

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee – 8
December 2022

Subject: Single Use Plastics

Report of: Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement
Strategic Lead – Resources and Programmes
Sustainability Project Manager, Zero Carbon

Summary

This report provides an update on work being undertaken across the Council on Single Use Plastics as part of the action under Workstream 3 of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. In particular, the report refers to the programme of work that is being set out, progress to date and next steps.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to note and comment on the information in the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 sets out the actions that will be delivered to ensure that the Council plays its full part in delivering the city's Climate Change Framework 2020-25

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments
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Actions set out in the Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 recognise the need for just and equal delivery of climate action across the city, focusing on the areas such as community engagement, accessible transport, access to green spaces and tackling fuel poverty.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The transition to a zero carbon city will help the city's economy become more sustainable and will generate jobs within the low carbon energy and goods sector. This will support the implementation of the Our Manchester Industrial Strategy and Manchester Economic Recovery and Investment Plan
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Manchester is one of a small number of UK cities that have agreed a science-based target and is leading the way in transitioning to a zero carbon city. It is envisaged that this will give the city opportunities in the green technology and services sector.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Transitioning to a zero-carbon city can help to tackle fuel poverty by reducing energy bills. Health outcomes will also be improved through the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport, improved air quality and easy access to green spaces.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Becoming a zero carbon city will help to make the city a more attractive place for people to live, work, visit and study.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	A zero carbon transport system would create a world class business environment to drive sustainable economic growth.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

It is not expected that there will be any financial consequences to the Revenue budget that should arise from the content of this report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

It is not expected that there will be any financial consequences to the Capital budget that should arise from the content of this report.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25
Manchester City Council Climate Emergency Declaration July 2019
Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 Updated 2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress to date on the Council's commitments on Single Use Plastics (SUPs) and to outline next steps and actions.
- 1.2 In 2019 Manchester City Council pledged to eradicate avoidable Single Use Plastics by 2024. This was following the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) launching the first city-region wide plan to drive down avoidable SUPs as part of the #PlasticFreeGM campaign, in which all ten GM Local Authorities signed up to the Local Authorities Plastic Pact.
- 1.3 All ten GM local authorities, plus the GMCA, have committed to actions related to reducing SUPs including aiming to eradicate avoidable single use plastic on the public estate; sharing data, knowledge and best-practice on avoidable SUPs; embedding environmental sustainability criteria in social value procurement mechanisms; and raising awareness amongst staff, suppliers and the wider community to influence and change behaviour.
- 1.4 Our commitment has been reflected in the MCC Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 (CCAP) under Workstream 3: Reducing Consumption Based Emissions and Influencing Suppliers.
- 1.5 The Council has committed additional resource to this area of work through the creation of a Sustainability Project Manager role to lead this area of work, along with embedding sustainable events activity. The postholder was appointed in June 2022.

2. Wider context on single use plastics

- 2.1 Single use plastic (SUP) items are designed to be used only once before being thrown away. These items include, but are not limited to, hot and cold drinks cups and lids, stirrers, drink bottles, cutlery, bin bags, straws and a large amount of packaging (such as bags, polystyrene and bubble wrap). Many items of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves and face masks are also SUPs.
- 2.2 Overuse of SUPs, as well as improper disposal contributes to a range of issues including pollution, climate change and health problems.
- 2.3 According to the Department for Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), it is estimated that on average each person uses a staggering 18 single-use plastic plates and 37 single-use plastic items of cutlery each year in England. For Manchester's population of 588,250, this could equate to nearly 10.5 million plastic plates and almost 22 million plastic cutlery items annually.
- 2.4 The durability of plastic means litter from items used for a few minutes can last for centuries in landfill or as litter in open-spaces or our lakes, rivers and oceans. Plastic waste is not biodegradable, meaning that it takes hundreds of years to decompose into tiny pieces known as microplastics. Items such as

plastic bags can block waterways and sewers, which leads to an increased risk of local flooding and posing threats to wildlife. Around the world, more than one million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals and turtles die every year from eating or getting tangled in plastic waste.

- 2.5 Plastic waste also has a significant negative effect on climate change through its production (as often plastics are made using fossil fuel), along with the energy required for disposal (including recycling).
- 2.6 A direct impact for the Council is seen through the Waste and Recycling team resources needed for waste and litter management.
- 2.7 According to the Plastic Health Coalition, plastics carry a significant risk to human health. Microplastics contaminate our food and waterways, they also attract micro-organisms, such as harmful bacteria. Plastics are also known to contain a number of harmful chemicals often associated with serious health issues, such as hormone related cancers, infertility or neurodevelopment disorders.
- 2.8 The picture on single-use plastics is complex. It is not as straight forward as removing or replacing all SUPs, as for some there is no viable alternative. This may be for health and safety reasons, financial motivations or avoiding food waste (of perishable products) for example. Consideration for the environmental impacts of alternative materials is also needed, including weight, transportation (especially important for packaging), how much of the material is recycled and how it is disposed of.

3. Council commitments

- 3.1 Within the refreshed Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 reviewed by this Committee and approved by the City Council's Executive in September 2022, we have strengthened the single-use plastic actions. We now have one SUP-related action for the Council and one for the Council's wider influence on the city, both of which aim to reduce avoidable SUPs, therefore reducing waste and carbon-related emissions:

Action 3.2: Ensuring the Council reduces avoidable SUPs by 2024 by:

Reducing single use plastics from across the Council's operational estates (i.e. cafes), markets (including pop-up markets), Council run events and other events held on Council owned land and procurement (including packaging on goods).

Action 3.6: Ensure all MCC Markets and Parks meet the Council's Single Use Plastic Free Pledge and UK Government legislation by:

Embedding and enforcing requirements to be single use plastic free within Market trader licences and Park trader licences

3.2 Work was undertaken by the City Council's Events Team on SUPs reduction in 2021, which showed adoption of reusable cups at all of Manchester's outdoor events could save approximately 1 million single use plastic cups each year from entering the waste stream, which equates to approximately 57 tonnes of carbon (when comparing embodied carbon in reusable and single-use cups). The impact of the pandemic on event delivery had enabled more resource from the events team to be directed to progressing this area of work. A risk was identified that this work would not reach its full potential without a dedicated staffing resource to support the climate actions relating to sustainable events and the Council moving towards being single use plastic free by 2024.

3.3 Funded through additional resources made available in the Council's 2022/23 budget, there is now a dedicated MCC Sustainability Project Manager assigned to this area of work, which has enabled a work programme to be developed. In post since June 2022, the main priorities within the work programme for the first 12 months are:

- Define which SUPs the Council uses through carrying out an audit
- Develop a baseline for SUP use
- Develop an action plan to outline steps required for eliminating avoidable SUPs and minimising the impact of unavoidable SUPs
- Develop organisational understanding of avoidable SUPs and environmental and financial impacts of SUPs
- Develop an External Stakeholder Engagement Plan

4. Progress to date

4.1 Progress to date on this programme of work since our Sustainability Project Manager came into their new post in June 2022 includes:

- i. Data collection to establish the current baseline of single use plastics in use across the Council.
- ii. Engaging internal stakeholders to raise awareness and embed the commitment.
- iii. Engaging external stakeholders to share the Council's commitment and drive down avoidable SUPs use across the city.

4.2 *Data collection to establish a current baseline:* This has involved categorising SUPs as avoidable or unavoidable by 2024. As outlined at 2.8, not all SUPs are avoidable. This has involved targeting Commissioning and Contracts Leads on which SUPs are procured and also defining the Council's commitment to reducing SUPs. Key SUPs in use have been identified as PPE, cleaning and household supplies (including bin bags), catering consumables, plastic drinks bottles, packaging on various products and parking ticket bags.

4.3 *Engaging with internal stakeholders to raise awareness and embed the commitment.* This has involved challenging common practice and offering support in assessing alternative options to SUPs in use. To date, this has included a Council-wide call to action and questionnaire; targeted call out to

Social Value, Commissioning and Contracts Leads; and bespoke engagement. To date the Zero Carbon team has engaged on SUPs with 13 teams and 93 individuals, across HROD, Corporate Estates, Adults Services, Neighbourhoods, Population Health, Homelessness, Education and Children's Services. These conversations have highlighted some of the measures and good practice already in place across MCC:

- Packaging – identified as a problem area, particularly across ICT and Adaptations Team. However, some good practice is already demonstrated by suppliers, including use of more sustainable alternatives such as bamboo, sugar cane and recycled post-consumer waste, along with tapeless carton boxes.
- Catering consumables – significant reductions of SUPs have been made across cafes on the Council estate. Good practice will be shared across all to promote consistency. As outlined by WRAP in '[Clear on Plastics](#)', careful consideration of bio-plastic, biodegradable and compostable plastics is key here. These products require industrial composting facilities to degrade properly and ensure they do not contaminate recyclable materials.
- Cleaning products – Facilities Management achieved reductions in plastics use through purchase of bulk refill containers and removal of desk bins in offices and so a reduction in bin bags.
- Parking ticket bags: 200,000 plastic Parking Charge Notice (PCN) bags are purchased each year to support Parking Enforcement. These bags need to be weatherproof to protect the paper PCN once issued and are disposed of by the motorist. From April 2023, the bags will be made from a minimum of 30% recycled content. This aligns to the [UK Plastics Pact](#) target of 30% average recycled content across all plastic packaging, and encourages responsible disposal by the motorist.

4.4 *Engaging with external stakeholders to share the Council's commitment to reducing avoidable SUPs by 2024 and offering collaboration opportunities.* To date, examples include:

- Since 2018, Markets has banned the use of single use plastics for drinking vessels, straws, cutlery, tasting/shot glasses and bags. Traders must commit to this and the Markets team monitor this consistently when markets are operational.
- Working with external events held on Council land to promote use of reusable cups in place of disposable SUP cups. The Council published a Reusable Cups Guide in Autumn 2021 to share good practice. A pilot project undertaken by Markets to loan out Council-owned reusable cups to event organisers started in June 2022. This has successfully moved three events onto using reusables and prevented 24,000 single-use cups entering the waste stream, a saving of half a tonne of plastic waste. Further events have been engaged to understand barriers and identify solutions to implementing reusable cup systems in next year's event season. Work with the events sector is in the context of ongoing pressures and uncertainty surrounding the impact of the pandemic. Reports taken to

the Communities and Equalities Committee in January and July 2022 outline this further.

- The Integrated Commissioning & Procurement (IC&P) unit provides procurement advice and support to schools on an ad hoc basis as needed. This includes direct advice when requested by a school on a specific procurement issue, or participating in events, such as school governors or business managers' forums. Schools have recently taken over milk procurement and guidance was issued by IC&P on how to take environmental considerations into account including specifying reusable bottles instead of plastic.

4.5 In March 2021, the council added a new 10% evaluation weighting specifically in relation to climate change and the environment as part of the Social Value element of contracts and this Committee had a report on this work in June 2022. The Council's SUP reduction commitment is included in the guidance for suppliers so that we can reduce the amount of SUP coming from suppliers.

4.6 Enforcement teams in Neighbourhoods are also working with businesses across the city to ensure the plastics ban on items such as cotton buds, straws, and drinks stirrers, (brought into effect in England in October 2020) is being adhered to. This will change to incorporate the results of a subsequent government consultation on other items including plates, cutlery and polystyrene cups (which ended in February 2022).

5. Next steps

5.1 The focus over the next six months is:

- Complete the audit of SUPs in use on the public estate through engagement with internal teams.
- Develop the baseline for SUPs use, including analysis by an independent expert and further analysis of contracts (in place or due for renewal).
- Develop an action plan to outline steps required for eliminating avoidable SUPs by 2024, along with next steps from 2025 aligned to the next edition of the CCAP. This will be aligned to the waste hierarchy, broadly focussing on avoid, reduce, replace and lastly recycle (for the unavoidable SUPs). However, as potential SUP reduction actions are identified, this will be progressed as soon as practically possible to do so.
- Develop organisational understanding of avoidable SUPs and environmental impacts of SUPs. This includes supporting teams across the organisation to assess alternative options to SUPs.
- Continued engagement of key external stakeholders, including our supply chain, partners such as MCRactive (where cafes and vending machines are in venues) and partners who we can learn from, such as the NHS and FoodSync.

5.2 The workforce will be engaged further through:

- Establishment of a cross Council working group to contribute to the Council's SUPs Action Plan

- Sharing of good practice examples through internal communications channels
- Inclusion in Carbon Literacy Training package
- Alignment to the development of advanced bespoke MCC Carbon Literacy Training and work to embed zero carbon within new and updated policies and strategies. Both strands of work are being overseen by the MCC Zero Carbon Workforce Development Manager who presented a report on the Council's Carbon Literacy programme to this Committee in November 2022.
- Ensuring the SUPs Action Plan is aligned to other work undertaken by the Council which is linked to SUPs usage such as Keep Manchester Tidy, Tobacco Control and Childhood Obesity.

5.3 Production of a Council SUP Policy to further communicate the commitment internally and externally.

5.4 Continue to share good practice and data with partners through GM networks and nationally as appropriate.

6. Recommendations

6.1 To note and comment upon the contents of this report