

# Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

17 December 2018



## Response of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the County Durham Environment Partnership report 'Phasing Out Unnecessary Single Use Plastics' (SUPs)

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### Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Director of Transformation and Partnerships

#### Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

#### Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) the response of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (ESC OSC) to the County Durham Environment Partnership's report 'Phasing Out Unnecessary Single Use Plastics (SUPs) (appendix 2) and action plan (appendix 3).

#### Executive summary

- 2 Whilst plastic is a cheap, durable and versatile material there is a growing realisation of the harm that it brings, especially to our marine environment. Of particular concern is the wastefulness of SUPs, designed to be used once and if not disposed of correctly can remain in our environment for hundreds of years.
- 3 Recognising the importance of the SUPs issue and the need for action to be taken Overview and Scrutiny recommended that the County Durham Environment Partnership form a task group with the purpose of reducing DCC's usage of SUPs and to influence partners to reduce their usage.

#### Recommendations

- 4 That the COSMB note the response of the ESC OSC to the County Durham Environment Partnership report 'Phasing Out Unnecessary

Single Use Plastics and the revised SUPs action plan incorporating those areas included in the Overview and Scrutiny response.

- 5 That the COSMB note that the ESC OSC will continue to monitor the progress made against the key actions identified in the 'Phasing Out Unnecessary Single Use Plastics' report and action plan, with the first progress update scheduled for the ESC OSC meeting on the 5 April 2019.
- 6 That the COSMB agree that the ESC OSC's response to the County Durham Environment Partnership report 'Phasing Out Unnecessary Single Use Plastics' and the SUPs action plan is shared with Cabinet at a future meeting.

## **Background**

- 7 On 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018 the following County Council resolution was passed:

That this Council resolves to:

Request that a report be brought to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the options for bringing an end to the use of unnecessary Single Use Plastics (SUP) in County Durham, taking account of the following measures to:

- (a) enable Durham County Council to become a full signatory of the 'Plastic Free Pledge', by phasing out the use of unnecessary SUPs in all County Council buildings, and working with commissioning partners to end the purchase and procurement of SUPs through the DCC supply chain;
  - (b) encourage the County's businesses, organisations and residents to go 'plastic free', working with best practice partners across the County to explore the creation of a 'plastic free network', that could provide business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUP to sustainable alternatives;
  - (c) to incentivise traders on Council land to sell re-usable or non-plastic biodegradable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out SUP; including investigating the possibility of requiring food and drink vendors to avoid SUPs as a condition of their event permission, strengthening DCC's existing guidance for exhibitors and traders.
- 8 A report was presented to the COSMB on the 14 February 2018 recommending that a task group be established to address the motion and that the group include representatives from both DCC and the

County Durham Environment Partnership. In addition, it was recommended that the task group would report their findings and conclusions to the ESC OSC.

- 9 The task group was established under the County Durham Environment Partnership and consisted of representatives from the relevant Council services and from a range of partners including the Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water Limited, Durham University, Durham City Business Improvement District and the North East Nature Partnership.
- 10 The report of the County Durham Environment Partnership 'Phasing Out Unnecessary Single Use Plastics' together with the SUPs action plan was considered at a special meeting of the ESC OSC on the 12 November 2018. The report identifies a range of 'quick wins' now implemented, a future bespoke local pledge, key future actions for DCC and actions to encourage wider involvement.
- 11 At the special meeting of the ESC OSC Members commented on both the report and the SUPs action plan, with those comments captured to form the following committee response:
  - The committee acknowledges the significant work undertaken by DCC and partners in a short period of time in both assessing and reducing the use of SUPs.
  - The ESC OSC welcomes and commends DCC and partners for the implementation of the 'quick wins' as identified in the report.
  - In relation to future actions, the committee supports and agrees those actions and timescales identified in the report and in the SUPs action plan.
  - The ESC OSC supports the introduction of a bespoke local pledge for County Durham to combat the use of unnecessary SUPs, designed not only with the Council in mind but also partners.
  - The ESC OSC recommends that the following additional areas are included within the report and/or action plan going forward:
    - That DCC and partners develop a communications plan which includes the use of Durham County News to:
      - Ensure that residents are informed of both why and when alternatives to SUPs are being used.

- Ensure that clear information on the different types of plastic, identifying what can and cannot be recycled is provided to residents.
  - Provide residents with an opportunity to identify how SUPs usage can be reduced.
- That DCC and partners continue to offer reward schemes for the use of alternatives to SUPs.
  - That DCC and partners reconsider handing out SUP 'free gifts' at future promotional events.

12 In addition to the above response, Members agreed that the ESC OSC would receive a further report and presentation detailing progress made against the key actions identified in a revised action plan attached as appendix 3 incorporating those areas included in the Overview and Scrutiny response. It was also agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny response will be included in the resulting Cabinet report and shared with Cabinet accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

- 13 The ESC OSC recognises that SUPs are a major issue and that DCC and partners need to undertake measures which will significantly reduce SUPs usage across their operations. The committee considers the partnership report and action plan key documents in ensuring that DCC and partners significantly reduce their use of unnecessary SUPs in the future.
- 14 The committee acknowledges and commends both DCC and partners for the significant work undertaken in a short period of time in assessing and reducing the use of SUPs in County Durham and in implementing 'quick wins' where possible.
- 15 In addition, the committee: supports the introduction of a bespoke local pledge for County Durham to combat the use of unnecessary SUP's; has identified additional areas for inclusion in the action plan including the development of a communications plan to alert residents when and why SUPs alternatives are being used; identified the need to reconsider the use of SUPs free gifts at DCC and partner promotional events and that DCC and partners continue to offer reward schemes for the use of alternatives to SUPs.
- 16 The committee will continue to monitor the progress made in relation to the key actions identified in the SUPs action plan.

## Background papers

- 'Phasing Out Unnecessary Single Use Plastics' - Report of the County Durham Environment Partnership
- SUPs action plan – County Durham Environment Partnership

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable.

### **Finance**

Recyclable/compostable alternatives to single use plastic may have a higher marginal cost although these will not significantly affect budgets and can sometimes be passed on to the customer

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

Not applicable

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Staffing**

Not applicable

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Risk**

Not applicable

### **Procurement**

Not applicable

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**Appendix 2 – Report of County Durham Environment Partnership  
(Task Group) – Phasing Out Unnecessary Single Use Plastics  
(SUPs)**

**Appendix 3 SUPs action plan**

**Appendix 4 LARAC response**

**Appendix 5 Survey**

**Appendix 6 Plastic pledges**

**Appendix 7 Brighton and Hove pledge**

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