

Wiltshire Council

Council

21 February 2017

Notice of Motion 40 - Reducing single use plastic in Wiltshire

From Councillors Terry Chivers and Ernie Clark

Officer Briefing Note

- 1. Develop a robust strategy to make Wiltshire a 'single-use-plastic-free' authority by the end of 2017 and encourage the County's institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt similar measures.*

It would be reasonable to encourage businesses and residents to reduce their use of single use plastic products. However, the most effective behaviour change occurs with a change in legislation such as the introduction of the five pence charge for single use plastic bags. The council already works with businesses to encourage them to take a more sustainable approach. This is evidenced through the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan.

The council works with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to encourage residents to reduce the amount of waste they produce, including single use plastics. The council also provides a kerbside collection of plastic bottles and collects a wider range of plastics at its household recycling centres. This should ensure that the vast majority of the single use plastic produced by households in Wiltshire is either recycled or used to produce energy from waste. In addition to the wider environmental benefits, if residents purchased less single use plastic this would reduce demand for the council's waste and recycling collection and disposal services.

- 2. End the sale and provision of SUP products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in council buildings where possible.*

The council encourages all of its providers of catering and vending services to act in an environmentally sustainable manner. We would encourage them all to consider their use of single use plastics and offer suitable alternatives where possible. However, in the current economic climate the council is limited in its ability to stipulate the use of specific products where this may have an impact on the cost of the services provided. Many of the alternatives to single use plastics, such as single use wooden cutlery and paper cups, carry a price premium. This makes it challenging to support the use of such alternatives when budgets are under pressure.

The council operates a successful recycling scheme for plastic bottles supplied through vending and catering services. Recycling containers are generally available at each point of sale. As a consequence the use of plastic bottles through these services should not be contributing to the problem of plastics in the world's oceans.

- 3. Encourage traders in Wiltshire to sell re-usable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out single-use plastic containers and cutlery on markets stalls by the end of 2017.*

It would be reasonable to encourage traders to reduce their use of single use plastic products and invite customers to bring their own, re-usable bottles, cups and cutlery. However many of these traders would be working to minimise their costs as they trade in a very competitive environment. They are likely to want to serve customers who require single use containers and cutlery and the alternatives to single use plastic are often more expensive. Such encouragement is only likely to succeed if there are cost effective viable alternatives available.

- 4. Investigate the possibility of requiring pop-up food and drink vendors at large council events to avoid SUP's as a condition of their contract; and work with tenants in commercial properties owned by Wiltshire Council to encourage the phasing out of SUP cups, bottles, cutlery and straws.*

While vendors at council events could be required to avoid single use plastics, again there would be cost implications of doing this either for the council or the vendors' customers. As with all businesses, traders and residents the council encourages use of more sustainable alternatives without mandating this.

The waste management arrangements put in place at such events should again ensure that single use plastics – and any other waste materials – would be recycled or otherwise properly managed to ensure that they do not contribute to the problem of waste in the world's oceans.