

Thurrock Council Policy for the elimination of Single use Plastics from Council Offices and Working Practices.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Thurrock Council believes that it is our responsibility to lead by example, when it comes to protecting and enhancing our environment. One of the key ways to do this is through tackling the amount of plastic produced and disposed of within our borders.
- 1.2 Worldwide billions of tonnes of plastic have been produced since the 1950's and without urgent cuts to demand, this figure will only increase. Thurrock Council recycles or produces energy from all plastic collected, however there is still plastic waste that escapes through litter that can be blown into water courses and can enter our seas and environment, with devastating consequences for wildlife and the wider natural world with risks being transferred up the food chain.
- 1.3 One of the ways to reduce the amount of plastic in circulation is to reduce demand for single use plastic (SUP). This was highlighted in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, launched by the Prime Minister in January 2018.
- 1.4 Although the 25 year plan does not specifically mention the practices of Local Authorities, Thurrock Council believes that we have a responsibility with regards to our environmental footprint, and in our own Waste Strategy (adopted by Cabinet in October 2020) we have made the elimination of SUPs from our offices and working practices, a strategic priority.

2. Defining single-use plastic

- 2.1 SUP is a wide-ranging term. It includes all products made wholly or partly of plastic, which are typically intended to be used just once and / or for a short period of time before being disposed of.
- 2.2 We will focus on removing consumer single-use plastics which are avoidable and or which have viable and sustainable market alternatives. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Plastics used for catering such as:
 - Single-use sachets (e.g. coffee pods, sauces, milk),
 - Take-away cutlery, boxes and plates Cups made wholly or partially from plastic
 - Water bottles

- Condiment sachets
 - Water cups
 - Plastics used for cleaning:
 - Single-use containers (e.g. hand soap, cleaning products)
 - Wipes containing plastic
 - Plastics used around the office:
 - Envelopes
 - Plastic wrapping for brochures
 - Plastics used in packaging:
 - Single-use packaging from deliveries
 - Single-use carrier bags
- 2.3 Plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds are now illegal (with some medical exemptions), and so should no longer be on Council premises

3. Removing and reducing single-use plastic

- 3.1 We will apply this policy to all relevant sourcing of new requirements and suppliers. Council Officers will also identify which existing contracts contain avoidable waste, prioritising single-use plastics and work with the relevant suppliers and facilities managers to source and implement alternative products.
- 3.2 Where there are no suitable alternatives, the Council will encourage the use of recycled plastics.
- 3.3 As a minimum, we will replace single-use plastics with viable alternatives, such as compostable materials, however in the long-term, we will aim to reduce and remove avoidable disposable products altogether and instead encourage more sustainable practices.
- 3.4 We will also encourage staff and Councillors to reduce the amount of plastic brought in by raising awareness, encouraging behaviour change and utilising our network of sustainability champions across the Borough.
- 3.5 We will work with event organisers to eliminate SUPs held on Council land.
- 3.6 Educate the public and local businesses regarding the issue of SUPs.
- 3.7 Supporting schools with regards to eliminating SUPs.
- 3.8 Support communities and litter pick initiatives to make sure that our parks and open spaces are free from litter and plastic.

4. Communications

- 4.1 Communication will take the form of informing rather than persuading. It will largely focus in internal communications to make sure staff are aware of the scheme and what it means for them as well as promoting the positive aspects of the new policy. Communication will take place through #TeamThurrock, the CEOs blog/email and the Intranet.
- 4.2 This will be bolstered by external communications highlighting the fact that Thurrock Council is leading by example and using this as an opportunity to highlight the issue to residents and encourage them to cut down on single use plastics.