

**CABINET
9 SEPTEMBER 2025**

SINGLE USE PLASTIC POLICY

Councillor Chris McEwan, Economy Portfolio

Trevor Watson, Executive Director Economy and Public Protection

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To propose adoption of a single use plastic policy (**Appendix A**).

Summary

2. Global plastic production has increased significantly in recent decades, with resulting increases in disposal costs.
3. The UK Government has begun making strides to reducing single use plastic production.
4. Plastic provides risk to our health and our environment and is also a major contributor to climate change.
5. Council catering outlets are already working towards reducing their use of single use plastic.
6. The rest of Council operations should be demonstrating the same commitment and leading by example.
7. Three principles would help us reduce our dependence on single use plastic and encourage others to take action:
 - (a) Lead by example;
 - (b) Work with suppliers and contractors;
 - (c) Support Darlington.

Recommendations

8. It is recommended that Cabinet approves the single use plastic policy.

Reasons

9. The recommendations are supported by the increasing public pressure to act on climate change and support our local environment. We run the risk of significant damage to our reputation if we do not deliver on our stated commitment to dealing with the Council's contribution to climate change and nature depletion.

Trevor Watson

Executive Director Economy and Public Protection

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Margaret Enstone: Extension 6229

Council Plan	<p>This report reflects the Council Plan Core Principle in Tackling Climate Change.</p> <p>In turn, actions that we take for climate change impact on our Council priorities. For example, as we improve our council stock, we improve the quality of life for our residents, leading to better health outcomes, which in</p>
Addressing inequalities	Climate change affects everyone, but it has a disproportionate impact on areas of deprivation. This report demonstrates how we are addressing our own carbon emissions and resilience, giving us the ability to demonstrate through good practice what other people can do themselves
Tackling Climate Change	The Council has recognised the need to consider the carbon impact of the decisions it makes. This report is a progress report of our journey to reducing our carbon emissions and adapting our services to the unavoidable effects of climate change.
Efficient and effective use of resources	Our approach to reducing emissions will mean that resources are used more efficiently.
Health and Wellbeing	According to the WHO, climate change is the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century. This report is a progress report of our journey to becoming a carbon neutral council.
S17 Crime and Disorder	There is no expected impact on Crime and Disorder in Darlington.
Wards Affected	This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular ward.
Groups Affected	This report covers how the Council is addressing its own carbon emissions and resilience. It will not affect any particular group.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	No

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

10. Plastic production has increased from around two million tonnes in 1950 to over 450 million tonnes today.
11. This means that we have increasing costs of disposal – both financially, and environmentally.
12. In 2018, the UK Government published its 25-year Environment Plan, which included a target of zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042.
13. In 2020, the government restricted sales of some single use plastic items and extended that in 2023 to further catering supplies.
14. Plastic pollution is litter. It is a global and local issue affecting natural and urban environments, the oceans and beaches. There are increasing links to health and wellbeing.
15. Plastic does not disappear, it simply breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, that are now being found inside our bodies: in our lungs and bloodstream. It is in our food chain and airborne particles have been found in areas such as high mountainous terrain that rarely see any human visitors.
16. Plastic is a major contributor to climate change. Almost all plastics require fossil fuels. The more plastic made, the higher the demand for gas, oil and even coal.
17. As a leader of place, the Council should be setting an example to other businesses in Darlington.
18. Our catering outlets in Hopetown, the Hippodrome and Dolphin Centre are already abiding by the legal requirements of no plastic cutlery or straws and are going further to source cups and plates that are not single-use plastic.
19. The Town Hall still uses plastic cups in the Committee Room and Council Chamber area. These are costing us, both in terms of purchase and in disposal.
20. We could also be encouraging our suppliers to reduce the amount of single-use plastic used in packaging materials.
21. And further, we can use our influence to encourage best practice and model positive behaviours.
22. The attached single use plastic policy (see Appendix A) sets out three key principles to reduce our dependence on single use plastic:
 - (a) Lead by example
 - (i) All Darlington Borough Council teams will work to reduce and remove single-use plastic across our buildings and services.

- (ii) Where the use of plastics is unavoidable, DBC will encourage the use of recycled plastics, supporting manufacturers that make products from locally sourced waste plastics.
 - (iii) Encourage all staff and Members to use reusable water bottles or cups.
- (b) Work with our suppliers and contractors
 - (i) Ask DBC suppliers to demonstrate that they are minimising the use of single-use plastics in their service provision and are finding sustainable alternatives (where appropriate).
- (c) Support Darlington
 - (i) Continue to support local communities by sharing best practice, raise awareness, supporting and promoting positive initiatives, campaigns and actions for reducing waste. For example, the Refill project app which signposts to businesses prepared to refill water bottles for free.

Financial Implications

23. We will be encouraging use of reusable bottles or cups by all officers and Members, which will reduce the need to both purchase these items and for disposal of them.

Legal Implications

24. There are no legal implications, but with increasing public pressure to act on the threats to our environment, we must demonstrate how we are taking responsibility for our own actions.

HR Implications

25. The report does not affect the terms and conditions of any staff or change their duties.

Estates and Property Advice

26. The report does not affect the Council's land holdings or involve a lease, or licence or any transfer or purchase of land.

Procurement Advice

27. The report does not involve any purchase over £100k.

Carbon Impact and Climate Change

28. Climate change is a corporate priority. Public scrutiny in this area is growing, and we should consider and set out the climate impacts of decisions. Single-use plastic has a direct impact on carbon emissions. By reducing our use of it, we are demonstrating our commitment to action.

Equalities considerations

29. This policy is highly unlikely to impact negatively on anyone with a protected characteristic.

Consultation

30. The Cross Party Climate Change Working Group has been consulted. The paper has also been discussed at Chief Officers Board. This issue was also supported by the Climate Champions, made up from officers across departments in the Council. No public consultation has been carried out.