

Internal Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Friday, 22 April 2022

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Corporate Priorities:
Protecting our environment;

Single-Use Plastics Policy - Update

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Brief Summary

This report provides an update on activity to reduce the use of single-use plastics by the county council, following the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group in 2019.

The report provides an update on the short-, medium-, and long-term actions suggested including actions undertaken. It also recognises the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to progression of activity and the use of plastics in the county council's pandemic response.

Recommendation

The Internal Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and consider whether there are any issues arising from the report which should be considered for future scrutiny as part of the annual work planning process.

Detail

Over the last four years, problems relating to single-use plastics and their environmental impact have been well documented.

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 in Lancashire. Following this meeting, Cabinet agreed to invite Overview and Scrutiny to establish a Task Group to review the matter. The Task Group looked at the following objectives:

- 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 single-use plastic 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 plastics, 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 single-use plastic 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 single-use plastic products.

The Task Group made a number of recommendations, which included short-medium- and long-term actions, as set out below. This report is intended to provide an update on activity undertaken with regards to single-use plastics, whilst recognising the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Short Term

1. Produce 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 single-use plastic products.
2. Share key messages from the single-use plastic campaign with businesses and partners across Lancashire with the support of Head of Business Service Growth using social media and other methods.
3. Engage with the School Forum, Governing Bodies and the Head of Service for Learning and Skills to initiate discussions with schools about the single-use plastic campaign and the need to reduce single-use plastics across Lancashire.
4. Share a copy of the Task Group's report with District and Borough Councils to initiate and inform wider discussions about the single-use plastic campaign in Lancashire.

Medium Term

5. Develop a robust strategy to make Lancashire County Council a single-use plastic free authority, where possible and feasible.
6. Continue discussions with suppliers and services in regard to alternative products that can be used and an understanding of cost implications for the following contracts:
 - a. Fresh meats
 - b. Cooked meats

- c. Soft drinks
 - d. Stationary
7. Hold 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. Invest in moveable signs that can help deter the public from littering from their cars and reminding them to be responsible with their waste.
 9. Set up a measurable target for reducing single-use plastics, internal to the county council.
 10. Involve and consult with the Lancashire Waste Partnership and the district councils so that a joined up and coherent approach to reducing single-use plastics 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. Investigate 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 Household Waste Recycling Centres
 - b. Working towards accepting more doorstep collected plastics
 - c. Investigating secondary processing alongside the Material Recovery Facilities
 - d. Reducing the amount of plastics in the reject stream at the Material Recovery Facilities
 - e. Undertaking plastic-specific education and communication campaigns during 2019
 13. Consider 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. Continue discussions with suppliers over the following contracts and when alternative products are available on the market, for these to be considered:
 - a. Cleaning materials
 - b. First aid and medical
 - c. Cheese packaging

Actions Undertaken

Noting that aspects of the following list have previously been reported to the Internal Scrutiny Committee, the county council has already:

- Ceased use of single-use plastic cutlery etc. in café facilities. In total 24 items have been replaced with sustainable alternatives, ranging from plastic forks through to food trays.
- Stopped selling soft drinks in plastic bottles (water is an exception that is being reviewed, but it should be noted that filtered/chilled water is available in offices and at canteens).
- Ensured the use of glasses rather than plastic cups at county council cafes and at meetings.
- Ensured takeaway coffee cups are compostable or fully recyclable.
- Undertaken a communications campaign to encourage the cessation of single-use plastic usage. This will be refreshed as post-pandemic office usage increases and posters will be updated / campaign relaunched.
- Shared messages with business partners, especially linked to procurement activity
- Engaged with the Schools' Forum.
- Shared the Task Group's report with district and borough councils. Most Lancashire councils have now produced resolutions, guidance, or policies to reduce single-use plastics.
- Undertaken discussions with suppliers and services in regard to alternative products, in order to avoid single-use plastics usage.
- For food and drink, included specific clauses within contracts that require food to be supplied in recyclable packaging, requested that products are supplied in the least amount of packaging possible and that products must be supplied in clear plastic packaging. Suppliers are asked to support the Council in its aims to reduce single-use plastics.
- For stationery, the current contract has been in place since February 2020. As part of the contract specification the supplier is obligated to meet certain environmental and sustainability requirements (where possible) including the obligation to reduce all forms of waste, use recyclable materials, and minimise packaging. Goods are also required to be delivered in suitable and preferably recycled packaging.
- Regarding cleaning materials, the current contract expires at the end of May 2022 and the new contract is currently being re-tendered. The following requirements have been included in the invitation to tender:
 - i) Tenderers are encouraged to offer products which
 - Use recyclable and minimum packaging;
 - Have minimum impact on the environment; and

- Have Ecological (ECO) labelling information.
- ii) In addition, the specification states that:
 - Goods shall be delivered in suitable and preferably recycled packaging;
 - In specific relation to Plastic Refuse Sacks, a tenderer's submitted product must meet a specifically stated minimum amount of recycled materials (varies from product to product); and
 - As part of the scored quality criteria, tenderers are also required to advise how they will assist the Council in achieving their social value objectives in relation to promoting environmental sustainability, including detail around recycling/reduced waste, types of packaging and environmentally friendly products.
- For First Aid and medical, the current contract has been in place since September 2021. As part of the contract specification the supplier is obligated to meet certain environmental and sustainability requirements (where possible) including the obligation to reduce all forms of waste, use recyclable materials and minimise packaging. Goods are also required to be delivered in suitable and preferably recycled packaging.
- Regarding waste issues:
 - i) The Task Group's report was circulated to the Lancashire Waste Partnership and a presentation given. Each district was encouraged to look what they have in place in their own buildings etc.
 - ii) The Environment Act was passed in November 2021 and is the means by which the Government will deliver its strategy through the development of new regulations. Government consulted on three major waste issues in March 2021 and the outcome is awaited. The regulatory requirements from any emerging legislation continue to be monitored.
 - iii) All plastics are accepted at Household Waste Recycling Centres
 - iv) In 2019/20, the collection of pots, tubs and trays in doorstep collections was facilitated across Lancashire
 - v) Secondary processes were introduced in the Material Recovery Facility to recover recyclable materials from reject streams in 2019. This involved the pre-sorting of glass in advance of the Material Recovery Facility process which increased its capacity and allowed the reject streams to be reprocessed. The waste company also had a savings target of £0.258m in 2019/20 in relation to this.
 - vi) Plastic-specific education and communication campaigns have been undertaken. This was built into the general communications programme in 2019 and included a video regarding the life of a plastic

bottle. The wider waste communications programme is to be revisited from April 2022 (note this is waste in general, not just in relation to single-use plastics).

vii) Movable signs have not been implemented due to issues relating to the practicality of placement / putting out / collecting and the risk of the county council being accused of cluttering / littering, as well as the potential for land ownership issues and possible advertisement consent requirements.

- Bite size briefings have been held and further can be scheduled.
- The council has also agreed to the ambition to transition the Lancashire economy away from carbon by 2030, address the biodiversity crisis, while also protecting against poverty and improving social inclusion. Actions in relation to single-use plastics will contribute to our efforts.
- The first Lancashire Climate Summit was held in March 2022. This saw leaders from Lancashire County Council, district and unitary councils, the Environment Agency and other local organisations meet to consider ideas that will help Lancashire to reach net zero carbon emissions and adapt to the changing climate.

Defra Consultations

In November 2021, the Government issued consultation relating to Single-Use Plastics. This proposed to ban:

- Plastic plates;
- Plastic cutlery;
- Plastic balloon sticks;
- Expanded and extruded polystyrene food containers; and
- Expanded and extruded polystyrene beverage containers, including cups.

The Government has also held a separate consultation on deposit schemes for drinks containers. The outcomes are being monitored.

Single-Use Plastics Policy Statement

The Single-Use Plastics Policy Statement is intended to highlight the next steps as the county council moves toward being a non-single-use plastics council. An outline of the emerging draft statement is provided at Appendix A. This will be accompanied by a more detailed action plan, which will clarify actions and timescales.

Consultations

The draft policy statement will be subject to consultation and the Cabinet will be made aware of comments received prior to its finalisation and adoption.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Financial

It is recognised that sourcing alternatives to single-use plastics can add costs to our operations. This will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis and it is hoped that, as more organisations pursue these options, cost impacts will reduce. As an example – providing alternatives to single-use plastics by the Facilities Management Service for catering has resulted in a 38% increase in cost (January 2022), however the amount in question was more modest, with a £304 increase. In this instance costs have been incorporated into the sale prices. The impact of any changes will be monitored to ensure performance of the business is not affected and the budgeted contribution to overheads is maintained.

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

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		