



# Sustainability & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Committee

## Working in Partnership to make Birmingham a Plastic Free City:

### Terms of Reference

## 1 Background

1.1 On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018 the City Council passed the following motion:

This Council is alarmed at the growing evidence of the impact of disposable plastic items on the world's oceans, fish supplies and the litter on the streets and in the hedgerows of Birmingham.

Council notes and welcomes the success of plastic bag charging policies introduced by national governments. It calls for action at a city level so Birmingham makes a significant contribution to reducing disposal of plastics and cleaning up the environment.

Council calls on the Executive to ask the Transport and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore the opportunities and the options available to the City so it can become a Plastic Free City. The Scrutiny Committee will report back by the end of the 2018/19 Municipal Year a range of options, including cost neutral options, which the Executive can implement as soon as possible from the start of the 2019/20 Municipal Year. These options to include:

1. Encouraging the city's institutions, businesses and citizens to adopt measures to minimise the use of single-use plastic products.
2. Immediately starting the process of reducing the sale and provision of single-use plastic products such as bottles, cups, cutlery and drinking straws in Council buildings where it is reasonable to do so.
3. Encouraging market traders to sell re-usable containers and inviting customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out single-use plastic containers and cutlery on market stalls.
4. Working with the Council events team and creating a policy in which single-use "disposable" plastic cups are replaced at all large city festivals with re-usable or deposit scheme cups and which the release of balloons on City Council property is not permitted, investigating the possibility of ultimately making these a condition for obtaining a licence for large scale events held in the city.
5. Promoting refill schemes with retail businesses and Business Improvement Districts.
6. Investigating the possibility of a installing free water fountains in City Council reception areas and elsewhere in our buildings.
7. Further investigating having locally branded water containers for sale.



8. Encourage the city's businesses, organisations and residents to go 'plastic free,' working with best practice partners in the city to explore the creation of a 'plastic free network,' that could provide business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to sustainable alternatives;
9. Working with tenants in commercial properties owned by Birmingham City Council to encourage the phasing out of disposable plastic cups, bottles, cutlery and straws.
10. Ensuring that sustainability is a key feature of the 2022 Commonwealth Games and commit to working with the LOC and Games partners to minimise the use of single use plastic items.
11. Ensuring that all Local Authority Maintained Schools schools are part of a new City Council initiative to help them become plastic-free working with partners such as CityServe and Veolia.
12. Encouraging, enabling and aiding all City Council employees, Councillors, businesses, community groups, and citizens to engage with an annual Plastic Free Challenge Month to be launched in April 2019.
13. Writing to all major supermarkets trading in the city encouraging them to introduce plastic free aisles.
14. Working with Procurement services to encourage all businesses with which the Council has contracts to support the banning of single-use plastics in their place of work and consider the possibility of phasing out of single-use plastics in the awarding of new contracts where this is relevant and proportionate.

Council further asks the Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs urging him to bring the United Kingdom into line with the European Union's 2030 target for phasing out single use plastics, rather than the less ambitious target outlined in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan for England only and to fund local government to meet the target.

The Council also commits to working with partners within the Combined Authority to develop a complimentary regional strategy on this issue to ensure greater collaboration and to leverage more support from Government for innovative schemes to help support the Government's own strategy to reduce plastic pollution.



## 2 Outline

### Aim

- 2.1 To explore the most effective/efficient waste management system to separate, collect and recycle plastics to increase recycling rates, and to consider the particular opportunities and constraints posed by the current waste strategy and prospective future disposal contract.
- 2.2 To report back to Council by April 2019 with a range of suggested options, including cost neutral options which the Executive can implement from the start of the 2019/20 municipal year.
- 2.3 To identify measures that need to be taken at Governmental level, what needs to be done by the City Council both strategically and at a more local level, what contribution can be made by businesses and what can be done by communities and in terms of encouraging behaviour change.

### Approach

- 2.4 Two sessions of the Sustainability & Transport OSC scheduled for 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019 and 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019 will be devoted to evidence gathering. To:
  - Understand the main source of the problem - can we identify what is the biggest source of single-use plastics?
  - Identify the scale of the problem in Birmingham - what percentage of plastic is for single-usage and what percentage is collected for recycling and the most common causes of plastics waste in Birmingham.
  - Examine what has worked/not worked to tackle the problem;
  - Identify best practice examples from elsewhere and what can we learn from them and also examples of good practice already happening in Birmingham;
  - Assess a range of actions/initiatives which could prevent or reduce the use of single-use plastics by providing a viable alternative.
  - Identify on-going or emerging Government consultations/strategies and understand the future implications for the amount of plastic going into the waste stream eg. consultation on eliminating single-use plastics, consultation on deposit scheme for plastic bottles and anticipated upcoming new national waste strategy.
  - Explore the most effective/efficient waste management system to separate, collect and recycle plastics to increase recycling rates.
  - Explore possible incentives which would encourage consumers to both avoid/prevent the use of plastic and to encourage higher levels of recycling for example by providing an economic incentive for consumers to recycle plastic.
  - Explore the potential viable alternatives to the use of single-use plastics and how can these be promoted more widely.



- Explore ways of raising consumer awareness and reducing consumer confusion by clearer public communication and consumer messaging about plastics and about best-practice on recycling.
- Explore what can be done to reduce waste from single-use plastics from a regulatory and enforcement standpoint.

2.5 A document pack of background information/written evidence will be circulated to the group in advance of the inquiry sessions.

2.6 In addition to the scheduled evidence gathering sessions, visits will be arranged as suggested by Members as appropriate and where possible within the timescale for the inquiry. (Visits to The Clean Kilo Supermarket in Digbeth and to the Local Authority Waste Disposal Company in Coventry have already been suggested as possibilities).

### Timescales

Terms of Reference to Committee	November
Session 1	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2019
Session 2	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Report to Council	2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2019

### Outcomes

Produce a report to Council with a range of options for the executive to consider implementing with a view to tackling the growing problem of plastic pollution by taking steps to reduce waste and increase recycling of single-use plastics to move Birmingham towards becoming a Plastic Free City.

### Membership

Members of the Sustainability & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Contributions from other Elected Members with a particular expertise or interest in this area

Expert lead officer/agency

### Officer Support

Rose Kiely, Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Research & Policy Officer



## Key witnesses/evidence to include:

Birmingham City Council on behalf of:

- BCC Events Team
- Birmingham Property Services (re commercial tenants in BCC properties)
- Commonwealth Games Team
- Veolia
- CityServe/Civic Catering
- Procurement (re contracts and Business Charter for Social Responsibility)
- Licensing
- Representation on behalf of Birmingham Improvement Districts/Retail business
- Birmingham Friends of the Earth
- TerraCycle
- WRAP
- Eco Birmingham
- Other relevant third sector/non-profit organisations