

**Report of:
Executive Member for Environment and Transport**

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	28 July 2020	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt

SUBJECT: REDUCING SINGLE USE PLASTIC IN ISLINGTON
1. Synopsis

- 1.1 On 26 September 2019 Council approved a motion on reducing single use plastics, which requires a report to be brought to E&R Scrutiny Committee the options for reducing the use of unnecessary non-medical Single Use Plastics (SUP) items in Islington.
- 1.2 A range of actions are already being implemented and the Council’s Reduction and Recycling Plan sets out many of these activities. This report addresses each of the specific suggestions within the motion, and outlines what is already happening and what is proposed.
- 1.3 The actions outlined in this report were developed, and the report drafted, prior to the current Coronavirus pandemic. This has significantly impacted on many of the ongoing and proposed actions, both positively and negatively. The Council will continue to take these proposals forward where practical and safe, to continue to reduce the consumption and disposal of single use plastic.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the actions being undertaken to reduce unnecessary non-medical single use plastic items in Islington as set out in this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 28 June 2019, Islington declared a climate emergency, committing Islington to becoming net-zero carbon by 2030. Reducing waste and increasing recycling plays a role in reducing carbon emissions. In particular, the production, use and disposal of plastic, around 99% of which is made from fossil fuels, is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3.2 A recent report by the Centre for International and Environmental Law (1) highlights the impact that plastic has on greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of its life cycle and estimates that by 2050, plastic production and incineration could emit 2.8 gigatons of CO2 per year, releasing as much emissions as 615 five-hundred-megawatt coal plants.
- 3.3 On 17 October Islington agreed its Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan 2018-2022. This commits Islington to a range of actions focussed on reducing the use of SUP.
- 3.4 There are a range of activities already underway to reduce SUP, but we can go further.
- 3.5 The full Motion on reducing SUPs in Islington is set out below, with comments setting out how the recommended actions are being implemented.
- 3.6 Upon approving the motion, Council noted that:
- 3.7
- **Islington Council is committed to cutting the use of single-use plastics in the borough, which are so harmful to the environment.**
 - **Eight million metric tons of plastic waste makes its way into the world's oceans each year. Plastic pollution is already a huge threat to life in our oceans.**
 - **There is a growing understanding of the risks posed to human health by toxic chemicals present in plastics. Terrestrial water supplies are known to be contaminated with microplastics, the long-term effect of which on human health is not known.**
 - **It is predicted that the amount of plastic debris is likely to increase over the next decade unless nations take strong measures to dispose of their litter responsibly.**
 - **Six months after the introduction of the 5p bag charge, use of single-use plastic bags dropped by 85%.**
- 3.8 Council further noted that:
- 3.9 **"Islington Council is leading on the Low Plastic Zone (LPZ) campaign across the North London Waste Authority, with the first accredited LPZ launched in Cowcross Street. The Scheme encourages and supports businesses to take specific actions to reduce Single-use plastic."**
- 3.10 London's first Low Plastic Zone was formally launched on 5 February in a joint event with the North London Waste Authority. Officers are working on proposals to expand this and similar schemes to other business areas in Islington.
- 3.11 **"Islington Council's draft Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan commits to a number of actions to reduce the use of single-use plastics including:**

- **Eliminating single use plastic from Islington Council's own operations where practical**
- **Promoting reusable alternatives to nappies, wet-wipes, sanitary products containing plastic items and highlight the dangers being flushed down the toilet**
- **Work to install more public drinking water fountains, subject to funding and share locations of public water sources via our website and the Refill App**
- **Extending low plastic zone and refill initiatives to other business areas in the borough**
- **Taking continued action to encourage schools to act on plastic by providing access to resources, advice and guidance."**

3.12 Islington's catering services has largely eliminated plastic from its catering offer for meetings and events. Plastic disposable cups have been replaced with washable glasses, milk is provided in jugs, teabags and coffee provided loose in glass jars and disposal stirrers replaced with teaspoons.

A communications campaign is underway to promote alternatives to nappies and flushable items containing plastic, while information and campaign materials on Plastic Free Periods has been provided to schools.

We continue to look for opportunities to make free drinking water available to all, including installing new water fountains and promoting use of the Refill App. An action day took place on National Refill Day 2019 involving volunteers speaking to local businesses encouraging them to sign up with the App and make free drinking water available to residents. This will be repeated with our new Recycling Champions.

We are reviewing the extension of the Low Plastic Zone, as well as other food container reuse ideas to other business areas.

We are making a range of resources available to schools on how to reduce plastic. For example, The Child Services Online Bulletin (available at to teachers at www.islingtoncs.org) routinely includes links to useful resources for teachers on reducing plastic and reducing and recycling waste. Recent bulletins have highlighted new resources from Recycle Now (Recycling Action Pack, <https://schools.recyclenow.com/resources/>), City to Sea (Plastic Free Periods, <https://www.citytosea.org.uk/plasticfreeperiods/rethink-periods/>) and Surfers Against Sewage (Plastic Free Schools, <https://www.sas.org.uk/plastic-free-schools/>). Two schools, Hugh Middleton Primary School and Laycock Primary School, have signed up to become Plastic Free Schools.

Separate letters regarding recycling services and highlighting resources available to teachers were sent to all schools in February.

3.13 **"In our parks the following clauses will be put into new concessions -**

- **The café will have free drinking water available at all times**
- **The licensee shall take reasonable measures to eliminate the use of single use plastic and plastic/wax lined paper cups**

- **The licensee shall offer a discount on the price of hot drinks to any customer using their own reusable cup of no less than 10p”**

3.14 These clauses, with minor amendments, are now included in all new parks concessions, beginning with the café at Caledonian Park Clock Tower.

3.15 Council noted that

3.16 **“This Council believes –**

- **That all public bodies have a role to play in reducing unnecessary single-use plastic waste**
- **That the council can be a local leader, encouraging residents, organisations and businesses to stop using non-medical single use plastics (SUP).”**

3.17 The Council resolved to

3.18 **“Bring a report to the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the options for reducing the use of unnecessary non-medical Single Use Plastics (SUP) items in Islington, with the aim of:**

- **ensuring that Islington Council becomes a full signatory of the ‘Plastic Free Pledge’ (<https://plasticfreepledge.com/>) by phasing out the use of unnecessary SUPs in all Council buildings, and working with commissioning partners to end the purchase and procurement of SUPs through the council supply chain;**
- **further encouraging the borough’s businesses, schools, organisations and residents to go ‘single-use plastic free,’ working to share business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to re-usable alternatives;**
- **supporting more traders on Council land to sell reusable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out SUPs;**
- **requiring food and drink vendors at sporting and other events or on film locations in the borough to avoid SUPs and other high carbon single-use items as a condition of their event permission;**
- **Investigating whether avoidance of SUPs could be a condition of licensing for pubs, nightclubs and music venues.”**

3.19 Islington is playing a leading role in reducing single use plastics and is well set to become the first London Local Authority to sign the Plastic Free Pledge.

Upon signing the Plastic Free Pact, Islington will launch a communications campaign to encourage Islington’s businesses, schools, organisations and residents to also sign the pledge.

As mentioned elsewhere, we will continue to develop the Low Plastic Zone project, taking it to other business areas in Islington, and have provide useful resources and guidelines to our schools.

A condition has been included in Islington's film locations filming licence that requires all parties to the licence, and their suppliers, to take active measures while on set to avoid the use of SUPs, to avoid the use of single use water bottles and coffee cups, avoid unnecessary plastic packaging and recycle unavoidable plastic waste where possible.

Officers are exploring whether this same approach can be extended to other events held in Islington.

We are also exploring whether licencing for pubs, nightclubs and music venues could include similar clauses. However, Councils are prohibited from imposing standard conditions on every licence. Licencing conditions are legal requirements and must be premises specific, necessary and proportionate to promoting licence objectives. Most pubs already avoid using disposal plastic cups.

Arsenal Football Club introduced a reusable plastic cup scheme last season and recently celebrated having saved an estimated half a million plastic cups from disposal.

We are actively exploring whether a similar scheme could be implemented at the Islington Assembly Halls.

3.20 **"Continue to call on National Government to take robust action in reducing single-use plastics."**

3.21 On 10 February Islington's Executive Member for Environment and Regeneration wrote to the then Secretary of State for Environment, to ask about progress in relation to a range of waste and recycling regulatory matter, including measures to reduce single use plastic. The letters reminds the Secretary of State of previous commitments on banning a range of SUPs which have not yet been implemented and requests an update on these measures. No reply has yet been received.

3.22 Islington also sent full detailed responses to each of the government's consultations in relation to SUP and resources, which are available on our website.

3.23 In addition to the above it is proposed that each Directorate organises a review of its own use of SUPs, highlighting the top 'offenders' and developing an action plan to reduce or eliminate these items where possible.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Implications:

All costs relating to the promotion and communication of the reduction of single use plastics have been covered through existing resources.

4.2 Legal Implications:

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Legal advice and support will be provided as necessary in relation to initiatives to reduce or eliminate single use plastic.

4.3 **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:**

Efforts to reduce single-use plastics will have primarily positive environmental implications. Although multi-use items can have a larger environmental impact than single-use items (as they are sturdier or made from more energy intensive material), their impact is usually lower once the number of times they are used and the supply chain impacts such as transport of the items are taken into account. This will mean an overall reduction in resource use, goods transportation and waste needing to be recycled or disposed of via incineration.

Plastic waste in the residual waste stream is sent to an energy from waste facility operated by London Energy Limited. Plastic film and rigid plastics forms approximately 86% of the direct CO₂e emissions from this method of disposal (2).

4.4 **Resident Impact Assessment:**

The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

None of the actions set out in this report have any adverse impacts.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to note progress made in reducing the unnecessary use of single use plastics in Islington.

Background documents and references:

- (1) Plastic & Climate: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet, Centre for International and Environmental Law, May 2019
- (2) Bristol net zero by 2030: The evidence base, Report to Bristol City Council of analysis of how the city can achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions (scopes 1 and 2) by 2030, Centre for Sustainable Energy, December 2019

Signed by: Keith Townsend

Director of Environment and Regeneration Date

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Appendix 1

Motion 5: Single-use plastic-free Islington

Motion moved by Cllr Russell

Amendment moved by Cllr Webbe

This Council notes –

- Islington Council is committed to cutting the use of single-use plastics in the borough, which are so harmful to the environment.
- Eight million metric tons of plastic waste makes its way into the world's oceans each year. Plastic pollution is already a huge threat to life in our oceans.
- There is a growing understanding of the risks posed to human health by toxic chemicals present in plastics. Terrestrial water supplies are known to be contaminated with microplastics, the long-term effect of which on human health is not known.
- It is predicted that the amount of plastic debris is likely to increase over the next decade unless nations take strong measures to dispose of their litter responsibly.
- Six months after the introduction of the 5p bag charge, use of single-use plastic bags dropped by 85%.

This Council further notes that –

- Islington Council is leading on the Low Plastic Zone (LPZ) campaign across the North London Waste Authority, with the first accredited LPZ launched in Cowcross Street. The Scheme encourages and supports businesses to take specific actions to reduce Single-use plastic.
- Islington Council's draft Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan commits to a number of actions to reduce the use of single-use plastics including –
 - Eliminating single use plastic from Islington Council's own operations where practical
 - Promoting reusable alternatives to nappies, wet-wipes, sanitary products containing plastic items and highlight the dangers being flushed down the toilet
 - Work to install more public drinking water fountains, subject to funding and share locations of public water sources via our website and the Refill App
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 - Taking continued action to encourage schools to act on plastic by providing access to resources, advice and guidance.
- In our parks the following clauses will be put into new concessions -
 - The café will have free drinking water available at all times
 - The licensee shall take reasonable measures to eliminate the use of single use plastic and plastic/wax lined paper cups
 - The licensee shall offer a discount on the price of hot drinks to any customer using their own reusable cup of no less than 10p

The Council believes –

- That all public bodies have a role to play in reducing unnecessary single-use plastic waste

- That the council can be a local leader, encouraging residents, organisations and businesses to stop using non-medical single use plastics (SUP).

This Council resolves to –

- Bring a report to the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee on the options for reducing the use of unnecessary non-medical Single Use Plastics (SUP) items in Islington, with the aim of:
 - ensuring that Islington Council becomes a full signatory of the 'Plastic Free Pledge' (<https://plasticfreepledge.com/>) by phasing out the use of unnecessary SUPs in all Council buildings, and working with commissioning partners to end the purchase and procurement of SUPs through the council supply chain;
 - further encouraging the borough's businesses, schools, organisations and residents to go 'single-use plastic free,' working to share business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to re-usable alternatives;
 - supporting more traders on Council land to sell reusable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out SUPs;
 - requiring food and drink vendors at sporting and other events or on film locations in the borough to avoid SUPs and other high carbon single-use items as a condition of their event permission;
 - Investigating whether avoidance of SUPs could be a condition of licensing for pubs, nightclubs and music venues.
- Continue to call on National Government to take robust action in reducing single-use plastics.