

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Date of meeting: 26 February 2018

By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Title: Notice of Motion: *“The County Council supports the Government ambition to eliminate avoidable plastic waste (particularly single use plastic) over the next 25 years. In support of this ambition the County Council will review the use of plastics in its own supply chain and the plastic recycling facilities available on its estate, to identify and increase the opportunities to reduce, re-use or recycle more plastic”.*

Purpose: To review the Notice of Motion and decide whether to agree, amend or reject it.

RECOMMENDATION: The Lead Member is recommended to recommend that the County Council:

- (1) Agree the Notice of Motion to support the Government ambition to eliminate avoidable plastic waste (particularly single use plastic) over the next 25 years. In support of this ambition the County Council will review the use of plastics in its own supply chain and the plastic recycling facilities available on its estate, to identify and increase the opportunities to reduce, re-use or recycle more plastic.
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1 Background Information

1.1. The following Notice of Motion has been submitted by Councillor Bennett:
“The County Council supports the Government ambition to eliminate avoidable plastic waste (particularly single use plastic) over the next 25 years. In support of this ambition the County Council will review the use of plastics in its own supply chain and the plastic recycling facilities available on its estate, to identify and increase the opportunities to reduce, re-use or recycle more plastic”.

1.2. In line with County Council practice, the matter has been referred by the Chairman to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment for consideration to provide information and inform debate on the Motion. The Lead Member’s recommendation on this Notice of Motion will be reported to the Council at its meeting on 27 March 2018.

2 Supporting Information

2.1 Plastics are an important and versatile material in the global economy. They are key components of a very wide range of products, including food packaging, toys, heat-saving domestic insulation and life-saving medical innovations. Consequently the use of plastics, of which there are many different types, has increased 20-fold in the last 50 years and is expected to double again in the next 20 years.

2.2 Many of the properties that make plastics a safe, secure, hygienic and cheap material also make it a tough and long-lasting material, which has an impact on the environment and public health. A significant amount of energy is required in the manufacture and transport of plastic products. After use, an estimated 12 million tonnes of plastic waste ends up in the world’s oceans every year, which imposes an economic and social burden by impacting on the productivity of fisheries, shipping and tourism, enters the food chain and imposes a clean-up cost. For example, recent surveys found that over 70% of UK tap water was contaminated with plastic fibres and a third of fish caught off the south coast contained plastic.

2.3 An increasing volume of plastic products are single-use, for example bottles, cups and straws, which means that the beneficial properties of plastics are not being maximised and an estimated £65 billion of material value is lost from the global economy every year. In addition, the recent ban by China on the imports of plastic waste for recycling from countries such as the UK means that the cost of disposal of plastic waste may increase in the short term, whilst the amount being recycled may decrease, as lower-grade plastic waste may have no market to go to.

2.4 There is an extensive range of legislation covering plastic waste and recycling, including from packaging, electrical and electronic equipment, end of life vehicles, and the use of recycled plastic in food packaging. Nearly all local authorities collect some common types of household plastic waste, with an estimated 58% of plastic bottles and 32% of pots, tubs and trays being collected for recycling. The UK has a plastic packaging recycling target of 57% by 2020, which helped to drive a doubling of UK plastic reprocessing capacity between 2010 and 2015.

2.5 Plastic waste remains a highly visible pollutant of public concern. The government's 25 Year Environment Plan, published in January 2018, includes a target to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042, in support of the separate Clean Growth Strategy, published in October 2017. The Plan points to the success of the 5p plastic bag charge in reducing the use of carrier bags by 85% and commits the government to removing all single use plastics from the central government estate offices.

2.6 A review of the County Council's use of plastics in its own supply chain and the plastic recycling facilities available on its estate will require Officer time. The recommended measures from this review may lead to new costs, for example, alternative materials to single-use plastics or additional recycling facilities for plastics, though this may be partly off-set by a reduction in the cost of handling and disposing of plastic waste.

2.7 The role that the County Council can play in reducing the impact of plastic waste includes reviewing the use of plastics in its own supply chain and the plastic recycling facilities available on its estate, to identify and increase the opportunities to reduce, re-use or recycle more plastic. This will add to the work that the County Council has already undertaken, for example the recent introduction of fully compostable packaging on the majority of goods sold in the café at County Hall. The scope of the work will need to be agreed with relevant sections of the County Council, to ensure that resources are focussed where they can achieve the best results, and may require changes to some County Council procurement, practices and staff behaviours. If these are considered acceptable then it is considered that the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Bennett should be agreed, and a progress report submitted to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment in 12 months' time.

3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 The impacts of plastic waste on the environment and human health are recognised by the County Council. In order to contribute to measures that reduce these impacts, the Lead Member is recommended to recommend that the County Council agree the following Motion:

"The County Council supports the Government ambition to eliminate avoidable plastic waste (particularly single use plastic) over the next 25 years. In support of this ambition the County Council will review the use of plastics in its own supply chain and the plastic recycling facilities available on its estate, to identify and increase the opportunities to reduce, re-use or recycle more plastic".

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None