

Briefing note for Plastic bags replacements

Single Use Plastic Reduction

As part of the city's ambition to reach carbon neutrality by 2028, the Council has made a commitment to reduce its use of single use plastic (SUP) as far as is reasonably practical.

All plastic is manufactured from crude oil, so it has high levels of embodied carbon, contributing to the city's and council's overall emissions. When plastic is disposed of, it will have further associated waste emissions, whether it is recycled, incinerated, or goes to landfill. If the plastic is not recycled, this could have further negative ecosystem impacts. If not recycled, plastic generated in the city will either be incinerated at the Eastcroft Energy from Waste (EfW) facility or sent to landfill. Plastic decomposes very slowly, remaining in the environment for many years. This can cause further environmental impacts due to the micro plastics that result.

Several of our services are already actively reducing SUP such as in our leisure centres where plastic water cups have been replaced with paper and they no longer use plastic shoe protectors. Also Highways now stipulate that no SUP will be accepted in any packaging of goods they purchase. A new corporate procurement policy will be introduced this year to ensure our suppliers make steps to reduce SUP in all its forms as much as possible.

However, in this instance, it is not a straightforward matter of simply replacing the plastic refuse sacks with non-plastic material. For some uses it is not possible to move away from plastic such as for clinical waste, dog waste etc.

However, where possible the service will explore alternative and more sustainable bag material such as those made from a high proportion (90%+) of recycled plastic or a material that is biodegradable or compostable, both of which are commercially available and we will therefore work with our suppliers to explore suitable alternatives to SUP. The initial switch to these sort of material will be consider for those public facing uses such those used by our Green Guardians teams.

This, along with exploring the reduction in the number of bags used by shifting the designs of the street litter bins and varying how we operate aligned to working with suppliers to explore alternative materials should see a noticeable reduction in the use of SUP in the service