

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Improve Brighton &amp; Hove's Recycling Scheme Petition</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>27<sup>th</sup> November 2018</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director, Economy, Environment &amp; Culture</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Rachel Chasseaud</b>	<b>Tel: 01273 290753</b>
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<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>(All Wards);</b>		

**FOR GENERAL RELEASE****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report has been written in response to a petition debated and amended at Full Council on 18 October 2018.
- 1.2 The petition was noted and referred to the Environment, Transport & Sustainability (ETS) Committee for consideration at its meeting on the 27 November 2018, with the report to this meeting to include:
  - a costed investigation into increasing the range of plastics the council collects
  - a costed investigation into the set-up of a food waste collection trial
  - a costed investigation into an education and information publicity drive, encouraging recycling and explaining how and what can be recycled
  - a costed investigation into options for a 'service guarantee,' allowing residents to know what level of recycling service they can expect the council to provide.
- 1.3 That with the above investigations to include the exploration of external funding sources e.g. DEFRA, Local Enterprise Partnership, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and others; and,
- 1.4 That for such a report to provide further detail on:
  - how the council may seek to ensure events granted permission in Brighton & Hove are 'single-use plastic free' by 2020
  - an action plan, including timescales, setting out how the council will contribute to the achievement of the waste framework directive target of 50% recycling by 2020.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Environment, Transport & Sustainability Committee notes that:

- 2.1 work on an Increasing Recycling Project and education campaign is included in officers' current work programmes and will be launched early in 2019.
- 2.2 the work already underway to reduce food waste and an initial exploration of a food waste collection service is under discussion with Veolia with details to be worked on within the City Environment Modernisation (CEM) Programme as part of the Increasing Recycling Project.
- 2.3 there is currently no, or very limited, markets for the recycling of pots, tubs and trays (PTTs) and therefore it is unlikely that a business case can be made for the investment required in collection and sorting services. However, the situation will be closely monitored for market changes.
- 2.4 a 'service guarantee' will be introduced at the end of the Increasing Recycling Project when the full extent and means by which materials can be recycled have been explored taking into account the government's forthcoming waste strategy proposals.
- 2.5 the council's events team has a sustainable events policy and works with event organisers to reduce single-use plastics (SUPs) at events. The progress made is illustrated by a case study of the plastics reduction at the Brighton Marathon, which has already been presented to the Tourism, Development & Culture Committee as part of a report on the events programme and further updates are planned.
- 2.6 an action plan setting out how the council aims to achieve the waste directive of increasing recycling rates to 50% will be presented to the committee in January 2019 as part of the CEM update report.

## **3. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 3.1 A report was presented to ETS committee in October 2018 setting out some of the work required to modernise City Environmental Management (CEM). This includes setting up a commercial arm to generate income in order to offset budget reductions; restructuring of refuse and recycling rounds; work to increase recycling rates; developing and embedding systems to ensure that the customer experience improves; improving staff and health and safety management; introducing a new environmental enforcement framework; and introducing charging to facilitate the refurbishment of 12 public conveniences. This is a significant programme of work which is expected to take years to complete and is using the full capacity of officers in CEM.

### **Increasing recycling campaign**

- 3.2 An information and educational campaign to increase recycling is currently in development with a view to this being launched early in the new year. This will include a multi-media campaign informing people of the waste hierarchy and

what they can recycle in the city, and how and where. We will be identifying and working with community champions to promote recycling in their neighbourhoods and holding events in educational institutions.

### **Food waste collection**

- 3.3 Costed options appraisals for the introduction of a food waste collection service will be built into the modernisation programme as part of the increasing recycling project. External sources of funding will be explored to facilitate this. It is anticipated that work on this investigation will commence in summer 2019. However work to reduce, reuse and recycle food waste is ongoing and will continue.
- 3.4 In July 2015 as part of the cityclean service plan and priorities report, opportunities for food waste collection were explored in detail but were not pursued due to the high cost which was in excess of £1 million per year.
- 3.5 The council has always encouraged residents to compost garden waste at home and provides subsidised compost bins and food waste composters. Since 2007, over 20,000 compost bins have been sold through the council's scheme, further information of which is on the council's website. The council also funds 37 community composting schemes in the city in partnership with Brighton & Hove Food Partnership. The council contributes £5,000 per year with an additional £15,000 this year to help start up six more schemes.
- 3.6 The council is a partner to Brighton and Hove Food Partnership. The partnership has been developing the food strategy and action plan 2018-23, and are exploring ways to reduce food waste such as:
- innovative approaches in order to prevent food waste in first place – move to a 'food use' not a food waste agenda
  - better redistribution of surplus food to people (and if not people, then animals)
  - where food waste is not prevented, increase composting

### **Plastics recycling**

- 3.7 The council currently collects mixed plastic bottles for recycling for which there is an end market. These are separated from other recyclable materials at the Mixed Recycling Facility (MRF) at Hollingdean.
- 3.8 The council does not collect all types of plastic, namely what are known as pots, tubs and trays (PTTs). These are made from or contain different types of plastic polymers: PET (polyethylene terephthalate), PP (polypropylene), PS (polystyrene) and PVC (polyvinyl chloride). There is currently a market for PP and this makes up about 22% of PTTs. However, there are no clear end markets for the remaining 78% of these types of plastics. Developing the capacity to sort these different materials into marketable and non-marketable would require considerable investment at the MRF. Furthermore, the majority of these plastics were being exported to China for recycling until China banned further imports in January 2018, disrupting the global market.

- 3.9 The Local Government Association (LGA) produced a report in August 2018 stating that only a third of PTTs used in the UK can be recycled due to the way in which the food packaging industry produce them, using low quality mixed polymers. In many cases food packaging is black in colour and it is not possible to recycle black plastics.
- 3.10 A recently published report 'Everyday Plastic' by Webb and Scneider supported by Surfers Against Sewerage states that an estimated 63% of plastics collected for recycling in the UK, are exported. In July 2018 the National Audit Office published a report stating there is a significant risk that PTT plastics being exported from the UK for recycling are ending up in landfill in the importing countries rather than being recycled. This is supported by a report by Greenpeace published in 'Unearthed' in October 2018 where an extensive quantity of plastic waste, bagged by a number of UK local authorities was found on multiple sites in Malaysia. This plastic was being stored in conditions that rendered it largely impossible to recycle.
- 3.11 Therefore in local authorities where PTTs are currently being collected, the combination of the inability to recycle two thirds of collected materials and the lack of an end market for the recyclable elements has become a significant challenge. Over recent weeks a number of local authorities that have been collecting PTTs are now pulling out of this type of plastic recycling as it has become unclear whether the collected and sorted materials are being recycled at all. Some of the local authorities who have recently withdrawn or are reviewing their plastics collections are Swindon, Basingstoke, Southampton and Newcastle.
- 3.12 While there is no clear market to generate income for PTTs, there can be no business case to enable investment in the Hollingdean MRF. Further to this there is a risk that once collected and sorted, exported plastics are being diverted to landfill elsewhere in the world. The LGA, National Audit Office and other agencies are pressing the government to place a greater emphasis on controls to reduce the use of packaging and where packaging is required, to ensure it is recyclable. Further to this they are pressing the government to develop end markets for the recycling of PTTs through the forthcoming waste strategy.
- 3.13 For these reasons there is no merit in the council collecting PTTs at this time, but the council will carefully monitor the situation in order to be ready to move into the collection of these when market conditions allow. External sources of funding will be explored in order to facilitate this.
- 3.14 In the interim, the council will use the recycling campaign to educate residents about the limitations that exist in terms of recycling PTTs and encourage residents to avoid highly packaged products wherever possible. It should also be noted that any PTTs which go into the refuse system in the city do not go to landfill in the UK or elsewhere. Like all other domestic refuse produced in the city it is transported to the Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) in Newhaven and used to generate electricity to service 22,000 homes.

### **Service guarantee**

- 3.15 The council will be able to provide a service guarantee on completion of the CEM Modernisation Programme - Increasing Recycling Project when all options have been explored and where the recycling of additional materials has been explored and when there is greater clarity on the government's waste strategy. It is anticipated that this will be towards the end of 2019.

### **Single use plastics (SUPs) and events**

- 3.16 The council is seeking to end the use of SUPs within all functions of the council, including events that the council licences. There are some significant challenges that the events industry will need to overcome to achieve this. The council's events team has a sustainable events policy and works with event organisers to reduce SUPs at events. The progress made is illustrated by a case study of the plastics reduction at the Brighton marathon, which has already been presented to the Tourism, Development & Culture (TDC) committee as part of a report on the events programme.

### **Waste directive target**

- 3.17 The city recycling rates are slowly increasing, with an increase to 30.4% in quarter 1 of 2018/19. This is the highest recorded recycling rate for the city to date. However this is much lower than the national average of 44% and we must make a significant improvement to achieve the waste framework directive target of 50% by 2020. Work is underway and expected to accelerate to increase recycling rates such as the increasing recycling educational campaign; the roll out of larger recycling wheeled bins; the extension of the garden waste scheme; and increased emphasis and promotion of composting. An action plan will be brought to ETS Committee in January 2019 with the CEM update report.

## **4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Other elements of the CEM Programme could be delayed in order to focus on the items identified in the petition. However this would risk ongoing budget pressures as commercial income targets would not be met; continued service disruption that will be rectified via round restructuring and a lack of improvement in the customer experience. It is therefore recommended that stabilising the Cityclean service is prioritised ahead of these projects.

## **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 This report was generated as a result of a public petition. There has been no further public consultation, but residents will be invited to be involved in the CEM projects where appropriate.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This report provides ETS committee with a response to the petition to Full Council on 18 October.
- 6.2 The items raised can be factored into the existing CEM Programme.

6.3 The end of SUPs for licensed events will be explored and form a strand of the events strategy which will be presented to TDS Committee at a future date.

## **7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

7.1 The resources required for the report recommendations are included as part of the CEM programme and associated budgets.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Gemma Jackson*

*Date: 13/11/18*

### Legal Implications:

7.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report which is to note. Legal implications in relation to proposals that identified in future reports will be addressed as they are brought forward.

*Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert*

*Date: 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018*

### Equalities Implications:

7.3 There are no equalities implications relevant to this report but as specific projects are developed equalities implications will be considered.

### Sustainability Implications:

7.4 The petition and this report sets out an ambition to reduce waste through the increasing recycling project.

### Any Other Significant Implications:

7.5 None

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

None

### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents**

1. City Environmental Management – Modernisation Programme Update Report - 9<sup>th</sup> October 2018

2. "Every Day Plastic" a report by Webb and Schneider – October 2018  
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a899f44b1ffb63e0c81fed9/t/5bd606380852291fdf5b1d2b/1540753006345/Everyday+Plastic+-+What+we+throw+away+and+where+it+goes.pdf>
3. "Two thirds of plastic is unrecyclable ....." Local Government Association  
August 2018  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/two-thirds-plastic-packaging-pots-and-trays-unrecyclable>
4. "UK Household Plastics Found in Illegal Dumps in Malaysia" Green Peace  
Unearthed – October 2018  
<https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2018/10/21/uk-household-plastics-found-in-illegal-dumps-in-malaysia/>
5. "The Packaging Recycling Obligations" National Audit Office July 2018  
<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-packaging-recycling-obligations/>

