

Z E R O C A R B O N

MANCHESTER

Avoidable Single Use Plastic Free

Action Plan

Version 2.0
12 October 2023



Overview

This document sets out an overarching action plan outlining objectives for Manchester City Council to deliver on its commitment **to eradicate avoidable single use plastics (SUPs) by 2024**, as outlined in the Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 (CCAP). It also includes the background and current context along with outlining the approach. The appendix sets out 20 objectives divided into the following key areas, along with an update on progress to date since the commitment was made in 2019:

- Offices and Operations
- Catering
- Events
- Markets
- Care (adults, children, homelessness)
- Construction
- *Cross-cutting areas relevant across all themes:*
 - *Communications and Engagement*
 - *Data analysis*

The detailed actions all directorates need to take (in meeting the objectives) are not included within this document – though work has been done by the Working Group to develop and draft these.

Communications and engagement, both within the Council and externally with suppliers and partners is vital to ensuring the Council and the City's use of SUPs continues to decline.

Further analysis of spend data is needed in order to better understand the impact of SUPs, along with prioritising action on the highest impact areas first. Data analysis could also enable us to understand the financial impact of reductions.

Monitoring of reductions through data analysis presents a challenge. A key piece of work for the working group is to establish KPIs to track progress.

An officer working group chaired by the Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement has overseen development of the plan to this point, through quarterly meetings. The Group will continue to meet to December 2024 (at least) and identify the best governance arrangements going forwards.

1. Background

In 2019 Manchester City Council pledged to eradicate avoidable SUPs 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.

All ten GM local authorities, plus GMCA, have committed to actions related to reducing SUPs (please refer to point 3 for details).

MCC's commitment has been reflected in the Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 under Workstream 3: Reducing Consumption Based Emissions and Influencing Suppliers. We 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.

The Council 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.

Wider policy context

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 year¹. 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 WRAP (Waste and Resource Climate Action Programme) to launch a Reusable Packaging Roadmap for the UK and a series of category-focused reusable packaging blueprints by Summer 2024.

The UK Plastics Pact is a collaboration between WRAP (Waste and Resource Action Programme) retailers, plastics recyclers, brands, manufacturers, NGOs, Governments and local authorities. The Pact's participants are responsible for more than 80% of the UK's supermarket

¹ [Defra \(2022\) UK Statistics on Waste](#)

plastic packaging and this voluntary agreement is the first of its kind the world. It sets out the following targets to be achieved by 2025:

- Eliminate problematic or unnecessary single-use plastic packaging through redesign, innovation or alternative delivery models (such as reuse)
- 100% of plastic packaging reusable, recyclable, compostable
- 70% of plastic packaging recycled, reused or composted
- 30% average recycled content across all plastics packaging*

* *The UK government introduced a tax on plastic packaging with less than 30% recycled content in April 2022.*

Legislation

The Department for Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have taken action to tackle the most problematic littered SUPs. Plastic stirrers were banned by DEFRA, along with restrictions being placed on plastic straws and plastic-stemmed cotton buds in October 2020. In October 2023, a further ban on Single Use Plastic plates, bowls, trays, containers, cutlery and balloon sticks; and polystyrene cups and trays (with some exemptions) came into force.

Enforcement teams in Neighbourhoods are responsible for enforcement of the plastics bans.

2. Why do we need to eliminate single use plastic?

The Council needs to show leadership in reducing its own use of avoidable (or unnecessary) plastic along with influencing the wider city as part of its duty of care to its residents. The overuse of single-use plastic has a wide range of impacts on the planet and on people's health. It could also be of benefit financially to use less.

Plastic waste is problematic because:

- It contributes significantly to global pollution, as well as climate change (as plastics are made using crude oil).
- 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.
- Scientific studies have found microplastics (from micro beads in personal care products and degradation of larger pieces of waste plastic) in our food, waterways and clouds and the human bloodstream.

SUP is a type of plastic specifically 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, 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. In some cases SUP can be defined as avoidable or unnecessary plastic, ie it could not be used at all or there could be a viable alternative with a less harmful impact.

The picture on SUPs 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, medical/clinical use, 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.

While in some cases the cost of eradicating SUP may be initially considered prohibitive, particularly when purchasing more sustainable alternative such as reusables, in reality it can bring considerable savings in the long term. This could be through reduced reliance on the single use through investing in reusable items or decreased volume of little and waste needed to be processed. A direct impact for the Council could be seen through the Waste and Recycling team resources needed for waste and litter management.

3. What have we committed to act on?

In 2019 Manchester City Council, alongside GMCA and the nine other Local Authorities in GM, signed a pledge to “eradicate avoidable single-use plastic from the public sector in Greater Manchester by 2024”. As part of that commitment, we have agreed to:

- **Show leadership** by supporting and implementing reductions in avoidable single-use plastics, working towards their elimination across the public estate by 2024.
- **Share data, knowledge, insights, and best-practice** on avoidable single-use plastics to aid in the development of a roadmap that sets out the journey (with step-by-step actions) towards a single-use plastic free public estate.
- **Procurement:** Look to embed environmental sustainability criteria in social value procurement mechanisms, and provide carbon literacy training.
- **Support new initiatives** to reduce SUPs and increase recycling and re-use.
- **Raise awareness of commitments with staff, suppliers, and the wider community** to influence and change behaviour.

The Sustainable Consumption and Production team at GMCA oversee a GM SUP work programme and chair quarterly meetings between the 10 Local Authorities and TfGM. The MCC SUP Working Group participates in the GM group through sharing of knowledge primarily, along with aligning communications and engagement with the PlasticFreeGM campaign.

This MCC SUP Action Plan will enable us to deliver on the actions set out in the GM SUP work programme.

4. How will the whole organisation play its full part?

By the end of 2024, our goal is to eradicate all avoidable Single Use Plastic on the Council estate, and define which SUP is not avoidable, with potential further targets to be set from 2025 onwards.

Avoidable Single Use Plastic Free by 2024 – Action Plan

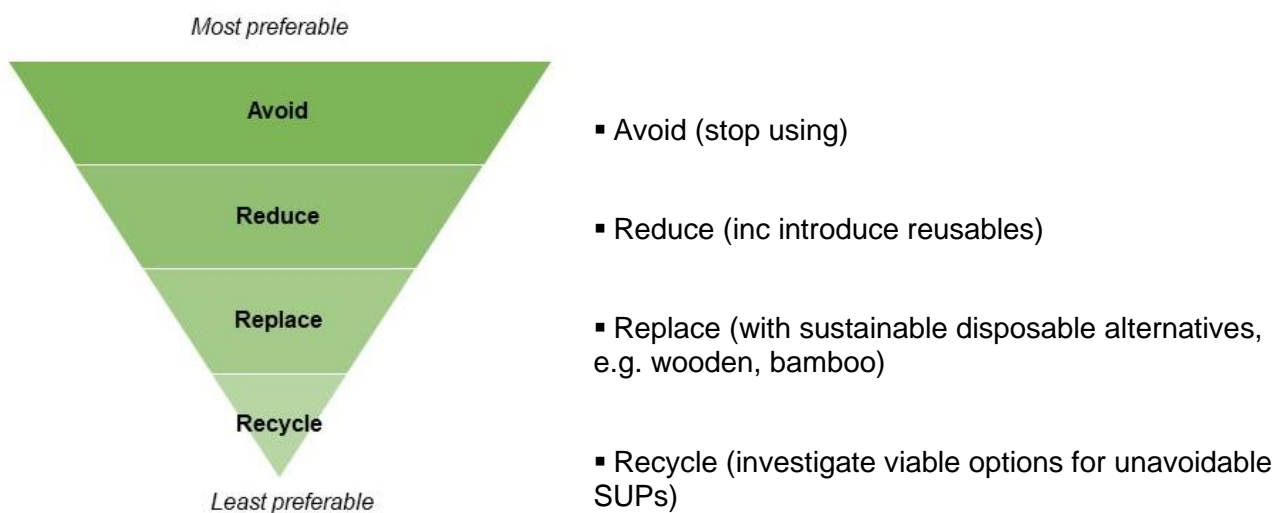
A working group has been established to oversee development and implementation of this action plan, chaired by the Head of Integrated Commissioning and Procurement, with membership from across MCC.

To ensure that we fully embed SUP reduction practices in decision making across our services, as well as fulfil our influencing and leadership role, the working group were asked to consider the following areas (and ask the same of their wider teams also):



Communications and engagement, both within the Council and with residents, businesses and other external stakeholders, underpins successful implementation of this action plan. Progress has already been made in raising awareness with multiple stakeholder groups and further steps are needed to fully embed a positive, long-lasting behaviour change to prevent any future increase in SUP usage.

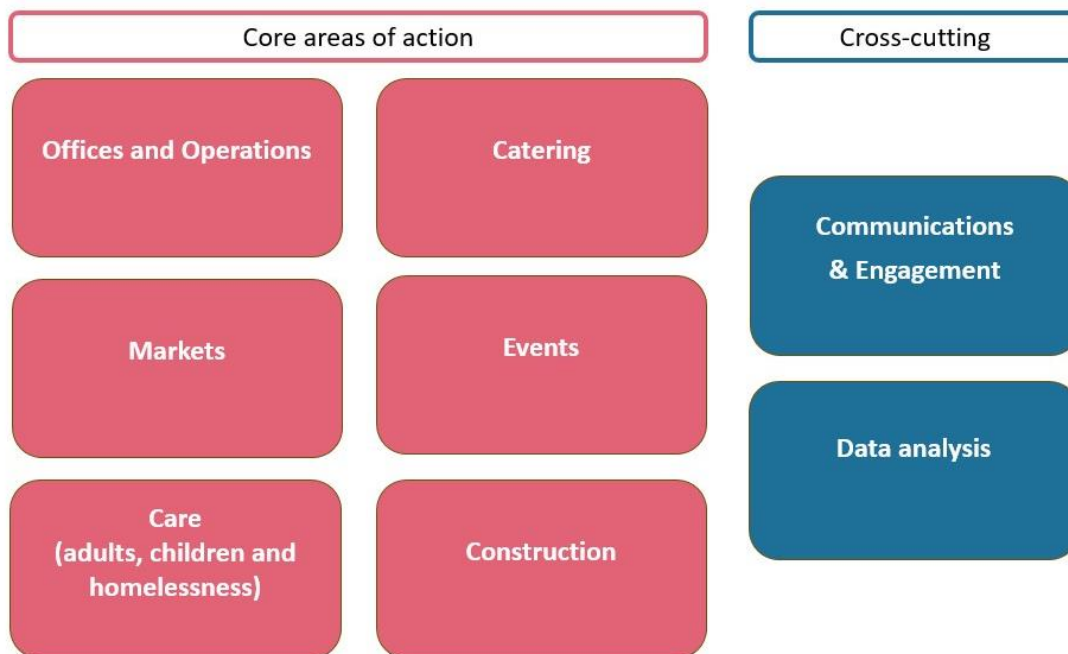
The waste hierarchy provides the underlining principle for how SUPs usage should be minimised:



Integrated Commissioning and Procurement play a pivotal role in reducing how much SUP we buy. 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. The Council's SUP reduction commitment will be included in the updated guidance for staff (by start of 2024) and for suppliers (by mid 2024) and SUP-related KPIs will be added into the tendering and commissioning processes so that we can reduce the amount of SUP coming from suppliers.

5. Action Plan Objectives

The Action Plan Appendix 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):



The detailed actions all directorates need to take (in meeting the objectives) are not included within the appendix – though work has been done by the Working Group to develop and draft these.

6. Summary and next steps

Work has been done to consider usage of SUPs across the organisation – both items bought directly and those bought by third party contractors in carrying out work for the Council. In addition, consideration of areas we could potentially influence has also taken place. The outcome of this work is this action plan.

The next steps are to

1. Ensure leadership support for this approach (approval of this action plan)
2. Relevant services to agree specific actions to be taken (across all Directorates)
3. Identify KPIs that can be monitored and evaluated – this could include MCC data on finance and procurement where possible, along with data held by suppliers in some instances. KPIs on embedding the process (the behaviour change) can also be used.

The Working Group will continue to meet until at least the end of 2024 in order to achieve points 2 and 3 to be able to fully embed this approach into business as usual. Ongoing monitoring and governance arrangements beyond 2024 need to be identified.