



Glasgow City Council

**Environment, Sustainability & Carbon
Reduction City Policy Committee**

**Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhoods and
Sustainability**

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Item 1

30th April 2019

REDUCTION IN USE OF PLASTICS

Purpose of Report:

To update the Committee on work being undertaken to promote the reduction of plastic usage within the city.

Recommendations:

That the Committee notes:

- (1) the content of this report and
- (2) the intention to draft a plastics reduction strategy for Glasgow.

Ward No(s):

Citywide:

Local member(s) advised: Yes No consulted: Yes No

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

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1. Plastics – the problem

- 1.1 Members of the Committee have previously expressed concern at the impact of plastic waste on the planet's ecosystems. At the meeting of 20 March 2018, for instance, the Committee agreed to ban the mass release of balloons and sky lanterns in recognition of the harm which plastic materials cause to other species. Members can view the report on this at: <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewSelectedDocument.asp?c=P62AFQDN2U2UNTNT0G>. This decision was further reinforced on 29 August 2018 by the announcement to drive forward a Plastic Reduction Plan for Glasgow (see the following link: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=23102>)
- 1.2 Plastic waste is both residual and toxic, endangering marine life especially and blighting the lives of human communities in parts of the developing world. There is a growing public sense that organisations and individuals need to take responsibility and take action to reduce, recycle and reuse plastics in order to prevent such material from becoming an increasing and almost permanent feature of the environment.
- 1.3 Plastic use and waste are global issues, but local action is where sustainable solutions will emerge from. There is therefore a strong role for the Council to use its community leadership role to work with partners and communities to raise awareness of these issues, to educate people and to promote action across Glasgow. This will help to ensure that the city does its part for Glaswegians and for the health of the city, as well as promoting good global citizenship and nurturing the future of the planet.
- 1.4 A recent motion on litter to the full Council received all-party support and committed the Council to greater action on plastic waste. The text of this motion can be viewed at: <http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viewSelectedPack.asp?c=P6J5FQ0GZ3ZLZLUT>
In this light, this report updates members on the actions that the Council is taking on these important issues, together with proposals to ensure that momentum is both sustained and grows to tackle plastics reduction in Glasgow.

2. Current work on plastics reduction

- 2.1 The Council has already taken positive steps to address plastics reduction in a number of ways. Much of this work has been focused around food and beverage packaging, as noted below.
- 2.2 On a national basis, the Scottish Government has made it clear that it wishes to see a greener and more sustainable Scotland, which significantly reduces plastic use and adopts more circular economic practices. It has committed to develop a deposit return scheme on beverage containers and has been

working with Zero Waste Scotland on this issue. A charge on single use carrier bags was introduced in Scotland in October 2014 and, more recently, the Scottish Government completed a consultation on a proposal to ban the manufacture and sale of plastic-stemmed cotton buds in Scotland. In addition, it has established an expert panel to consider actions to reduce the demand for single-use plastic items.

2.3 The Council has already undertaken a number of steps to encourage and support sustainable choices by staff and residents, as follows:

- Glasgow's Commonwealth Games set a high ambition to become the greenest games ever and a key action towards this was setting contractual requirements for caterers to use biodegradable food packing, called Vegware. This packaging was used throughout all eleven days of the Games, with many caterers choosing to continue with this best practice after Games-time. Subsequently, the range of disposable items (such as plastic knives, forks and spoons) used in Cordia-run Council cafes has also been reviewed. 100% of them are now recyclable/compostable and plastic knives, forks and spoons have been replaced with wooden alternatives.
- Single use plastic straws are no longer available in all Council-run cafes and restaurants and have been replaced by eco-friendly alternatives. This has followed a successful campaign by pupils from Sunnyside Primary School in Craigend (<http://www.naestrawataw.org/>). Indeed, children and young people in the city have continued to be at the forefront of the movement to tackle plastic waste. Last year's Venturejam initiative, for instance, brought young innovators together to work with the SSE Hydro on generating new ways to encourage the recycling of plastic waste.
- Internally, work has commenced on the issue of single use coffee cups. These items are not recyclable via normal channels and the Council and Encore catering have therefore worked to raise awareness of the wastefulness of single coffee cup usage by promoting (and retailing) reusable ones. To further incentivise this, Encore provide a ten pence discount in their cafes for staff who present a reusable cup when buying a hot drink.
- Further work is currently being undertaken to encourage the licensed trade to end the use of plastic straws (through the Best Bar None scheme). This is part of a broader ambition for the sector to move away from single use plastic and to follow the good example already being set by some premises and chains in the area, including the Scottish Event Campus.

2.4 The Council has been mindful of the need for a more co-ordinated approach to this important set of issues. It has therefore looked for opportunities both to improve the recycling of single use plastic products and to prevent them from becoming waste in the first place. The three initiatives detailed below are key elements of a developing strategy for Glasgow on plastic waste and represent good progress for both the Council and the city in stepping up action in this area.

3. Glasgow Cup Movement

- 3.1 One of the most profound signs of a throwaway approach to consumption is the huge amount of single use drinks cups (especially for coffee) that go to landfill or end up as litter on city streets. There has been increasing media attention on this area, with almost 500 million single use cups being used each year in Scotland alone – and only 4% of them currently recycled nationally. Recycling of such cups has not been common because it requires specialist processes to strip away and repurpose the materials from which they are made.
- 3.2 The Council has been looking at ways to address this challenge and has been working in partnership with the national agency, Keep Scotland Beautiful, to bring a scheme to the city which can do that. The Glasgow Cup Movement is the result of this collaboration and it was launched on 31 January 2019 in the city as part of a broader national initiative on this area (<https://www.KeepScotlandBeautiful.org/cups/>). It has the support of the Scottish Government and a range of businesses, including those which are the major coffee retailers across the nation.
- 3.3 Membership of the Cup Movement provides access to a collection service and recycling provider, which uses an innovative method to fully recycle single use cups into new plastic functional products. The Council has agreed to lead the way in tackling the issue of waste produced from single-use cups by being the first public body in Scotland to sign up to the Cup Movement. Subsequently, major shopping centres in the city have signed up to the collection service, together with city centre businesses.
- 3.4 The aims of this campaign nationally and locally are:
- Educating, inspiring and empowering people to change their littering, recycling and reuse behaviour.
 - Providing robust evidence to inform policy and practice.
 - Creating a successful model which can be replicated in other cities.
 - Contributing to the Scottish Government's circular economy ambitions.
- 3.5 The City Chambers complex will be one of the first participating locations for the Glasgow Cup Movement. Seven collection units are being installed across the complex to enable and support staff to recycle single use plastic cups. By signing up to this project, the Council will be able to access the services provided by the collection and recycling facilities. Its introduction will be accompanied by a major staff information campaign.
- 3.6 In addition to installing collection units to capture single use plastic cups that have entered into circulation, there will be a concerted effort to educate staff on the waste hierarchy and encourage them to stop using single use cups. Encore will also be running promotions to encourage staff to bring or purchase reusable cups. This is likely to include a discount on hot drink purchases or competitions to incentivize staff to participate by using the collection units.

- 3.7 The Council works closely with the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce on its programme to develop more business opportunities in the circular economy (<https://circularglasgow.com/>). A report on this work is due to be presented to the Committee by the end of this year, in line with a commitment made by the Leader of the Council to develop a strategic roadmap for the city in this area. The circular economy fundamentally seeks to use waste from one process as a primary input to another and thereby to maintain or even increase the value of a product and its lifetime, as well as to prevent its ending up as landfill. In the case of coffee cups, the proposed method for processing them when collected in Glasgow will lead to the repurposing of their constituent materials to other products such as signage and reusable containers.

4. Upstream Battle

- 4.1 The most severe impacts from plastic waste occur mainly away from its source – our towns and cities – and in the marine environment. Plastic litter harms fish and marine mammals by being ingested and by entangling them. It has become a major source of pollution in the world's seas and, where it accumulates in coastal regions and river deltas, is a threat to human communities too. It is estimated that up to 12.7 million tonnes of plastic gets into the sea each year, equating to a truck full of litter a minute. Many initiatives that tackle marine litter have traditionally been targeted at cleaning up beaches. However, as 80% of marine litter comes from land, this issue needs to be addressed at its upstream source where litter is washed into gutters, blown into streams or simply discarded.
- 4.2 In order to focus local and national attention on to this important area, Keep Scotland Beautiful is leading a campaign called Upstream Battle (<https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/upstreambattle/>). This was launched in Glasgow on 25 October 2018. It aims to address the issue of marine litter by raising awareness and educating the public on the impact of plastics in the marine environment. In particular this will focus on local level at plastic litter entering the Clyde and its tributaries, which ultimately leads to the sea.
- 4.3 The Council currently undertakes a significant amount of work to prevent land blown litter and plastics from reaching waterways. This takes the form of cleansing services and enforcement action, supporting and coordinating community clean ups, and even operating the Water Witch river boat which clears plastic and other debris from the Clyde. The Upstream Battle campaign will help to focus the Council's planning on targeted action in conjunction with neighboring local authorities, thereby ensuring a strong and consistent message across the city-region.
- 4.4 Upstream Battle will increase links with community groups, schools, businesses and members of the public. It will encourage those engaged in existing litter and waste activities to join the campaign as 'anchor' flagship groups. At the heart of this work is a renewed focus on active citizens making a difference, representing a significant development of voluntary participation in environmental action by residents and especially young people. The Council is an active partner in this work, together with the other west of

Scotland local authorities which border the Clyde and its firth as it meets the sea. Upstream Battle takes in all of the Clyde's catchment area, from its source in the Lowther Hills, along its major tributaries such as the rivers Kelvin and Leven, to the Forth and Clyde canal, and to the Firth of Clyde.

- 4.5 This work also fits well with the Scotland's forthcoming Year of Coasts and Waters in 2020 (<http://www.eventscotland.org/funding/year-of-coasts-and-waters-2020/>). It will promote the nation's rich and varied natural environment around its coasts and inland waters to residents and visitors. Protecting and enhancing such extraordinary local and national assets is going to be even more important in this light. Upstream Battle and its legacy for work across local authorities which border the Clyde is therefore timely and will contribute towards national ambitions for 2020.
- 4.6 This initiative offers a good opportunity for the Council to work across sectors and especially with community groups in support of a common goal. It acknowledges that no single agency or group of people can solve these issues, but that collective action can make a real difference. A major spring clean along the Clyde is currently being planned for April-June 2019. Upstream Battle will be focused on three key areas for this work:
- Awareness raising - through public workshops, local exhibitions and social media.
 - Citizen science – through an expert group, mass surveys and local anchor groups.
 - Children and young people – through work with primary schools and a young reporters for the Clyde programme.

5. Refill Glasgow

- 5.1 There is a growing appreciation amongst local authorities and businesses across the UK of the need to support greater access for residents to free drinking water whilst on the move. This is in a current context where around 7.7 billion plastic water bottles are purchased every year in the UK, but only a minority of people use reusable ones. For Glasgow in particular this represents an opportunity to make greater progress in shifting public attitudes towards the consumption of tap water - which is famously one of the best drinking water sources anywhere in the world. If reusable containers are also used in place of single use plastic bottles, then a significant potential reduction in plastic waste can be made.
- 5.2 Public water fountains were once a relatively common feature of cities, particularly in the age of municipal improvement when they played a key role in combatting communicable disease. They are now making something of a comeback in various settings - such as airports and shopping centres – in order to address contemporary concerns about the waste from single use plastic water bottles and with a new focus on their role in filling re-usable containers. Scottish Water is running a campaign called Your Water Your Life, for instance, which aims to encourage people to carry a reusable bottle

and refill on the go. The first Scottish Water top-up tap was launched on Buchanan Street on 18 December 2018.

- 5.3 Public water fountains require capital investment and incur ongoing maintenance costs, at a time when public sector funding is generally very tight. In this light, the Council has been exploring alternative approaches which make use of existing resources and connect to digital media. Refill is a UK-wide scheme which encourages businesses to allow people to refill their water containers from the tap in their premises (<https://refill.org.uk/about/>). It promotes this through a sticker in the window of the premises and especially through an app which lets people know of participating businesses in their area.
- 5.4 Refill estimates that the average person in the UK will use 150 plastic water bottles every year. If just one in ten people refilled once a week then there would be 340 million less plastic bottles a year in circulation. The Council has formally joined the Refill initiative and the objectives of this work will be to:
- Engage with community and environmental groups to champion Refill where they live.
 - Enable people to make the change and build the Refill network themselves.
 - Run a positive, fun and inclusive campaign in Glasgow.
 - Address creative new ways to communicate the initiative and its impacts.
 - Work with the city's businesses to champion the extra value brought to their customer offer by participation in Refill.
 - Make Glasgow the first 'Refill City' in Scotland.

6. Future Work – drafting of plastics strategy and action plan

- 6.1 The specific project work noted above should make a combined positive difference to Glasgow's production of and attitudes to plastic waste. It is clear, however, that there is a need to develop a consistent, stated and strategic approach to addressing the issue of plastics for the city. This will help the Council as a distinct organisation to continue to reduce its use of plastics wherever possible, but also provide wider encouragement and leadership to the city itself.
- 6.2 In this light, work has begun to prepare a plastics reduction strategy, which will describe the means to achieve these aims. This work will involve engagement with local and national partners, as well as consideration of good practice from other city peers such as Bristol. It will also draw on widespread consultation to ensure that issues and challenges are more fully described and addressed, both with partners and with Glaswegian communities. A prior, targeted consultation with a number of key stakeholders has led to the following areas emerging for potential inclusion within such a strategy:
- Reducing the prevalence of single-use plastic straws and other forms of single-use plastic through further engagement with the licensing process to address licensed premises and events.

- Exploration of the feasibility of installing and expanding the provision of ‘top-up taps’ across the city, both in city streets and plumbed-in water coolers in Council premises to be made available to the public (particularly in museums and libraries).
- Looking at the Council’s procurement of items and how best to reduce plastic waste (including packaging).
- Further work to reduce the number of items used within Council and Encore cafes that are made from plastic and increase the use of sustainable alternatives.
- Explore the potential for the creation of Glasgow’s first ‘plastic free school’ in Glasgow. The plastic reduction agenda has captured the interest of significant numbers of younger people, particularly through TV programmes such as Blue Planet.
- Use of internal communication channels to encourage staff to make positive choices - for example, tips for plastic-free packed lunches.
- Inclusion of a new action plan to draw together the various elements of the local contribution to the Upstream Battle initiative.
- Collation of potential asks of national government in relation to those matters over which the Council has limited or no direct control in this area (such as further action to reduce the use of plastic bags and packaging).

6.3 Work is now underway to develop a formal strategy and action plan on plastics reduction for the city and a draft of it will be brought to a future meeting of this Committee after the summer recess.

7. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial: No direct financial implications for the Council

Legal: No direct legal implications for the Council

Personnel: These actions will be undertaken using existing staff resources.

Procurement: The broader strategy on plastics will need to be considered within the context of sustainable procurement practices.

Council Strategic Plan: This report supports the Council’s strategic objective to become a more Sustainable City.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal Not applicable.

*support the
Council's
Equality
Outcomes
2017-22*

*What are the
potential
equality
impacts as a
result of this
report?*

An EQIA screening has been undertaken and can be viewed via the following link:
<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=44940&p=0>
A need has been identified to maintain the availability of plastic straws for some disabled citizens.

*Please
highlight if the
policy/proposal
will help
address socio
economic
disadvantage.*

Not applicable.

**Sustainability
Impacts:**

Environmental:

This report will have a significant positive impact upon the environment by actively raising awareness and educating citizens and staff members about the need to reduce plastic use. This will also set in motion a series of actions designed to reduce, reuse and recycle plastics within the Council and wider city.

*Social,
including Article
19
opportunities:*

There is the potential for positive social impacts should plastic alternatives be sought from local suppliers

Economic:

This report supports the city's broader ambitions to grow the circular economy.

**Privacy and Data
Protection
impacts:**

This report has no impacts upon privacy or data protection.

8. Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:

- (1) the content of this report and
- (2) the intention to draft a plastics reduction strategy for Glasgow.