

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee (Special)
Date of meeting	22nd December 2020
Lead Member/Officer	Councillor Emrys Wynne Chair – Use of Plastics Members’ Task & Finish Group
Report author	Heidi Barton-Price – Strategic Planning & Performance Officer
Title	Avoidance & Reduction of Plastics in Denbighshire County Council

1. What is the report about

To consider the proposed recommendations of the Use of Plastics Members’ Task & Finish Group (following group meeting held on 23rd November 2020). The meeting provided Members with updates in order for them to consider the way forward for the Members’ “Use of Plastics” Task & Finish Group, the viability of Phase 2 as outlined in the original associated action plan and any further actions.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1 To acknowledge the Task & Finish Group’s work in terms of the achievements during Phase 1 i.e. the reduction and avoidance of the use of single-use plastic in civic offices.
- 2.2 To enable Members to scrutinise the proposed recommendations as a way forward regarding Phase 2 and the future of the Group.

3. What are the recommendations?

That Performance Scrutiny considers and comments on the Task and Finish Group’s work thus far and endorses the following recommendations:

- (i) given the current circumstances due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Phase 2 of the Group's work should not proceed and that the Task and Finish Group be disbanded;
- (ii) opportunities to reduce the use of plastics in school catering and procurement, along with any future work on the avoidance and reduction of plastics in Denbighshire County Council (including its Alternative Delivery Models (ADMs) such as Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL)) be co-ordinated under the proposed Climate and Ecological Change Strategy; and
- (iii) having agreed the above recommendations that the Committee submits them to County Council for approval

4. Report Details

Full Council, at the end of January 2020, approved the recommendations included in the Task and Finish Group's initial action plan to reduce the use of plastics in civic offices (Phase 1). Full Council also agreed to the Group's request to continue its work for a further 12 months with a view to devising methods for reducing the use of plastics in two specific areas, namely school catering and procurement (Phase 2).

Within a matter of weeks of the above decision being taken the COVID-19 pandemic struck and the country went into lockdown.

This report outlines the proposed recommendations following the recent meeting of the Use of Plastics Members' Task & Finish Group where the group acknowledged the achievement of Phase 1 in reducing the use of plastics in civic offices and considered a way forward in relation to the work it had been tasked to undertake, but were unable to progress Phase 2 (School Catering and Procurement) due to the pandemic.

Please see appendix A for Current Position and Further Considerations of the Task & Finish Group.

It outlines the proposed recommendations that the Use of Plastics Members' Task & Finish Group seeks Performance Scrutiny Committee to take forward to County Council for approval.

Officers involved with the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy – suggest that the recommendation (ii) includes the following words highlighted in bold text `Opportunities to

reduce the use of plastics in school catering and procurement **for the benefit of reducing carbon emissions**, along with any future work on the avoidance and reduction of plastics in Denbighshire County Council (including its Alternative Delivery Models (ADMs) e.g. Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL) be co-ordinated under the proposed Climate and Ecological Change Strategy.

Actions which support the avoidance and reduction of plastics would fall under the Waste and Supply Chain workstreams of the Net Carbon Zero Programme within the Council's proposed Climate and Ecological Change Strategy. Actions which reduce carbon from waste and our supply chain will be developed and delivered over the coming 9 years and will be subject to securing funding. Certain actions that reduce carbon from waste and supply chain will have the co-benefit of avoidance and reduction of plastics.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The decision will contribute towards the Environment priority contained within the Corporate Plan 2017–2022.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Not applicable. There are no financial proposals involved with this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well Being Impact Assessment?

The Well-being Impact Assessment is an integrated impact assessment. This means it has been designed to assess likely impact on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Denbighshire, Wales and the world. The proposal for the work to be co-ordinated under the proposed Climate and Ecological Change Strategy demonstrates a sustainable approach to the environment and contributes positively overall to the well-being goals.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The Use of Plastics Members' Task & Finish Group have made these recommendations to Scrutiny having consulted with relevant Officers including Corporate Director for the Economy & Public Realm, Head of Highways, Facilities and Environment Services, School Catering Managers, the Climate Change Programme Manager as well as Cllr Brian Jones

(Lead Member) and Cllr Graham Timms (Chair of Climate and Ecological Change Working Group as well as being a member of the Plastic Task & Finish Group).

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not applicable

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There is a risk that some impetus is lost as the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy will not provide a specific focus on the avoidance and reduction of single use plastic. However, legislation which the Welsh Government (WG) proposes to bring forward during the autumn of 2021 aimed at reducing the use of single use plastics across Wales, may well help deliver the aims of the Group's Phase 2 work. Under the proposed legislation public bodies and others in Wales will be required to reduce their use of single-use plastics. This will require all Council services to re-evaluate their use of single-use plastics and source products made of alternative materials for all purposes but those provided exemptions under the legislation.

However, retaining the Use of Plastic Members' Task & Finish Group could subsequently risk duplication of work and the diversion of Member time on the broader and wider context of the Climate and Ecological Change Strategy which will result in the reduction of use of plastic.

11. Power to make the Decision

Scrutiny's powers in relation to Policy Development and Review are outlined in Section 7.4.1 of the Council's Constitution, whilst Section 7.2.2 of the Constitution stipulates that Scrutiny "can make reports or recommendations to the Council or the Cabinet in connection with the discharge of any functions.

Appendix A – Current Position & Further Considerations of the Task & Finish Group

Civic Offices (Phase 1): The objectives for Phase 1 have been achieved. All refreshment, vending machines and water coolers had been switched off since the end of March 2020. Some of the machines have already been collected by the supplier whilst others are awaiting collection. Their removal, similar to numerous other services and tasks had been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

School Catering (Phase 2): The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the School Catering Service, has resulted in additional food safety measures being required in order to minimise the risk of infection when providing school meals to the county's pupils. Consequently, more plastic and polystyrene are currently being used by the School Catering Service than before the pandemic. Officers informed the Task & Finish Group that due to the current restrictions, requirements and expectations that the aim to reduce its use of these materials should be held in abeyance until the pandemic is over.

Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL): During the early stages of its work the Task & Finish Group had explored the Council's Leisure Service's use of single use and disposable plastics and decided to focus on attempting to reducing the Service's use of plastic materials at a later date. Since then the management of the leisure service provision in the county had transferred to Denbighshire Leisure Limited (DLL) and was therefore now outside the Council's direct control. Consequently, exploring DLL's use of plastics was now outside the Group's remit, as DLL had its own management arrangements and its own governance structure in the form of the Strategic Governance Board, on which Lead Members and a Scrutiny representative served.

Welsh Government's Consultation on Reducing Single Use Plastics: Denbighshire has responded as part of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) collective response to the Welsh Government which acknowledged the urgency of the need to address the problems entailed with using single use plastic. The response included concerns in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on the use of plastics, the continued need for health and safety and infection control purposes to use plastics for the delivery of certain services, as well as practical matters relating to enforcing any new regulations and the financial implications of enforcement work. Concerns have also been raised in respect of the proposed timing for introducing the ban, autumn 2021. Feedback from the

consultation is currently awaited, to be communicated via the Environment Directors group of the WLGA.

Climate and Ecological Change Strategy: Actions which support the avoidance and reduction of plastics could fall under the Waste and Supply Chain workstreams of the Net Carbon Zero Programme within the Council's proposed Climate and Ecological Change Strategy. Actions which reduce carbon from waste and our supply chain will be developed and delivered over the coming 9 years and subject to securing funding. Certain actions that reduce carbon from waste and supply chain would have the co-benefit of avoidance and reduction of plastics.