

SINGLE USE PLASTICS POLICY

Head of Service/Contact:	Amardip Healy, Chief Legal Officer
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	no
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	Annex 1 – Single Use Plastics Policy – Our 5 Pledges Annex 2 – A Single Use Plastics Strategy for Surrey
Other available papers (not attached):	HM Treasury: Tackling the plastic problem summary of responses to the call for evidence

Report summary

This report seeks approval of the Council's Policy on single use plastics as well as endorsement of Surrey County Council's Policy on single use plastics.

Recommendation (s)

That the Committee:

- (1) approves the Council's Policy on 'Single Use Plastics' and**
- (2) endorses Surrey County Council Policy on single use plastics and agree for the Chairman to sign the document on the Council's behalf.**

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 This proposal supports the Council's four year Corporate Plan specifically focusing on two Key Priorities; 'Keeping our Borough Clean and Green' through the reduction of non-recycleable or hard to recycle waste, and 'Managing our Resources', by taking a community leadership role in the management of resources and the effect on the environment.

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2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has for some time been committed to taking leadership on tackling the plastic waste problem by taking responsibility for its own impact on the environment. It has been working towards minimising use of single-use plastics across its own operations and services and by all staff.
- 2.2 Recently this work has gained further momentum through the introduction of refillable water bottles for staff. Single use plastic cups are not being provided to staff and existing supplies are only being used in situations where it continues to be appropriate, for example at the reception desk to the Town Hall. In terms of future works, a water fountain will be installed as a part of the Market Square works, to encourage members of the public to refill their water bottles. There are many practical examples where reliance on single use plastics has and continues to be being actively avoided and discouraged throughout the Council's daily activity and interactions.
- 2.3 As a part of the launch of the Council's new behaviour framework, staff were encouraged to engage with the broader issues around the use of single use plastics, and not just within the work environment. Building awareness of the issues and changes in purchasing habits necessary enables a Single Use Policy to work in an environment where change is expected.
- 2.5 The agenda on single use plastics is now widely accepted as an area of universal concern. A report from the recent call for evidence by the HM Treasury, "Tackling the plastic problem summary of responses to the call for evidence"¹ states, "*Over the last few months, it has been extraordinary to see the level of public interest in the issue of plastic waste and litter, with 162,000 responses to our call for evidence on single-use plastic waste. This is the largest response to a call for evidence in the Treasury's history.*"
- 2.6 For these reasons, it is important to galvanise public support for change. By pro-actively working with our supply chain, the Council will achieve a reduction in unnecessary waste plastics across our day to day supplies and operations.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/734837/Plastics_call_for_evidence_summary_of_responses_web.pdf

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- 2.7 The approach of taking direct action to address the use of single use plastics has to date helped to change attitudes and habits. However, to extend the scope of the Council's drive to promote change with those we do business with, we need a clear and direct policy statement. Such a statement will add the necessary authority to the message of change which in turn will translate in actions.
- 2.8 At the same time Surrey County Council has been working with all the Surrey Borough Councils to secure wider agreement on a strategic approach to single use plastics within the County.
- 2.9 It is fortunate both these pieces of work have now come together as both policy documents work together with the aim of changing behaviour both within and outside our organisations. They both add strength to the bargaining positions of the Councils to bring about choice and change - as both purchasers and consumers.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Single use plastics are considered to include any disposable plastic item which is designed to be used only once - e.g. plastic bags, disposable utensils, beverage containers, coffee capsules, wet wipes, razor blades, plastic drinks bottles, food wrappers, bottle tops, straws, stirrers and plastic lids.
- 3.2 The nature of the threat to the environment from single use plastics has grown exponentially over a short period of time. Recent media coverage has resulted in both the knowledge and understanding of the impact on the environment becoming better understood.
- 3.3 As society gains a better understanding of the threats from a much wider range of goods which contains plastics, so has the pressure to take action to address these threats. This has led to pressure to consider with much greater care the implications of convenience items.
- 3.4 The purpose of introducing a Council Single Use Plastics Policy is to both embed the way we have been working and also to influence the behaviour of suppliers. By having a clear policy on how we want to buy our goods, it is easier to influence a change in behaviour towards the use of single use plastics.
- 3.5 Although our local policy has been ready in draft form for some time (**Annex 1**), it was felt best to wait until the County Council had completed its county-wide project on single use plastics, which it has now done (**Annex 2**).

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- 3.6 The proposed Policy at Annex 1 is on the basis of 5 pledges. It has been designed to engage officers in the process of changing habits which will lead to the reduction of the use of single use plastics. By adopting a policy, we will be able to measure and audit the use of single use plastics within the organisation as well as set targets for a reduction in their use. This will aim to phase out as many as possible through the use of alternatives.
- 3.7 Through simple changes in habits and expectations, the Policy aims to ensure the reduction in reliance on single use plastics is sustained.
- 3.8 A Surrey wide joint working task force was set up and the work has developed into the draft document at **Annex 2**. The drivers and aims of the document almost mirror those of our own policy approach.
- 3.9 The county-wide policy has been produced by Surrey County Council through joint working with the Surrey Borough Councils. The aim of the County Policy is to “support Surrey to become a SUP free county”. The focus of the policy is driven from a waste disposal perspective in line with the County’s responsibility.
- 3.10 Following suggestions by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, an offer has now been put for all the Borough Council’s to endorse the policy by their respective Chairmen or Leaders to sign the document.

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 **Chief Finance Officer’s comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report. It will be important when contracting with suppliers to ensure they are made aware of the Council’s policy on single use plastics and how the supply chain can address the need, in particular, for a reduction in packaging which cannot be recycled.
- 5.2 **Monitoring Officer’s comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 The Policies both at Borough Council and County levels will contribute to delivering change which will enable both authorities to demonstrate community leadership and best practice with regard to plastics.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 The County-wide single use plastics policy will allow a clear message to be sent and this will be reinforced by local policies and measures.

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8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 The alternative is to not implement the Borough and County policies. This would not result in improved environmental performance, nor would it reflect the growing demand for change.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 Over time, through increased public awareness and demands for change, industry will have to react by reducing the production of single use items. The agenda to reduce single use plastics has opened the door to increased public awareness of the effect of everyday items upon the environment.
- 9.2 By having a dedicated approach to single use plastics, both within our local and wider supply chain, the Council's agenda for change will be supported and has the greatest chance of influencing behaviour.

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);