



Subject:	Single Use Items
Date:	3 December 2019
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Alison Allen, Neighbourhood Services 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 respond to a notice of motion from the 20 September Strategic Policy and Resources Committee calling for the elimination of single use items and an overall review of the Council's purchasing of materials and internal waste management;
1.2	<i>'This Council recognises the significant detrimental effect that single use items have in Belfast; calls for the creation of an internal strategy to do away with single use item usage; and, agrees to review our internal waste policies alongside supporting any resulting recommendations with appropriate funding and necessary resources'</i>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The committee is asked to approve the following recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The implementation of a centralised recycling and waste collection system for the entire Council estate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To broaden the remit of the Social Values working group to consider how to eradicate single use items through more effective purchasing procedures, assessed against the waste hierarchy and the wider sustainable agenda. • To participate with Queen’s University Belfast in the application of ESPRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences research Council) funding in the establishment of Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centre to better inform future Council decision making).
3.0	Main report
	<p><u>Background and Context</u></p> <p>3.1 The issue of single use plastics has come to the forefront of public attention as a result of BBC’s ‘The Blue Planet’ programme which highlighted the stark consequences of our failure to manage the plastic we produce to meet our daily needs. However, we must ensure that we focus our attention on the issue of single use as simply substituting plastics with other single use items i.e. paper does not necessarily lead to better environmental outcomes with regard to either littering or CO2 production.</p> <p>3.2 We must not lose sight of how plastic has transformed our lives and plays a significant role in reducing pollution in other areas. The problem stems from society and policy makers having limited regard for the wider ramifications of unfettered plastic consumption combined with poor collection and disposal infrastructure.</p> <p>3.3 Commendably the Council continues to invest heavily in behaviour change through the creation of outreach teams for both littering and recycling plus accompanying advertising budgets, resulting in recycling rates currently at 44% and litter behaviour decreasing year on year. Further work is required within both the council and our communities to reduce the amount of waste we produce and improving the capture of ever more items for recycling.</p> <p>3.4 Both the EU and UK governments have taken the issue of single use plastics and sought to build a policy framework that EU member states and the UK to can work towards to eliminate their use.</p> <p>3.5 As part of the Circular Economy Package adopted in early 2018, the European Commission is working on a directive to influence the demand, usage and disposal of the</p>

top 10 most commonly littered SUP items found in seas. The Single Use Plastic Directive which was adopted on the 5 June 2019 includes the following initiatives;

- Plastic reduction: Member States should adopt the necessary measures to reduce the consumption of single-use plastic products by 2026 compared to 2022 (through reduction
- Targets, measures encouraging re-usable alternatives, economic instruments, marketing restrictions, etc.).
- Plastics ban: Member States should prohibit the sale by 03/07/2021 of: cutlery, plates, straws, cotton buds.
- Drinking bottles: From 2025, beverage bottles (PET bottles) should contain at least 25% recycled plastic; and from 2030 should contain at least 30% recycled plastic.
- Caps and lids: Should remain attached to the containers during the use stage.
- Marking: Every single-use plastic product should contain info on 1) appropriate waste management options and 2) acknowledge the presence of plastics in the product and the resulting negative impact of littering by 3 July 2021.
- Separate collection: Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure the separate collection for recycling: 1) by 2025, 77% of waste single-use plastic products placed on the market in a given year by weight and 2) by 2029, 90% of waste single-use plastic products. In order to achieve that objective, Member States could: (a) establish deposit-refund schemes; (b) establish separate collection targets for relevant extended producer responsibility schemes.

3.6 The above is expected to be integrated into UK law after withdrawal from the EU.

3.7 The UK government via DEFRA has published its own requirements in the Waste and Resources Strategy (December 2018)

- Invoking the polluter pays principle and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging, ensuring that producers pay the full costs of disposal for packaging they place on the market.

- Stimulating demand for recycled plastic by introducing a tax on plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled plastic.
- Setting minimum requirements through eco-design to encourage resource-efficient product design.
- Incentivising consumers to purchase sustainably, for example by consulting on extending and increasing the carrier bag charge.
- Providing consumers with better information on the sustainability of their purchases through better product labelling.
- Continuing the ban on the most problematic SUP products (where there is a clear case for it and alternatives exist) in a systematic approach.
- Addressing barriers to reuse, repair and remanufacture.
- Introducing a deposit return scheme (DRS) for single-use drinks containers, subject to consultation.
- Developing measures to reduce the environmental impacts of disposable cups.
- Producing consumer guidance for the recycling, resale, reuse and disposal of consumer internet-connected devices.
- Leading by example by procuring more sustainably and requiring all government bodies to remove consumer SUP products from government estate by 2020.

3.8

The UK Government's new planned actions are ambitious and will potentially result in drastic changes to the way waste management is currently handled by local authorities. The 'polluter pays' principle in particular is expected to take financial burden away from taxpayers, which could benefit local authorities significantly.

3.9

DAERA have also recently conducted a number of consultations on Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) and EPR for Northern Ireland and are currently updating the Waste Management Strategy to reflect the changing legislative framework.

Internal Improvements

- 3.10 From an internal Council perspective, the Recycling Outreach team have worked with the Catering section to implement a series of changes that has resulted in significant change to staff behaviour in the Atrium restaurant in the Cecil Ward Building. During European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) 2018 the teams actions dramatically impacted the number of single use disposable paper and plastic cups resulting in the following
- Single use paper coffee cup usage has fallen by 80% (3500 cups per month to just 750)
 - 70% of customers are using their own cup from almost none before November 2018
 - Complete eradication of the single use plastic cups for water
 - Non-recyclable waste has reduced by 1/3 as more food waste is being recycled and less paper cups are being used
- 3.11 And more recently during EWWR 2019 we have eliminated single use condiment sachets for salt, pepper, sugar and red and brown sauces. We are currently looking at methodologies to implement the same across all aspects of catering both internally and externally.
- 3.12 These changes are to be welcomed but do not cover the full spectrum of single use items used or purchased on a daily basis across all Council services. Therefore it is recommended that the Council broaden the scope of the Social Values Working Group to consider the issue of single use items in all future procurement exercises. The Working Group already has sustainability within its remit. It is advised that a suitably qualified officer be appointed to the group to consider these issues as they arise.
- 3.13 This group would work to ensure compliance with the forthcoming legislation but also to promote the Council's leadership within the city and demonstrate its sustainable credentials on the world stage via participation in such events as The Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index) and via its licensing of events across the city.
- 3.14 Another aspect of plastic pollution is inadequate or incorrect use of internal council recycling collection infrastructure. The existing recycling collection system is not always

being used appropriately with higher than acceptable levels of contamination, despite having help shift the internal recycling rate to over 30%. Additionally, this system is only in place across city centre locations with limited recycling infrastructure across the wider Council estate.

3.15 To address this issue, the Recycling Outreach team has implemented a trial of a new centralised collection system within the Cecil Ward Building. The team worked with the cleaning staff to establish a baseline by measuring the limited performance of the current scheme in terms of participation, contamination of the bins and the lost productivity of the cleaning staff in the servicing the existing system.

3.16 The trial both in the Atrium restaurant and 3rd floor of the CWB has resulted in significant increase in the capture of food waste and reduced the levels of contamination. Staff satisfaction with the system has also improved. The scheme has also resulted in reducing the time taken to clean each floor in CWB by 40 minutes. This saving when replicated across CWB, 9 Adelaide and the City Hall would cover the cost of purchasing the new bins within the first year of introduction. Similar schemes have been implemented in Mid & East Antrim, Derry City & Strabane and Mid Ulster in addition to the Stormont estate and numerous other councils across the UK.

3.17 The volume of bins required would necessitate a tender process from the supply of both bin units and bags. It is envisaged that the scheme could be begin to be rolled out from March 2020.

Knowledge Development

3.18 The Recycling Outreach team is regularly asked by both University of Ulster and Queen's University to participate in projects that help further our understanding of the wider sustainability agenda. To this end we are currently a stakeholder on the ACCEPT project seeking to explore the Circular Economic impacts of plastic cycle for Northern Ireland.

3.19 We have now been asked to be a partner in the application for ESPRC –UKRI for a research grant of £4.2 million to establish an Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Centre. The requirement for the Council is to commit officer to assisting in the application and if successful to allow the relevant officers time to help with the research in terms of communication best practice and legislation.

3.20	<p>The committee is requested to approve of the Waste Manager (Education and Business Development) assisting QUB in its current application.</p> <p><u>Finance and Resources Implications</u></p>
3.21	<p>The full cost of introducing the new internal Council recycling collection system would be approximately £26,000. This can be covered from within existing CNS and Facilities Management Unit budgets with phased introduction and taking into account the operational savings from improved recycling management.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.22	<p>None at present, although this will be assessed on an ongoing basis.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 - EU Single Use Plastic Directive - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/904/oj</p> <p>Appendix 2 - UK Waste and Resources Strategy - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765914/resources-waste-strategy-dec-2018.pdf</p> <p>Appendix 3 - The Global Destination Sustainability Index - https://www.europeancitiesmarketing.com/2019-global-destination-sustainability-index-and-awards-released/</p> <p>Appendix 4 - Belfast Event Sustainability Policy</p>