

# Cheltenham Borough Council Draft Single use plastics strategy 2020

## 1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1. This single use plastic reduction strategy has been developed to support the council's procurement policy, protocols and process and will also contribute to the Council's actions to address climate change.
- 1.2. The government's resources and waste strategy published in December 2018 pledges to reduce our plastic waste and to make all plastic packaging reusable or recyclable by 2050 and within this wider context, this strategy aims to reduce and eliminate single use plastics as soon as possible within Cheltenham Borough Council.
- 1.3. Most plastic currently produced can be recycled, however, the extent to which plastics are recycled depends upon various technical, economic and logistical factors. As a valuable and finite resource, given that it is derived from fossil fuels such as oil and coal, the optimum recovery route for most plastic items at the end of life is for them to be recycled, preferably back into a product that can then be recycled again and again, ad infinitum.
- 1.4. It is estimated that 8.3 billion tonnes of plastics have been produced globally so far, with 6.3 billion tonnes of this becoming plastic waste. Only 9% of plastic is currently recycled and 12% is incinerated, resulting in 79% of the plastic produced to date either ending up in landfill or elsewhere in the natural environment, perhaps most worryingly in the world's oceans. Single Use Plastics make up a significant proportion of this total. Single Use Plastic refers to any disposal plastic item which is designed to be used just once.
- 1.5. The council recognises that discarded plastics, including non-recyclable food containers, cups and straws are a major pollutant and of detrimental impact to Cheltenham and the wider environment. The council is striving to implement 'recycle and go' bins to capture more recyclable plastic waste such as plastic bottles and pots, as well as empty coffee cups, within the town centre.
- 1.6. This strategy has been developed to expedite a program of plastics reduction actions that will have a long term positive impact on the current issues raised within the community.
- 1.7. When reviewed in 2019, the key areas of single use plastic within the council included:
  - Plastic cutlery
  - Coffee vending cups
  - Food containers
  - Straws
  - Condiment sachets
  - Soft drink bottles
  - Water cups
  - Bin liners

- Stationery items – plastic wallet files etc.

## 2. Strategy scope

2.1. This strategy aims to reduce and eliminate single use plastics within the council and encourage change within the borough based on the authority leading by example.

2.2. The key objectives which form the scope of this strategy are:

1. The systematic identification of single use plastics by the council and its partners and the more environmentally friendly alternatives available
2. To reduce/remove single use plastics by working to encourage supplier businesses and contractors to help reduce/remove these from the supply chain
3. To raise awareness of the impact of single use plastics across the town
4. To deliver the commitments and actions within the strategy through a collaborative approach, not just by the council, but across the wider public sector and through our supply chains.

## 3. Reduction/removal of single use plastics within the Council

3.1. To reduce and remove single use plastic within the council, there are three key steps that need to be taken:

1. Identify current use
2. Identify and develop alternative sources of supply; and
3. Implement change.

3.2. A high level review of all single use plastics across the council has taken place, which identified the single use products currently used as:

- Cutlery
- Coffee machine vending cups
- Water cups
- Food containers
- Condiment sachets
- Soft drink bottles
- Straws, milk carton straws
- Bin liners
- Stationery items – plastic wallet files etc.

3.3. The council's partner organisations procure most of these items. A joint approach with our partner organisations and supply chains to bring about change is essential, to promote innovation and identify alternative products and solutions to ensure acceptable functionality and that essential ongoing customer needs are met.

- 3.4. Relevant tenders by the council need to include standard criteria to consider how our supply chain assesses the circular economy in relation to plastics and those businesses must be encouraged to minimise waste and to recycle. Such criteria would help to support the reduction and ultimately, the elimination of plastic packaging, at the same time supporting the wider climate change agenda. This is needed to reduce the impact of our supply chain on the environment and to help achieve the council's goals of carbon neutrality by 2030.
- 3.5. Following identification of suitable alternative products, access to current products should be phased out and stopped as quickly as is practicable.
- 3.6. Further details of benchmarks and actions to be developed are provided within the action plan within the appendix to this strategy.

#### 4. Promoting the reduction and removal of single use plastics across Cheltenham

- 4.1. Through taking a lead on the reduction and removal of single use plastics across all council offices and where possible schools, we will take forward the opportunity to lead and to educate and promote awareness of the negative impact they have, whilst identifying alternative products for council staff, visitors and school pupils, which can directly inform the wider Cheltenham community.
- 4.2. In addition to the work undertaken by the council directly to reduce and manage its single use plastics, the council works closely with partners across the borough, demonstrating its commitment to the management and removal of plastics locally. The Council has considered initiatives such as 'refill Cheltenham' to make Cheltenham a borough in which refilling your water bottle becomes a cultural norm, with refill points available in town, via cafes, retailers, hotels and business. There is an opportunity for the Cheltenham Trust to be involved in this scheme and to promote this to visitors of Cheltenham, however, with the constraints of COVID-19 this initiative has not been taken forward yet due to the associated health and safety concerns and funding requirements.
- 4.3. The work done so far by our service provider/partners has provided an improved understanding of the current hotspots in the area and where resources and efforts should be prioritised to support the early reduction of plastic waste.

#### 5. Impact

- 5.1. Environmental – the growing generation of plastic waste and its leakage into our environment must be tackled if we are to achieve a truly circular lifecycle for plastics. Today, littering and the leakage of plastic waste is causing extensive damage to our environment and wildlife, economic impacts on activities such as tourism, fisheries and shipping and may already be affecting human health through the food chain.
- 5.2. Economic – with the achievement of this strategy within Cheltenham, depending on the cost implications through the supply chain to innovate and develop alternative solutions, there may be a potential cost increase, however this will be defined within the action plan. In the long term, failure to act could have far reaching impacts on human health and well-being, with similarly extreme cost implications.

## 6. Monitoring and reporting

6.1. An update on relevant activities and achievements within the action plan will be included in future reports to members.

### Action Plan 2020-21

#### - reduction and removal of single use plastics within the Council

Action	Responsible lead	Timescales
Create a more detailed baseline of current single use plastic used across the council, including in the home due to homeworking following the Covid-19 pandemic	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	By January 2021 subject to the constraints of COVID-19
Identify investment required to implement re-usable products (e.g. water bottles instead of cups) and consider budget options to support this activity	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	TBA
Evaluate and trial alternative solutions where applicable as soon as possible	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	TBA
Identify where no alternative products are currently available within the market and work with current suppliers to develop solutions	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	TBA
Roll out the use of alternative products and publicise successes	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	TBA
Phase out/stop single use plastic products being ordered as soon as an alternative and more environmentally friendly source is available	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	TBA
Monitor and where still being used, remove single use plastic cups at water coolers and coffee machines across the council	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	By January 2021 subject to the constraints of COVID-19
Raise awareness of issues with a group of staff champions	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	By January 2021 subject to the constraints of COVID-19
Ensure the effective consideration of plastics within the sustainability test for all relevant contracts as part of the procurement process	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	
Promote, internally and	Karen Watson report to Mike	By January 2021 subject to

externally, the removal and reduction of single use plastic in both home and work life via social media and the website, working with partner organisations and Plastic Free Cheltenham including businesses and schools.	Redman	the constraints of COVID-19
Review progress annually and report back to members	Karen Watson report to Mike Redman	October 2021