

Cabinet

14 November 2019

Reduction of Single Use Plastic by Warwickshire County Council

Recommendation

That Cabinet approve the plans for reducing single use plastic as set out in section 3.0 of this report.

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 On 13th December 2018 the Council stated its support for the Sky Ocean Rescue campaign's aim of reducing the amount of plastic in the waste stream and committed to achieving Single Use 'Plastic Free' accreditation. It also asked that a report be brought to Cabinet by November 2019 setting out how the organisation can work towards installing public water refill points and eliminating all non-essential single use plastic over the next two years.
- 1.2 In support of the above motion this report documents the current situation within Warwickshire County Council (WCC) buildings regarding water refill points in public areas, single use plastic and associated recycling facilities.
- 1.3 Over the last 4 years WCC has recycled an average of 3.5 tons of plastic each year from its centralised properties – the majority of this is single use plastics. Internal audit activities indicate that as well as this approximately 4.8 tons are likely to have been disposed to residual waste streams.
- 1.4 It should be noted that legislation is proposed requiring reducing/eliminating single use plastics. The European Parliament has approved a Single Use Plastics Directive aimed at banning single-use plastics by 2021. The ban will see the end of plastic products such as straws, knives, forks, earbuds and plates. The ban will also include drinks containers made of expanded polystyrene and all products made of oxo-degradable plastic. It is not yet clear how this will apply to the UK due to the uncertainty around the Brexit process - however this issue is also noted in the UK Government's Our Waste, Our Resources : A Strategy for England and resources which has a commitment to match and where economically practicable exceed the ambition of the EU with regards to single use plastics.

2.0 Achievements to date

- 2.1 WCC has been undertaking environmental improvements, where feasible and financially viable, for several years through the work of its environmental management system. A comprehensive audit has been undertaken over the last few months to determine the organisation's current status with regards to these requirements and to identify future potential improvements. (Refer to Appendix A)

Key actions already in place

- Removal of most single use plastic related to buffets from Northgate House Kitchen;
- Removal of most single use plastics from service operations related to Northgate House Restaurant;
- Reduction in plastic waste bin liners from cleaning operations through group bin activities;
- Replacement of plastic cups in Shire Hall Ante Chamber with glass ones;
- Implementation of recycling facilities within WCC buildings; and
- Removal of hot drinks machines in meeting rooms
- Approval of the Internal Corporate waste Strategy which cites reducing single use plastic as one of its main objectives

3.0 Recommendations with financial implications where known

- 3.1 **Replace Hot Beverage Dispensing Machines** – Machines at Northgate House Conference Centre and Pound Lane Training Centre currently dispense a plastic cup with each drink they discharge. Changing to machines that provide options for re-use or use of users' own cups would potentially prevent thousands of plastic cups being used and discarded each year.
- 3.2 **Water dispensers in Public Places** – Of the 19 Warwickshire libraries only one currently has a water dispenser accessible to the public. The average cost for installation for the remaining 18 libraries is estimated at £2,250. The cost for associated ongoing maintenance and servicing of dispensers is approximately £100 per unit totalling a further £1,800 per year.
- 3.3 **Use of Plastic Cups** – It is recommended that all disposable plastic cups currently used throughout WCC buildings be removed. These should be replaced with reusable option where there is a need.
- 3.4 **Procurement** – Consideration of single use plastic should be included at the procurement stage of contracts/purchases. Costs regarding alternatives determined from this process will differ greatly depending upon the specific items/contract being procured. A revised environmental procurement assessment is shown in Appendix B.

- 3.5 **Paper** – Currently the most popular paper sourced through ESPO (ESPO Shires) arrives with each ream wrapped in plastic. An alternative ESPO general copier paper that is not wrapped in plastic has an on-cost of approximately £2 per box. The intention is still to reduce paper use as a priority.
- 3.6 **Cleaning** – The use of group bins rather than individual under-desk bins in offices supports a reduction in the number of bin-bags used. This should be progressed further.
- 3.7 **Officer Time** – In order to facilitate the recommendations above, along with actions indicated in the audit (Appendix A) and the potential development of a plastics strategy for WCC it is estimated that a temporary post covering one day per week for an expected period of 1 - 2 years will be required.
- 3.8 The costs will either be met from current budgets, or be a consideration for future procurement choices

4.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 4.1 The County Council is a large and diverse organisation undertaking various operations and utilising many different contracts that involve plastic use. It is not expected that WCC will be able to eliminate all non-essential single use plastics overnight. It is estimated that this will take 1 – 2 years to ensure that contractual requirements are not compromised and that best solutions are determined.
- 4.2 Progress regarding the actions above will be reviewed quarterly by the EMS Manager and reported to WCC senior management through quarterly environmental briefings.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix A – Audit of single use plastics

Appendix B – Proposed Procurement Environmental Risk Assessment

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Julie Burton	julieburton@warwickshire.gov.uk 01926 418056
Assistant Director	Craig Cusack	craigcusack@warwickshire.gov.uk
Strategic Director	Rob Powell	robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holders	Heather Timms	cllrtimms@warwickshire.gov.uk

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Councillor Timms, Cockburn, Shilton, Chattaway, Fradgley, Kondakor, Roodhouse and Chilvers