

**South Ayrshire Council**

**Report by Director - Place  
to Leadership Panel  
of 13 March 2018**

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**Subject: South Ayrshire Council Plastic Straw Commitment and  
Single Use Plastics Pledge**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding the recent campaign in relation to plastic straws and to propose that South Ayrshire Council stops procuring single use plastic straws with immediate effect, investigates options for other single use plastic products over the next four years and invites partners to join in this endeavour.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Panel:**

- 2.1.1 approves that the Council will commit to no longer purchasing single use plastic straws, individually or in packets, with immediate effect;**
- 2.1.2 approves that the Council pledges to stop using other single use plastic items within four years;**
- 2.1.3 approves that partners are invited to join the Council in this undertaking as part of our Earth Hour 2018 campaign; and**
- 2.1.4 approves that the Council will support the community in plastic-free initiatives such as per the Plastic-free Coastlines Campaign.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 'The Final Straw' campaign has been gathering momentum nationally following the popular BBC series 'Blue Planet' raising awareness of the harm plastic is doing to our oceans. Plastics are today even evidenced in our food chain because of the level to which they have been used and discarded into the natural environment.
- 3.2 On our beaches in South Ayrshire, plastic waste is regularly washed up. Various forms of plastic are also collected by Waste Management operatives from our streets. Many of these items are single use food and drinks related waste. Of these the plastic straw has become the focus of the current campaign as it has been identified as one item that can easily be removed by stopping using it in the

first place. It is ultimately however just one example of many similar items that can be considered in a similar way.

- 3.3 'The Final Straw' campaign questions 'How often do you get a plastic straw with your drink that you didn't ask for and you don't need?' and goes on to explain that plastic straws end up in our seas, suffocating wildlife and polluting beaches. Many of us don't need plastic straws but we want to be clear that robust, flexible and suitable alternatives must be readily, easily and cheaply available to ensure that those who rely on plastic straws are not negatively effected.'
- 3.4 There has already been a wide ranging sign up to the campaign, from individuals, schools and businesses to local authorities, the Scottish Parliament and even the Island of Arran who have further pledged to become the first plastic free island through the Surfers Against Sewage Plastic Free Coastlines campaign.
- 3.5 The Plastic Free Coastlines approach works in a similar way to the Fairtrade movement. Local communities are challenged to sign up, giving volunteers a set of steps to work through including engaging with their own local council as part of that. The local council is then required to pass a 'resolution' to support Plastic Free Coastlines, committing to plastic free alternatives and supporting plastic free initiatives within the area. Through the 'resolution' the Council must:
- lead by example by removing single-use plastic items from their premises;
  - encourage plastic free initiatives and promoting the campaign and supporting events; and
  - ensure that a representative of the Council is named on the Plastic Free Coastlines steering group.
- 3.6 The Plastic Free Coastlines campaign toolkit provides a useful list of ten of the first products to tackle as follows:
- Plastic straws and stirrers;
  - Plastic bottles;
  - Coffee cups and lids;
  - Plastic cutlery;
  - Plastic 'food-on-the-go' packaging;
  - Plastic bags;
  - Bathroom plastics including cotton buds;
  - Plastic drinking cups;
  - Condiment sachets; and
  - Balloons.
- 3.7 The Council has recently passed a motion in relation to preventing the release of helium balloons and sky lanterns. These single use items after release end up as unwanted and potentially harmful waste in our seas and across our countryside.
- 3.8 Each year the Council supports the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF's) Earth Hour and reaches out to partners and the wider community to do the same. This demonstrates the Council's leadership on climate change and contributing to our

fulfilment of our statutory duties in this respect. This year the Earth Hour campaign is challenging us to think about our impact on the environment and make promises to protect the planet picking up on the 'we're all connected' theme.

#### **4. Proposals**

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Council signs up to 'the last straw' campaign and promises, as with the Earth Hour 2018 promise, to stop buying single use plastic straws with immediate effect. This promise relates to individually purchased plastic straws and packets of single use plastic straws. Alternative paper and biodegradable straws are already available to procure if required.
- 4.2 Where single use plastic straws are part of other products we buy, such as attached to tetra pack milk and juice products for our schools, it will take more time to find suitable alternatives. In this case, for example, paper straws are currently not strong enough to puncture the foil of a tetra pack and the environmental impact of alternatives such as small bottles also still needs to be properly established as many, like straws, are single use plastic items. For items and issues such as these council officers will continue to work with suppliers, explore options and put steps in place for each item as the best options are established
- 4.3 While the commitment the Council makes today in relation to straws is a good start, we know we need to go further to eliminate unnecessary single use plastics from our day to day use within the organisation. Over the next four years it is proposed that the Council explores other plastic items which can stop being used and replace them with more environmentally friendly preferably reusable alternatives. This will start with the ten items listed at paragraph (3.6) above but will cover the full range of single use plastics purchased by the Council.
- 4.4 Work has already begun on this topic through the Council's sustainable development team and Green Champions network working together with procurement and catering teams to look at single use cups and other food packaging items. Officers are now compiling a list of all the single use plastic items we procure and will be able to report back as alternatives are identified and put in place. All single use plastic items will be identified and explored over the next 4 years, reducing resource use and moving to more environmentally friendly alternatives within this timeframe.
- 4.5 It is recognised that there may be some specific products, for example items for medical use, where single use items will be required and a substitute equivalent product may not yet be available within the four year timeframe. It is intended however that these necessary exceptions will be in the minority and will listed so they can be reported on transparently. The list will allow these items to continue to be revisited going forward as more alternative products become available.
- 4.6 It is also proposed that any commitments approved by the Council are promoted as part of the Earth Hour 2018 campaign. As part of the campaign we will approach our partners to ask them to join us in our promises. We will also promote our promises at the Earth Hour Environment Fair on 24 March where the Council's commitments in relation to helium balloons and sky lanterns will also be covered.
- 4.7 Finally, while the Council has not yet been approached by the community to participate in the plastic free communities initiative, the Council will support the

community in plastic free initiatives such as the Plastic Free Coastlines Campaign, with the proposals above putting in place the leadership basis which will allow the Council to do so.

## **5. Legal and Procurement Implications**

5.1 The recommendations in this report are consistent with legal requirements and reflect appropriate advice.

5.2 The recommendations in this report are consistent with procurement requirements and reflect appropriate advice. The Procurement team have been fully consulted and will work together with the Sustainable Development team to deliver the recommendations of this report.

## **6. Financial Implications**

6.1 Not applicable.

## **7. Human Resources Implications**

7.1 Our commitments will be delivered within existing resources.

## **8. Risk**

### **8.1 *Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations***

8.1.1 There are no risks associated with adopting the recommendations.

### **8.2 *Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations***

8.2.1 There is a risk that our shorefronts and coastline continue to be plagued with plastic waste streams with the risk to marine and other wildlife. There is a further risk that single use plastic waste streams continue to blight our communities and add to the burden of dealing with processing the plastic waste.

## **9. Equalities**

9.1 The proposals in this report allow scrutiny of performance. The report does not involve proposals for policies, strategies, procedures, processes, financial decisions and activities (including service delivery), both new and at review, that affect the Council's communities and employees, therefore an equality impact assessment is not required.

9.2 It is recognised that there will be times when specific groups may require single use plastic straws or other single use items for specific reasons, for example medical reasons. We will consult with appropriate groups going forward to identify these needs and uses and make appropriate provision in order that no groups are unfairly disadvantaged by the steps set out in this paper. For example, in relation to plastic straws it is proposed that provision will be made that a selection of alternative straws are available on request in our facilities for service users with such specific needs.

## 10. Sustainable Development Implications

- 10.1 **Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.
- 10.2 A key environmental benefit of this report will be to reduce unnecessary resource use, raise awareness and show leadership on this topic in South Ayrshire.

## 11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

## 12. Link to Council Plan

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to the Council strategic objective of 'Enhanced Environment through Social, Cultural and Economic Activities' and to the outcome of 'Work with partners to improve roads and other infrastructure, to encourage house building and business investment that sustains local communities'.

## 13. Results of Consultation

- 13.1 There has been no public consultation on the contents of this report.
- 13.2 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Ian Cochrane, Portfolio Holder for Sustainability and Environment, and the contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

## 14. Next Steps for Decision Tracking Purposes

- 14.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director – Place will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Leadership Panel in the 'Council and Leadership Panel Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<b><i>Implementation</i></b>	<b><i>Due date</i></b>	<b><i>Managed by</i></b>
Remove single use plastic straws from procurement catalogues and issue advice as appropriate in relation to non-catalogue requests	13 March 2018	Neighbourhood Services Manager
Ensure alternative products are available if required (paper and biodegradable straws)	13 March 2018	Neighbourhood Services Manager

<b><i>Implementation</i></b>	<b><i>Due date</i></b>	<b><i>Managed by</i></b>
Investigate all other single use plastic products and take forward alternatives including a transparent list of any required exceptions	13 March 2022	Neighbourhood Services Manager
Approach partners to join us in the commitment as part of the Earth Hour 2018 campaign	Before 24 March 2018	Neighbourhood Services Manager
Promote commitment	24 March 2018/ ongoing	Neighbourhood Services Manager

**Background Papers**    [‘The Final Straw’](#) campaign

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