

Subject:	Single Use Plastic Strategy	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny	Date:	7 March 2022
Report of:	Director of Communities	Portfolio Holder:	Environment
Key Decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required: No	Attached:	No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required: No	Attached:	No
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1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	For Overview and Scrutiny to agree and comment upon the attached Single Use Plastics (SUP) strategy and to agree to the Strategy being taken to Council in March 2022.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1 In July 2021, a Council motion was passed to develop a Plastics Free Strategy for Rossendale in order to show our commitment to reducing plastics use and to enable community groups to apply for “Plastic Free Status” for a number of our towns.

It was also agreed that the council would report back on progress of all actions to Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) by March 2022 – this report summarises our actions to date in respect of the motions outlined below.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency in September 2019 and committed to take action locally through the development of its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which was published in 2020. At the September 12th 2019 full council meeting the following motion on Single Use Plastics was unanimously agreed This motion stated:

“...Council therefore commits to reviewing all service areas with the aim of minimising and hopefully removing entirely our use of non-biodegradable single use plastics”.

3.2 At the full council meeting in July 2021, the following further motion was unanimously agreed:

1. To develop a plastics strategy with the objective that Rossendale will become a Plastic Free Community by 2025;
2. To set up a Plastic Free Working Group;
3. To review recycling routes for plastics in RBC;
4. To support Plastic Free Community initiatives in the Borough.
5. To confirm that following actions agreed in 2019, RBC is now single-use plastics free in all service areas, to be confirmed by a full audit, and where this is not the case make any changes necessary by autumn 2021
6. To confirm progress in supporting community events to be single use plastic free
7. To report on progress of all actions to O&S by March 2022 and bring a report to

full council by the end of the current municipal year

4. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 4.1 A strategy has been developed and is structured to mirror the Corporate Plan. This strategy encompasses many of the recommendations of the motion to Council last year. This includes a commitment to be plastics free by 2025, to complete a Single Use Plastics audit and review recycling routes for plastics. This audit has been completed and results were reported to the Councils Corporate Management Team last year. Four deliverable actions have been taken from the audit and these are included in the strategy.
- 4.2 The plastic free working group that was requested by Council has been incorporated into the Climate Change Officers Group as a standing item. This approach has been agreed with lead members.
- 4.3 The strategy has three priority areas. Firstly for the Council to lead by example in its own reduction of Single Use Plastics. Secondly to examine ways in which events on council owned land can be single use plastic free as well as work with other partners to reduce single use plastic use. The third priority is to work with communities to achieve Plastic Free Status for their towns. It is expected that all four larger towns have community groups that wish to work towards this. Having a Council strategy is an essential element of the community groups achieving plastic Free status.
- 4.4 All actions suggested in the motion to Council have been completed or incorporated in the Strategy.
- 4.5 Further information regarding the context and background to the Plastic Free Strategy - Working towards a Plastic Free Rossendale is provided in the background papers attached to this report.

Next Steps

- 4.6 It is recommended that the Plastics Free Strategy and an update on the completed actions be presented to Council on March 16th for approval.

5. RISK

- 5.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

- A risk register has been developed for the Climate Change Strategy of which the SUP strategy is part.

6. FINANCE

- 6.1 Recommendations from the SUP audit may have some financial implications for the council, each proposed initiative will be assessed based on the budget available and potential environmental benefits.

7. LEGAL

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The current plastics audit and its resultant actions do not have any adverse impact on equalities. Officers will engage with community groups on the development of plastic free

initiatives to identify and address any possible adverse impact on protected groups.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Achieving Plastic Free status and reducing the council’s use of single use plastics is a key priority for councillors, as demonstrated by two motions to Council on the subject. There was limited focus in the original climate change strategy on the reduction of single use plastics and it is considered that the attached strategy is a balanced approach which achieves the key objective of auditing our own plastics usage and also having a strategy which then enables community groups to apply for plastic free status.

9.2 It is recommended that following any amends that Overview and Scrutiny recommend, the strategy be taken to Council in March 2022.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Working Towards a Plastic Free Rossendale	Attached
Single Use Plastic Policy Context and Background	Attached
Surfers Against Sewage, Plastic Free Communities	Attached
RBC Single Use Plastic audit and recommendations	Attached

Working Towards a Plastic Free Rossendale

A Single Use Plastics Strategy for Rossendale



01 Foreword

In September 2019 Rossendale Borough Council declared a Climate Emergency and pledged to take action to make sure we reach Carbon Zero by 2030. Our 10 year Climate Change Strategy sets the framework for achieving that ambitious goal.

We know that the use of plastics, especially single use plastics is of major concern to our communities and the Council recognised this in July 2021 by committing to reducing its own use of Single Use Plastics and by committing to a strategy that will encourage community groups across Rossendale to become plastic free communities.

**“Rossendale Borough Council aims to become a (Single Use)
Plastic Free Community by 2025”**

This strategy tackles the use of single use plastics in Rossendale in three key priority areas:

- To minimise the amount of Single Use Plastics used by the Council in all its activities
- To minimise the amount of single use plastics used in community events and by council partners
- To assist community groups to achieve Plastic Free Community status as defined by Surfers Against sewerage.

This short but powerful strategy sets out the actions being undertaken to achieve these priorities.

02 Introduction (By Adrian Lythgoe)

We are clear that human activities are leading to climate change at a scale and pace that threatens our quality of life and that of future generations. This global challenge requires a global response and we are keen to do our bit locally and provide leadership. The council have committed to an ambitious Climate Change Strategy and significant funding to achieve this.

It is evident from our extensive community engagement on Climate Change, that the reduction of single use plastics is a key priority for local residents.

Rossendale Borough Council is taking action to avoid unnecessary plastic waste. We are committed to prevent, reduce, reuse and recycle as much waste including SUPs as possible in all our activities. As part of our approach this strategy sets out the measures that the council will take to prevent the use of SUPs within our own activities and how we will lead by example to educate and encourage others to follow suit.

Plastics generally, and in particular Single Use Plastics are currently wide spread. They contain a number of different types of plastics, especially in the food industry. Not all of these are recyclable; the wide range of plastics in use makes collection, sorting and treatment including recycling expensive and energy intensive.

The most common single-use plastics found in the environment, in order of magnitude are: cigarette butts, plastic drinking bottles, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, plastic grocery bags, plastic lids, straws and stirrers, other types of plastic bags, and foam take-away containers.

This strategy and its action plan supports our wider climate change strategy in the following areas:

- 3.3 Waste and the wider environment – to ban the procurement of single use plastics for all council services and events by June 2022
- 3.4 Working together in partnership to support Rossendale climate change champions to create wider networks for action

The Council will lead by example in reducing its own plastics use and will encourage its partners to do likewise. We will also work with our communities towards their ambitions of achieving Plastic Free Status for their communities.

Priority 1 - To Minimise the Amount of Single Use Plastics used by the Council in all its Activities

It is imperative that the Council leads on reducing its own use of Single Use Plastics if it is to expect communities to follow suit.

The Council in line with most of the country carries out the collection of recyclable material. The prevailing problems associated with the use of plastics need to be addressed in order to protect the planet, environment and our own health. Currently Rossendale sends around 7400 tonnes of waste for recycling each year and recycles around 33% of the boroughs domestic waste. The average English borough is recycling around 49%.

Single Use Plastics cannot be recycled and must be tackled at source. In practice this means eradicating the use of Single Use Plastics by the Council.

To inform the actions required under this priority, a Single Use Plastics Audit for all Council activities has been completed.

Key actions

Following an audit of Single Use Plastics for the Council, we commit to:

- To find a viable alternative Single Use Plastic sacks that are currently in use in use by our refuse teams
- To use reusable taxi license plates rather than disposable ones
- To Use only compostable cups for water and drinks machines
- To promote with all staff, alternative options to eradicate Single Use Plastics from both their work life and home life e.g. by using tap water rather than bottled water.

Priority 2 - To minimise the amount of single use plastics used in community events and by council partners

The Council does work with a wide range of partners to deliver a wide range of community activities and events. Some of these activities and events rely on council permissions and this enables us to set conditions, such as insisting on there being no use of single use plastics. For other partner activity and events we can play a role in providing alternative sustainable options and promoting these with partners wherever possible.

Key Actions

- To review the permissions process for events on council land in order to insist that Single Use Plastics are not used.
- To encourage and support partner organisations such as Rossendale Leisure Trust, including The Whitaker and ABD Centre to review their use of SUPs and identify alternatives.

- To use our extensive community and business networks to promote the use of alternatives to Single Use Plastics.
- To encourage council suppliers and contractors to not use single use plastics during our procurement of services.

Priority 3 – To assist community groups to achieve Plastic Free Community status as defined by Surfers Against sewerage.

The biggest difference that Rossendale can make in reducing the use of Single Use Plastics is by mobilising and supporting our excellent communities. We have seen time and again that the communities of Rossendale deliver the biggest difference in the quality of the life of residents. Whether this is community groups coming together to support people through the Covid pandemic or coming together to prevent climate change, we have an extensive engagement network that makes a real difference. It is this brilliant network of community activists that will make the biggest difference in reducing the use of Single Use Plastics and creating a Plastic Free Rossendale.

Key Actions

- RBC will agree a Plastic Free Strategy and sign up to Plastic Free Rossendale
- Hold annual conferences on climate change that will bring all those working on a Plastic Free Rossendale together.
- Support local groups to achieve Plastic Free Town status across Rossendale
- Following the achievement of Plastic Free Towns status for all our towns, we will apply for full Plastic Free Rossendale status.

Measuring our Success

This strategy will be managed and monitored through the Council’s Climate Change Officer Group with Plastic Free Working being a Standing Item on the Agenda. They will review the progress made against the following aims and objectives and provide an annual update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Single Use Plastic Audit: Consolidated responses and recommendations for action

This audit considers the main activities undertaken by Rossendale Borough Council that result in the utilisation of single use plastic (SUP). The activities covered are: General Office Activities, ICT and Marketing, Cleaning and Caretaking, Catering and hospitality in Futures Park Offices, meetings and resources rooms and Henrietta Street.

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
Water dispenser cups	Provision of drinks to staff and visitors awaiting appts and for meetings Futures Park Ground, 1 st 2 nd Floors	Approximately 2,500 per year	Yes	Use of paper biodegradable cups already in use We use cups/ glasses Use of own cups but unclear around compatibility etc	Paper cups are routinely put in bins for general waste so are not being recycled. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve labelling/ signage so that paper cups are included as paper bin waste and recycled Identify a specific space on each floor for location of standardised recycling bins rather than in individual offices Include paper recycling bin in meeting rooms 	Lee Child
Plastic Vending Cups	Provision of drinks to staff and visitors and meetings,	Approximately 1,500 per year	No	Use of paper biodegradable cups already in use	As above.	Lee Child
Cans Crisp and sweet packets	Staff use – vending machines Vending machines and corporate support	Unknown	No	Remove the vending machine which also ticks the box for the health and wellbeing agenda	Cans are recycled in kitchens. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Scope to recycle crisp/sweet packaging and other soft plastics through the Co-op schemes in Rossendale at Waterfoot, Whitworth and Haslingden. This would need RBC to set up collection point and for an officer to drop off.</i> 	With Plastic Free Communities reps.3

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question as to should we have a vending machine at all? Staff survey? 	CMT decision
Plastic wallets	Meetings/ presentations	Less common but reduced impact where recycled	Recycled from redundant files when destroying files in accordance with document retention schedules.	None	<p>These are reused by staff. Don't procure any more reuse what we have.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Print room now identified as central store so more opportunities for reuse. Increased use of online docs etc 	All managers
Plastic report/covers	Can be reused not easily recycled	Less common but reduced impact where recycled	Recycled from redundant files when destroying files in accordance with document retention schedules.	None	Continue to reuse but avoid further purchase	All managers
Encapsulating pouches	Protection planning notices etc	5 per year	We have a statutory obligation to publish intention to dispose notices on RBC owned Property/land in line with the constitution	None	No change needed	

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
Laminating pouches	Presentation/ meetings	Max 50 per annum for notices	No	None	Ensure used signs are recycled where possible	All managers
Plastic wrapping	Paper supplies, newsletters etc	What sort of volume?	Not usually	None	Dependent on suppliers. This something to consider before ordering	All managers
Binding strip	Secure boxes of A3 paper reams	Low volume	No	None	None	
Cable ties	Hold up signs and comms materials Official notices on posts and lighting columns	100 per annum	Yes	Use of recycled string	Cable ties no longer used	All managers
Pens	Offices, meeting etc	50 per year	No	No known credible alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock is reused • To set up a collection point at Futures Park – printer rooms and identify staff to drop off <i>NB biros, pens and highlighters can be recycled through Helmshore Recycling scheme .</i>	All staff
Disposable wipes IT screen wipes	Offices Cleaning monitors and It equipment	unknown	Yes	Ensure recyclable products are used	Explore alternative products that can be recycled	Lee Child

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
Other – staff own food and drink containers	?recycling facilities available not always used	unknown	No	Recycling facilities in each kitchen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour change campaign to encourage reuse and recycling better labelling and information on bins etc clarification on what plastics can be recycled in Rossendale 	Joe Walker/all staff
Covid related packaging: Anti bacterial wipes Face masks Face Visors Anti-bac plastic spray bottles Plastic aprons Plastic gloves LTF tests	offices, reception, meeting rooms,	30 tubs of anti bac wipes per annum	Yes No No	Use of this now diminishing Refillable bottled spray now to be used with paper towels. The use of face masks is now declining but dependent on Covid levels and regs. Face visors are not throw away and are re-usable for other situations Bottles are re-fillable	Hygiene requires single use, no obvious alternative Already using refillable spray etc.	
OTHER (please add)	Vinyl gloves for work tasks, machine maintenance	40 boxes per annum (250 x 40)	yes	Use none disposable textile gloves which can be recycled	Identify recyclable products	??
Procurement – cables etc	IT equipment etc	unknown	No	None	Explore how these can be recycled	Andrew Buckle/Joe Walker

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
Procurement printer toner cartridges and packaging	Printing rooms	Unknown	No	None	E Ensure all packaging is recycled	Diane Dungworth
Disposal – phones etc	Throughout offices	Unknown	Yes	Recycling	Explore how these can be recycled	Andrew Buckle/Joe Walker
Disposal – IT equipment	Throughout offices	Unknown	Yes	Recycling	Explore how these can be recycled	Andrew Buckle/Joe Walker
Cleaning dispensers	Hand wash etc	Unknown	No	Reused and refilled	No action	
Cleaning agents	Various cleaning chemicals are supplied in plastic bottles and containers	Unknown	No	These are recyclable.	Recycle all plastic containers	Lee Child
Cleaning – small bin bags	Offices and meeting rooms	As an example, Community office uses approx. 10 per week	Yes	Reduce the number of bins to 1 per office, rather than 1 per person. Reductions in purchase of bags and reductions in time for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy win for RBC to implement across all offices. Move to group bins: • One waste bin/bin liner per floor or per office • Campaign to instill behaviour change 	Climate Change Officer Group Reps3

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
		480 per year: replicated across all offices in Futures Park and Henrietta St		cleaning staff to empty and replace. Knock on effect of reducing other larger sacks used for collection		
Cleaning – large bags	Consolidation of waste from offices		Yes can be reduced	See comments small bin bags above	See above	
large bin bags	Confidential waste	Unknown	No	Already reused across council	Recycling in place	
Plastic recycling	Recycling facilities available				Recycling in place	
Disposable gloves (latex & non latex)	Caretaking and cleaning staff	Unknown	Yes	Buy reusable gloves not just for single use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source longer use gloves for staff and encourage staff to preserve for longer. 	Lee Child
Disposable wipes	IT screen wipes Desk and hand cleaning	Unknown	Possibly	Packaged not plastic drum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source lighter packaging not plastic drum, or ensure recycling 	??
Cutlery	Events etc			Already in place	N/A	

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
Plates dishes, cups etc	Council meetings and events			Already in place	N/A	
Hot drink vending machines – individual sachets	Drink machines in Futures Park meeting rooms and Floors 1 and 2 and outside Council Chamber				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pouches are not recyclable in Rossendale – Look to replace in due course 	Lee Child
Plastic milk containers	Meeting rooms, events and regular council activities		Yes	Provide milk in jugs ? waste/costs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority for action – replace with milk bottles 	Directors to agree
Containers for sandwiches etc Clingfilm cover	Buffets, Mayoral events Food protection			Using paper bags for sandwiches	N/A	??33
Water dispensers	Staff and visitors	unknown	No		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signage and bin to encourage cups put in paper recycling not general waste 	Lee Child
Straws	Hospitality events			Not in use	N/A	

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
Private Hire Vehicle licence plates	Licensed vehicle ID plate		Yes	Yes – replacement stickers for year on year	None	Phil Morton
Purple Sacks	Lining litter bins and containing picked litter	Lining litter bins and containing picked litter	100,000	No	None	
Black sacks	Residual and excess waste	Residual and excess waste	80,000	Use of biodegradable plastic sacks HAS COST IMPLICATIONS	Use of biodegradable black plastic sacks	Keith Jenkins
Green sacks	Collecting green waste	Collecting green waste	80,000	Possibly	Explore use of biodegradable sacks	Keith Jenkins
Excess waste and recycling sacks	To contain excess recyclable or non recyclable items where bin collections may have missed	To contain excess recyclable or non recyclable items where bin collections may have missed		Possibly	Explore use of biodegradable sacks	Keith Jenkins

Type of SUP	Use/ Location	Quantity PA Where known	Avoidable?	Alternative Identified Any implications for use eg cost/time	Recommendations for Further action	Next Steps/ Lead Officer
Disposable gloves latex and non latex	For waste collection staff	1500	Yes	Buy reusable gloves not just for single use then throw away.	Source longer use gloves for staff and encourage staff to preserve for longer.	Keith Jenkins

Comment on paper cup recycling: not sure that these are recycled with paper as they are usually left in office/meeting rooms waste bins which cleaners collect at end of day and include non recycleable waste so paper cups are not separated out. Need to have bin for paper cups which is clearly signed.

Not SUP but to reduce amount of paper used : Printers default to be set to print double sided as standard to reduce paper/need for boxes of paper

Single Use Plastic: policy context and background

The UN states that only 9% of all plastic produced globally is recycled and pollution from plastics is currently recognised by the public and policymakers as one of the most pressing and challenging environmental issues to address in the UK.¹

UK Policy

In 2011 Government launched its 25 Year Environment Plan, recognising that plastics pose a great threat to our environment at home and globally. Following this, the Resources and Waste Strategy for England was published at the end of 2018 and Government has pledged to remove all consumer single-use plastics from central government estate offices by 2020. This strategy sets out how we will preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy in England.

[Resources and waste strategy: at a glance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/resources-and-waste-strategy-at-a-glance)

Rossendale Policy

In September 2019 Rossendale Borough Council's declaration of Climate Emergency included:

- Working towards making the council's activities net-zero carbon by 2030
- Setting a 100% clean energy target, across the Council's full range of functions by 2030.

Following the Council's Climate Emergency declaration RBC committed to take action locally through the development of its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan published earlier this year (2021). At the September 12th 2019 Full council meeting this Single Use Plastic resolution was unanimously agreed. This motion stated:

"...Council therefore commits to reviewing all service areas with the aim of minimising and hopefully removing entirely our use of non-biodegradable single use plastics and will encourage organisers of the wonderful community events we have in Rossendale to do the same..."

The Council recognises that discarded plastics, including non-recyclable cups, bottles and straws, are a major environmental pollutant and of detrimental impact to Rossendale Borough and its communities.

¹ UN references report published on World Environment Day June 2018.the full report can be found at: <https://www.unenvironment.org/interactive/beat-plastic-pollution/>

Public awareness of the problems caused by our throwaway society is at an all-time high and the council needs to demonstrate by example actions taken reduce the use of SUPs and promote reduction of SUPs across the whole community.

What are Single Use Plastics?

Single Use Plastics (SUPs) and the effects of plastic pollution in rivers, oceans and beaches has become a much discussed topic with high levels of public interest. According to recent research over eight million metric tons of plastic waste ends up in the world's oceans each year, endangering marine life. There is also a growing understanding of the risks posed to human health and the wider food chain.

Single-use plastics also known as disposable plastics are commonly used for plastic packaging and include items intended to be used once before they are thrown away or recycled.

The most common single-use plastics found in the environment, in order of magnitude are: cigarette butts, plastic drinking bottles, plastic bottle caps, food wrappers, plastic grocery bags, plastic lids, straws and stirrers, other types of plastic bags, and foam take-away containers.



The problem

The problem is the prolific use of avoidable single use plastic items such as plastic drinking straws, plastic drink which are used on average for around 20 minutes but can take over 400 years to degrade.

Around 300 million tons of plastic waste is produced every year and about half of which is the single-use type.

- Consequently, 91% of plastic waste ends up in landfills instead of being recycled every year.
- For every ton of plastic recycled, around 680 gallons of oil and 5,774 kWh of energy are saved.
- Also, recycling one ton of plastic saves up to 2,000 gallons of gasoline.²

Plastic is a complex mixture of various chemicals which do not biodegrade or compost but simply degrade. This means plastics slowly break down into smaller and smaller pieces (micro-plastics) a process that can take hundreds of years. These micro-plastics also get into ecosystems, wildlife and our bodies (eg by eating fish). The long term impact of micro-plastics on human health is currently unknown but there are serious concerns about the consequences.

² [60 Recycling Statistics: 2020/2021 Data, Trends & Predictions | CompareCamp.com](#) Arthur Zuckerman May 11 2020

The process also releases CO₂, increasing our carbon footprint and leaching toxic chemicals into the environment. These pass into water supplies, rivers and seas and through farmland where they are absorbed by plants and animals and thus enter the food chain.

Current Situation

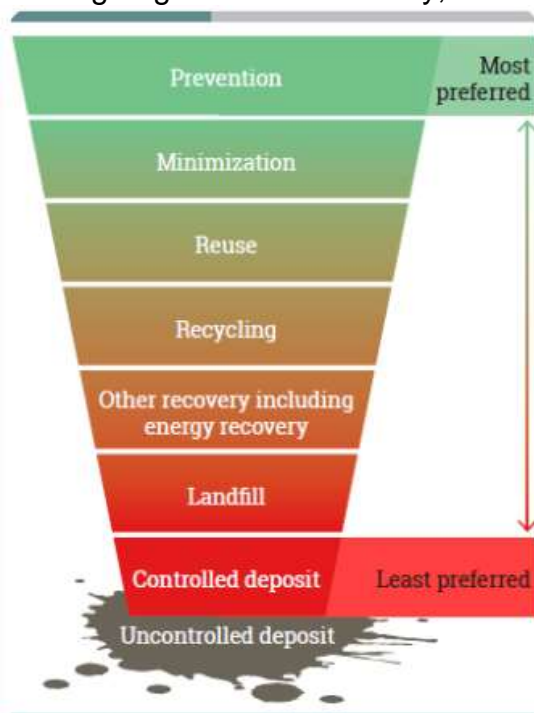
Plastics generally, and in particular SUPs are currently wide spread. They contain a number of different types of plastics, especially in the food industry. Not all of these are recyclable and the wide range of plastics in use makes collection, sorting and treatment including recycling, expensive and energy intensive.

The Council in line with most of the country carries out the collection of recyclable material. The prevailing problems associated with the use of plastics need to be addressed in order to protect the planet, environment and our own health.

Currently Rossendale sends around 7400 tonnes of waste for recycling each year and recycles around 33% of the boroughs domestic waste. The average English borough is recycling around 49%.

The international recognised waste hierarchy highlights that waste prevention is the most favourable option, with reuse and recycling following behind.

SUPs go against this hierarchy, encouraging the least preferred options of waste disposal – controlled and uncontrolled deposit.



Source: Global Waste Management Outlook, UNEP, 2015.

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to prevent, reduce, reuse and recycle as much waste including SUPs as possible in all our activities. As part of our approach this strategy sets out the measures that the council will take to prevent the use of SUPs within our own activities and how we will lead by example to educate and encourage others to follow suit.

Leading by Example

The UK government made a start on reducing the prevalence of SUPs in our environment following the introduction of the 5p bag charge, increased to 10p in 2021. Since its introduction the number of bags used has gone down by more than 95% in England. A total of nearly £180m has also been raised for good causes from the revenue collected.

Other countries have gone further. The Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) have also been effective in reducing litter and increasing reuse of plastic products. DRS levy a charge on plastic products as a deposit which is returned to the customer when the packaging is brought back to the store for reuse.



	Deposit scheme	Money back	Recycling rates
 Germany	Plastic bottles; glass; aluminium cans	22p	98.5%
 Norway	Plastic bottles; glass bottles; aluminium cans	9-24p	95%
 Netherlands	Large plastic bottles; beer bottles; plastic beer crates	9-23p	95%
 Finland	Plastic bottles; aluminium cans; glass bottles	9-36p	93%
 Denmark	Plastic bottles; glass bottles	12-35p	89%
 Sweden	Plastic bottles; aluminium cans	9-18p	85%
 Canada (British Columbia)	Glass; plastic bottles; Tetra Pak containers, aluminium/steel cans	6-12p	85%
 USA (California)	Aluminium; glass; plastic	4-8p	83%
 South Australia	All drinks containers	6p	81%
 UK	None		57%

Daily Mail On-line, 14th February 2017, by Daniel martin and Sean Poulter

Across the UK, consumers go through an estimated 14 billion plastic drinks bottles, 9 billion drinks cans and 5 billion glass bottles a year. In March 2021 DEFRA opened a second consultation on DRS in England Wales and Northern Ireland.

However in light of the disruption caused by the pandemic any decision to implement will be delayed until late 2024 at the earliest.

Solutions and Considerations

Life Cycle Thinking

The current debate around waste plastics has focussed on their impact on marine pollution and has brought some people to question the long-term viability of a single use throwaway society. However, some of the alternatives to single use plastics may impact more on climate change.

The answer is not as simple as all plastic is bad. If plastic products are made to last and are reused again and again and then recycled at the end of their usefulness they can be a sustainable option. Some single use “disposable” plastic items are less avoidable – for example single use plastics used in medical testing and discarded safely to avoid contamination and potentially serious impacts on human health.

Considering using alternatives such as non-plastics and reusable containers can result in counterintuitive consequences. Life Cycle Thinking will be essential to ensure that reusable replacement products don't have a greater environmental impact than disposable alternatives.

By considering all stages of a product's lifespan, including extraction of raw materials, construction, use and disposal, we can ensure that measures taken at one stage do not lead to unintended consequences in another.

For example, results from life cycle assessments suggest that:

- Cotton bags need to be used 173 times before they become more environmentally friendly than a single use plastic bag;
- Paper bags can decompose but have a higher carbon footprint than plastic ones, because the process of making them uses more energy; and
- A stainless steel water bottle needs to be used several hundred times before it is better for the environment than a single-use plastic one.

Compostable items

In many sites, compostable plastics have been seen to be a good alternative to SUPs. However, compostable plastics tend to exhibit similar aesthetic and physical properties as non-compostable plastics meaning that they are almost impossible to distinguish at a composting plant. There is no way for plant operators to determine whether they should be accepted in the process or screened out as contamination. Conversely, this same confusion arises at plastics recycling facilities which cannot differentiate between compostable and mainstream target plastic types.

A key limitation of compostable plastics is that a period of six months is required to break down the material. This is unlikely to be realistic for composting facilities in the UK which typically process material over an eight to twelve-week period.

In principle, compostable cups appear to be environmentally preferable. However, under current arrangements it is likely that the majority of compostable cups end up in landfill where their breakdown produces methane, a greenhouse gas 25 times more damaging than carbon dioxide.

In light of the above, it is recommended that focusing on waste prevention via reuse as the preferred option for cups. If the Council opts to use compostable items, then the only way to ensure these are correctly disposed of is to have suitable compostable facilities onsite or nearby, Windrows, typically utilised for green waste are not suitable.

References and resources

[Home - Plastic Free GM : Plastic Free GM](#) useful content including factsheets and ideas for alternatives.

[What is single use plastic? — Plastic Free Challenge](#)

[Home - Plastic Free Communities](#)

Surfers against Sewage - What is a Plastic Free Community?

Plastic free community status is awarded by Surfers Against Sewage (SAS). Many communities across the UK have achieved this already. Locally this includes Longridge in Lancashire and Ramsbottom in Bury. It is led by communities themselves but must be supported by the local authority or town council. SAS publishes advice for councils on its website which includes the following actions:

- Support plastic free initiatives and the community groups working on them in your area.
- Work with Plastic Free Community leaders on the motion or resolution supporting Plastic Free Communities.
- Liaise with your community leaders to facilitate and promote the campaign locally.
- Encourage schools, businesses, community groups and individuals to get involved.

But most of all...

- Demonstrate leadership and set up a working group to examine the options available to reduce avoidable single-use plastic
- Perform a complete audit of avoidable, single-use plastic items used across council owned buildings and facilities.
- Develop a plastics strategy with specific objectives for eliminating avoidable single-use plastics. Link this to environmental policy, waste strategy and sustainable procurement policies where appropriate.
- Ensure appropriate recycling routes are available to capture plastic.
- Enable reuse and refill schemes to replace single-use plastic consumption.
- Consider how you can promote the reduction of single-use plastics across the council area and involve collection and waste disposal authorities in this process.

The Council has already made progress towards implementing some of these actions:

1. Carried out an audit of single use plastic in council owned buildings
2. Held a climate emergency action day on 10th November for community groups and residents which included sharing information about plastic free communities and how to establish them in Rossendale
3. Developed a plastics strategy for the Council

Taken from: <https://www.sas.org.uk/advice-plastic-free-councils/>