

Overview and Scrutiny

13 August 2018

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting? **Yes/No**

Reducing Single-Use Plastic in the Town Hall and the Wider Community

Final Decision-Maker	Overview and Scrutiny
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Ronen Basu, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability
Lead Director	Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities
Head of Service	Gary Stevenson, Head of Environment and Street Scene
Lead Officer/Author	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the interim report of the Task and Finish Group.

Explain how this report relates to the Corporate Priorities in the Five Year Plan:

- A well borough – the environmental impact of plastic and in particular single-use plastic is a national and international issue and the benefit for the environment locally from efforts to reduce its use should be supported.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	13 August 2018

Reducing Single-Use Plastic in the Town Hall and the Wider Community

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the 11 June meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee a task and finish group was appointed to look at the use of plastics by the Council in the Town Hall and to see if there are ways of reducing its use. The issue was highlighted by borough Councillor Joy Podbury and included in the Committee's work programme for 2018-19.
 - 1.2 The topic was discussed at the meeting and it was agreed that the Group should look at the use of plastics by staff and councillors and identify areas that could be influenced directly or indirectly. It was also agreed that the group should identify opportunities in the wider community that could result in the reduction of plastic usage. It was felt that a large part of the Group's work should focus on a reduction in single-use plastics.
 - 1.3 Councillors Dianne Hill, Carol Mackonochie, Peter Lidstone and Julia Soyke were appointed from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Group. Councillor Joy Podbury has been co-opted on to the Task and Finish Group and at the Group's first meeting was appointed as Chairman.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The use of plastic and its impact on the environment has been a topic nationally and internationally for many years. In 2015 the Government introduced a law requiring large shops to introduce a 5p charge for single-use plastic bags. Following the scheme's introduction the sales of plastic bags reduced by 83 percent - demonstrating that significant intervention can have an impact on behaviours. Programmes such as the Blue Planet and images in the media have increased the focus and there is scientific evidence of the growing impact on oceans and seas, and other eco-systems, of the build-up and permanence of plastics. The drivers for reducing single-use plastics are environmental, economic and health (see the [New Plastics Economy](https://newplasticseconomy.org/) ^{1.}). The focus nationally and internationally remains on reducing single-use plastics and between March and May 2018 The Government ran a call-for-evidence as part of its consultation on using the tax system or charges to address single-use plastic waste. ^{2.} Other efforts planned are for a deposit return scheme on plastic bottles and forcing supermarkets and other retailers to pay more to clear up waste created within the EU's circular economy package.
- 2.2 The work of the Group is aimed at the Council as an organisation and at staff and borough councillors. Local retailers and businesses are also a potential audience, as are local councils and residents. Attitudes and behaviours towards a reduction in single-use plastics are changing. As highlighted above, media

1. <https://newplasticseconomy.org/> - New Plastics Economy – the Ellen MacArthur Foundation

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-the-plastic-problem> - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) Tackling the Plastic Problem

coverage has sharpened focus on the issue. Behavioural change by governments, and producers and consumers of plastic is the key to any long lasting campaign.

- 2.3 There are a number of large chain coffee shops local to the Town Hall. These retailers are making efforts to encourage reuse and recycling through pledges to recycle a percentage of cups and incentives to customers who bring in a reusable cup. There are calls from smaller companies and environmental lobbies for more sustainable cups to be produced on a larger scale.
- 2.4 The Group also recognises that there are opportunities to work towards a greener and more sustainable office environment when the civic development is complete with staff working in the new office accommodation. Looking more broadly at the environmental impact of the civic development, a preliminary Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) report was produced in 2016 for the civic development (Calverley Square), for both the new theatre and offices. The pre-assessment for both buildings demonstrated that a Very Good rating could be achieved.
- 2.5 During its meetings the Group identified the following stakeholders and part of the work will be to talk to these organisations:
 - Kent Resource Partnership
 - Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP)
 - Producers and users of plastic packaging in the borough
 - Local Businesses
 - Town and parish councils in the borough.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Group would like to look at plastics brought into the Council by staff and Members and whether there are opportunities to reduce this and/or provide alternatives. The Group may look to involve local businesses in any initiatives. The Group would like to explore opportunities to reduce single-use plastic in the wider community.
- 3.2 The Group identified the following mediums through which engagement with stakeholders could take place:
 - Staff bulletins
 - Members newsletter
 - Autumn Local magazine
 - Council website
 - Notice boards
- 3.3 Recycling and a general reduction in waste at the Town Hall also includes items such glass, paper, metal and food waste. The Group recognises the importance of tackling these areas also but felt that they would be dealt with more effectively as separate pieces of work.

- 3.4 As part of its work the Group will undertake a bin audit of the Town Hall at its next meeting and further audits when the work is complete and six months after the final report has been published.
- 3.5 There are a number of pledges/statements of intent whereby organisations have committed to reducing single use plastics within their own businesses. The Scottish government has backed a 'Resource Efficiency Pledge' scheme which helps Scottish businesses use energy, water and raw materials more efficiently. The retailer Iceland has 900 stores in the United Kingdom and has already committed to eliminating plastic packaging for its own products by 2023.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Ultimately the Group would like to retain focus on plastic reduction and in particular single-use plastics. Members would like to see a measurable reduction in single-use plastics in the Town Hall. The review should also achieve a realistic and measurable reduction of single-use plastic in the wider community but the group recognises the challenges involved in measuring this effectively and will seek advice on how this can be achieved in the long term from the environment and Street Scene Team and their colleagues at KCC. The Group also recognises that there are opportunities for the Council to work towards a sustainable policy for minimal use of single-use plastics in the new offices through design.
- 4.2 Following its work the Group would like the Council to consider a pledge to an existing scheme and/or a commitment to reducing single-use plastic in the Town Hall and for a scheme to be available to staff which incentivises a reduction in single-use plastic brought into the Town Hall from outside.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The first piece of work the Group has undertaken is to design an anonymised survey which it would like to circulate in the first instance to staff in the Town Hall and to visiting Members. It is hoped that the survey will identify behaviours in terms of plastic use and highlight the importance of reduction and recycling. The draft survey can be found through the following link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WFSQF2D>

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 This is an interim report to update Members on the work of the Task and Finish Group. It is anticipated that a final report including recommendations will be submitted to the 8 October meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The report is for noting and there are no direct legal or human rights implications as a result of the recommendation.	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Finance and other resources	This is an interim report and for noting. There are no direct financial or resource implications from the recommendation. However, the Task and Finish Group's work will be to identify areas where plastic reduction can have an environmental benefit and the Group is mindful of the cost implications when considering a greener agenda and working environment – these considerations will be included in the final report.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement. 01/18/18
Staffing establishment	There are no direct implications on staffing as a result of the recommendation in the report.	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Risk management	There are no direct implications on risk management as a result of the recommendation in the report	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Data Protection	There is no direct impact on data protection as a result of the recommendations in the report	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Environment and sustainability	This is an interim report for information purposes only. However, it is hoped that the final recommendations will identify areas where the Council can reduce the use of plastic in the Town Hall and look ahead to a sustainable policy for the new offices.	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Community safety	There are no direct community safety implications as a result of the recommendations in the report	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Health and Safety	There are no direct Health and Safety implications as a result of the recommendation in the report	Nick Peeters, Scrutiny and Performance Officer

1. <https://newplasticseconomy.org/> - New Plastics Economy – the Ellen MacArthur Foundation
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-the-plastic-problem> - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) Tackling the Plastic Problem

Health and wellbeing	This report is for noting and although there are no direct implications on health and wellbeing as a result of the recommendation in the report, the final report will include recommendations that are aimed at improving the wellbeing of residents in the borough	Nick Peeters Scrutiny and Performance Officer
Equalities	There are no direct equalities implications as a result of the recommendation in the report	Sarah Lavallie, Corporate Governance Officer 02/08/18

8. **REPORT APPENDICES** - There are none

9. **BACKGROUND PAPERS** - There are none

1. <https://newplasticseconomy.org/> - New Plastics Economy – the Ellen MacArthur Foundation
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/tackling-the-plastic-problem> - [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) Tackling the Plastic Problem