

## Manchester City Council Report for Information

**Report to:** Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny  
Committee – 12 October 2023

**Subject:** Single Use Plastics

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

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### Summary

This report provides an update on work being undertaken across the Council on Single Use Plastics (SUPs) as part of the action under Workstream 3 of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25.

The report provides background to this work: updates on actions taken by the Council to deliver its pledge to eradicate the use of avoidable Single Use Plastics by the end of 2024; a national ban on SUPs introduced by Government and; communications and engagement work undertaken to reduce SUPs use within the Council and with businesses and residents across the city.

### Recommendations

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

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### 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

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.

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy</b>
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*  
*Manchester City Council: Progress to date on the Council's commitments on Single Use Plastics (SUPs) December 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) since the last report to this Committee in December 2022. Next steps and actions are outlined within the report.
- 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; support new initiatives to increase recycling and re-use; 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:  
  
**Action 3.2:** Ensuring the Council reduces avoidable SUPs by 2024 by reducing single use plastics from across the Council's operational estates (ie. 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.
- 1.5 The previous report to Scrutiny in December 2022 was prepared following the creation of a dedicated Council post to focus on this issue, along with other actions in Workstream 3. The 2022 report set out the following next steps:
  - Development of baseline for SUPs use
  - Development of an action plan for eliminating avoidable SUPs by 2024, along with next steps from 2025
  - Development of organisational understanding of avoidable SUPs and environmental impacts of SUPs
  - Continued engagement of key external stakeholders

## **2. Wider Context on Single Use Plastics**

2.1 Single Use Plastic items are designed to be used once before being thrown away.

2.2 Plastic waste is problematic because:

- It contributes significantly to global pollution, as well as climate change (as plastics are made using fossil fuel).
- Items such as plastic bags can block waterways and sewers, leading to an increased risk of local flooding.
- It causes a major risk, sometimes fatal, to many marine species who mistake plastic objects for food and/or can become entangled in plastic waste.
- SUP items are often difficult to recycle, so often end up as landfill or burnable waste.
- Plastic waste as litter isn't biodegradable so will take hundreds of years to decompose into tiny pieces known as microplastics, potentially releasing embedded chemicals also. Microplastics have been found in our food and waterways.

2.3 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, lack of suitable products in the marketplace, 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.

2.4 Our pledge is to eradicate avoidable SUPs. Our definition of avoidable is where an item is non-essential or where there is a viable alternative, such as a reusable item. At this time, not all SUPs in use will be avoidable.

## **3. Change in National Legislation and Policy**

3.1 The Department for Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have taken action to tackle the most problematic littered SUPs. According to DEFRA it is estimated that, on average, each person uses 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.

3.2 Plastic stirrers were banned by DEFRA, along with restrictions being placed on plastic straws and plastic-stemmed cotton buds in October 2020. In January 2023, DEFRA announced a further ban on Single Use Plastic would come into place in October 2023 on plates, bowls, trays, containers, cutlery and balloon sticks (with some exemptions). Brief guidance was published by DEFRA in May 2023, whilst the legislation was still subject to parliamentary approval. Further detailed guidance for businesses was published by

Government in September, which the Council is now working to distribute as quickly as possible through a variety of channels.

- 3.3 In August 2023, DEFRA published an updated Waste Prevention Programme, now titled The Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste for England. This sets out priorities for action to manage resources and waste in accordance with the top layers of the waste hierarchy – prevention and reuse, detailing actions for plastics (as well as construction, textiles, furniture, electronics, food and road vehicles).

DEFRA estimate that the UK produces 2.5 million tonnes of plastic packaging waste (commercial and household) each year<sup>1</sup>. The key points to highlight in relation to the planned plastics actions by the UK Government are:

- the intention to explore the potential for technological innovation in the production of coffee cups, and behavioural science in how they are used. (timescale TBC)
- Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging payments has been delayed to October 2025.
- Consideration of measures through packaging Extended Producer Responsibility or other means, to encourage use of reusable and refillable packaging (from 2025)

It also references work to be undertaken by the WRAP (a climate action NGO) to launch a Reusable Packaging Roadmap for the UK and a series of category-focused reusable packaging blueprints by Summer 2024.

- 3.4 As the full detail on the Government's plastics policies emerge from DEFRA, this will need to be embedded into the Council approach on SUPs.

#### **4. MCC Progress Update**

- 4.1 The previous SUP report in December 2022 updated this Committee on the initial scoping work carried out to identify SUPs purchased by the Council, along with categorisation as avoidable or not avoidable by 2024. This involved working with 13 teams and 93 individuals across the Council. Since the start of 2023, further development work has been undertaken to shape the findings into an action plan to ensure we remove SUPs where possible, then reduce and/or recycle where the SUPs are still a necessary part of service provision.

- 4.2 The progress over the last ten months has been:

- Establishment of a cross-Council working group
- Development of an Action Plan for eliminating avoidable SUPs by 2024, along with next steps from 2025
- Identification of quick wins, including Neighbourhoods engaging cafes on the public estate to further reduce SUPs in use and Facilities Management continuing to work with a key supplier to replace products

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<sup>1</sup> [Defra \(2022\) UK Statistics on Waste](#)

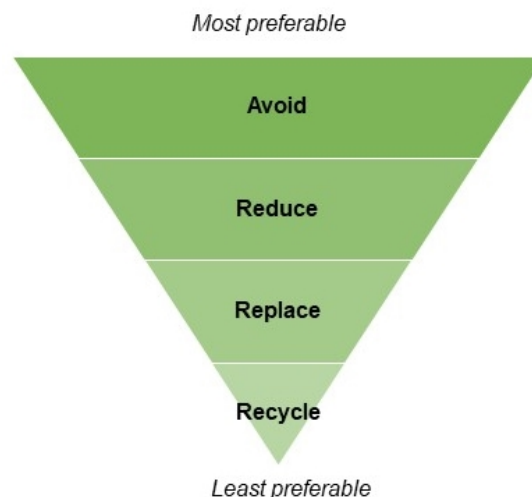
- Identification of opportunities to influence beyond the Council on SUP reductions
- Development of the communications and engagement approach, aligned to wider Zero Carbon Communications plans.

4.3 In April 2023, a working group was established to oversee delivery of the Council’s commitment to eradicate avoidable SUPs on the Council estate; share knowledge and data; and use the Council’s position to influence stakeholders. The group is chaired by the Council’s Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement with 20 members drawn from across all Directorates, the Manchester Climate Change Agency (MCCA) and Mcr Active, demonstrating the strength and breadth of engagement. The core purpose of the working group is to develop and implement a Council-wide Single Use Plastic Reduction Action Plan (the Action Plan).

4.4 The overarching approach agreed by the working group, which underpins the Action Plan, is to ensure that we fully embed SUP reduction practices in decision making across Council services, as well as fulfil our influencing and leadership role outside of the Council. The following graphic sets out the approach to SUP reduction:



4.5 Influence and engagement is fundamental to successful implementation of this action plan. Given that reduction in single use plastics needs to be driven by behaviour change, the Action Plan addresses the need to communicate with a range of stakeholders including residents, businesses, partners, schools, staff and suppliers.



4.6 The waste hierarchy provides the underlining principle for how SUPs usage should be minimised:

- Avoid: stop using
- Reduce: introduce reusables (where they will be used enough times to be less harmful than single use)
- Replace: with sustainable disposable alternatives, such as wooden, bamboo
- Recycle: investigate viable options for unavoidable SUPs)

4.7 The Working Group has developed a working draft of the Action Plan that will be passed for wider approval this year. This covers progress made along with ongoing action needed to continue to eradicate avoidable SUPs by December 2024. As some SUPs are unavoidable for a range of reasons including: health and safety reasons; financial motivations; lack of suitable alternative products available; or avoiding food waste; the Action Plan also sets out how we continue to review usage of these items beyond 2024. The action plan document also serves to communicate across the organisation on the progress to date along with the continued action needed.

4.8 The Action Plan sets out objectives across six areas, which allows a focus on the overarching aim of ‘eliminating avoidable SUPs by 2024’, helps with target setting and facilitates good practice sharing between teams (who are trying to reduce the same type of SUP items):





4.9 Some examples of action taken since December 2022 are:

- Office and Operations: engagement with the Council's main supplier of cleaning products to set a target to switch more products to bulk containers (rather than individual bottles), along with review of recycled content of other plastic products
- Catering: Cafés in our Parks have embedded SUP reduction into catering concession agreements, and requirements to eradicate avoidable SUPs will be included in the tender for ice cream concessions in 2024.
- Licensing: a SUP free expectations will now be included in the Council's Licensing Policy (due for implementation this year). Whilst this will primarily affect specifying requirements/conditions for new applications, it will also set the reference point for existing premises licence holders in terms of what is expected by the Local Authority.

## 5. Communications and Engagement

- 5.1 Progress has been made with multiple stakeholder groups in communicating the need to reduce avoidable single use plastics to influence use of SUPs within the Council and the wider city.
- 5.2 This year, the Council participated in Plastic Free July – a global campaign, run by the Plastic Free Foundation, which encourages people to reduce their Single-use Plastics (SUPs) and wider plastics use. This involved encouraging Manchester residents and businesses to avoid, reduce, replace and recycle, to decrease avoidable plastic waste from throwaway items.
- 5.3 The Council also used Plastic Free July to kick off a six-month campaign to help residents and businesses prepare for the upcoming law change on SUPs. The Council aligned with GMCA and their Plastic Free GM campaign, which had also used the July awareness campaign to launch new resources showing residents and businesses the best products to switch to.
- 5.4 The Council signed up to the Refill campaign in June 2023, working in partnership with City to Sea (not-for-profit that delivers campaign) and GMCA on a 12-month pilot. This is as part of our commitment to support new initiatives to increase re-use. A task and finish group including Council officers, FoodSync and MCCA is overseeing a work programme, including a target to increase Refill points by minimum 20% (where residents and visitors can fill up re-useable water bottles for free). The Council is using its own buildings and encouraging others to do the same.
- 5.5 SUP content is being included in refreshed Carbon Literacy Training content along with work to further embed SUP reduction awareness among Council staff so that it becomes business as usual to reduce SUPs use.



- 5.6 A briefing note for suppliers to raise awareness and share good practice on SUP reduction has been created and shared to supplier networks. In March 2021, the Council added an additional 10% evaluation weighting specifically in relation to climate change and the environment as part of the Social Value element of contracts. The Council's SUP reduction commitment will be strengthened in the updated guidance for suppliers and KPIs for SUP reduction will be added into the tendering and commissioning processes from early 2024.
- 5.7 The Council takes an active role in the GM Single Use Plastics Working Group, chaired by GMCA and including all ten GM Local Authorities, established in January 2023. A key role for the group is to share information and good practice on SUP reduction covered by legislation, but also on wider SUP reduction.

## **6. Challenges**

- 6.1 The complexity and breadth of this area of work presents a challenge in that those responsible for procuring goods and services need to understand and engage with suppliers on the options available when considering how to reduce SUPs or items with SUP packaging.
- 6.2 The communication from the UK Government on SUP legislation and delays in receiving this have made communication with businesses and external stakeholders challenging over the last 10 months.
- 6.3 Analysis of spend data to quantify SUPs in use and monitor reductions is complex, given that this includes consideration of direct purchase of single use plastic products, products packaged in SUPs and indirect use of SUPs by suppliers and providers. The Working Group are in the process of identifying the level of data analysis possible to identify KPIs for inclusion in the Action Plan.

## **7. Next steps**

The focus over the next 14 months to December 2024 will be as follows:

- a. [The MCC] SUP Action Plan (referred to in this report will) be agreed by the SUP Working Group (and passed for wider approval later) this year. The Zero Carbon Team will continue to support colleagues to embed their own SUP reduction actions aligned to the action plan.
- b. Continued communications on recently banned SUP items.
- c. Continued actions to develop cross-organisational understanding of SUP reduction by working with the Zero Carbon Workforce Development Manager. Along with targeted workforce engagement as identified by the SUP Working Group.
- d. Further guidance to be included within the Sustainable Procurement Toolkit for staff that manage contracts and in guidance for suppliers – due to be available by start of 2024. This will also be a feature of the training available to Procurement staff, Commissioners and Contracts Managers.

- e. Continued engagement of key external stakeholders and sharing of good practice and data with partners through GM networks and nationally as appropriate.

**8. Recommendations**

To note and comment upon the contents of this report.

**9. Appendices**

None