

# Appendix

## PLASTICS AND NON-RECYCLABLE CUPS

### Background

1. Government policy on this issue is moving forward. The Government's 25 year Environment Plan sets a target to achieve zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042. The plan supports a number of initiatives such as: free water refill points in every major town and city; the introduction of plastic-free supermarket aisles, and incentivising producers to take greater responsibility for the environmental impact of their products. Measures already introduced include:
  - 5p charge for plastic bags – since this was introduced in 2015, there has been an 83% reduction in use of single-use carrier bags from supermarkets
  - Ban on the manufacture of rinse-off personal care products containing plastic microbeads - January 2018. A ban on the sale of such products will follow later this year.

The Government has also recently announced proposals to bring in a national drinks bottle and can deposit scheme

### Actions taken to eliminate single use plastic in Council catering

#### County Hall & Wildwood

2. Servest provide the catering services for County Hall and Wildwood offices and have made significant progress in eliminating single use plastic. Alongside reusable ceramic and metal items for use in the café and for meetings, Servest now use 'vegware' compostable cutlery and containers for the food they make on site, [www.vegware.com/our-materials/info\\_17.html](http://www.vegware.com/our-materials/info_17.html). They do not provide straws. They have undertaken to make disposable cutlery only available at the counter on request and, where possible, to provide coffee in a ceramic cup as a default, if it is to be consumed in the café. (NB The ceramic crockery and metal cutlery regularly go missing, so during very busy times the cafe sometimes runs out of clean crockery and cutlery and uses disposables instead). Soft drinks are now only sold in cans and glass bottles, not plastic.
3. Servest currently discount hot drinks by 10p for those using reusable cups, (as long as they are lidded and have measure marks). They currently sell an average of 400 hot drinks in disposable coffee cups a day; c.100,000 cups a year. They have recently started selling reusable cups and water bottles and will shortly be introducing the following at County Hall and Wildwood:
  - Pricing of hot drinks to include a surcharge if in a disposable cup (likely to be 25p more than if in reusable cup)
  - The use of compostable disposable coffee cups.These changes are being accommodated within the terms of the current contract, at no extra cost to the Council. It is to be noted that Servest also supply the BBC.

#### Plastic water cups

4. Place Partnership have removed the cup holders from all water coolers at County

Hall, making it clear that cups are available at Reception, the café and the shop if required. The cups are made from plant based bioplastic. Prior to this, an average 200 cups were used a day, c.50,000 a year, which cost the Council £1,374 last year. It is expected this measure will save the Council money, since while the unit cost of the bioplastic cups is a third more than the plastic ones, their use should be substantially reduced. There appear to have been no complaints following introduction of this measure.

### **The Hive Café**

5. The Hive café currently offers free refills for those using reusable cups. Bellrock, (facilities management at the Hive), are keen to support the reduction of single use plastic. Plans are in place to use compostable coffee cups, lids, disposable cutlery and takeaway boxes. This will not mean extra cost to the Council.

### **Worcestershire Countryside Centres**

6. Worcestershire Countryside Services' catering leases contain a term that relates to reducing packaging and waste, specifying that disposable items are to be avoided but that if they are used, they are to be biodegradable where possible. Biodegradable disposable coffee cups are used.
7. It is planned to strengthen this part of the lease agreement with the Orchard Café at Worcester Woods Countryside Centre, when the lease agreement is reviewed this year, and at Waseley Hills Country Park next year. Compostable rather than biodegradable disposable items are to be specified. This should not mean extra cost to the Council.

### **Libraries and Care Facilities**

8. Twelve of the Council's libraries and two residential units/day centres use single use plastic for catering. Some are taking measures to replace petroleum based plastic with plant-based alternatives.

### **Events**

9. The Council also procures catering for events not on Council premises, e.g. business and skills events at Worcester Rugby Club, Cricket Club, local hotels etc. Catering at this type of location is usually provided with ceramic crockery and metal cutlery. For events where plastic disposables are normally used, e.g. outdoor events, the cost impact of using e.g. compostable disposables instead will vary, but, as an indication, one caterer has quoted an extra 2% on overall costs. For large outdoor events e.g. Redditch Tour Series, catering vans may be given the opportunity to buy a pitch. In this situation, beyond making a request for caterers not to use single use plastic, the Council has little control over what the caterers use.

### **Disposal of single use plastic, coffee cups and compostable items**

10. Plastic recycling has been available in the offices and café at County Hall for several years, as part of current recycling arrangements. Plastic recycling is not available at all Council premises. There are currently no facilities to recycle disposable coffee cups at any County Council premises.

11. Spot checks on County Hall waste in the past have shown that disposable coffee cups, plastic cups and food containers make up a significant proportion of waste disposed, e.g. every year c. 100,000 disposable coffee cups and plastic lids are thrown away at County Hall & Wildwood. These items are sometimes disposed of incorrectly in recycling bins, (sometimes still part full of food or drink), thus contaminating materials for recycling.
12. Unless they are recycled, single use plastics at County Hall & Wildwood are collected with other general waste, (including coffee cups), by Worcester City Council. Worcester City Council disposes of this waste through Severn Waste facilities; in the main through Envirecover, where the waste is incinerated and the energy produced sent to the national grid. Food waste from County Hall catering is currently collected for anaerobic digestion. Paper, cardboard, glass and cans are also recycled via segregated collections.
13. Place Partnership are reviewing the above arrangements, including the logistics of a composting collection for 'vegware', compostable coffee cups and food waste, and introduction of comingled recycling for other materials (including plastic). This is in order to make it easier (& cheaper) for staff and visitors to dispose of waste correctly. While early indications show the cost of the joint collection of 'Vegware', compostable coffee cups and food from County Hall and Wildwood as more than the current food waste only collection service, this arrangement should reduce the amount and therefore the cost of general waste collected. The current cost of waste disposal for County Hall and Wildwood is c. £40,000 a year.

### **Encouraging staff to take part**

14. The Council's communications and sustainability teams are working with caterers to put together staff communications on what is being done. Reuse will be stressed and the discipline of returning ceramic and metal crockery, cutlery etc. to the café at County Hall and disposing of items in the correct bin reinforced.

### **Encouraging others to reduce single use plastic**

15. The Council promotes household waste prevention and works with Worcestershire district councils to promote recycling, including plastic recycling. Campaign material targeting plastic waste is used. It is planned to give away 'Lets Waste Less' branded reusable drinks cups, water bottles and shopping bags at promotional events.

### **Environmental Implications**

16. By encouraging use of reusable alternatives to single use plastics and coffee cups, these actions will decrease the amount of waste from Council premises and also reduce the risk of pollution of the environment by littering.
17. The use of plant based Plant-based materials, including bioplastic such as 'vegware', are becoming more commonly used as an alternative to petroleum-based plastic, in part as a response to the increasing cost of production of plastic from oil, in part because they are considered more environmentally beneficial. Benefits of using such materials include:
  - They are made from a renewable resource

- They use about two thirds less energy to produce and their manufacture produces less CO<sub>2</sub> than conventional plastic
- They can be composted, or digested with food waste, or recycled.

There are some caveats however:

- Many bioplastics, (including those being used at County Hall), require specialist facilities to be composted or digested. These facilities are becoming more widespread in the UK and are now available locally.
- They are often difficult to tell apart from petroleum-based plastics. If bioplastics are accidentally recycled with petroleum-based plastic, they will contaminate the load. Awareness raising and clear labelling of waste disposal facilities is therefore required.

18. Lifecycle assessments of the environmental impact of reusable cups versus disposable, while varied in the extent of their results, tend to reach similar conclusions. On an individual use basis, disposable cups usually require the fewest resources. However, repeated use of a reusable cup, (by the amount of times common in council catering), normally makes up for that difference. If the environmental impact of the disposal of the cup is also taken into account, the environmental benefit of using reusable cups increases further.

19. It is to be noted that Countryside Services intend to change their specification of 'biodegradable' to 'compostable', because some plastics labelled as biodegradable break down into harmful micro-plastics.