

Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 October 2021

**Report of the Assistant Director Travel, Environmental and Countryside Access
Services**

Single Use Plastics

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the status of Single Use Plastics following a report to North Yorkshire County Council's Executive Committee meeting in March 2021.

2.0 Key Background Information

- 2.1 In December 2020 a report was produced and presented to this forum on single-use plastics. That report set a series of recommended actions (shown in Appendix 1) for the Council to undertake to see it take a more proactive stance on the matter.
- 2.2 Following the meeting of that Committee, that same report was presented to the Council's Executive Committee on March 2021. The recommendation agreed at that meeting was for the Executive Member for Open to Business, including growth, economic development, planning, waste management, trading standards unit and business relations takes forward the recommendations in the original December 2020 report.
- 2.3 Alongside the set of recommendations, it is important to also consider the call upon Council resources in respect of managing the impact of COVID-19 and also Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It would be fair to describe the last 18 to 24 months as exceptional in how NYCC has responded to the pandemic.
- 2.4 Despite these challenging circumstances, progress has been made across the recommendations, although – due to competing priorities as described above – some further than others. Thematically the actions can be groups into three categories: Procurement and Contract Management, Property and Facilities and then a broader public engagement.

Procurement and Contract Management

- 2.5 A number of the recommendations were policy or process related, such as updating the Council Procurement and Contract Management Strategy to include an action to end the use of single-use plastics products by suppliers wherever possible and appropriate to do so. This work is in progress, but work on the new Strategy has been delayed to 2022/2023 to take account of local government reorganisation.
- 2.6 As Chair of the Yorkshire and Humber regional Strategic Procurement Group the Council has looked to influence the region to consider collective ways of reducing single-use plastic among the collective supply chains. This work is ongoing, although feedback to date is that this is something that is not a high priority regionally at present.

2.7 Other areas of procurement activity have made progress. Work has begun on a comprehensive supply chain audit to understand the volume and proliferation of single-use plastics among, all first-tier suppliers. This is in progress as part of work the Procurement and Contract Management Service is doing to support the Beyond Carbon Board. In addition, resources have been secured within Legal Services to begin work to understand the scope to amend, or include new standard contractual terms and conditions to embed a commitment to reduce single-use plastics throughout our supply chains.

2.8 In addition, the Council are working with YPO who have undertaken work to reduce the use of single use plastic, particularly relating to their own branded goods. As a major supplier to the Council and North Yorkshire schools, we will look to measure the impact this has had as we continue to progress other supply chain related recommendations.

Property and Facilities

2.9 Given COVID-19, the number of staff working from council buildings has significantly reduced over the last 18 months, accordingly the current use of single-use plastics is down similarly. In looking forward, the Council is designing its “New Ways of Working” in how teams will operate post lockdown. At this stage the exact nature of that is unclear however it is expected many teams will work in a hybrid fashion with a mixture of some home working and some time in offices.

2.10 In order to help reduce single-use plastics in the workplace (whether that is in the office or homeworking), a two-pronged approach is to be taken: firstly, education and communication to staff on the impact to the environment of use of such plastic; secondly, when looking at a fuller return to office space, removing single-use plastic from all aspects, for example provision of hospitality to meetings.

2.11 To support North Yorkshire schools and reducing demand for single-use plastics, the Council can deploy its Carbon Reduction Officer (branded “Powerdown Pete”) to run facilitated sessions and provide education material accordingly. Additionally, the Waste Management team supported by its volunteers, the “North Yorkshire Rotters” are able to undertake school talks and assemblies where they cover the messages of reduce, reuse and recycle and include plastic within this.

Public Engagement

2.12 The final area to consider is raising the profile of the subject with the wider public, accordingly the Council’s Waste Management team have undertaken a traditional media and social media campaign (examples shown in Appendix 2). This campaign has been focused on the issue of single-use plastics highlighting to the general public both where such plastic occurs and also its impact on the environment. This is part of a waste minimisation programme the team actively engage on. Additionally, a web page has been created on the Council’s website to educate staff and members of public on how best to recycle plastic (<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/plastic-recycling>).

2.13 A full list of actions and the respective updates can be found in Appendix 1.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 Given the context of COVID-19 and its impact of people working remotely, coupled with the pressures and opportunities presented through LGR, it is likely the approach to reducing Single Use Plastics will inevitably change over the next 24 months. As such rather than pursue a set of potentially redundant actions, it would be prudent to wait for future ways of working as well as collaboration through Unitary, to determine a set of achievable goals.

- 3.2 Additionally, as the County Council has set ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030 (or as soon as possible after) and created programme infrastructure around that environment objective, it is suggested the agenda of Single-Use Plastics and the associated recommended actions be integrated into the Beyond Carbon project.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that:

- TEEOSC note the update on Single Use Plastics provided through the report, and
- Seek to incorporate the recommended action areas in the Beyond Carbon initiative.

Michael Leah, Assistant Director Travel, Environmental & Countryside Services

Date: 6 October 2021

For further information, contact the author of the report

List of recommendations & status

	Proposed Action – March 2021	Update – September 2021
Short Term (next 12 months)		
1	Produces a concise policy statement with high-level commitments to reduce single-use plastics in its buildings and in its supplier chain.	To be written into post-Unitary Corporate Procurement Strategy.
2	Appoints a senior officer by its Management Board to act as a 'champion' for reducing single-use plastics across the council's directorates and to report at timely intervals to the Transport, Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress made across directorates.	Karl Battersby, Corporate Director Business & Environmental Services appointed as lead.
3	Updates its Procurement and Management Strategy to include an action to end the use of single-use plastics products by suppliers wherever possible and appropriate to do so.	In progress but delayed from 2022 to 2023 given LGR.
4	Leads by example, demonstrating positive change and quick wins on those contracts which are centrally managed.	Given few staff working in office environment there has been a natural, significant reduction in use. An example of a 'quick win' is that no single-use plastic is to be provided in meetings in staff offices.
5	Undertakes a more detailed and comprehensive supply chain audit to understand the volume and proliferation of single-use plastics among, as a minimum, all first-tier suppliers.	Work in progress and now joined up with Beyond Carbon programme.
6	Progresses work to understand the scope to amend, or include new standard contractual terms and conditions to embed a commitment to reduce single-use plastics amongst its suppliers	Resource requested from Legal to progress this.
7	Uses its influence in the region as the Chair of the Yorkshire and Humber Councils Strategic Procurement Group to consider collective ways of reducing single-use plastic among the supply base, for example across common contracts.	Ongoing, although feedback to date from Y&H region is that this is something that is not a high priority regionally.
8	Lobbies the Crown Commercial Service to include a prompt for all suppliers in the standard invitation to tender document, about how they intend to reduce their usage of single-use plastics.	Complete, the CCS position is that it will tackle the issue on a case-by-case basis rather than a blanket approach.
9	Takes the lead on behalf of the YNY LEP, in putting in place a communications programme linked to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in generating single-use plastics waste, encouraging behavioural change amongst council staff and the public to reduce their use of single use plastics in the workplace and in the home.	Y&H Chief Executives Low Carbon Workstream Group held first of two Circular Economy Workshops (lead by YNY LEP) in September to build a community of practice across the region, with a view to developing a Y&H Circular Economy Strategy (including plastics).
10	Promotes the single-use plastics campaign to schools, providing best practice examples.	Work underway within the Facilities Management service ('Power down Pete')
11	Shares key messages from the communications campaign with our contractors and suppliers to	In progress as part of supply chain audit work supporting Beyond Carbon Board.

	give them notice of our intentions to reduce single-use plastics.	
12	Shares a copy of this report with North Yorkshire District Councils and the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership to inform and build upon joint initiatives aimed at reducing the use of single-use plastics.	To be considered through LGR.
Medium Term (12 months & beyond)		
13	Uses scored tender evaluation questions relating to single-use plastic reduction, particularly across key contracts, to reward those suppliers most proactive and engaged on the issue.	No update
14	Increases the number of 'meet the buyer' events for suppliers to meet representatives of the Council to facilitate shared learning, promote business, and to understand expectations; in this case regarding single-use plastics.	Picked up on a case-by-case basis for individual procurements.
15	Produces and regularly reviews directorate-based action plans to reduce single-use plastics, and updates the progress made	No update
16	Educates and trains staff particularly those involved in commissioning to reduce single-use plastics.	Amendments to be made to procurement Gateway 1 to include specifics in support of this.

Examples of social media communication

The collage consists of six screenshots arranged in a 2x3 grid, showing social media posts from North Yorkshire County Council. The top row shows tweets, and the bottom row shows Facebook posts.

- Top Left (Twitter):** A tweet from North Yorkshire CC (@northyorksc) dated 13:27. Text: "Did you know that wet wipes contain #plastic? It would take over 100 years for one wipe to biodegrade and we use 11 billion in the UK every year. Find more tips on how to #recycle plastic and #reduce your waste this #RecycleWeek [link] northyorks.gov.uk/plastic-recycl...". Includes a video thumbnail of a woman.
- Top Middle (Twitter):** A tweet from Jen Lowes (176 Tweets) dated 13:28. Text: "You Retweeted North Yorkshire... · 27/09/2019 To celebrate #RecycleWeek we're giving away a reusable coffee cup, Chilly's water bottle and reusable shopping bag! Follow us on Instagram and like our #RecycleWeek competition post before the 29th of September to enter. [link] instagram.com/northyorksc". Includes a photo of a 'CHILLY'S' water bottle.
- Top Right (Twitter):** A tweet from Jen Lowes (176 Tweets) dated 13:28. Text: "You Retweeted North Yorkshire... · 07/06/2019 We now use about 20 times more #plastic than we did 50 years ago. Our plastic #recycling page has lots of information and tips on how you can do more to #recycle plastic and reduce your waste. [link] northyorks.gov.uk/plastic-recycl...". Includes a photo of plastic waste.
- Bottom Left (Facebook):** A post from North Yorkshire County Council dated 13:33. Text: "You can #reduce your plastic consumption this #RecycleWeek by trying some of our top tips! Get a reusable water bottle and carry it with you. Download the Refill App to find local places where you can refill for free at [link]. Our plastic recycling page has lots of information and tips on how you can do more to #recycle plastic and #reduce your waste this #RecycleWeek. Find out more at [link]". Includes a photo of a person using a phone.
- Bottom Middle (Facebook):** A post from North Yorkshire County Council dated 13:33. Text: "Today is #GlobalRecyclingDay! There's a load of information on our site about all the ways you can play your part in recycling more and helping to protect the planet: [link]. And don't forget, you can book virtual talks and workshops with Jeff, pictured, and the rest of our North Yorkshire Rotters on the 3 Rs - reduce, reuse and recycle. Find out more at [link]". Includes a photo of a man with a blue bin.
- Bottom Right (Facebook):** A post from North Yorkshire County Council dated 13:34. Text: "Did you know we now use about 20 times more plastic than we did 50 years ago. Our #plastic #recycling page has information and tips on how you can do more to #recycle plastic and reduce your waste. [link]". Includes a photo of plastic waste.