

**Report for:** Cabinet – 15 September 2020

**Title:** Single Use Plastics Policy and Action Plan

**Report authorised by :** David Joyce, Director of Housing, Regeneration & Planning (to be confirmed)

**Lead Officer:** Joe Baker, Head of Carbon Management

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:**

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1. This report seeks adoption of the Single Use Plastics Policies and approval of the Single Use Plastics Action Plans.
- 1.2. These policies set out objectives for the Council around the reduction of Single Use Plastics, both in the Council and across the borough.
- 1.3. These are accompanied with Action Plans that lay out the specific actions taken, being taken, and to be taken to achieve these objectives.

## **2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

8 million tonnes of plastic ends up in the world's oceans every year, killing more than a million sea birds and 100,000 marine mammals. The plastic which we throw away will be a pollutant for hundreds of years, as the benefits of plastic – its durability – makes it a long term pollutant. We need to take action to reduce the use of Single Use Plastics in order to reduce plastic pollution. It is really important that the Council leads in this space and this is an important element of the Council's response to its Climate Emergency Declaration.

This Action Plan is set out into two section. The first setting out how the Council will show leadership and use it procurement powers and purchaser requirements, and its own operational practises to reduce the use of single use plastics in our operations. The second Action Plan sets out how the Council will continue to work with its partners and empower wider Haringey community to empower greater action around the redcuing the use of single use plastics.

### **3. Recommendations**

#### **3.1. For Cabinet to:**

Approve the Single Use Plastics Policies and accompanying Action Plans, attached at Appendices 1 and 2 of this report, which outlines how the Council will reduce Single Use Plastics in the Council and across the borough.

### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1. Haringey Council is committed to doing everything possible to respond to the climate emergency and improve sustainability across its own operations and in the borough of Haringey.
- 4.2. The policies and action plans contribute to the Place Priority of the Borough Plan, specifically objective 10 to make the borough a cleaner, accessible and attractive place – targeting waste minimisation.
- 4.3. Reducing consumption across the Council's offices and the borough will save money, reduce waste, improve our environment and decrease the amount of harmful plastics ending up in the world's oceans or in landfill.
- 4.4. The Single Use Plastics (SUPs) Policies and accompanying Action Plans represent a step towards this by outlining exactly what the Council will be doing to reduce reliance on SUPs within its own offices, on Haringey Council owned land, in Haringey schools, and across the borough.
- 4.5. Haringey Council has already taken bold steps to reduce SUPs, such as working with the North London Waste Authority (NLWA) on a low-plastic zone in Crouch End, reducing SUPs in Council offices and getting businesses signed up to refill schemes.

### **5. Alternative options considered**

#### **5.1. Do Nothing**

This was rejected as it would not comply with the Borough Plan, specifically objective 10 to make the borough a cleaner, accessible and attractive place – targeting waste minimisation.

#### **5.2. Do a Council plan only**

This was rejected, as the Council is well placed to help reduce SUPs beyond its own organisation. To only focus on plastics the Council directly uses would miss opportunities, such as SUPs at events, SUPs in schools and SUPs used by the Council's partners.

#### **5.3. Do a Borough plan only**

This was rejected as the Council can learn from its own experience of reducing SUPs to inform the most effective ways to work in the borough. The Council would not want to offer advice on reducing SUPs if it could not demonstrate its own efforts to reduce SUPs.

## 6. Background information

### 6.1. The problem with plastic waste

- 6.1.1 Community groups, organisations around the country and residents are all concerned about, and attempting to, reduce their own consumption of Single Use Plastics. The Council has listened to these concerns and this report is one way in which the Council is responding.
- 6.1.2 8 million tonnes of plastic ends up in the world's oceans every year, killing more than a million sea birds and 100,000 marine mammals. More than 80% of marine litter is plastics. Plastics take longer than other materials to break down and often break down into smaller, harmful micro-plastics. Single use items, such as plastic bottles or straws, are some of the most commonly found plastics in the world's oceans. These micro plastics get into the food chain and when dried act like a dust. Recent studies have found high levels of micro (less than 5mm in diameter) and nanoplastics (less than 0.001mm) in humans<sup>1</sup>.

### 6.2 National, regional and local context

- 6.2.1 In March 2019 the EU voted to ban single use plastic cutlery, cotton buds, straws and stirrers by 2021. This directive will also ban single-use polystyrene cups and those made from oxo-degradable plastics.
- 6.2.2 The measures also mean that EU member states will have to reduce the use of plastic food containers and plastic lids for hot drinks. By 2029, 90% of plastic bottles will need to be made from recycled materials.
- 6.2.3 New advertisements on harmful plastic items will also be introduced in EU member states, to discourage people from disposing of these items incorrectly.
- 6.2.4 The UK government introduced 5p charges for carrier bags in 2015, and in 2018 also committed to banning single use plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds which came into effect in April 2020. They have also stated an ambition to eliminate all avoidable single use plastics by 2042.
- 6.2.5 Councils across the UK and across London have passed motions, endeavouring to reduce, remove or eliminate single use plastics from their own offices. Some have gone further and committed to reducing, removing or eliminating single use plastics in their region, city or locality.
- 6.2.6 The London Assembly passed a motion calling on the Mayor of London to lobby government to introduce taxes on all SUPs and ban non-recyclable hot drink cups. And as a result of this the GLA has partnered with Thames Water to offer boroughs free installation and management of water fountains across London.
- 6.2.7 Islington Council passed a motion in September 2019 committing the Council to becoming a full signatory of the Plastic Free Pledge, to encourage businesses to reduce SUPs, support traders on Council lands to reduce SUPs and investigate whether conditions on SUPs can be included in licensing conditions. Islington has also included measures on SUPs in its Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan

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<sup>1</sup> Human Consumption of Microplastics (2019) Cox et al, *Environ. Sci. Technol.* 53, 12, 7068–7074v

2018-2022. Measures include installing water fountains in public places, working with the NLWA on Low Plastic Zones and eliminate SUPs in its own offices and services where possible.

- 6.2.8 Barnet Council passed a motion in October 2019 resolving to replace SUPs used by the Council and all commissioned services with sustainable or re-usable alternatives, ensuring procurement practices reduce SUPs, encourage community water refill schemes and work with the NLWA on low-plastic zones.
- 6.2.9 Camden has created a Cabinet post with a Portfolio including Plastics and Sustainability and has appointed a Councillor as a Cabinet advisor for 'Plastic Free Camden' who co-ordinates the work ongoing to reduce single use plastics within the Council. Camden Council has worked to reduce SUPs at its main office and has run projects with schools to reduce waste and SUPs. It has also worked with the NLWA and with businesses to encourage them to reduce SUPs in West Hampstead.
- 6.2.10 Waltham Forest is piloting a low-plastic zone in Leytonstone, using the NLWA project to support this. It has also worked with the GLA to install a new water fountain.
- 6.2.11 Enfield passed a motion in September 2019, which committed the Council to holding a 'Planet of Plastic' week to work with schools, businesses and Council departments to 'highlight the impact of plastic use and what can be done by us all to reduce the environmental impact'.
- 6.2.12 Hackney has eliminated SUP catering from its Town Hall, created a sustainable procurement strategy and banned SUP bottles from running events. It is also working on a low-plastic zone with the NLWA, installing water fountains and has removed SUPs from the café in its service centre.
- 6.2.13 The NLWA runs lots of projects such as informative sessions in schools and the 'Low-Plastic Zones' that encourage businesses to make simple swaps. It delivers these projects in conjunction with the councils.

### **6.3 Scope and definitions**

- 6.3.1 SUPs are any plastic designed to be used only once. The most common SUPs are items such as plastic bottles, straws, carrier bags, packaging and most takeaway coffee cups. It does not include any plastics intended to be used on more than one occasion such as plastic used in everyday items such as ID cards, reusable bottles, technology and much more.
- 6.3.2 The Council believes that, by tackling SUP waste in its own operations and working with partners, it can lead by example on how to reduce waste.
- 6.3.3 The Council recognises that to achieve all of the actions outlined in the policies and action plans, there is a need to work effectively with partners, community groups, charities, businesses and residents. The issues of SUPs cannot be tackled alone. The Council will endeavour to use its extensive links into the community to ensure that this ambition is achieved.

- 6.3.4 Some actions, such as the Staff Waste Reduction Network, rely on the commitment and dedication of Council officers. These initiatives should receive high level support within the Council, to ensure they are supported and continue to thrive.
- 6.3.5 The COVID pandemic is now generating an increasing amount of single use plastics. In many cases this is driven by necessity. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been crucial in protecting medical staff and other frontline workers from Covid-19 transmission. But there has also been an increase in the use of SUP as a reaction to navigating a new world of potential risks. Many restaurants and fast food chains have swung to take-out operations, bringing with them large amounts of disposable utensils and containers. And some have put a hold on bring-your-own reusable cups.
- 6.3.6 The Council in its review of the SUP Policy in the light of COVID recommends that SUP should be used in medical treatment and procedures as per medical advice. And once used, the plastic is disposed of properly through medical waste disposal services. The improper disposal of PPE is a public health risk to others because of the risk of transmission of viruses and they are an environmental threat, particularly for marine life. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends fabric masks for social distancing, and for those not in a medical setting. The June 2020 WHO Guidance on this recommended that cloth masks consist of at least three layers of different materials: an inner layer being an absorbent material like cotton, a middle layer of non-woven materials such as polypropylene (for the filter) and an outer layer, which is a non absorbent material such as a polyester or a polyester blend. These can be washed and reused. While not plastic free, this approach reduces the amount of plastic being used.
- 6.3.7 At the start of the COVID pandemic several shops stopped the use of reusable cups / containers through concerns of transmission. But in June 2020<sup>2</sup>, more than 100 experts including virologists, epidemiologists, biologists, chemists and doctors from the UK and other countries have signed a statement saying reusable containers are safe if thoroughly washed. And studies show that reusable containers are similar transmission risk when compared to single use containers. COVID can be disrupted by detergent, such as washing-up liquid. This means reusable containers could actually be safer if they are regularly and properly washed. When compared to single-use ones that may have been exposed to the environment for a long time. And a pile of used containers sitting in an overflowing bin could also be a health risk. Therefore in line with Public Health England Guidelines to minimise risk people should thoroughly wash reusable containers with hot water and detergent, and remember to wash hands with soap and hot water. And when handing over reusable cups remove lids or items that may come into contact with your mouth. As a result of this June 2020 study several coffee shops are now reintroducing reusable cups back into their stores to help reduce the number of single-use takeaway cups being used. Therefore the Council will continue to support the use of reusable containers.

## 6.4 Single Use Plastics Policies

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<sup>2</sup> <https://storage.googleapis.com/planet4-international-stateless/2020/06/26618dd6-health-expert-statement-reusables-safety.pdf>

6.4.1 The Single Use Plastics Policies focus on two separate areas: the Council and the Borough.

#### **The Council Policy and Action Plan**

6.4.2 The Council policy scope is to focus on SUPs that can be directly reduced or eliminated – such as in Council offices (Appendix 1). The objectives are to:

- Work to eliminate the avoidable use of SUPs across Council offices
- Work in partnership with schools to eliminate avoidable SUPs
- Audit the organisation to assess all of the Council’s commercial and service uses of SUPs and develop solutions
- Improve procurement practices to reflect the commitment to reducing SUPs in Haringey

6.4.3 The Council’s Policies and Action Plans are being delivered across the organisation, with responsibility for delivery owned by the relevant service. The Action Plans will be co-ordinated and monitored by the Place Board with the services. The actions themselves will be delivered in partnership by services across the Council through their existing workstreams. The owners of these Council actions are set out in the Council’s Action Plan (Appendix 1).

6.4.4 The Council actions that will make a significant impact on SUPs include:

- Setting new policies and standards in the Council’s Procurement process to ensure that SUPs are reduced and are a contractual requirement.
- Working with catering and the cafes in the Council to remove SUP as an option.
- Working in partnership with North London Waste Authority to reduce the use of SUP with the borough’s schools.

6.4.5 As a result of COVID many Council offices remain closed and staff are working from home. Many actions in the Council Action Plan at this time cannot be designed or fully realised due to the unknown reopening strategy for the offices and staff numbers expected. But to encourage positive impact in the home working environment, the Council has agreed to develop a intranet web page (for staff access only) on measures that they can undertake in their home to reduce SUPs.

#### **The Borough Policy and Action Plan**

6.4.6 The Borough SUP Policy focuses on how to reduce SUPs used by businesses, event organisers, and residents in Haringey (Appendix 2). The objectives are to:

- Partner with event organisers to eliminate avoidable SUPs at events held on Council land and share best practice more widely.
- Collaborate with the GLA and other partners to improve access to free drinking water across the borough.
- Work alongside residents, businesses and partner organisations in the borough to support and incentivise moves away from SUPs.

6.4.7 The Borough SUP Policy and Action Plans are being delivered across the borough in partnership, and will be co-ordinated and monitored by the Place Board with the services. The actions themselves will be delivered in partnership by services

across the Council through their workstreams. The owners of these actions are set out in the Borough Action Plan (Appendix 2).

6.4.8 Several businesses in the borough have already made the declaration and are undertaking efforts to reduce and remove the use of SUPs. In Crouch End the business community has come together to collectively share best practice and promote these key messages. They are reducing their use of SUP through actions and promotions – such as reuse bags, and free water refills. This collective is now being supported by North London Waste Authority (NLWA) and it is hoped that more business groups across the borough will form and be supported in this manner by NLWA.

6.4.9 Alongside this several primary and secondary schools, have signed up to student led projects and programmes to reduce the use of SUPs and increase recycling rates around plastics. Through this action plan we will be able to sign post more schools to best practice that they can replicate.

6.4.10 The borough actions that will make a significant impact on SUPs include:

- Partner with event organisers to eliminate avoidable SUPs at events held on Council land and share best practice more widely.
- Collaborate with the GLA and Thames Water to install free water fountains in key locations across the borough, enabling quick and free refills for water.
- Work alongside the business community to support and incentivise moves away from SUPs.
- Working in partnership with North London Waste authority to reduce the use of SUP with local businesses.

6.4.11 Both the Council's and the Borough's policies are accompanied by Action Plans, in appendices 1 and 2, which set out the completed, ongoing and future actions the Council is undertaking to achieve each objective. These Action Plans represent the Council's desire to tackle SUPs in a transparent and accountable way.

6.4.12 The Action Plans are living documents that do not represent everything that is or can be done to tackle SUPs. They will be reported on and updated with new actions as and when the Council enacts them, which will then be published online.

## **7. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

The policies and action plans contribute to delivery of the Place Priority of the Borough Plan, specifically objective 10, to make the borough a cleaner, accessible and attractive place – targeting waste minimisation.

## **8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)**

### **Finance**

This report seeks approval for the Single Use Plastics Policies and accompanying Action Plans which addresses the issues surrounding the use of single use plastics across the borough.

The Financial implications surrounding the adoption of this paper are in the region of £20k, in the first year including expenditure for communications and new bins.

The on-going costs are expected to be in the region of £17k per annum for the provision of milk in the Council offices and there is no Budget provision for this currently. Therefore budget resources will need to be identified prior to implementation.

This is not expected to be implemented at this stage due to the impact of Covid 19 and will only go live once the new occupancy levels have been determined.

Once the final working patterns in the Council are known (which offices are open and staffing numbers) the Council will review the Actions around - office milk supply, new bins and recycling systems, and communications. These will be costed and alongside the business cases by the Place Board, and will be submitted for a growth bid and funding.

### **Strategic Procurement**

New guidelines on SUPs have been developed as part of the Social Value Toolkit. These will be evaluated as best practice for all relevant procurement projects across the Council to reduce the amount of single use plastic brought by the Council, both directly or as a result of materials purchased and wrapping.

Funding: Strategic procurement costs within contracts.

By 2022 Strategic Procurement will monitor the SUP procurement practices and publish our performance in the Waste Strategies of the Council and NLWA.

### **Legal**

As part of Government policy to reduce the impact on the environment of single-use plastics, draft Regulations, the Environmental Protection (Plastic Straws, Cotton Buds and Stirrers) (England) Regulations 2020 were introduced on 3 March 2020.

When these Regulations come into force they would ban the supply of certain single -use plastics, including straws, cotton swabs, and coffee stirrers to end users, and would make it an offense to supply single-use plastic stirrers to end users. The Regulations would be enforced by local authorities.

When the Regulations take effect officers in legal services can advise on the implications of the Regulations for the Council. Legal advice can also be sought on any potential legal issues that may arise relating to the policies and action plans which this report recommends Cabinet to approve.

The Council can introduce policies and the action plans further to the general power of competence set out in Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011. Both the proposed policies and action plans accords with Central Government policy.

### **Equality**

The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

The proposed decision is to approve the Single Use Plastics Policies and accompanying Action Plans.

The overall objective of the Policies and the Action Plans is to reduce the use of any plastic product designed to be used only once. Implementation, as set out in the Action Plans, focuses on two separate areas: Haringey Council premises and the Borough.

Appendix 1 sets out the actions that concern Council premises. These will affect the Council workforce, within which women and BAME people are overrepresented relative to the general population. The Council workforce also includes people who have disabilities. Reasonable adjustments will be made in the implementation of the Action Plan where necessary to meet the needs of these people, and people who share the other protected characteristics, where they differ to the needs of others. It is not anticipated that the proposed decision will result in any direct or indirect discrimination for Council staff.

Appendix 2 sets out the actions that will be implemented across the borough more widely. BAME people, young people, people with disabilities, and people from religious groups are overrepresented in Haringey relative to the London and UK populations. The objective of the proposed decision is to reduce use of single use plastics and plastic waste and the means by which the Action Plan seeks to do so are not anticipated to result in any direct or indirect discrimination for Haringey residents. Indeed, to the extent that the policy and the action plan results in a lower level of pollutants it can be expected to benefit to benefit the wards in Haringey that are more deprived on average and in

which people who share the protected characteristics are overrepresented as these wards tend to have higher levels of plastic pollution. Moreover, actions to improve access to free water can be expected to benefit young people, older people, and people with disabilities and limiting health conditions in terms of their health.

## **8 Use of Appendices**

- Appendix 1: SUP Council Policy and the Council Action Plan
- Appendix 2: SUP Borough Policy and the Borough Action Plan

## **9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**