

ITEM NO	
---------	--

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE



DATE	21st September 2020
PORTFOLIO	Resources and Performance Management
REPORT AUTHOR	Chris Gay
TEL NO	Ex. 7163
EMAIL	cgay@burnley.gov.uk

Response to the Green Group motion on single use plastics

PURPOSE

1.0	To consider a motion presented to Council from the Green Group on single use plastics.
-----	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

RECOMMENDATION

2.0	<p>In response to the motion it is recommended to the Executive that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">an audit and publication of single use plastic (SUP) items used by the council is not undertakenan annual SUP audit and publication scheme is not introducedWhere reasonably practical council actions are maintained to reduce SUP in the supply of council goods, services and works, through appropriate tender specificationsWhere reasonably practical and appropriate include specific lease or tenancy conditions to support SUP removal and reductionCriteria are included in tender specifications to evaluate supplier compliance to SUP removal or reductionThe recommendations at C and E above are applied where SUP use is identified in the existing council supply chainWork continues to encourage local businesses to reduce SUPthe council does not undertake a feasibility study to identify available premises for a community co-operative shopThe council uses social media to facilitate and raise awareness on actions to support SUP reduction, linking this with existing County wide awareness initiatives
-----	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.0 The Council is already undertaking a number of initiatives to reduce reliance on SUP and any response must be proportionate. The focus of council resources is currently prioritised on its response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

4.0 **The Green Group Motion**

The Green Group presented a motion to full Council on 18th December 2019 calling for the following resolutions with regards to the Council's use of SUP:

- a) Conduct an in-depth audit of all items used within the council estate for USUPs and publish the results to the public by 30 April 2020
- b) Thereafter, complete annual audits of the councils' USUP use, and publish these results to the public annually, no later than the 30 April in each year
- c) End the procurement and use of USUPs, including (but not limited to) cups, cutlery, water bottles, stirrers and straws, within all Council run operations, premises and events by March 31, 2020
- d) Include, as a condition of any new licence to occupy, lease or other tenancy or other disposal of council premises, a provision that no USUPs will be generated or permitted at such premises
- e) Include, as a condition of any new council contract, a provision that no USUPs will be generated or permitted in the Borough
- f) Assess the councils' supply chain, and switch to businesses that are as USUP-free as possible
- g) Encourage local businesses (including Burnley Market and Burnley FC) to phase out and stop their use of USUPs
- h) Carry out a feasibility study to identify (i) a space owned by this Council within the Borough to house a zero-waste [8] community run co-operative shop with rent and rate incentives and (ii) for siting of refill stations, to discourage the purchase of USUP bottles
- i) Facilitate education programmes to the public to discourage the use of USUP

5.0 **BACKGROUND**

- 5.1 Single use plastics (SUP) or disposable plastics, are used only once or for a short time before they are recycled or become waste. Common SUP items include plastic bags, coffee stirrers, water bottles, food packaging etc. The negative effects of plastics upon the environment, through production and disposal, is a well documented concern.

5.2 Action is being taken to address SUP at global and national levels. The UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan aims to remove SUP by 2042. The UK Plastics Pact, led by WRAP, is working with the sector to transform use through innovation, design and reuse.

5.3 The Environment Bill 2019/ 21 will soon return to Parliament. It includes powers to introduce charges on suppliers using SUP. From October, Defra will implement a ban on plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds, and from 2022 it will introduce a tax on plastic packaging where companies produce or import packaging not containing at least 30% recycled content.

6.0 **Summary of current council actions to address SUP**

In context the council does not have a significant SUP 'footprint'; for example, through large catering, supply or retail operations. The council has, and continues, to take proportionate action to remove or reduce SUP where practical. Current priorities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic limit capacity to introduce any additional activity to address SUP.

6.1 Greenspaces and Amenities are working with parks friends groups to make 'Plastic Free Parks'; supported by the introduction of free public 'bottle filler' water fountains at the Rotunda car park, Towneley Hall and Thompson Park to encourage re-use of plastic containers. £20,000 has been allocated in the 2020/ 21 Capital Program for new bottle filler sites in both Padiham and Burnley town Centre's. However, during the pandemic work is on hold. A request to United Utilities to sponsor the installation of connections for filler points is being pursued.

6.2 Most ice cream sales at Towneley park are for those in cones (i.e. an edible container). Dialogue with vendors is ongoing for all sales to be SUP free. The supply chain is in the early stages of responding to consumer demand for alternative packaging. Supply chain changes are likely to be incremental as alternatives become available.

6.3 Licences for the Boat House and Rotunda contain clauses requiring operators to sell drinks in aluminium cans or tetra packs and supply bio-degradable takeaway receptacles and wooden stirrers. Biodegradable receptacles are provided at the Scott Park concession.

6.4 The new tenancy at the Stables Café is being progressed. The condition of tenancy requires bio-degradable cups, plates and stirrers and fresh milk for hot drinks served from jugs rather than plastic containers. The sale of drinks in plastic containers is not permitted.

6.5 The use of horticultural plastics in Greenspaces is being reduced by switching from bedding plants to herbaceous perennials. Work continues with suppliers to reduce SUP in the parks operation.

6.6 Plastic cups were replaced with 8oz biodegradable paper cups in 2018 for drinks vending in the Town Hall. Plastic lids are not used for hot drinks and wooden stirrers have replaced plastic. Drinking water is provided by mains supply water dispensers.

6.7 Changes at the County Council waste treatment plant in October 2019 means a wider range of plastics can be processed including [SUP] margarine tubs, ready meal trays and yogurt cartons. These items are now being sent for processing through council recycling collection services; resulting in less plastic sent to landfill or incineration. The annual recycling calendar publication in November will continue to promote messages to residents on recyclable materials

7.0 **RESPONSE TO MOTION**

7.1 **Audit and Reporting of Council SUP Usage**

An in-depth audit with annual update and reporting of all SUP use in the Council would incur costs. An estimate of approximately 30 days would be required to initially scope use across the council, including review of associated contracts and purchasing histories to verify the extent. Alternatively, a desktop review focusing on 'main consumers' could be less resource intensive; but would not provide a comprehensive analysis. In any event it should be noted that it may not be possible to capture all use, for example packaging in goods received and use through the entire supply chain.

7.2 With limited resources available, and other prioritise, attention and activity is best focused on continuing the actions already being taken council wide to address SUP.

7.3 **Procurement of SUP.**

Research identifies that supply chains are in the early stages of responding to customer requirements on SUP. This restricts opportunities for immediate action to provide suitable and cost-effective alternatives; as would existing contractual arrangements. However, as has been demonstrated much work has already taken place. The council is acting on ending the sale and provision of SUP products. Service units are acting where possible; and should be further encouraged to review consumption and adopt products that are not reliant on SUP; including minimising use in the packaging of goods purchased.

7.4 **Condition of Contract (Procurement)**

The inclusion of a condition of any new contract that no SUPs would be generated or permitted in the borough is likely not achievable. This would be the case where alternatives are not yet available, or that they attract higher costs. This could restrict the ability and duty to achieve best value of public expenditure. The requirement to comply with procurement legislation will also need consideration. The ability to apply conditions would also be dependent on the pace at which the marketplace implements changes. This should be viewed on a case by case basis; as legislation and national policies work to remove SUP in supply chains.

7.5 As relevant contracts come up for renewal, they should be reviewed for alternative products and packaging. The inclusion in tender specifications of criteria that set out minimum and cost effective requirements on the non-use of SUPs, or its reduction, would signal council intentions to the marketplace; and as part of a scored tender evaluation could incentivise suppliers to meet requirements or seek innovative alternatives. In doing so we must be mindful that the council has relatively low buying power.

7.6 **Supply Chain**

In considering SUP within supply chains, where there is often little or no visibility of usage beyond tier one suppliers, it would be difficult to identify and address the full extent of SUP. As previously stated, supply chains are in the early stages of responding to consumer demands. The inclusion of requirements in tender specifications and actions in 7.3 above will help the council continue to positively address SUP. Action at Government and international levels should also prove significant in influencing the supply chain / marketplace.

7.7 **Condition of Lease**

Introducing restrictions into contracts for the sale or lease of council land or property could reduce the ability (requirement) to achieve 'best price'. As highlighted above, requirements in relation to SUP have been included where appropriate. All lease opportunities are reviewed case by case, conditions are included where possible. For example, the Rotunda license currently requires supply of bio-degradable cardboard cups and plates and wooden stirrers. A lease condition will be included when next tendered to exclude drinks in plastic containers.

8. **Encourage Local Business to Stop Using SUP**

8.1 **Burnley Market**

Discussions on tackling SUP have been undertaken with food traders. Some have removed SUP in all but take-out sales. Tenants are positive and willing to work further with the council on reduction and alternatives, and discussions will continue.

8.2 **Community Run Co-Operative**

The council already provides support, including a business rate incentive, to a plastic free 'refill' shop in Padiham. Turtlebee opened in December 2019 and offers a refill service for dried foods, washing powder and cleaning products. Other alternative plastic free products are planned. They work with local businesses to encourage plastic free products and provide advice to help promote change in resident shopping habits.

8.3 A feasibility study to identify further council space to run a zero-waste community run co-operative shop would incur costs, where presently there are more pressing priorities. As the Council already engages with several local co-operative groups and charities e.g. Pennine Lancashire Community Farm, New Ground Together, Park's Friend's Groups etc. a more feasible approach could be, based upon any demand present, to use established links to encourage parties to consider developing a clear business case for zero-waste initiatives that could be the basis for consideration of support.

8.4 **Education Programme**

Social media themed messages on SUP could sit alongside existing posts around council climate change initiatives i.e. the use of electric vehicles etc. Internal communications also serve to encourage staff to take positive action. This is perhaps the extent to which the Council could act in terms of education. Whilst the specific details of an education program are not fully determined in the motion; such a program would perhaps be better served through linking up with County Council work to promote SUP reduction across Lancashire. In all respects, the use of council resources in response to the Covid-19 pandemic remains the priority.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION

- 9.0 The costs associated with motions A (audit), B (annual reporting) and H (feasibility study) are the officer time used to undertake research and analysis tasks etc. An estimate of a minimum of 30 working days is considered reasonable, costing in excess of £11,000 (based upon the average charge out rate of 53.61 per hour). There would also be an on-going cost in collating and reporting information annually. Again a reasonable estimate here would be approximately £2,700 pa.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

10. None presently.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION

11. This report will be presented to the Council's Scrutiny Committee on 21st September 2020.