

Wirral Council's Single Use Plastic Audit Findings and Policy Review



Wirral Council's Single Use Plastic Audit

1. Background

- 1.1 In November 2018, Wirral Council published their Single Use Plastic (SUP)-free Wirral policy.
- 1.2 The policy was in response to the UK figures of some 2.2 million tonnes of plastic packaging consumed annually in the UK, with only 40% of this recycled domestically. It's also estimated that eight million tonnes of plastic waste end up in the world's oceans each year, endangering life and entering the food chain – potentially posing a threat to human health.
- 1.3 Highlights of the policy include:
 - all council procurement processes, services and events (even third-party events on council property) will be required to be SUP-free wherever possible, in a bid to reduce their environmental impact.
 - the council will support the Refill scheme, which encourages residents to fill up drinking bottles and reduce SUP bottles.
- 1.4 From the 1st October 2023 businesses must no longer supply, sell or offer certain single-use plastic items in England. Some of these plastics/items include:
 - Single-use plastic plates, trays, and bowls
 - Single-use plastic cutlery or balloon sticks
 - Ready-to-consume food and drink in polystyrene containers. This includes in polystyrene cups.

2. Single use plastic audit

- 2.1 To measure adherence with Wirral Council's 'single use plastic' policy and the new government legislation, an audit of single use plastics was conducted across council buildings. For this purpose single use plastic was taken to mean plastics to only be used once for their original purpose.
- 2.2 With support of the Asset Management team, a list of council buildings was obtained for currently in use building. The list of officers responsible for these buildings were contacted and provided with a criteria checker for 'Single Use Plastics' they use and procure. The results of the audit can be seen in section 3.
- 2.3 Working with the procurement team, the suppliers of these produces were identified with the view to identifying alternative product lists.
- 2.4 The main suppliers used to procure SUP products are:
 - Wray Brothers- Cleaning & toiletry supplies.
 - Harlech- Vending machine products & kitchen supplies.
 - Alpine vendors- Vending drinks.
 - Canon & Canda Copying- Printer cartridges.
 - Lyreco- Office supplies e.g., pens and sticky tapes.
 - Almond catering- Plastic milk containers.
 - WV Howe- Plastic cutlery & plates.

2.5 It was also discovered that certain council buildings are used for public events for communities, and these produced single use plastic products such as plastic cups and stirrers for refreshments. SUP guidance has been developed by the Climate Emergency team and will be provided to advise all organisers on the changes required based on the new government guidelines and Wirral Council's SUP policy.

3.0 Audit results

3.1 The table below shows the results of each single use plastic identified and within each council building.

3.2 The audit identified that while some types of single use plastics, such as plastic cutlery, single use water bottles and straws were not evident in any of the council buildings, other plastics such as bin bags, disposable gloves and single use bottles for cleaning products were evident in many of the audited buildings.

Single Use Plastic Audit of Wirral Council Buildings							
	Libraries	Sailing Centre & Golf	Sandford St	Birkenhead Town Hall	Cheshire Lines	Floral Pavilion	Leisure Centres
Plastic water bottles							
Plastic juice bottles							
Plastic milk containers							
Plastic water cups							
Plastic coffee cups							
Plastic cup holders							
Plastic stirrers							
Plastic cutlery							
Food in plastic e.g. fruit, salad, pasta							
Plastic Straws							
Plastic bags							
Cling film							
Disposable lids							
Disposable gloves							
Wet SANI wipes							
SUP bottles for cleaning products							
Bin bags							
Hand sanitiser							
Sponges							
Printer cartridges							
Balloons							
Balloon sticks							
Loo roll wrapped in plastic							
Laminator pouches							
Laminated posters							
Tea bags (containing plastic)							
Pens							

Plastic sleeves							
Plastic envelopes/jiffy bags							
Plastic sticky tape							
Bubble wrap							
Plastic glasses							
Plastic gloves							
Plastic plates							

4. **Conclusion and recommendations**

4.1 The SUP audit identified that the SUP policy has worked to a degree with easily identifiable SUP such as plastic cups, not present in any council buildings at the time of the audit. However, SUPs are still being used widely within the council, perhaps because officers do not identify them as SUP, because they are unaware of alternatives, or alternatives are not readily available.

4.2 Single use plastics are also used within council buildings by external event organisers, any events occurring within council buildings should be subject to the same policy restrictions.

4.2 The recent audit of council buildings, has resulted in 3 main recommendations being developed to follow on from the initial commitment and policy in 2018:

1. Target internal reduction of single use plastics

- Ensuring future and current suppliers with Wirral Council offer an alternative catalogue of single use plastic free products. This will be achieved through the inclusion of methodology statements which ask and acknowledge the council's SUP commitment, with each question scoring high on the tender process. Current suppliers will be contacted and made aware of the councils SUP commitments and whether they can offer an alternative list to the products they supply or risk losing out on future tenders when their contract ends.
- Internal communication campaign to provide guidance to staff around SUP purchasing and new government legislation.
- Improvement of internal recycling facilities for SUP.

2. Supporting communities, events and partners to reduce SUPs across Wirral

- Work with the Cool Wirral Partnership to support all partners across the borough to make SUP commitments and strategies targeting SUP products within their own organisation.
- All council buildings used for internal or community events, will be informed to follow the guidance developed for organisers, on the changes surrounding new government guidelines and Wirral Council's SUP policy.
- Work with partners to Communicate the importance of reducing SUP and support external campaigns and initiatives.

3. Better monitoring and reporting

- Any council officers procuring SUP products will be required to input the exact volume of purchase in the description of their raised purchase order, helping ensure all council data around plastic consumption is recorded accurately.
- Consistent tracking of metrics around the amount of plastic waste produced by the council and wider borough overall (CO2e). Annual progress reports of the strategy to be delivered to the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Group, to ensure the councils SUP commitments are being delivered consistently.

4.3 To strengthen compliance to Wirral Council's 'single use plastic' commitment and the new government legislation, it is proposed that an update of the councils existing policy be undertaken to reflect the current legislative changes and incorporate the above objectives.

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