



Single Use Plastics Policy

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Key Points

This briefing contains background on the new proposed EU rules on single-use plastics as well as information on what to consider when developing your own policy and examples of local authority best practice.

1.0 Background

In May 2018, the European Commission proposed new EU rules on single-use plastics, designed to tackle “wasteful and damaging plastic litter through legislative action”. This follows on from the success of the implementation of plastic bag charges via the 2015 Plastic Bags Directive, which has resulted in “72% of Europeans cutting down on their use of plastic bags”.

The new suggested rules include a plastic ban in certain products, consumption reduction targets, obligations for producers, plastic collection targets, new labelling requirements as well as an obligation to raise awareness of “the negative impact of littering of single-use plastics”. The proposed rules also have a separate section on fishing gear which will not be covered in this briefing.

According to the European Commission [press release](#), “the proposed Directive will bring both environmental and economic benefits and will avoid the emission of 3.4 million

tonnes of CO2 equivalent, avoid environmental damage which would cost the equivalent of €22 billion by 2030 and save consumers a projected €6.5 billion.”

The [European Parliament](#) voted and backed a “complete ban on a range of single-use plastics across the union” by 571 votes to 53; “MEPs backed a ban on plastic cutlery and plates, cotton buds, straws, drink-stirrers and balloon sticks”. “The EU hopes it will go into effect across the bloc by 2021” and the “UK will also have to incorporate the rules into national law if the ban becomes a fully-fledged directive before the end of a Brexit transition period.”

Common types of single-use plastics used by local authorities include:

- Coffee vending cups
- Condiment sachets
- Food containers
- Plastic cutlery
- Soft drink bottles
- Straws / milk carton straws
- Water cups

2.0 Things to consider

When developing your authority’s own single-use plastics policy and programmes, we would recommend that you:

1. Identify your current use of single-use plastics in your authority (e.g. use in catering, offices)
2. Identify and develop alternatives to current products (e.g. providing reusable water bottles instead of cups, reusing existing supplies of poly-pockets)
3. Implement the changes (e.g. removing single-use plastic products from ordering catalogues, establishing a timeline for the eradication of single-use plastics from the authority)

You should make sure where possible that changes don't negatively impact certain groups (e.g. straws for disabled people that require them), and generally make sure that what you are replacing the plastic with doesn't create other problems.

[Brighton & Hove City Council](#) are a good example of an existing policy, and [Dumfries & Galloway Council](#) are a good example of a reduction strategy.

3.0 Policies, campaigns and commitments

Many UK Councils have already responded by introducing a range of policies, campaigns and other means of cutting down on single use plastics. Typical commitments include:

Council commitments

- Eliminating single-use plastics from offices and other Council buildings
- Working with event organisers to eliminate single-use plastics across events in their cities
- Encouraging the use of recycled plastics where the use of plastics is unavoidable
- Educating the public through campaigns and initiatives for reducing plastic waste
- Requiring suppliers to minimise single-use plastics and finding suitable alternative products

Working with partners / education role

- Supporting schools to free buildings of single-use plastics
- Supporting litter-pick activities in our communities to reduce plastic litter
- Using the council's communication channels to share best practice and information

4.0 Examples of creative local authority solutions

Many local authorities have been involved in creative ways of using, reducing and collecting single-use plastics, here are some examples of the innovative work local authorities are undertaking, the results of which are still being analysed.

- [Bath and North East Somerset Council](#) are asking businesses, schools and community groups to commit to “eliminating at least three single-use plastic items over the next year and replacing them with sustainable alternatives” with 9 businesses signed up since the March 7 launch.
- [Cheshire East Council](#) have created a community toolkit “to give people handy tips on how they can reduce their reliance on single use plastic”.
- [Durham County Council](#) have “trialled new “plastic road” technology, which sees normally unrecycled materials added to the mix during resurfacing works”.
- [Plymouth City Council](#) are trialling Sea Bins which are “floating rubbish bins that can capture annually 90,000 plastic bags, 35,700 disposable cups or 16,500 plastic bottles”. They are also working with South West Water to provide more free tap water refill points in public places in Plymouth.

5.0 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes the work done by local authorities across the UK to reduce single-use plastics. We recognise that we are all at different stages in our journey to eradicate plastic from the workplace, and through our combined efforts we can achieve significant change in the amount of plastic waste going to landfill.

APSE’s Waste and Recycling advisory groups are free to attend for all members. Please visit www.apse.org.uk for upcoming 2019 meeting dates.

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