



Reducing Single Use Plastics in Lancashire

Overview and Scrutiny Review – January 2019

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Background and Scope to the Review

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. The motion approved by Full Council was:

According to recent research, eight million metric tons of plastic waste ends up in the world's oceans each year, endangering marine life. There is also a growing understanding of the risks posed to human health by toxic chemicals present in plastics.

Less than a year after the introduction of the 5p bag charge, use of single-use plastic (SUP) bags had already dropped by 85%, 300 million tons of plastic are produced around the globe each year. Public awareness of the problems of our throwaway culture is at an all-time high.

It is time for Lancashire to take a lead on this issue.

Council resolves to ask Cabinet to work towards:

- (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 feasible and appropriate;
- (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.

Following this meeting Cabinet agreed to invite Overview and Scrutiny to establish a task and finish group to review this matter.

Membership of the Task and Finish Group

The following County Councillors were appointed to the task and finish group:

- Gina Dowding (Chair)
- Stephen Clarke
- Loraine Cox
- Charles Edwards
- Steve Holgate

- Dave Stansfield
- Peter Steen

Officers

The following officers were either consulted with or attended meetings of the task and finish group:

- Suzie Evans – Communications Account Manager
- Clare Joynson – Head of Service Facilities Management
- William Maxwell – Service Development Manager, Waste Management
- Steve Scott - Head of Service Waste Management
- Rachel Tanner – Head of Service Procurement
- Ginette Unsworth – Head of Communications
- Andy Walker – Head of Service Business Growth

A research student from the University of Lancaster also attended a meeting of the task group to update Members on research work completed for his Masters dissertation.

Methodology

The task and finish group considered documentary evidence from a variety of sources both internal and external to the county council. Senior officers and Heads of Service from a number of Services were consulted as part of the process and attended meetings of the task group.

A visit to a leading manufacturer of recycling plastics which are collected from household waste was also conducted to give Members the opportunity to see first-hand how recycled plastic is used to produce products for building and construction, fencing and barriers, ground reinforcement, furniture and outdoor spaces.

This report reflects the views and recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the county council. In many cases, suggestions are made for further consideration to be given to issues, and this would need to include a full assessment of the legal and financial risks and implications.

Documents

HM Government - A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment

HM Government – Resources and Waste Strategy for England

HM Treasury – Tackling the plastic problem: Using the tax system or charges to address single-use plastic waste

Lancashire County Council - Procurement Strategy – Section 4 Sustainable Procurement

Lancashire Waste Partnership – Rubbish to Resources, Waste Management Strategy for Lancashire 2008 – 2020

WRAP (The Waste and Resources Action Programme) - The UK Plastics Pact, Understanding plastic packaging and the language we use to describe it, WRAP

Websites

<http://www.wrap.org.uk/>

<https://recyclingtechnologies.co.uk/>

<https://www.hahnplastics.com/en/>

<https://www.lancasterguardian.co.uk/news/lancaster-city-council-launches-plastic-campaign-1-9109470>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690293/PU2154_Call_for_evidence_plastics_web.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england?utm_source=b0d0d95f-7f69-47ca-ad4a-d36d5b082d9f&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate

Findings

Context

"It is estimated that 8.3 billion tonnes of plastic have been produced since the 1950s. Without urgent action to cut demand, this is likely to be 34 billion tonnes by 2050, the majority of which will end up in landfill or polluting the world's continents and oceans"

Source: Government's 25 Year Environment Plan

SUPs, or disposable plastics, are only used once before they are thrown away or recycled. A SUP item may have only been used for a few seconds but can last for centuries in the natural environment. SUPs include items such as plastic bags, straws, coffee cups and stirrers, water bottles and most food packaging. There is growing public awareness and concern about the widespread use of SUPs and the exponential growth in recent times, especially reflecting concerns that vast quantities of SUPs could be considered completely unnecessary and have only been introduced into our lifestyles relatively recently for convenience rather than need.

Tackling plastic waste requires a determined and intense effort at a national and global level. Earlier this year, the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan was set out which highlighted key targets for reducing plastic waste. The Government has pledged to eradicate all avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042. To help meet these targets a new Resources and Waste Strategy has just been published (December 2018) which aims to set out how the UK will achieve this.

In April 2018 a UK Plastics Pact was also put in place bringing together the government, businesses and citizens with an aim of transforming the plastic system. The Pact is led and managed by The Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), in partnership with Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF) and highlights the following UK target:

By 2025, the UK Plastics Pact will transform the UK plastic packaging sector and help stop plastics polluting the environment by;

- *Take actions to eliminate problematic or unnecessary single use packaging items through redesign, innovation or alternative (reuse) delivery models.*
- *100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable.*
- *70% of plastic packaging effectively recycled or composted.*
- *30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging.*

Source: The UK Plastics Pact, WRAP

The county council is already doing some things to help reduce plastic waste, however, more action is required both internal and external to the authority if Lancashire is to become as plastic free as possible. To look at this issue further a number of Services across the county council were engaged and officers attended task group meetings and gave advice and detailed the support their Service could offer to meet the objectives of the task group's review.

(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.

Communication and education about the need to eliminate or reduce SUPs and recycling is a key element of driving change, both internal and external to the county council.

The county council's Corporate Communications Team is working with the Waste Management Service to drive a campaign about recycling in Lancashire and reducing SUPs will be highlighted as part of this drive to educate Lancashire residents about the issue. A graphic video has been created to show residents how one small action per household can build into a mountain of waste. The Waste service will be launching new initiatives to raise awareness of plastic, targeting schools as well as engaging the wider community, throughout 2019. The task group also suggested that the county council consider a ban on helium balloon releases and sky lanterns in line with a growing number of other local authorities and the district and borough councils also be encouraged to do the same.

The Facilities Management Service who are responsible for the day to day management of the council's buildings and facilities are working on a range of key messages to be included in a poster campaign throughout the Facilities Management catering outlets using the existing SUP national campaign materials. This will be phased into the catering outlets throughout February and March 2019 and linked to the introduction of changes that are being implemented in support of the SUP initiative to raise awareness of the changes being offered.

Promotion of the SUP initiative amongst employees was included in the Chief Executive's fortnightly communication to staff which took place week commencing 24 September 2018 to coincide with National Recycling Week.

Reduction of SUP's in the business community is being recognised as a commercial opportunity and there is the demand out there to encourage businesses to look at this issue further. There are a number of examples of companies in Lancashire that have aided the reduction of SUP's, for example a printing company in Clitheroe who are producing 100% recyclable paper cups. Business Service Growth is supportive of using its business links to share key information about reducing SUP's in Lancashire through social media and by promoting any campaigns that the county council wish to use to reach out to the business community.

The task group suggested that a robust strategy is developed to make Lancashire County Council a SUP free authority, where possible and feasible, incorporating the recommendations proposed in this report.

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

The Facilities Management Service is responsible for a number of contracts across county council buildings. The Service is fully committed to identifying alternative

products to cease the use of SUP products and to support the review of the supply chain through the formal tender process in future business plans for areas within their direct control, and where it is feasible to do so in meeting the objectives of the task group for the eradication of SUP in Lancashire.

The county council's catering contract is one of the key contracts which supplies SUP items such as plastic cutlery, tea/coffee cups and fast food packaging. Schools across Lancashire are the main purchaser of these items as well as the County Hall Reflections café.

As part of this review, Facilities Management Service liaised with Procurement Service and directly with a range of suppliers to identify suitable alternative items and products for each of the SUP products currently used in fulfilling a takeaway service and for the product lines sold over the counter. The Service has undertaken considerable research to identify suitable alternatives available on the market and has held meetings with existing approved suppliers to share ideas and request suppliers to source new items for their catalogue. For the majority of product lines the Service found that the external supply chain is still in the early stages of responding to consumer and client demands, which has delayed the Service's ability to move as quickly as desired to implement all the changes proposed. At this stage there is a requirement to use existing suppliers contracted to the county council, and therefore options are limited in identifying immediate suitable and cost effective alternatives. In the longer term, suitable products will be incorporated into the tender requirements through liaison with Procurement Service as and when supplier contracts are due for retender.

The Facilities Management Service is looking to identify operational practical solutions to allow customers to use their personal reusable drinkware and containers. However this presents many challenges, for example, loss of portion control, self-service as against high street fully resourced/controlled service, potential for non-payment of goods, hygiene issues, as advised by Public Health England, as well as the conflict this may cause at the point of sale with customers. This is not something the Service feels able to implement at present and will remain a consideration for future development, with the focus remaining on the introduction of SUP alternative products, and a drive to reduce all waste.

Where change is possible, it is being implemented incrementally, as and when suitable products are sourced by suppliers and approved for purchase. The Service will continue to roll out changes with the aim of achieving maximum change possible for those items in the current product range. It is evident that progress through the supply chain in the future will be the key to much greater success in eradicating the use of SUP across the Facilities Management catering outlets, and the wider Lancashire adoption of change.

The Facilities Management Service has made some early progress in identifying, and where possible implementing changes to cease the use or sale of all SUP items, to contribute to the objectives of the SUP task group. To date the following changes have either been introduced or are in the short-term forward plan to implement:

- All plastic cups in County Hall complex staff and public areas have been removed and replaced with drinking glasses. The impact on staff resources and cost of stock is being monitored.
- All plastic soft drinks bottles have been replaced by canned drinks, the impact on sales/revenue is being monitored.
- Consideration of ceasing sale of plastic water bottles is under review. There were 5500 units sold in the period 2017/18 attracting an income of £4,660. It is anticipated current year sales are in line with the previous year. There is no suitable alternative product to plastic bottled water readily available. Front of house service are encouraging customers to use chilled water provided with their own refillable drinkware. Research through suppliers is underway to find a solution.
- A further 6 items of disposable products have been replaced over recent months. There will be a relatively low increase in cost, of just over £2,300 per annum based on estimated annual purchases as per the table below:

Product	2018/19 Estimate (based on 2017/18 purchases)	
	Current Annual Cost (£)	Revised Annual Cost (£)
12oz Cup/Lid	3,747	4,400
Salad box	261	305
Sandwich box	261	261
Stirrer	164	263
Cutlery	1,672	3,122
Jacket Potato box	69	137
Total	£6,174	£8,488
Annual Increase		£2,314

- There are a further 15 types of disposable products currently in use that require a suitable alternative. Sourcing is currently underway with contracted suppliers.

This process has identified the financial impact of potential changes and any risks associated with the implementation of change in product lines. The increased cost of alternative products or cessation of selling popular product lines e.g. bottled water, may impact upon the catering business outturn due to passing the additional cost on to the customer base, if customers go elsewhere, and the potential knock on effect of losing income from impulse purchases of the wider service offer. A balance will be needed to ensure ongoing customer satisfaction and that the business remains in a position to sufficiently contribute to the cost of overheads.

Financial

The initial changes indicate an increase of £2,314 which is a 37.5% increase in the cost of disposable products based on previous year level of purchase. This increased cost will be incorporated into the sale price of items to customers to

ensure full cost recovery. There may be a loss of income from sale of items such as bottled soft drinks, which have been exchanged for cans. The selection of drinks available in cans has been increased in line with the top ten best-selling soft drinks in the UK and it is hoped the wider variety will attract custom and have a positive impact on sales.

There may be an impact on resources required for the provision and replenishment of drinking glasses supplied throughout meeting areas, where plastic cups have been replaced. This change will be monitored in terms of any impact on service performance in other areas, the aim will be to absorb any effect within the current resource allocation. There may also be a cost pressure from the ongoing supply of water glasses due to breakages, and this will be monitored.

Risks

The following risks have been identified:

- Financial risk due to increased cost and therefore increase in sale price compared to high street may affect customer retention.
- Customer retention risk due to lack of convenient disposable drinks; canned drinks can't be resealed; if sale of bottled water ceased due to convenience, and still readily available on high street, this may affect sales from other customer impulse purchases.
- Environmental risks of alternative products is not yet fully understood both internally and in the wider environment.

Discussions with Waste service colleagues are taking place to fully understand the impact of product changes and to ensure that any environmental impact is minimised when alternatives are sourced. Research by the Facilities Management Service so far has established there are various complexities in products that are presented as recyclable and understanding of this is needed to ensure that any SUP replacement products fully meet the objectives of the council's SUP strategy.

The requirement to end the sale and provision of SUP products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in council buildings, events and services is ongoing. The Service aims to have this completed, where possible, by the end of the financial year, however much will depend on the procurement process, and it will be important to closely monitor the impact of any changes on the performance of the business and ensure sufficient contribution to overheads maintained. One of the main issues will be ensuring the customer understands the cost increases and the poster campaign will be used to highlight changes as they occur and gain buy in from potential customers. When all alternatives have been sourced through suppliers, the Service will be in a position to place orders and will work with Procurement colleagues to negotiate competitive unit rates for the most suitable alternatives. It is likely that more attractive unit rates will be agreed when a supplier contract is due to be retendered.

(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.

The catering contract is one of the main contracts that supplies items such as plastic cutlery, plates, bowls, soup cartons and lids, cups and fast food packaging to schools and social care facilities. Although the majority of the material used is recyclable, it is not widely recycled within the UK. Changes within existing contracts can quite easily be made internally to the council such as the Reflections Café as detailed above, however, schools are not under the control of the county council and change would be dependent on individual schools. Whilst schools can be encouraged to make more environmentally friendly changes, they cannot be forced to change their current products or suppliers. The task group noted that changes to some products would inevitably incur greater costs and this could be a determining factor when choices were made.

Discussions with schools should be initiated through School Forums, Governing Bodies and the Head of Service for Learning and Skills to ensure schools are engaged with reducing SUPs across Lancashire. Whilst many young people are already engaged with doing more for the environment, further information and education about the issue throughout schools is necessary to help promote the issue and encourage opportunities for change, both at home and in the school environment. The task group also suggested schools could run competitions or other campaigns which could be used to further highlight the issue.

(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.

Procurement is led by service need and there is currently over 300 contracts in place across the county council, not including BT Lancashire Services contracts. Across the Procurement Service, work has been undertaken to identify all the contracts that will be impacted on in relation to the reduction of plastic across the county council, although given the number of contracts and that massive diversity of what the council procures, from personal care items to furniture to teaspoons, this is clearly a complex task.

The Procurement Service is reviewing the need and requirement for SUPs against each of these contracts. Details of each of the current contracts in place including the length of contract, whether current items are recyclable, the main customer(s) and actions being taken or will be taken in due course are detailed in **(Appendix A)**.

Fresh meat and cooked meat contracts is provided in vacuum bags and plastic trays, both of which are non-recyclable. The supply chain are currently trying to identify alternative products, however the current market place has limited alternative packaging available. Any new packaging will have a cost increase implication that needs to be considered, discussions are ongoing with the relevant Service. The cheese contract has also been considered, however, again at this stage there is no

alternative to the plastic packaging currently used. This will be reviewed as and when a suitable replacement is available in the market.

The task group noted that changes to cleaning and medical materials are more challenging due to the chemicals present in products. There is provision for suppliers to collect empty containers but work needs to be done to ensure this service is fully utilised. Currently no alternative packaging is available across the supply chain due to the nature of the product being stored, this will be reviewed in due course by Procurement Service as and when new products come out into the market.

Future Contracts

As part of the Procurement Service's category management activity, procurement initiative plans (PIPs) and contract extension gateways (Gateway 5s) are developed by the relevant Category Managers prior to re-tender or extension of an existing contract.

Whilst the procurement strategy adopted for each tender exercise/contract extension (and the subsequent specification for the goods required) is heavily influenced by the customers' requirements and priorities, both the PIPs and Gateway 5s are aligned to the commitments of the council under Section 4 of the Procurement Strategy – Sustainable Procurement, which states the following:

It is recognised that procurement has a vital role in furthering sustainable development through the procurement of goods, services and work. Procurement decisions have a major socio-economic and environmental implication, both locally and globally, now and for future generations.

When referring to Sustainable Procurement, Lancashire County Council means the process whereby the Council meets its needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits to not only to the council, but also society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.

Some practical examples of sustainable procurement that are employed include:

- *Evaluating whole life contract costs in purchasing decisions.*
- ***Minimising packaging used in goods received.***
- *Reducing delivery frequencies to County Council premises.*

To maximise sustainable procurement in the future, the County Council will strive to:

- *Raise education and awareness*
- ***Educate, train and encourage our staff to review their consumption of goods, services and works, reduce usage and adopt more environmentally-friendly products;***
- *Communicate our sustainability objectives to our suppliers;*
- *Promote and embed best practice for sustainable procurement;*
- ***Understand the sustainable impact of procurement activities for all contracting activities and include specifications to mitigate against***

negative impacts and develop actions to deliver positive ones where possible.

Consider environmental issues:

- ***adopt the principles of resource and waste minimisation for materials, energy, water, air and land in support of carbon reduction and climate change, reusing and recycling wherever possible;***
- ***consider the costs and benefits of environmentally-friendly goods, services and works;***
- ***wherever possible and practicable, specify a requirement in line with nationally or regionally agreed minimum specifications;***
- ***where such exact specification is not possible, enable suppliers to submit offers for environmentally-friendly alternatives;***
- ***work in partnership with other public bodies to maximise sustainable procurement gains through collaboration and information sharing.***

Source: Lancashire County Council Procurement Strategy

Existing or future requirements for SUP products will be identified and reviewed as part of the PIP and Gateway 5 development, these are reviewed and agreed by the Procurement Manager and Main Stakeholder(s)/Customer(s) prior to approval and commencement of any procurement exercise/contract extension.

Earlier in 2018, the Procurement Service worked with Lancaster University and a student who as part of his Masters Dissertation researched SUP and alternative provision at the county council. The scope of the research was:

1. Research the supply chain to determine if alternative products are available, and determine viability (still provide good value for money to the council and compliance with legislation where appropriate);
2. Identifying current usage of SUP through corporate contracts. The main areas include Catering/Cleaning/Traded Services;
3. Identifying contracts where immediate action can be taken to remove or reduce the use of SUP;
4. Propose what measures/steps need to be taken in order to develop the market.

A number of recommendations are made in the final report and generally speaking the short term and medium term recommendations are ones that the county council is already pursuing or will be pursuing as a result of the work of the task group.

(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.

Engagement with the district and borough councils (in their roles as 'Waste Collection Authorities') through the Lancashire Waste Partnership is essential in order to drive a rigorous enforcement policy across Lancashire. Examples of policies in place at other authorities such as Lancaster were shared with the task group. It is recommended that a copy of the report and the recommendations proposed by the task group be shared with district and borough council colleagues in the first instance for a wider debate to be initiated. The Lancashire Waste Partnership is already being engaged and will continue to play a role in this transformation.

Waste Management Service

Whilst there is a real need to reduce the use of SUPs and using alternative products, it was noted by the task group that often many forms of plastic can be reused and/or recycled and a key element is educating the public about what can and can't be recycled and how to avoid plastic in the first place. Due to the lack of demand for certain types of plastic to be recycled, often items that can be recycled are not in the UK.

As an example of how plastic can be transformed, the work of a local company that manufactures new plastics from used plastics was provided to the task group. The company use plastics that we currently in Lancashire do not ask the public to separate. The plastics are used to create a pellet which is then used to create recycled plastic lumber and outside products for building and construction, ground reinforcement, fencing etc. Members of the task group attended a site visit to see first-hand how used plastics are recycled. There is potential for the county council to consider finding a strategic partner who can help the council change its entire approach on plastics to enable more plastic material to be recycled into new products from the waste we generate. The county council (in its role as the 'Waste Disposal Authority') is working with its waste company, Lancashire Renewables Limited, to see if the right mix of plastics collected in Lancashire could become feedstock used for recycled plastic products used by North West manufacturers.

Current practices

Lancashire's waste collection authorities only currently collect plastic bottles. The majority doing so co-mingled with glass and cans. These materials are then delivered to a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) which separates all of the materials back out into the each individual waste stream so they can then be sent to relevant recycling processors.

Around 7,000 tonnes of plastic goes to the council's own MRF at Farington Waste Recovery Park from doorstep collections every year. It is estimated that at least this amount again, when all plastics are included, remains in the residual waste stream.

When set against all of the materials collected for recycling over the course of a year, 150,000 tonnes, this figure seems low. However plastic is light, so in terms of volume, this makes up a sizeable amount, and unlike garden waste or paper and card, it will not break down quickly or harmlessly. Its environmental impact is therefore disproportionately high for its mass.

Restricted by the MRF capacity available the county council currently limits the recycling of other plastics, such as pots, tubs and trays to its HWRCs. Recycling facilities for larger plastic items are also provided for at the same.

Recycling More Plastic in Lancashire

The government has responded to increased public concern around waste plastic, in particular around SUP items. With a new government strategy just published, there is expected to be tougher targets for recycling overall and under what is called the consistency agenda (getting more consistency in what and how materials are collected throughout the UK) a duty to collect and process a wider range of doorstep collected materials.

With just under three quarters of all councils currently collecting plastic pots, tubs and trays, Lancashire authorities may also well be required to collect these items, amongst others, in the future. Albeit this could be introduced sooner if additional MRF capacity was available.

Options for the Material Recovery Facility (MRF)

Most district councils are keen to encourage the collection of a wider variety of plastics in the co-mingled stream by including pots, tubs and trays. To enable this the county council would have to increase the MRF capacity available to it. There would be two main options available in this respect:

- **Expand our own MRF** – The MRF at Farington is configured primarily to separate out the types of plastic that bottles are made of. To separate out more plastics would require investment of up to £1.5 million in new equipment. This would have the lateral benefit of picking out, not just additional plastic types, but make the MRF more effective in capturing plastics with higher value. This could potentially make it an 'invest to save' opportunity, with a re-payment period of possibly as little as 4-5 years.
- **Third party processing** – Third party contracts could be put in place in order to separate out co-mingled materials. However, it isn't considered that there is sufficient MRF capacity available locally for a significant increase in materials which would inevitable increase transport costs. Furthermore, as MRF operators are subject to volatile market fluctuations they may not always be keen to receive co-mingled materials. On this basis, at the end of any contract the council could end up with more recyclables than it can recycle simply as there is not the facility to separate it back out.

It is worth noting that the need to increase MRF capacity is highly likely to be necessary at some point in response to tougher government recycling targets.

Removing more recyclables at the doorstep will increase the amount collected co-mingled unless more streams are collected separately. In this respect some investment or risk on the county council's behalf (or both) will be required.

Having sustainable outlets for separated materials will always reduce the council's risk. Additional processing (beyond simple separation) such as cleaning, flaking or pelletising the plastic, would increase its value and open up more markets for processing. There is space next to the MRF for this, but it would again require significant investment. Talks are ongoing with plastic processors. It may make sense for a business to be set up alongside a recycled plastic source, process the plastic 'on site' then supply the manufacturing-ready feedstock to a nearby plant.

Future Considerations

The task group recommends that the Waste service be supported to take these opportunities forward with the support of Lancashire Renewables where costs can be kept (over a five year timescale) neutral or would produce savings; and where diversion from landfill of plastic can be increased.

Conclusions

Reducing plastic and being environmentally responsible is a significant issue and one that over the past few years has increasingly gained more media exposure and coverage as the public become more educated on the issues and consequences of plastics. The Government has just launched the Resources and Waste Strategy which is aimed at making the UK a world leader in resource efficiency and as such sets out for local authorities the Government's approach to reducing waste, promoting markets for secondary materials, incentivising producers to design better products and how we can better manage materials at the end of life by targeting environmental impacts.

Communication and education about recycling and reducing plastic waste is fundamental to making changes, both internal and external to the county council. A large contribution to this needs to be made by schools by educating the youth of today, this will support long term change in mind set and actions. School Forums, Governing Bodies and the Head of Service for Learning Skills need to be engaged as part of this process. The impact of how education from an early age can make a difference is evident, for example in Germany where they are regarded as the best in the world at recycling.

The task group welcomes the research work conducted by a Lancaster University student, and it is encouraging to see that a number of the short and medium term recommendations are in line with proposals already being considered by Services as part of this review.

Whilst reducing or eliminating SUP is the key objective of this task group, it is acknowledged that waste in general and the need to reduce and recycle waste as an authority is important. The Waste service has estimated that there is the potential to

save more than 50,000 tonnes of waste that is currently going into landfill when it should be recycled. If Lancashire collectively recycled more we could potentially save around £4m a year which could make a big contribution to balancing the budget for the county council. The Waste service is working closely with Corporate Communications on a campaign to promote best practice and to encourage Lancashire residents to recycle more. Further opportunities to accept more plastic waste, investigate secondary processing alongside the MRF and reducing the amount of waste in the reject stream are being recommended to be explored further.

In order to make a significant difference across Lancashire it is necessary to engage with district and borough councils, statutory partners, businesses and citizens to adopt a truly Lancashire wide SUP free strategy. The Lancashire Waste Partnership is already being engaged and will continue to play a role in this transformation.

The work of the task group has initiated considerable debate and much positive action has already taken place as a result of the enquiries to help the county council become as plastic free as possible. The task group acknowledge that a number of the objectives are longer term ones that can only be implemented once existing supplies and contracts come to an end. Understanding the financial implications and any other potential risks of changes to existing products and suppliers will need to be considered by Services.

Actions Implemented

Since the Full Council resolution and as a result of the issues raised by the task group a number of important actions have already been implemented, including:

- All plastic cups in the County Hall complex for staff and in public areas such as the Committee Floor have been replaced with glassware.
- The sandwich packaging for sandwiches in Reflections café have been changed to a new material which is fully biodegradable.
- The tea/coffee mugs have been replaced and are now fully biodegradable.
- All plastic soft drinks bottles have been replaced by canned drinks.
- Takeaway food boxes have been replaced and are now fully biodegradable.
- The tea spoon/stirrers have been replaced and are now fully biodegradable.
- The takeaway cutlery have been replaced and are now fully biodegradable.
- Information about the changes are being shared with staff as and when they are implemented so that they are aware.
- HWRCs have extended the type of plastics they collect to include pots, tubs and trays.

The work of officers in responding to the task group and taking forward these important initiatives is extremely positive and demonstrates a genuine commitment at all levels of the county council to respond to the problems created by SUPs in an innovative and positive way.

Recommendations

This report reflects the views and recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the county council. In many cases, suggestions are made for further consideration to be given to issues, and this would need to include a full assessment of the legal and financial risks and implications.

The task and finish group recommends that the relevant Cabinet Member:

Short Term

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

Medium Term

5. Develops a robust strategy to make Lancashire County Council a SUP free authority, where possible and feasible.
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
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.
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.
9. Sets up a measureable target for reducing SUPs, internal to the county council.

10. Involves and consults with the Lancashire Waste Partnership and the district councils so that a joined up and coherent approach to reducing SUP across Lancashire is enabled.
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.
12. Investigates proposals from the Waste 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.
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.

Longer Term

14. Continues 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

The task group is grateful for the support and advice of those who provided information and evidence to support its work.

Abbreviations and terminology

Gateway 5s	Contract Extension Gateways
EMF	Ellen MacArthur Foundation
HWRC	Household Waste Recycling Centres
MRF	Material Recovery Facility
PIPs	Procurement Initiative Plans
SUPs	Single Use Plastics
WRAP	The Waste and Resources Action Programme

Appendix A – Procurement Contracts

Green – action has already been taken and re-procurement of the contract will remove the requirement for SUP.

Amber – medium term action, ongoing discussions with both service area and suppliers to identify alternative products where possible.

Blue – longer term action, currently no alternative provision identified but the position will continue to be reviewed.

Contract	Main Products/Detail	Recyclable	Main Customer(s)	Contract End Date	Comments/Action Being Taken
Catering Disposables	Plastic Cups, Soup Cartons/Lids, Disposable Cutlery, Plates and Bowls	Majority of material is recyclable but not widely recycled within the UK	Head of Service Facilities Management (Reflections) Head of Service Learning and Skills - Catering Services (School Kitchens and Care Homes)	31/05/2020	Wider removal of disposable cutlery plates, bowls and soup cartons etc. would need to be discussed and agreed with service area. On-going work with service area to address how these can be removed from the contract. Alternative products are available but may have quality and cost implications.
Cleaning Materials	Variety of Cleaning Products, packaging of which is mainly	Majority of packaging (once cleaned) can be	Head of Facilities Management (Office Cleaning)	31/03/2020 Option to Extend to	No alternative packaging currently available across the supply chain due to the

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	plastic	recycled within the UK.	Head of Service Learning and Skills - Catering Services (School Kitchens and Care Homes)	31/03/2022	nature of the product that is being stored. This will be reviewed when supply chain has alternative packaging products available.
Fresh Meat	Vacuum Bags and Plastic Trays	Non-Recyclable	Head of Service Learning and Skills - Catering Services (School Kitchen and Care homes) Head of Facilities Management (Reflections)	28/02/2019 Option to Extend to 29/02/2020	Supply chain currently trying to identify alternative products, market place has limited alternative packaging available. Main priority is food hygiene requirements. Alternative packaging would have cost increase implications. On-going discussion with service area.
Cooked Meat	As Above (mainly vacuum packed, some products provided on plastic trays)	Non-Recyclable	Head of Service Learning and Skills - Catering Services (School Kitchen and Care homes) Head of Facilities Management (Reflections)	30/04/2019	As Above.
Cheese	Plastic Bag or	Non-Recyclable	Head of Service Learning and Skills -		Manufacturers have not confirmed any alternative

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	Plastic Tray		Catering Services (School Kitchen and Care homes) Head of Facilities Management (Reflections)		to the plastic bag packaging. No alternative products currently available within the supply chain. Review when supply chain has alternative packaging available.
Soft Drinks	Plastic Bottles	Top volume items are either 50% or 100% recyclable (bottle tops not recyclable)	Head of Learning and Skills - Catering Services (School Kitchens) Head of Facilities Management (Reflections)	30/09/2019 Option to Extend to 30/09/2021	Need to work closely with catering services and school units to identify alternative items. May have cost increase implications. On-going discussions with service area.
Water (Large Bottled Cooler Units)	Cooler Units are fully recyclable (not classed as single use). Disposable plastic cups provided for drinking purposes	Disposable Plastic Cups – Not recyclable.	Head of Facilities Management (Office use)	28/02/2019	Plastic cups have been removed from use and are no longer purchased. Re-tender of contract will not include the provision of disposable plastic cups.
Stationery	Not classed as true single use products, however, a number of plastic items are purchased, consisting mainly	Not widely recyclable	Head of Procurement - Authority Wide	31/01/2020	Discussions to take place with supplier to identify alternatives to plastic wallets and folders. Currently there are no available alternatives to

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	of: Pens (various sorts), Plastic Document Wallets and Folders				plastic pens across the supply chain. On-going review of contract.
First Aid and Medical	Disposable Aprons, Vinyl/Latex Gloves	Not widely recyclable	Head of Facilities Management - Care Homes	31/03/2019 Option to Extend to 31/03/2021	Currently limited or no alternatives to disposable aprons/gloves available across the supply chain. Discussion to take place with supplier to identify alternatives where possible.