

# Environment, Development and Transport Committee

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Recommendations of the Single Use Products Member Task and Finish Group</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>8 March 2019</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b> In response to a motion passed at Full Council, a Member Task and Finish Group was established by EDT Committee to make recommendations to its meeting 8 March 2019 on a balloon and lantern free charter and in relation to single use products and plastics in buildings owned or operated by the County Council.	

## **Executive summary**

Existing County Council policies and progress are identified and proposals for next steps are presented.

### **Recommendations:**

Members are requested to:

- 1. Recommend to Full Council on 15 April 2019 that it supports:**
  - a) Adoption of a balloon and lantern free charter.**
  - b) Updating the County Council’s Environmental policy and Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Advice on lanterns.**
  - c) Adopting a single use products policy for procurement and facilities management.**
  - a) Development of a charter for good practice on single use products as a Norfolk wide voluntary sign up quality scheme and use of County Hall as a demonstration project to establish good practice and principles.**
- 2. Request that the Member Task and Finish Group meets in September 2019 and March 2020 to assess progress and make any further recommendations required.**
- 3. To agree that the County Council becomes a signatory to the Courtauld Agreement which brings together organisations involved in the food system to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable and reduce food waste.**

## **1. Proposal**

### **1.1. Balloons and Lanterns**

The Member Task and Finish Group advises that Committee recommends that the County Council adopts a balloon and lantern release charter which would supplement and complement its existing ban on their release on County Council owned land.

This approach would encourage other organisations to sign the charter and thereby provide an easy to use template to apply the principles to land they are responsible for.

Signatories to the charter would also be agreeing to ensure that their organisations switch to safer alternatives, such as tree planting, flying flags or banners, holding virtual races or using balloons in a contained way and actively encourage residents to these safer alternatives as well.

Signatories would also extend their commitment to:

- a) Support national campaigns.
- b) Promote restrictions on all open spaces used for recreation.
- c) Encourage retailers to sell alternatives and sign up to the charter.
- d) Gather evidence of the impacts of sky lanterns and balloon releases.
- e) Lobby for a ban on releases of balloons and sky lanterns.

In support of this approach the Group recommends that the County Council's Environmental Policy and Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Advice on lanterns are both reviewed and updated.

## 1.2. **Single Use Products**

The Member Task and Finish Group assessed the beneficial changes already delivered by the County Council and assessed what further progress can be made and proposes:

- a) That a single use products policy for procurement and facilities management is adopted that requires practices to effectively minimise the use of single use plastics and to dispose of them responsibly. For example through procurement this could minimise the use of packaging, buying in bulk, eliminating double wrapping and where possible returning wrapping. In relation to catering this could be achieved by minimising the use of packaging by food and drink suppliers, minimising the use of packaging at point of sale, providing glasses and ceramic cups, favouring plumbed in water dispensers, incentivising users to bring their own reusable cups and containers, minimising the use of disposable wipes and buying cleaning products in bulk with appropriate dosing systems to prevent over use.
- b) Audits of single-use product and plastic usage on County Council premises, so that the scale of usage and viable and practicable re-use alternatives can be identified.
- c) Working with the Norfolk Waste Partnership to establish scope for collaboration.
- d) Recommending County Hall as a demonstration project to establish good practice and principles that can be replicated at scale, for example through other organisations and educational establishments.
- e) Developing a charter for good practice on single use products as a Norfolk wide voluntary sign up quality scheme using the same principles and approach suggested for the balloon and lantern release charter.
- f) Contributing to consultations on relevant national policy in 2019, such as on the introduction of a deposit return scheme for single use drinks containers.

1.3. To assess progress and make any further recommendations required it is suggested that the Member Task and Finish Group meets in September 2019 and March 2020 to review progress and make any further recommendations required.

## **2. Evidence**

### **2.1. Balloon and Sky Lanterns**

2.1.1 [Policy and Resources Committee](#) on 26 January 2015 agreed to '*ban the launching of sky lanterns and mass release of balloons from Norfolk County Council owned land*'. As the County Council land ownership is mainly agricultural land and premises such as offices and buildings this policy, although emphatic in its nature, will have had limited effect as the properties are not prone to this sort of use. To build on this a balloon and lantern free charter is suggested, to inspire others to adopt the same policy on land which is in their control.

The approach suggested is based on that taken in Dorset by the [Litter Free Coast and Sea](#) campaign as a part of its coastal partnership activities.

2.1.2 The County Council's [Environmental Policy](#) and Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service [Safety Advice And Guidance](#) on lanterns should be reviewed and updated to support the exiting ban on balloons and sky lanterns and any future charter.

### **2.2. Single Use Products**

2.2.1 The Member Task and Finish Group assessed the beneficial changes already delivered by the County Council. In response to a County Council motion approved on 12 December 2016 (Section 5.2 below) in early 2017, and again more recently, existing practices within the County Council were reviewed involving input from the Corporate Property Team and Norse, for example in relation to restaurant services and facilities management.

2.2.2 This established that recycling of plastics was already being addressed, particularly in County Hall, as waste segregation was taking place that included the collection of plastics, either supplied via catering or generated by staff through the use of bottles and containers.

Norse has updated recycling signage and systems (for example in the restaurant, main reception and on all floors) to ensure the correct information is given out to all County Hall staff and visitors to help ensure that waste is recycled and disposed of appropriately. Food waste bins are also located throughout the building and at the plate clearing station in the restaurant.

Further potential for improvement was identified in relation to the number of drinking water outlets at County Hall. An evaluation showed reasonably low usage of plastic cups, with an estimated 350 used in six months, and the number of water cooler drinks machines has been reduced, for example in the reception area at County Hall and in the training rooms. The restaurant continues to use glasses and reusable cutlery, with plastic knives, forks and spoons having been removed and wood versions being moved over to corn starch.

The majority of the single use plastics used at County Hall and some satellite offices are recyclable material (eg drink bottles and sauce containers) and where appropriate, alternatives are sourced for those items that are not recyclable material, for example reusable cups were assessed for the County Hall shop and elsewhere where hot drinks are provided. However, some items which are contaminated, for example with food residue, do end up being disposed of with general waste and options for alternative materials for some products would be more expensive.

- 2.2.3 This year sandwich packaging has been reduced and simplified and a 'bring your own lunchbox' scheme has been introduced that provides a 10p reduction for take away items. The stock of UHT milk cartons is being run down to be replaced by milk jugs, snack item sales have shifted to using tongs and paper bags, sauce sachets are being replaced by a sauce station and bottled drinks are being replaced by cans in fridges and vending machines.

The next planned step is ending the provision of disposable cups to customers at the County Hall shop, meaning that drinks will be provided in ceramic based or other reusable cups that can be returned and reused.

- 2.2.4 Norse has also progressed the agenda in its role as a leading school meal provider in East Anglia. Following a trial in June 2018 with Primary Schools it has established a way to successfully reduce the packing used in its pick and mix menus without reducing the appeal to children, the overall food presentation and the practicality of the lunch service. Different types of packing and drink options were trialled and following the October 2018 half-term the packaging product list has been reduced by 50%, individual products have been switched to those made of single materials, use of plastic containers has dropped by 95% and no straws are provided as drinks are not pre-packed. This development in primary schools is being replicated in the secondary schools in business and industry catering sites operated by Norse from early 2019.

- 2.2.5 To effect wider change the County Council, working as part of the Norfolk Waste Partnership, increased its focus on lobbying and influencing national policy development around plastics, litter, waste reduction, future targets and the circular economy.

To achieve this the Partnership and the County Council now has active representation on Adept's waste panel (the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport), Nawdo's policy and advisory committee (the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers), has a representative on the Local Government Association's Waste Sounding Board, and the Partnership joined Recoup (Recycling of Used Plastics), which is an influential organisation working on the plastics agenda. This approach, alongside using pre-existing channels, has been used throughout 2017 and 2018 to help influence national policy and the development of a national resources and waste strategy which was published 18 December 2018.

- 2.2.6 Norfolk County Council is also working with the Suffolk Waste Partnership on a successful project called [Food Savvy](#) which although it has a primary focus on reducing food waste is also delivering local initiatives to reduce plastic waste. A current example is working directly with local employers Aviva and the Environment Agency in Norfolk on the establishment of a lunch club project, funded by the private sector, to get employees to take part in a month long supported plastic free lunch experiment (support such as videos, planning tools, meal plans and the support of chefs and provisions of samples to test) to lead to good ideas being shared through work places that reduce plastic usage and food waste.

Reducing household food waste at source can have a positive impact on our budgets. Action relies on working with householders as well as householders acting on messages given to them. Currently, from information provided by Wrap the average UK household throws away the equivalent of six meals a week,

which would fill 50 carrier bags with wasted food and amounts to around £700 of wasted money every year for a family. However, many families still do not recognise how much food goes to waste from their homes, 60% still believe they waste 'none' or 'hardly any' food. Over one third don't know how much they could save by reducing their food waste.

To support and build on the County Council's activities in this area to reduce food waste it suggested that it becomes a signatory to the Courtauld Agreement. National waste charity Wrap launched Courtauld 2025 as voluntary agreement in March 2016, to bring together organisations involved in the food system to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable and reduce food waste.

- 2.3 To help inform the Group's work a visit to the Costessey Materials Recovery Facility operated by News Ltd was held on 12 February 2019 to establish the wider context around plastics usage and recovery. This process highlighted the issue and associated significant costs of contamination in recycling, operational issues around sorting materials collected for recycling and the direction of emerging national policy.

The Group has contributed to a supportive response to the Government's consultation (which ended on 22 February 2019) on its proposal to extend the single-use carrier bag charge to all retailers and to increase the minimum charge to 10p. Government has already implemented a charge on plastic bags, banned the sale of plastic microbeads, consulted on banning plastic drinking straws, stirrers and cotton buds, and is assessing the impact of banning other single-use plastic items and the County Council should continue to actively contribute to opportunities to influence emerging national policy.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1. On 11 February 2019 Full Council approved a £25,000 budget to support work to avoid the use of single use products and fund actions arising from the work of the Member Task and Finish Group. Whilst there are no direct additional financial considerations arising from the recommendations in this report this budget could be used to support the development and delivery of education programmes and initiatives and any future decisions made in relation to premises management and catering. Such decisions should be based on detailed business cases and understandings of the consequences of different approaches, for example in relation to the:

- a) Wider socio-economic impacts.
- b) Potential effects on businesses/SMEs.
- c) Economic impact of changes, including on families and communities.

- 3.2. Becoming a signatory to the Courtauld Agreement is not about generating additional costs, rather it is about capitalising on the existing works and activities that are already in place by the County Council to reduce food waste. It is also about doing it in a way that sends out a signal about what we are doing to a wider audience that includes Wrap and businesses and organisations that produce waste. This is an important consideration as producers are expected to play a larger part in how local authority waste services are funded in the future, through what is called producer responsibility.

The agreement's focus is on an area of our major costs. Of the circa £50m total local authority cost for waste in Norfolk we are spending more than around £11m

a year or 22% of the total system costs by dealing with food waste. That includes the cost of collecting and processing food waste, and the cost of collecting and dealing with the food waste element of residual waste.

#### **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

- 4.1. Release of sky lanterns and balloons has environmental, social and economic impacts such as fire hazard and loss of livestock or wildlife as a result of ingestion, entrapment and or panic.
- 4.2. There is no accepted definition of single-use plastic (SUP) products, but it can be taken to include things that are made wholly or partly of plastic and that are not intended to be reused or refilled for the same purpose as they were originally intended.

SUP products include a diverse range of commonly used items that are discarded after having been used once for the purpose for which they were provided, often for as little as a few seconds, and are rarely recycled or recyclable, and are prone to littering.

SUP products include: food containers; beverage cups, bottles containers, their caps & lids; cotton bud sticks; cutlery, plates, stirrers, straws; sticks for balloons and balloons; packets and wrappers; cigarette filters; sanitary items and wet wipes; and lightweight plastic carrier bags.

SUP items represent about half of all marine litter items found on European beaches by counts. Single-use drinks containers, or parts of them, regularly feature among the top ten items found on UK beaches.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1. Committee agreed to establish a Member Task and Finish Working Group at its meeting on 09 November 2018 in response to this motion passed at Full Council on 15 October 2018:

*'Council reaffirms its commitment to the protection of the environment, in particular the marine environment, as we are a county with some 90 miles of coastline and acknowledge that we have a responsibility toward keeping it as pristine as possible.*

*Therefore, this Council resolves to ask Environment, Development and Transport Committee to establish a Task and Finish Group to investigate the issues of a balloon and Chinese lantern free charter and single use products including, but not limited to, single use plastics in council owned or operated buildings and report back with recommendations by April 2019.'*

Committee established the following terms of reference for the Group:

- a) To consider and investigate the issues set out in the motion to Full Council as set out above.
- b) To report back findings and recommendations to EDT Committee at the meeting in March 2019.

The Membership of the Group is:

- Cllr Steffan Aquarone.
- Cllr Stuart Clancy (Chair).
- Cllr Terry Jermy.
- Cllr Bev Spratt.

- Cllr Sandra Squire.
- Cllr Tony White.

5.2. The County Council approved the following motion on 12 December 2016:

*‘This Council RESOLVES to ask the Norfolk Waste Partnership to research the Reduction of single-use plastic in Norfolk. This should include the following proposals for consideration:*

- 1. request officers to develop a robust strategy to move towards making Norfolk County Council workplaces ‘single-use-plastic-free’ by the end of 2017 and encourage other institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures;*
- 2. end the sale and provision of SUP products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in council buildings by the end of 2017, by using reusable or fully recyclable alternatives.*
- 3. investigate the possibility of requiring pop-up food and drink vendors at council events to avoid SUPs as a condition of their contract; and to replace with reusable or fully recyclable alternatives.*
- 4. work with tenants in commercial properties owned by Norfolk County Council to encourage the phasing out of SUP cups, bottles, cutlery and straws, by using reusable or fully recyclable alternatives.’*

5.3. Wrap launched Courtauld 2025 as a voluntary agreement in March 2016, to bring together organisations involved in the food system to make food and drink production and consumption more sustainable. Wrap sees local authorities as critical players in trying to reach the goal of reducing food waste as local authorities are at the end of the pipeline and have to deal with food waste left over by householders.

Organisations that sign up to the commitment are basically saying that they agree to work with suppliers and customers across the food chain from producer to consumer. This is something we are already doing in Norfolk, for example by working on the [Food Savvy](#) initiative with the Suffolk Waste Partnership, previous work with Sainsbury’s, supporting community fridges, delivering ‘Love Food Hate Waste’ and ‘Plan Eat Save’ initiatives, working with a network of food waste volunteers, as well as by supporting food waste collections and the recent. Note that there is no expectation on councils not doing food collections to start doing so if they sign up – as is evident in the Suffolk Waste Partnership involvement for example.

## **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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