

Full Council – 22 February 2018

Tackling our throw-away culture by providing incentives to reduce, reuse and recycle to safeguard our health and environment

Motion proposed by Councillor Habib Farbahi, seconded by Councillor Simon Nicholls

The Council notes:-

There are now 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic in the World's Oceans, with an estimated 10% of the plastics we produce ending up in the oceans. Research from the University of Exeter shows that plastic damages marine life; in particular micro-plastics can enter the food chain at the zooplankton stage and by stunting growth may cause damage all the way up the chain¹. There is universal agreement that this must be stopped.

Professor Galloway and her colleagues of Exeter University gave evidence to the Government's Environment Audit Committee, as well as delivering a high-level presentation at the United Nations headquarters in America, outlining the effect micro-plastics have on the ocean environments⁴.

We want to raise awareness of the issue of micro-plastics, as it is one of the major threats to the health of our oceans and is something everyone, including school children, can all do something about. Potentially hazardous chemicals used in plastic food packaging have been found in the digestive system of 86% of teenagers who took part in a recent study at Exeter University². These chemicals could be linked to breast cancer and heart diseases³.

The plastic bag charge reduced usage by 85% in the first year and the recent disposable coffee cups campaign has led to a "latte levy" being proposed by a group of influential cross-party MPs, and indeed to our own recycling centres accepting these cups. Now we need local government to commit to a Plastic-Free Charter.

This could include a plastic bottle return scheme. Tackling plastic pollution will require us to work closely with local businesses to find non-plastic alternatives. It will take research and investment, but most of all it will take a willingness to change.

We all recognise and accept that action needs to be taken and welcome the petition on the single use plastic and wish to go a step further by:-

Recommending that:-

- 1) This Council will set up a cross-party working group including, parish representatives, to research ways and costs of reducing or eliminating not only single use plastic on its premises but the wider implications which the Council may wish to become involved with. To engage with small, independent businesses such as coffee shops, pubs and restaurants and give the working group a practical time scale to work to;
- 2) This Council supports the potential idea of working with the University of

Exeter on an advisory basis to achieve this goal with no costs to Taunton Deane taxpayers; and

- 3) This Council widely promotes through Council-wide email footers and footers on all news releases that both Taunton (Priorswood) and Poole Household Waste Recycling Centres and twelve other Recycling Centres across the County can now accept plastic-lined paper cups and emphasise that plastic can damage our health.

(Note : Other ideas that could be considered by the proposed working group could perhaps include:-

- (a) The Council ceasing the use of single use plastics on all its premises in favour of recyclable or biodegradable alternatives;
- (b) The Council to look at providing multi-compartment recycling bins in prominent pedestrian entry and exit points and thoroughfares inside and outside all its buildings and encouraging landlords and operators of buildings used by organisations receiving Council grants and loans and housing to do the same;
- (c) Schools and Colleges to be encouraged to reduce the use of single use plastic;
- (d) The Council works towards establishing a plastic litter free zone within our town centres; and
- (e) Introducing incentives (for example a modest reduction in Business Rates?) for businesses that reduce their use of single use plastics and their plastic throw-away.

References:-

<http://biosciences.exeter.ac.uk/microplastics/>

1 Galloway T, Cole, M, and Lewis C (2017) Interactions of micro-plastic debris throughout the marine ecosystem. *Nature Ecology & Evolution* 1: 0116
doi:10.1038/s41559-017-0116

2. Galloway, T, Baglin, N., Lee, B., Kocur, A, Shepherd, M, Steele, A, Harries, L and the BPA Schools Consortium (2018) An engaged research study to assess the effect of a 'real-world' dietary intervention on urinary bisphenol A (BPA) levels in teenagers. *British Medical Journal Open* 8:e018742.
doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2017-018742

3 Gore A, Chappell V, Fenton S, Flaws J, Nadal A, Prins G, Toppari J, Zoeller R (2015) The Endocrine Society's Second Scientific Statement on Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals. *Endocrine Reviews*. 2015 Dec;36(6):E1-E150. doi: 10.1210/er.2015-1010. Epub 2015 Nov 6.

[4 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/featurednews/title_632419_en.html](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/featurednews/title_632419_en.html)



BIOSCIENCES

College of Life & Environmental
Sciences
Geoffrey Pope Building
Stocker Road
Exeter UK EX4 4QD

t +44 (0)1392 725171
f +44 (0)1392 723434
e biosciences@exeter.ac.uk
w biosciences.exeter.ac.uk

14 February 2018

Dear Councillors Farbahi and Nicholls,

Ref: Tackling our throw-away culture by providing incentives to reduce, reuse and recycle to safeguard our health and environment.

I hold a chair in Ecotoxicology at the University of Exeter and an honorary position at University of Exeter Medical School. I have been involved in the study of environmental pollution for over 15 years and during this time have advised governments internationally on the topic of plastic pollution. This includes providing evidence to the UK government environmental audit committee and to the United Nations relating to the use of microbeads in cosmetics and to the USA Food and Drug Administration relating to the use of plastic chemicals in packaging materials.

I have now had the opportunity to read through your motion to Taunton Deane Borough Council on 22 February. It is encouraging to see how your council is working proactively to reduce the effect of plastic in our environment.

On behalf of my research group, I am happy to support your initiative in raising awareness that the widespread use and disposal of plastic litter into the environment and the generation of microplastics presents a potential risk not only to our fragile oceans and environment but also to human health. I am willing to provide unbiased advice on issues relating to plastic pollution and the interpretation of scientific evidence and implementation of remedial actions that fall within my expertise, at no cost to the council.

As an educational establishment, we are always happy to engage with local partners and to integrate the work of our students and researchers into appropriate activities such as this.

Yours sincerely

Professor Tamara Galloway

Chair in Ecotoxicology
Director of Innovation and Impact
College of Life and Environmental Science
University of Exeter
Exeter UK, EX4 4AS
Tel 0 44 1392 263436 Email t.s.galloway@exeter.ac.uk

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Motions to Council – Assessment Form

On receipt of a Motion from a Councillor, the Democratic Services Manager will carry out an assessment as to its contents to establish whether there are likely to be significant consequences to the Council should the Motion be carried at the subsequent Full Council meeting.

The first question to be addressed will be:-

“Can the Motion, if approved, be implemented without the need for any resource (financial and otherwise) to be identified outside existing budgets or staffing capacity?”

If the answer is ‘yes’, then the Motion can proceed towards discussion and resolution.

An example of a Motion which would fall into the above category would be where the Council is being asked to lobby the Government, Somerset County Council or other body on a particular issue. If the motion is carried, the action required will usually involve no more than a letter being prepared and sent to the intended recipient.

However, as in the case of the recent Motion on ‘Legal Hubs’, the answer to the above question would clearly be ‘no’.

In such circumstances, detailed analysis of the wording of the Motion will be required to identify what will be needed if the Motion – when it comes before Full Council – is carried.

Such analysis will include:-

- What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?
- What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?
- Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?
- Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive? If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.

If such analysis is required, the Democratic Services Manager will arrange for the attached pro-forma to be completed and this will accompany the relevant Motion onto the agenda of the Full Council meeting so all Members are aware that further investigation will be required before the Motion – even if it is carried – can be implemented.

Motions to Council – Assessment Proforma

(To be used in circumstances where it appears the wording of a proposed Motion will commit the Council to providing further financial or staffing resources which cannot be met from existing budgets)

Brief Details of the Motion -

Motion

- 1) This Council will set up a cross-party working group including, parish representatives, to research ways and costs of reducing or eliminating not only single use plastic on its premises but the wider implications which the Council may wish to become involved with. To engage with other businesses such as supermarkets and hospitals and give the working group a practical time scale to work to;
- 2) This Council supports the potential idea of working with the University of Exeter on an advisory basis to achieve this goal with no costs to Taunton Deane taxpayers; and
- 3) This Council widely promotes through Council-wide email footers and footers on all news releases that Poole Household Waste Recycling Centre and 12 other Recycling Centres across the County can now accept plastic-lined paper cups and emphasise that plastic can damage our health.

Questions to be addressed

- ***What additional resource would be required to ensure the Motion (if approved) could be implemented?***

Answer – It is assumed that a cross party working group would need some support from Democratic Services and various officers within the council to deliver the specified outcomes on within Council owned buildings. This is not considered to be a significant diversion from current priorities and could be supported.

The engagement with other businesses and employers may be more resource intensive and would likely fall to the Economic Development team as they have the existing relationships so additional resources may be required or an agreed diversion of workload. This might be mitigated with a more clearly defined outcome. Is success considered to be a discussion with these businesses, which is less resource intensive than success being the removal of single use plastics from their premises.

It is unclear if working with Exeter University would be an officer task or one for the cross party group. Consideration may also be given to the use of Bridgwater and Taunton College subject to the level of expertise that is anticipated.

The email footnotes could be established relatively easily with minimal resource and costs. The cross party group could propose the wording and consideration could be given to a broader message which may incorporate “reduce, reuse, recycle” which has been the mantra of the Somerset Waste Partnership. The group may also wish to consider joining that message with our (WSC) Harbour operations and

responsibilities to try and prevent plastic finding their way in to the sea and onto the coastline.

- ***What needs to be done to identify the level of resource necessary both in financial and staff terms?***

Answer – Staffing resource is variable dependant on the perceived success criteria but potential this could be managed with no additional financial impact.

- ***Are any approvals needed to provide these resources?***

Answer – This work could span a number of teams, Facilities, Operations, Economic Development, Housing (for community meeting rooms) but a Council approval of this with the associated success criteria would create this as a new task that would require no further approval beyond agreement on the diversion to the workload with the impacted portfolio holders.

- ***Will this require reports to be submitted through Scrutiny and the Executive? If a Supplementary Estimate is required, Full Council approval will be required too.***

Answer – It is envisaged that a working group would feed back to Council and the Chairman of the group would be responsible for creating the reports rather than officers. There are no requests for supplementary estimates identified in this request so there appears to be no requirement for anything other than update reports at this stage.

Likely timescale involved – Some tasks could be considered as quick wins:

- Implementing a footer message to emails and publications
- Reducing or banning single use plastics in council buildings

Other aspects it is difficult to establish a timeline for as engagement with others, where we hold no power in their decision making, could take longer.