



Subject:	Single-use coffee cups & plastic items on Council sites
Date:	22 nd June 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director, City & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Tim Walker, Head of Waste Management Peter McKay, Facilities Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To report to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee regarding the use of single-use items for the Council, such as coffee cups and straws versus re-useable items of crockery and cutlery and to seek guidance on the next steps.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the contents of this report and to consider next steps.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Background At the SP&R Committee meeting in January 2018, Councillor McReynolds referred to the recently published Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) report into the impact of disposable coffee cups in the UK and asked the Council to consider the following motion " <i>This Council</i>

welcomes the recent report by the Environmental Audit Committee into the impact of disposable coffee cups in the United Kingdom; acknowledges the impact they are having on the environment given that 2.5 billion are thrown away each year with many ending up in landfill; agrees to replace current coffee cups on council sites with compostable cups.”

3.2 The Committee agreed that a report on the replacement of current coffee cups with compostable cups on Council sites be submitted to a future meeting. It also agreed that a report on the Council’s use of plastic materials be submitted to the future meeting.

3.3 Further to this Notice of Motion, in April a councillor sent a letter to the Chief Executive raising concerns around plastic polluting the seas and, in particular, the problem of plastic straws. In the letter, the councillor noted the Council’s success in tackling recycling and asked for the Council to give consideration to banning single-use plastic straws across Council properties.

Context

3.4 In recent months, there has been considerable public and media interest in plastics and their fate. As part of the Circular Economy package (CEP), new recycling targets have been introduced for municipal waste (55% by 2025, 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035) and are now awaiting transcription into local legislation. As part of this package, the EU announced proposals to restrict the use of single-use plastic products which would affect the sale of plastic plates, cutlery, stirrers and straws, sticks for balloons and cotton buds with plastic stalks. Some items (plastic bottles, food containers, wrappers/packaging, sanitary towels/wet wipes, balloons, lightweight plastic bags and cigarette filters) would not be banned, but subject to financial measures to encourage industry to reconsider their business model and/or pay for collection and clean-up costs of these items. The aim is to affect the design of these items and ask manufacturers to consider if there are sustainable alternatives. In terms of single-use plastic bottles, the CEP will mean Governments have to ensure that 90% of these are collected for recycling by 2025.

3.5 This plastic bottle target is in part a response to China's ban on importing plastics waste and the EU aim is to either cease production of these single-use items or to develop volumes which would support a plastic remanufacture industry. Similar plastic strategies have been drafted either within the context of the Circular Economy or as standalone items and, by way of example and in response to the EAC report, HM Treasury issued a call for evidence regarding the possible introduction of a tax on single-use plastic (SUP) waste in March. On behalf of the constituent councils, arc21 submitted a response.

3.6	<p>This reply (which is included in full in Appendix 1) made several points, of which the most salient to Belfast are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ arc21 broadly agrees with the report’s definition of single-use plastics but considers that there should be exclusions for compostable liners and other containers used in the collection of food waste – WRAP research has shown their use results in greater food waste capture ▪ single-use plastics are often the only option for consumers as it is unusual for consumers to have a choice between buying products packaged in single-use plastic and the same product sold either loose or packaged in more sustainable materials, and ▪ the plastic bag levy in NI demonstrated that consumers can be responsive to price changes allied to strong environmental evidence, even if the price change is relatively minor. <p>The Council’s Canteen</p>
3.7	<p>Returning to the Council, Facilities Management reports that one of the principal reasons for using single-use plastics and other disposables in the canteen and on the trolley services in the three city centre buildings is the significant costs which would be incurred if they had to replace crockery and cutlery on an ongoing basis as much of this previously went missing. This topic gets raised periodically through the Council’s Question Time Forum and the following points have consistently been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>“our customers, especially those on the lower end of the salary scales, are very much price sensitive and some will not be prepared to pay the additional cost for using compostable disposables</i> ▪ <i>we priced these disposables out and the additional costs are significant</i> ▪ <i>our waste at the back-end is reduced as most of our dishes are freshly made and we don’t purchase a lot of processed foods, which normally have a lot of packaging</i> ▪ <i>we also minimize food waste by not over producing and re-using food which is safe and of a high standard in other menu dishes”</i>
3.8	<p>Further to this, in 2017 the expenditure on single-use items which could be swapped with crockery was £4K, while £1K was spent of missing crockery. Standard practice from canteen staff is to ask customers if they are sitting-in or taking-out with a view to encouraging the use of crockery for those sitting-in and to minimize the cutlery being removed from the Atrium.</p>

3.9	Crockery has further additional costs over single-use items including use of detergent, dishwasher repairs and maintenance and power. Moving to compostable cups and other items would incur additional cost for the Council as presently they are more expensive than single-use items.
3.10	<p>The greatest number of single-use items purchased are the 12oz disposables cups for the bean-to-cup machine used in the Atrium which are not included in the above figures as it is considered that there would be H&S issues should customers choose to use their own cups which could prove to be incorrectly sized, plus keeping the single-use cups with this machine assists in the control of payments from customers. The possibility of encouraging people to bring their own mugs or to purchase a branded reusable mug have been discussed within Facilities Management but to date it has been considered that it would be extremely difficult to control portion sizes, or for catering staff to challenge customers who brought coffee from the staff kitchens located elsewhere in the Cecil Ward Building (CWB) or 9 Adelaide Street.</p> <p>“Sort it out” Materials & Educational Campaign:</p>
3.11	The internal waste management arrangements for CWB were optimised in 2014-15, raising the recycling rate from 39% to 50% – and supported on the Council’s homepage and by an educational campaign for all staff to “Sort it out”. There may be some scope to increase this as the Council’s facilities are served by the Commercial Waste collection service which has a new contract bringing commercial waste recycling in line with what is offered to households in Belfast (mixed dry recyclables include plastic pots and trays, as well as paper, cardboard, cans and plastic bottles which can now all be included in the blue recycling deskside bins).
3.12	This 2014-15 optimisation exercise did not include single-use plastics due to complications in terms of cost, and customer behaviours (disappearing cutlery and crockery). It is also obvious that the Atrium’s customers’ habits have deteriorated in recent years probably not helped by office moves and staff turnover, &c. In this regard, the recent report on Water Refill Points is also of relevance here (see Appendix 2).
3.13	This approach builds upon previous voluntary bans on single-use items on Council premises, such as balloons, which was approved by the Health & Environmental Services Committee meeting in November 2008 (see Appendix 3).

Approaches from Other Councils:

- 3.14 Other councils have been considering how to tackle single-use items and there are now several examples of good or best practice. For example, **Cork City Council** is introducing an office ban on the use of single-use coffee cups by ceasing to provide disposable cups within Council buildings. In their place, the Council is distributing free reusable cups to staff at Cork City Hall. If staff forget their “*keep cups*”, they will have to pay 20 cent extra to use one of the crockery cups available in the Council’s canteen (see <https://greennews.ie/cork-city-council-ban-coffee-cups-offices/>).
- 3.15 Similarly, **Oxford City Council** is planning to take its first step towards stopping using single-use plastics, such as straws and cups with a complete ban on these items in Council buildings. This Council hopes that other businesses will follow their lead and cut back on the amount of plastic used and thrown away in the city (see http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/15674949.Could_Oxford_City_be_about_to_ditch_plastic_for_good_/). It is thought that by adopting such an approach, Oxford will become the first UK city to ban non-recyclable food containers. Demonstrating how this is applied, all street vendors will be required to use recyclable or biodegradable food containers in order to reduce the amount of waste the city sends to landfill (see <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/oxford-becomes-first-uk-city-to-ban-non-recyclable-plastic-food-containers-10174601.html>).
- 3.16 In 2016, **Bristol City Council** proposed to itself “*single-use plastic-free*” and to develop a strategy to encourage and enable the city’s institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures. The Council recognized that this would require changes in policy and Council leadership/championing to reduce their use of single-use plastics (SUP). Specifically, the Council would:
- end sales of SUP bottles in Council buildings and phase out their use at all events hosted in Council-owned buildings, both public and private
 - end the use of other SUP products in council buildings starting with, but not limited to, “*disposable*” cups, cutlery and drinking straws
 - ensure re-usable and affordable food containers are available for sale in public markets – to be piloted by the Council’s city centre market
 - work with the Festivals Team and create policy in which single-use cups are replaced at all festivals with reusable or deposit scheme cups (this would ultimately be a licence condition for large events)

- work with tenants in the Council’s commercial properties to phase-out SUP glasses, bottles, cutlery and straws and help them to engage with “Go Green’s” methodology
- work with bars and cafes to phase-out single-use cups and to encourage the use of reusable and deposit scheme ones.
- encourage, enable and aid all employees and councilors to engage with the Plastic Free July challenge.”

Many of these pledges were captured on the City-to-the-Sea website (see <https://www.citytosea.org.uk/getting-the-council-to-do-its-bit-in-cutting-single-use-plastics/#1>).

3.17 Councils are not the only public sector organisations addressing this issue. Last month, the Scottish Government banned single-use cups, and hot drinks will be served in reusable ceramic mugs in cafes and canteens at their offices instead. Staff have also been encouraged to bring in their own mugs for takeaways. The government said the move would prevent 450,000 plastic cups from being thrown away each year (see <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/plastic-coffee-cup-ban-single-use-scotland-government-buildings-roseanna-cunningham-a8375521.html>).

3.18 Elsewhere, **Brisbane City Council** has announced it’s about to become one of Australia’s most environmentally friendly councils after committing to ban plastic straws, helium balloons and single-use bottles (see <http://www.news.com.au/technology/environment/conservation/brisbane-city-council-announces-ban-on-plastic-straws-balloons-and-singleuse-bottles/news-story/99c8af5b049a9c30e5e761a0bf7003f5>).

3.19 In NI last November, **Ards & North Down Borough Council** adopted a Notice of Motion to recognise the importance to reduce waste, society’s increasing reliance on plastic and the resultant rise in the amount of plastic which ends up in the oceans and on beaches. At the meeting, ANDBC councillors were also asked to support an “*end to use single use plastics*” and for the Council to promote eco-friendly alternatives. Currently, research is being done to consider the best way for this decision to be implemented and a report will be re-presented to the Council in shortly (see <https://www.sustainableni.org/blog/ards-and-north-down-council-bans-single-use-plastics>).

3.20	<p>Returning to Belfast, Members should note that responsibility for managing internal waste does not rest with any one service. The provision of cups and crockery lies with Facilities Management's Catering Services, whereas the policy landscape and provision of public services rests with Waste Management. While my Service is keen to lead by example, most of its focus is externally driven on changing public attitudes and behaviours (there has been notable changes in these areas over the years). If Members wish to reduce single-use items within the Council, then resources will need to be identified to work across the Council and develop viable proposals.</p>
3.21	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>Committee is asked to consider each of the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ implementation of a loyalty card or discount scheme for the reuse of standardised (for H&S) and branded reusable coffee mugs ▪ incentives for the use of reusable crockery and their return to the canteen ▪ a ban on Council premises of specific single-use plastic items. <p>It is recommended that the following steps are taken:</p>
3.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ research policies elsewhere regarding single-use plastics ▪ research single-use plastics throughout the Council ▪ establish a project team to explore implementation of bans on certain items/incentivising reuse ▪ the Council promote voluntary initiatives through existing communications channels ▪ that KPIs are developed to monitor performance and permit adjustment ▪ further report be submitted providing detailed costed options and analysis.
3.23	<p><u>Finance & Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Members should be aware that any subsequent changes of policy in the context of the above information will likely have a significant budget implication. No specific financial resources have been set aside within the current budgets for 2018/19.</p> <p><u>Equality Implications</u></p> <p>There are no equality implications contained in this report.</p>

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4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1a&b – arc21 report on Treasury call for evidence on addressing single-use plastic waste and submission</p> <p>Appendix 2 – People & Communities Committee report of 5 June, 2018: Water Refill Points - Response to Notice of Motion</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Health & Environmental Services Committee report of 5 November, 2008: Balloon Releases at Council Events</p>