

Subject:	Single Use Plastic Strategy	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Full Council	Date:	16 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
Contact Officer:	Tricia Brindle	Telephone:	01706 252542
Email:	triciabrindle@rossendalebc.gov.uk		

1.	RECOMMENDATION(S)
1.1	For Council to agree the attached Single Use Plastics for Rossendale.

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 a report on progress of all actions would be presented to Council before the end of the current Municipal year following its presentation and discussion at Overview and Scrutiny which took place on 7th March 2022.

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 ull council meeting on September 12th 2019 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 actions are being completed.
- 4.2 The plastic free working group that was requested by Council has been achieved by incorporating a standing item into the existing Climate Change Officers Group. 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 into the Strategy.

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.

5. RISK

- 5.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- A risk register has been developed for the Climate Change Strategy, of which the Single Use Plastics strategy is part. This will ensure that risks associated with this strategy will be monitored and updated.

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 the Council as part of its broader strategy to address climate change and carbon reduction. It is considered that the attached strategy provides a balanced

approach to reducing Single Use Plastics within the Council and importantly it provides an essential platform for communities in Rossendale to work on becoming accredited as plastic free.

It is recommended that the Council agree the strategy and that progress is monitored through the Council's wider Climate Change programme.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Working Towards a Plastic Free Rossendale	Attached
Single Use Plastic Policy Context and Background Paper	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 relay 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: 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/strategies/resources-and-waste-strategy-for-england)

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

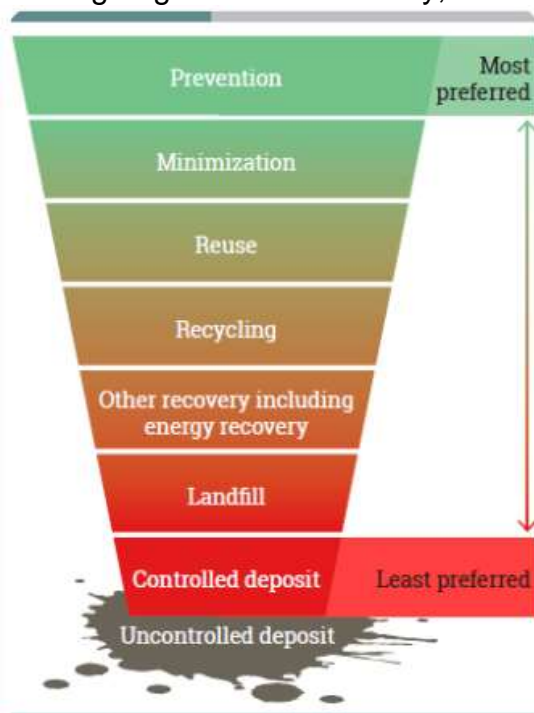
Plastics generally, and in particular SUPs are currently wide spread. They contain a number of different types of plastics, especially in the food industry. Not all of these are recyclable and the wide range of plastics in use makes collection, sorting and treatment including recycling, expensive and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