

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**19 MARCH 2020**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET DECISION**

**Environment and Transport - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Mike Smith**

**SINGLE USE MATERIALS POLICY 2020 – 2025**

**SUMMARY**

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council first adopted an Environment Policy in 2016 demonstrating our public commitment to preserving, protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment, and providing an overarching framework for our work on environmental improvement and sustainability. This policy has overseen significant performance in areas such as carbon reduction, energy efficiency and green infrastructure, and also provides the framework for improving internal waste management.

The issue of waste, reuse and recycling, including Single Use Plastics, is becoming increasingly prominent and in the public consciousness. This 'Single Use Materials Policy' will contribute to the Council's overarching Environment Policy by focusing efforts on reducing resource use, increasing internal reuse and recycling, phasing out 'single use materials' by 2025 and increasing the sustainable use of resources. It aims to ensure we work to become a 'single use materials free' local authority by March 2025 and includes a focus on improving internal waste and recycling arrangements, working with our supply chains to use sustainable products, influencing partners and stakeholders to improve performance, and raising awareness of waste and unsustainable practices.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)**

To ensure Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has an adopted framework for our actions across the organisation to reduce the use of single use materials, improve the management of resources and to contribute to the overall improved environmental performance of the organisation. It will provide the guiding principles and objectives for our decisions on products and materials, and strengthens the ability to maintain good environmental performance from contractors, suppliers and partner organisations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet note the report and the rationale for a new Single Use Materials Policy and approve the attached policy.

## DETAIL

1. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to environmental improvement and sustainability and this is demonstrated through a variety of strategic and operational commitments ranging from the significant investment and performance in areas such as energy reduction in street lighting to the impressive pathway since 2009/10 on reducing the Council's greenhouse gas emissions. Our Environment Policy provides the overarching framework for our work on sustainability across the organisation.
2. Our current Environment Policy adopted in December 2017 includes the priority of managing resources sustainably. This is consistent with the governments 'Resources and Waste Strategy for England' 2018 which sets out how the UK will double resource productivity and eliminate avoidable waste of all kinds (including plastic waste) by 2050, with a focus on minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy.
3. There is now a drive for a more circular economy, maximising the value of resources and minimising waste and its impact on the environment. The Council recognises that as the largest local authority in the region with an economy that has strong links and emphasis on waste, waste recovery, waste to energy, and as a community leader we have a key role to play in single use material waste, particularly plastic. Single use materials such as plastics are not only a pollutant but an opportunity to recover valuable materials for reuse and recycling.
4. The Council recognises the importance of tackling waste products, particularly 'single use materials', which are products designed for a single use after which they are recycled or disposed as solid waste, often implying cheapness and short-term convenience rather than medium to long-term durability. The term is also sometimes used for products that may last several months to distinguish from similar products that last indefinitely. Plastic is the most prominent and high profile material with 79% of the plastic waste ever produced now residing in landfills or in the environment and only 9% ever having been recycled.
5. Single use plastics have a global impact and media coverage in the last 2 years is increasing its prominence. Significant environmental damage being caused is raising the public consciousness stimulating widespread momentum and support to reduce dependency. It is high on the political agenda and there is increasing pressure for business and Government to work together to 'solve' the problem.
6. The Council recognises the importance of its role and enhancing the Environment Policy by committing to:
  - Minimising the dependence on single use materials across the Council
  - Increasing the amount of recycling and reducing the amount of general waste to Energy from Waste
  - Separating out materials via collection facilities in all main buildings
  - Phasing out all single use materials by 2025 from Council activity
  - Leading by example, influencing partners, suppliers and contractors, and increasing public awareness of the issue
7. The purpose of adopting the Single Use Materials Policy is to ensure we minimise and phase out the use of single materials across the Council by 2025 and our commitment is to:
  - Audit all current internal arrangements, adopt an 'action plan to zero' on single use materials in the next 12 months, and agree targets for annual improvements

- Implement a phased approach to new internal waste and recycling collection facilities in all operational assets, beginning with our six main administrative buildings in 2020/21
- Implement awareness campaigns, engage with suppliers, contractors and stakeholders to phase out the removal of all single use materials from Council processes
- Engage with partners in joint ventures and innovative projects to raise awareness, reduce and phase out single use material waste
- Measure and publically report the impacts of the Policy and actions on reducing waste and our pathway to Zero Single Use Materials
- Deliver communications campaigns on single use materials and recycling

8. In March / April 2020 the trialling of new waste and recycling arrangements in Municipal Buildings, including introducing new collection facilities for clean recyclables across our estate, will begin and this is a bold new step in our work to improve practices. This will see almost 170 individual waste bins removed and replaced with centralised separation facilities for the recycling of paper, card, plastics and tins. Total waste collected from Council buildings equates to nearly 242 tonnes per annum, and approximately 16% (40.4 tonnes) is recycled, 1% of waste (0.4 tonnes) is sent to landfill with the rest approximately 83% (202 tonnes) sent to Energy from Waste. Of the total 242 tonnes from our 6 main buildings, 220 tonnes is produced at Municipal buildings. We will be separating materials, measuring performance and aim to roll out these facilities should the trial be a success.
9. Waste, and particularly tackling single use materials, is becoming an ever more important environmental issue and one that is gaining media and public prominence all the time. It is imperative that the Council leads by example in terms of waste management, reuse, recycling and influences through best practice. This is best achieved by adopting a strong policy on single use materials internally, introducing new facilities to enable employees to contribute, increase the recovery of recyclables and reduce overall waste production over time.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Community Impact Implications as a result of adopting this internal waste policy.

## **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

This report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is a small cost of introducing the new separation facilities in Municipal Buildings however part of the trial is to assess any changes in cost and income from the separation of materials, the collection and management of fewer facilities and the routes for the collected waste. The financial implications of phasing out single use materials will be assessed after the audit of materials to be undertaken when developing the action plan which is to be brought back to Cabinet at a later date.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications identified at this time.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

This policy of reducing the dependence on unsustainable products is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

## **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

The report and internal policy does not affect individual wards.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

SBC Single Use Materials Policy 2020-2025

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