**Single-use Plastics Strategy**

**2019 – 2022**

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6. **Executive Summary**

In March 2018, at a meeting of full Council, members passed a motion for the development of a strategy by the end of 2018 for Oldham to be a ‘single-use plastic free’ authority. The strategy would not only include actions for the Council but challenge partners, businesses, community groups and residents to adopt similar measures.

Since the introduction of a 5p charge for plastic bags there has been a drop in use of single-use plastic bags by 85%. However, most families still throw away about 40kg of plastic per year which could otherwise be recycled. The amount of plastic waste generated annually in the UK is estimated to be nearly 5 million tonnes and, when not disposed of properly, has an effect on our environment: blighting streets; spoiling the countryside; and damaging wildlife, seas and the coastline.

Oldham Council recognises that by eliminating single-use plastic materials we can achieve a significant reduction in plastic waste across our sites. The council has developed this strategy and action plan in line with the ambition and wider plan of Greater Manchester Combined Authority to be the first UK city-region to drive down single-use plastics.

The strategy identifies opportunities for Oldham Council to reduce its reliance on single-use plastics by:

* Ending the sale and provision of single use plastic products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in council buildings, or council supported venues, wherever possible; promoting the use of non-plastic recyclable alternatives e.g. paper straws to ensure our venues remain accessible to those with additional needs.
* Encouraging traders across the Borough to sell re-usable containers and invite customers to bring their own.
* Considering the merits and practicalities of introducing a ‘window sticker’ scheme to accredit local businesses that are committed to reducing plastic waste through, for example, offering free water bottle refills.
* Investigating the possibility of requiring pop-up food and drink vendors at council supported events to avoid single use plastics as a condition of their contract; with a view to phasing out all single use plastics at markets and events in the Borough.
* Work with tenants in commercial properties owned by Oldham Council to encourage them to support this campaign.

The UK Government has identified several single-use plastic items that require more urgent action by banning or restricting their sale, i.e. plastic-stemmed cotton buds, plastic coffee stirrers and plastic straws, and on 22 October 2018 it was confirmed that a number of policies will be introduced, aimed at banning the sale and distribution of these items by 2020. A ban on the distribution and sale of the items will help to eliminate the 4.7 billion plastic straws, 316 million plastic stirrers and 1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds from the nation’s waste streams.

The Council will also continue to promote the established Greater Manchester plastic bottle recycling scheme to manage this plastic waste effectively.

1. **Introduction**

Since the broadcast of the BBC’s Blue Planet programme highlighting the effect of plastic pollution in seas, oceans and on beaches, this has become a much-debated topic with high levels of public interest. The issue of single-use plastics and how to reduce, reuse and recycle them has already been very much a part of the Authority’s work around waste reduction over many years.

At a meeting of full Council on 28 March 2018, a motion was passed in respect of a strategy for a ‘single-use plastic free’ authority to be developed by December 2018. The strategy would not only ask that the Council adopts new practices but also challenge other organisations, businesses, community groups and residents to adopt similar measures.

This strategy and action plan has been developed incorporating ideas and opportunities from a number of sites and services to reduce our reliance on non-essential, non-recyclable single-use plastics.

1. **Objectives**

From the Council motion, four objectives have been identified for this strategy:-

1. **Reduce Council use of single use plastics** – Oldham Council committing to reducing our reliance on single-use plastics where practicably possible. Identifying sites and service areas where significant improvements can be made. Working with the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities on identifying all single-use plastic products purchased through the variety of public sector contracts. Communicating to staff, building users and visitors the role they have to play to ensure the success of the strategy.
2. **Engage strategic partners and businesses** – Encouraging partners on the Oldham Leadership Board and businesses across the borough to also Do Their Bit on reducing single-use plastics. Disseminating the council’s strategy and engaging with businesses to provide strategic leadership on how they can develop their own actions. Promoting the Greater Manchester Plastics Pledge and initiatives such as the Manchester bee paper straw.
3. **Engage schools and community groups** – Getting schools and young people on board with this agenda. Supporting schools that are tackling single-use plastics through their eco-councils or the Oldham Pledge and working with members of Oldham Youth Council with engaging young people. Also assisting community groups e.g. people who manage allotments on raising awareness with members of the public who they engage with.
4. **Engage residents** – Engaging with residents through the Green Oldham campaign, our webpage, social media, case studies, press releases, Borough Life and Family Life and identifying how they can contribute and Do Their Bit. Suggesting simple changes that can be made to daily routines that’ll help save money, improve health and help the planet.

The Action Plan (Section 5) has actions for each of these objectives, including specific actions on communications for each objective which form an overall communications plan.

1. **How the strategy has been developed to address the Council motion**

To fully inform the project, audits have been undertaken to gather information and understand why different types of single-use plastics are procured by services. A mix of sites and services i.e. The Civic Centre; Choices (internal catering provision); Queen Elizabeth Hall; Oldham Library and Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre were audited to understand the scale of the challenge.

Across Council sites, a number of single-use plastic products are used for a variety of reasons and occasions. Types of plastic include: bags; bottles; cups; straws; stirrers; plates; bowls; cutlery; milk cartons; individual tea bags; sachets of coffee and cling film.

Staff are aware of the impact plastic pollution has on our planet and sites and services are already taking action to reduce their reliance on plastics - for example, since September 2018, Shaw Lifelong Learning Centre has been encouraging learners to bring a reusable drinks bottle to classes, and staff at Queen Elizabeth Hall have invested in 600 cups and saucers, replaced plastic straws with paper ones, and are now using metal spoons and biodegradable cups.

It should be noted that there will be circumstances when plastic cups will still be used, e.g. as part of the licence agreement for Queen Elizabeth Hall, the council’s Licencing Team in conjunction with GM Police have stipulated specific occasions when glass and polycarbonate cannot be used for health and safety reasons.

Where alternative products are available to replace single use plastics, it may be that these products have a higher cost per unit. As the market for these sustainable products develops, it is expected that the price will fall. However, by way of mitigation of any extra cost to the Council, staff and Members will be encouraged in the first instance to bring their own water bottles or cups, thus reducing the quantity of single-use cups required and hence the total cost of these items to the Council.

Where actions are proposed in the Action Plan to replace single-use plastic products with alternatives, it should be noted that these are ‘snapshots’ and it is anticipated that the market and costs associated with these replacement products will change rapidly, so the exact details in the Action Plan are likely to be obsolete in a short space of time. The principle of selecting better product options will however continue.

As part of the original motion it was suggested that a ‘window sticker scheme’ be established to recognise and acknowledge those businesses that have signed up to reducing single-use plastics. The Project Steering Group discussed the idea and agreed that a window sticker scheme might be complex and difficult to manage and enforce in terms of compliance and capacity, as well as requiring a plastic sticker for the scheme itself. The Group settled on a potentially more worthwhile and deliverable idea – namely, a compostable carrier bag available to local businesses and market stall holders. The bag would not only be supplied for carrying goods and produce home but could also be used to line the user’s food caddy bin. Discussions are taking place with GMCA and GMWDA around the potential to use a generic dual-use compostable bag, possibly badged with the Manchester bee, which will be available across Greater Manchester including Oldham. This is on the back of previously launched products e.g. the paper drinking straw with the Manchester bee.

At the Greater Manchester Green Summit on 21 March 2018, a campaign was launched encouraging Greater Manchester businesses and residents to make the shift away from single-use plastics to sustainable alternatives. One early benefit from this initiative is that businesses from the tourism and hospitality sectors who sign up to a pledge to stop using plastic straws have the ability to procure paper straws with the Manchester bee emblem on them, and these straws will also be available to Oldham businesses.

Council officers have raised our single-use plastics initiative with the Oldham Leadership Board. Partners have been asked if they have considered the issue of single-use plastics across their sites and services and whether their organisation would be willing to match the Council’s commitment to producing a strategy and action plan.

Since July 2018 the Project Steering Group has discussed the challenge of engaging with tenants in commercial properties owned by Oldham Council to encourage them to phase out single use plastic cups, bottles, cutlery and straws. The group decided that the best way to do this would be to promote the Council’s own waste service collection to tenants, highlighting the fact that the Council’s grey waste bin collection, where the majority of single use plastics apart bottles must go, is taken to an energy recovery facility for thermal recovery i.e. the heat captured is used to create steam, which drives turbines to produce electricity. With private waste collections there is no guarantee that this will happen, with the possibility of waste ending up in landfill.

There may be opportunities to engage with specific tenants providing catering services to encourage them to follow the Council’s lead in phasing out single-use plastics.

Since the original Council motion, the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee had the opportunity to discuss the development of this strategy on 4 September 2018, and a question was asked at that meeting as to how the Council will engage with schools. Subsequently, liaison with schools, colleges, members of the Youth Council and community groups is taking place to ensure full engagement with all members of the community on the single-use plastics agenda.

One opportunity to work with schools is through the Oldham Pledge commitment, in particular Pledge no. 12: “Contribute to Environmental Sustainability”.

1. **Action Plan**

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| **Action**  | **Service Area / Responsible Officer** | **Timescale/deadline** | **Cost/****Resources** |
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| **Objective a): Reduce Council use of single use plastics.** |  |
| Stop procuring plastic cups for water machines used by visitors to council buildings. Procure a small quantity of paper cups (lined with polyethylene) instead. | Corporate Property / Peter Wood | April 2019. | Single-use plastic cups cost £34.95 for 1,000; white paper cup with plastic film - £40.00 for 1,000. |
| Procure paper cups (lined with polyethylene) for hot drink machines looking for an alternative when becomes available. | Corporate Property / Peter Wood | April 2019. | Single-use plastic cups cost £45.00 for 1,000.Sturdy paper cup with plastic film -£63.11 for a box of 1,000. |
| Paper cups (lined with polyethylene) dispensed from vending machines. | Corporate Property / Peter Wood | When contracts are due for renewal. | TBC |
| Crockery including cups and saucers to be used by Choices (internal catering provider). | Corporate Property / Peter Wood | April 2019. | TBC |
| Stainless steel cutlery (or alternative reusable material) to be used by Choices. | Corporate Property / Peter Wood | April 2019. | TBC |
| Internal and external caterers to stop using cling film to cover food and use an alternative ie tin foil | Corporate Property / Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | April 2019. | TBC |
| Internal and external caterers to stop providing tea and coffee in individual plastic sachets. | Corporate Property / Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | April 2019. | TBC |
| Internal and external caterers to stop providing milk in individual cartons. | Corporate Property / Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | April 2019. | TBC |
| Paper plates, bowls and wooden cutlery used by external caterers. If not adhered to a waste fee is applied to cover waste collection costs. | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | April 2019. | TBC |
| Promotion of the current recycling scheme across council sites to all staff | Jamie Whitehouse | April 2019. | £300.00 - design and printing.  |
| Engagement with Recycle4GM to hold recycling awareness sessions for staff | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | April 2019. | Officer time |
| Internal – Promotion of the new Choices crockery and cutlery provision and requirements when using external caterers. | Jamie Whitehouse | April 2019 | Officer time |
| Internal - Staff Matters - two articles on ‘Plastic isn’t so fantastic’ and ‘Have you got the bottle?’ | Jamie Whitehouse | September 2018 | Officer time |
| Staff prevented from procuring plastic plates; bowls; cutlery; individually wrapped tea, coffee, milk and stirrers. | Mohammad Sharif | April 2019 | Officer time |
| The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is working to identify all single-use plastic products purchased under different contracts within the public sector. | GMCA | TBC | Officer time |
| Lobby Crown Commercial Services to update the ‘Environmental Issues’ section of the standard Invitation to Tender template to prompt all suppliers to think about reducing their use of single use plastics explicitly. | Mohammad Sharif | April 2019 | Officer time |
| Update the Sustainable Procurement Impact Assessment Tool to include an explicit reference to plastic.  | Mohammad Sharif | April 2019 | Officer time |
| Raise awareness of plastic issues with the Procurement Leads.  | Mohammad Sharif | April 2019 | Officer time |
| Ensure plastic cups are not supplied in hot drinks vending machines when the tender is renewed. | Peter Wood | When contracts are due for renewal. | TBC |

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| **Objective b): Engage strategic partners and businesses** |  |
| **Action**  | **Service Area / Responsible Officer** | **Timescale/deadline** | **Cost/****Resources** |
| Raise awareness at an Oldham Leadership Board meeting challenging them to do their bit. | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | September 2018 plus follow-up | Officer time |
| Individual meetings with Oldham businesses on their action plans. | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | September 2018 onwards | Officer time / potential for funded project contracted out for business engagement (TBC) |
| Roll-out of a generic dual-use compostable bag, possibly badged with the Manchester bee available across GM. | Mark Husdan/Town Centre/Markets Team | April 2019 | TBC |
| Promotion of a Manchester bee paper straw to bars, pubs and restaurants in the borough. NB Businesses need to sign up to the GM plastics pledge first. | Jamie Whitehouse | January 2019 | TBC |
| Promote cafes, bars and coffee shops that offer to refill water bottles for free. Costa Coffee has been offering this service since March 2018. | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | January 2019 | Officer time |

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| **Objective c): Engage schools and community groups** |  |
| **Action**  | **Service Area / Responsible Officer** | **Timescale/deadline** | **Cost/****Resources** |
| Engagement with primary and secondary schools | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | January 2019 | Officer time |
| Engagement with colleges in the borough | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | January 2019 | Officer time |
| Council’s Waste Education Officer promoting and encouraging ‘Reduce, reuse and recycle’ across schools. | Waste Team | On-going |  |
| Engagement with members of the Youth Council | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | January 2019 | Officer time |
| Engagement with the Study Support Manager on the Oldham Pledge and Pledge 12: Contribute to Environmental Sustainability. | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | January 2019 | Officer time |
| Bid to Recycle4GM to fund an engagement programme for schools and community groups | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | January 2019 | Officer time |

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| **Objective d): Residents - Engage residents.** |  |
| **Action**  | **Service Area / Responsible Officer** | **Timescale/deadline** | **Cost/****Resources** |
| Promotion of the current recycling scheme to residents | Jamie Whitehouse | As per existing Action Plan |  |
| Explore the potential for an Oldham-badged water bottle | Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team | January 2019 | TBC |
| Promotional channels:* Borough Life and Family Life;
* Webpage – promoted on the Green Oldham webpage;
* Social media updates (Facebook and twitter);
* Press release – promotion of the scheme and how people can get involved;
* Case studies – videos of residents, businesses and stakeholders who have got involved in the campaign. These can then be shared on social media and embedded on the webpage; and
* Waste calendar promotion
 | Jamie Whitehouse | New YearApril 2019On-goingApril 2019On-goingWinter 2018/19 | £300  |
| Raise awareness and hold discussion sessions for community groups, people who manage allotments, etc. focussing on raising awareness with members of the public who they engage with. | Anne Fleming/Strategy, Partnerships and Policy Team/Jamie Whitehouse | Spring/Summer 2019 |  |