

Lancashire County Council

Draft Single-Use Plastics Policy

April 2022

Introduction

The environmental impact of plastics pollution has been well documented over recent years. This policy statement is intended to commit Lancashire County Council to continue to act to remove and reduce the use of Single-Use Plastic from our operations and services, as well as working with our community and businesses towards finding positive solutions for reducing unnecessary waste.

'Single-use plastic' is a wide-ranging term. It includes all products made wholly or partly of plastic, which are typically intended to be used just once and / or for a short period of time before being disposed of.

Concerns relating to single-use plastics are primarily:

- The impact of plastic pollution through litter and improper disposal of waste. This is a global and local issue that affects the natural and urban environment, the oceans, beaches and links to people's health and wellbeing. The impact goes beyond aesthetic problems caused by litter and includes impacts on livestock and wildlife, including impacts such as microplastics that potentially affect the food chain.
- Plastic is a major contributor to climate change, with chemicals derived from fossil fuel production used to make almost all plastics.

National Policy Context

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.

Lancashire County Council's Corporate Strategy

Our Corporate Strategy (adopted in 2019) establishes our vision:

'Here at Lancashire County Council, we are helping you to make Lancashire the best place to live, to work, visit and prosper'

Reducing the impact of single-use plastics contributes to a number of the objectives set out in the Strategy:

- **Lancashire will be the place to live**, through:
 - Improving the quality of life and our environment
- **Lancashire being a great place to do business and invest**, through:

Appendix A

- Providing clarity for Lancashire business regarding best practice and establishing clear expectations for our suppliers. We will work with our suppliers to develop best practice.
- **Lancashire will be the place to visit, through:**
 - The protection of our urban and rural areas plus our coastlines from the littering impacts arising from single use plastic use.
- **Lancashire being the place where everyone acts responsibly, through:**
 - Reducing plastic pollution with the associated environmental and health gains
 - Ensuring we spend public money wisely in order to minimise the impacts of plastic waste and help minimise disposal costs
 - Ensuring that we learn from national and international best practice and work with our district colleagues to address these issues.

In 2021 the council supplemented the Corporate Strategy by setting out four key corporate priorities:

- **Delivering Better Services**
- **Protecting Our Environment**
- **Supporting Economic Growth**
- **Caring for the Vulnerable**

This policy supports these priorities by finding good environmental alternatives to plastics, minimising waste, helping to create new markets for alternative products. We also need to recognise that in protecting our most vulnerable residents, we often rely on single-use plastics for Personal Protective Equipment for both staff and residents and plastics can also be necessarily linked to care arrangements. We recognise the need to respect the needs of our vulnerable citizens in the application of this policy.

Further consideration is also required in respect of the role of plastics within the food industry. Plastic packaging helps in extending the shelf life of food, reducing unnecessary food waste, whilst also protecting food from chemical, bacterial, and physical cross contamination. We recognise the importance of adherence to food legislation in the application of this policy.

It should be noted that this approach has been shaped by the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic response, especially in relation to staff and public protection and the ongoing need for some single-use plastic products in exceptional circumstances. Even pre-pandemic, this was recognised as an issue by the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group.

Where products are deemed essential, we will however:

- Continue to seek alternatives;
- Ensure that, wherever possible, the product used is recyclable and that we do recycle it; and
- If not recyclable, we will ensure disposal using best environmental practice.

Our Policy

We will act to remove and reduce the use of single-use plastics from our operations and services as well as working towards finding positive solutions for reducing unnecessary waste.

Our Approach

A single-use plastics action plan will be produced by September 2022, which will focus on the following objectives:

1. Leadership
 - a. Continue to work with our communities, district councils, public sector colleagues and businesses to identify and implement opportunities to reduce single-use plastics use and waste.
 - b. Work with our supply chains to identify alternatives to single-use plastics including a requirement that suppliers support/assist the council in meeting our objectives.
 - c. Use our procurement power to help develop alternative solutions to single-use plastics.
2. Commitment:
 - a. To purchase alternatives wherever viable options exist.
 - b. To continue to identify single-use plastic usage in our operations and find suitable alternatives
 - c. To ban the use of Chinese lanterns and helium balloons on county council land and premises. For those occupying premises under an existing lease, they will remain subject to the terms of that agreement, and we cannot unilaterally change them until the lease is renewed. We will however seek to get early agreement with occupiers wherever possible. Schools are also responsible for their own operational premise management, however we will also ask schools to agree to this approach.
 - d. To continue to work with the waste industry to develop recycling opportunities and develop best environmental options for disposal.
3. Recognition that some usage is currently unavoidable, however where this is the case:
 - a. We will encourage the use of recycled plastics, ideally supporting manufacturers that make products from locally sourced waste plastics.
 - b. We will ensure that, wherever possible, the product used is recycled.
 - c. We will ensure best available environmental disposal where recycling is not possible.
4. Supporting:
 - a. Event organisers to eliminate single-use plastics across all events held on county council land and share guidance for this more widely.
 - b. Our staff, communities, and businesses by sharing best practice, raising awareness, and promoting positive initiatives, campaigns and actions for reducing waste.