their time their position was that the existing controls were felt to be sufficient and there appeared to be no appetite to legislate further at that stage. A further representation will be made as detailed under Recommendation 13, however it is possible that the view of the Government has not changed.