



**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – CLIMATE CHANGE,  
BIODIVERSITY AND CARBON REDUCTION**

**26 July 2021**

**Report of the Executive Director Adult Social Care and Health**

**Proposals for a Single Use Plastics Policy**

(Cllr Barry Lewis, Cabinet portfolio holder for Strategic Leadership, Culture,  
Tourism and Climate Change)

## **1. Purpose**

1.1 This paper addresses the issues surrounding procurement and use of Single Use Plastic and sets out an outline of proposals for a Single Use Plastics Policy and Action Plan for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee.

## **2. Information and Analysis**

### **2.1 Derbyshire County Council's Ambition**

Derbyshire County Council is leading a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reduce carbon emissions generated in Derbyshire to help meet ambitious national targets needed to address the global climate change crisis. Action is needed on an unprecedented scale and local authorities have a crucial role to play through leading by example and inspiring and encouraging communities to play their part.

The Council is already getting its own house in order by cutting emissions from its buildings and operations to reduce the council's carbon footprint to net zero by 2032 or sooner. But the Council wants to go even further to fulfil its climate and carbon reduction pledges set out in May 2019 and to deliver its Climate Change Strategy due to be published autumn 2021. This includes building on measures already put in place to remove single use plastics from catering at County Hall and minimising use of single use plastics across all our operations.

## **2.2 Derbyshire County Council Climate Change governance**

Climate change is a multi-faceted, cross-departmental issue requiring support and action from all employees so co-ordination of the different agendas is essential in order to achieve our aims and to maximise the co-benefits of tackling climate change. Governance of climate change within the Council has recently been reviewed with Theme Teams, each with a named lead officer, co-ordinating and delivering projects across departments. A Climate Change and Environment Programme Board will oversee the work. Some issues will require action across several of these themes: Single Use Plastics is one of these issues. The Theme Lead for Single Use Plastics is Procurement working collaboratively with Waste colleagues and with input from other relevant themes as necessary.

## **2.3 The scale of plastic in the UK**

Plastic is one of the most useful inventions in recent history. In the UK it is estimated that five million tonnes of plastic are used every year, nearly half of which is packaging which is used just once. The low cost of plastic has encouraged the development of many single use plastic (SUP) items.

SUPs can be described as any disposable plastic item that is designed to be used only once or for a short period of time. Single use plastics are often used in packaging, consumer products, cosmetics, personal protective equipment and healthcare products. Examples include plastic bags, disposable utensils, beverage containers, balloons and wet wipes. The pandemic is causing a rise in SUP items such as aprons, health care equipment and lateral flow test kits.

A comprehensive list of SUPs used by the Council can be found at Appendix 2. Single use plastic has a number of benefits. These include contributing to food safety and hygiene and reducing packaging weight in transit and thereby reducing energy and emissions that would be generated by using alternative materials.

There are three key issues linked to the development of a SUP policy:

- Plastic pollution is litter - Plastic pollution is both a global and local issue that affects the natural and urban environment, oceans and coasts and impacts on the health and wellbeing of many living creatures. Derbyshire has some of the most beautiful and accessible countryside in Britain including the Peak District National Park and the Derwent Valley World Heritage Site. The quality of our environment contributes greatly to the local economy and supports a diverse range of habitats and species which are at risk due to plastic pollution.

Plastic pollution from SUPs found in our towns and villages impacts aesthetically but is also costly to clear up. When SUP items are not adequately captured and managed at their end of life, they represent a real threat to our ecosystems by degrading into tiny particles. Known as micro-plastics, they can contaminate the food web including being ingested by plankton. There is a need to stop more plastics entering our

ecosystems and a further challenge to remove what is already there. Plastic pollution in our streams and rivers ultimately flows to the seas causing considerable damage to marine wildlife. By reducing or removing SUPs, the County Council is leading by example in finding alternatives to the types of SUPs that could pollute our environment if not disposed of correctly.

- Disposal of waste plastics – In developing a more sustainable planet it is vital to avoid the generation of waste but, where it is produced, it needs to be recognised that all wastes have a value and can be used elsewhere. There is a need to develop alternatives through supporting research and innovation and to develop the circular economy to ensure 'single use plastic' is not an end product but part of a cycle. Whilst plastics have many advantages as packaging for our goods and the manufacture of everyday items in our lives it is a difficult material to recycle and dispose of. The types of polymers used to produce some items are currently hard to recycle so they often end up as residual waste and are sent for final disposal.

The numbers of SUP items are high; the UK Government estimates that every year 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds end up in landfill. Replacing all these items with alternatives which are biodegradable or recyclable is a major technological and economic challenge. The difference between recyclable, biodegradable and compostable plastics is given at Appendix 3.

Countries around the world have issued bans to accepting certain types of plastic waste resulting in local authorities in the UK having to find alternative end destinations for plastic waste which has in turn increased their costs. It is often difficult for local authorities to find recycling solutions for certain types of black plastic and mixed-grade plastics. It is therefore important, where possible, to avoid the use of SUPs in the first place and, where they are purchased, to use alternative materials or ensure that they contain recycled content and can be recycled.

- SUP is found in many products: medical supplies that cannot be reused for safety and hygiene reasons, personal protective equipment, cigarette filters, chewing gums, disposable nappies, food packaging, balloons, cups, straws and many more. Recyclable or readily biodegradable alternatives are not always available. Where they are available, they are often more expensive and the Council needs to recognise the impact on Council finances of this and provide staff with guidelines on an acceptable level of increased cost. This may have implications for the financial controls currently in place.
- Plastic contributes to climate change - Chemicals derived from fossil fuel production are used to make almost all plastics. The more plastic that is made, the more petrochemicals are required, and the more

petrochemicals are required, the higher the demand for gas, oil and even coal. By reducing or removing SUPs, the County Council is helping to reduce the demand for fossil fuels, thereby reducing the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) in the atmosphere.

## **2.4 National Policy and guidance**

The UK Government under Prime Minister May had a strategic ambition to “...work towards all plastic packaging placed on the market being recyclable, reusable or compostable by 2025.” The UK Government published its *25-Year Environment Plan* in 2018, which includes a target of “achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042”. Furthermore in 2018, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) published *Our waste, our resources: A strategy for England* which sets out several plastic waste reduction reforms to help the Government achieve its ambitious plans for a greener future. These include a plastic packaging tax, introducing a Deposit Return Scheme and consistency in household and business recycling collections in England. Successive UK Governments have also signed up to many international agreements aimed at reducing plastic in the marine environment. It is important that the Council plays its part in these agreements as plastic entering the streams and rivers in Derbyshire will end up in our seas and oceans harming wildlife and communities across the world as well as leaving a legacy for future generations.

In addition, there are several voluntary initiatives aimed at changing the way that plastics are designed, produced, used, re-used, disposed of and reprocessed by all stakeholders in the plastics chain. Examples of these include:

- the “Plastics Pact”, a collaboration of businesses, which has set a target to eliminate unnecessary single-use plastic packaging, for all plastic packaging to be re-usable, recyclable or compostable and for 70% to be recycled or composted by 2025. Derbyshire’s SUP outline policy includes key elements from this Pact.
- The “Plastics Industry Recycling Action Plan” (PIRAP), an industry action plan which includes: increased collection of recyclable plastics; improved sorting; and developing end markets for recycled plastics.
- The “UK Circular Plastics Network” (UKCPN), which aims to bring together plastic product users through a programme of networking and knowledge-sharing events.

## **2.5 Development of a Derbyshire County Council SUP Policy**

Single Use Plastic is often regarded as a ‘waste’ issue, though as this paper sets out, procurement plays a key role in use of SUPs. Therefore, development of a Sustainable Procurement Policy should also be considered in the context of SUPs. A draft outline Single Use Plastic Policy for the Council and suggested key actions have been set out in Appendices 4 and 5.

### **3. Alternative Options Considered**

3.1 No alternatives are considered, the issues for consideration are presented in this report for discussion.

### **4. Implications**

Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

### **5. Consultation**

5.1 In developing this paper, consultation has been undertaken with the Council's Environmental Sustainability Group.

### **6. Background Papers**

6.1 None.

### **7. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Implications

Appendix 2 - Single Use Plastics used by Derbyshire County Council

Appendix 3 - Recyclable, biodegradable and compostable plastics

Appendix 4 - Derbyshire County Council's draft Single Use Plastic Policy

Appendix 5 - Single Use Plastics key actions 2021-22

### **8. Recommendation(s)**

That the Committee:

- a) considers the resource implications and sustainability issues raised in this report regarding development of a corporate policy for the use of Single Use Plastics, and
  
- c) resolves to support the further development for submission for Cabinet approval of a policy based on the initial draft outlined in Appendix 4 to this report.

### **9. Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

9.1 To ensure that the implications regarding development of a Single Use Plastics Policy are understood, and that the approach and content of the Single Use Plastics Policy that is under development is considered fit for purpose and supported by the Committee.

**Report Author:** Denise Ludlam  
**Contact details:** denise.ludlam@derbyshire.gov.uk

### **Implications**

#### **Financial**

1.1 It should be recognised that in implementing this policy, there are resource implications and that officer time will be needed to support its delivery and monitoring.

#### **Legal**

2.1 All Council procurement and contracting activities need comply with the applicable public procurement and contracting legislation and law, including the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 which prescribe processes for public contracts for goods and services above certain thresholds. The 2015 Regulations have been amended in accordance with the terms of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU by the Public Procurement (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

#### **Human Resources**

3.1 Training and guidance will need to be provided for staff to understand the issues involved

#### **Information Technology**

4.1 There are no Information Technology implications associated with this report.

#### **Equalities Impact**

5.1 There are no equalities impact implications associated with this report.

#### **Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

6.1 The Strategy supports the Council's ambition to be a net zero organisation by 2032, or sooner, and for the county to be net zero by 2050, and informs the action that needs to be taken to achieve these ambitions.

#### **Environmental Sustainability**

7.1 Development and implementation of this policy will improve the environmental sustainability of the Council.

#### **Other (for example, Health and Safety, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)**