

Reducing Single Use Plastics in Merton Council buildings

Final report and recommendations.

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Foreword

Councillor Aidan Mundy, Task Group Chair.

We are armed with both the evidence and know-how to alter the impact our consumption choices are having on our world. Our action or inaction on single use plastics and other areas of policy will determine the ecological future of our planet.

Viewers of BBC's Blue Planet series will remember the stark imagery of some of the millions of tonnes of plastic in our oceans, and the marine life who fell victim to debris from plastic bottles to food packaging. Coupled with Sir David Attenborough's haunting narration the series sparked action amongst policy makers; including our own national government's pledge to commit resources to reducing our nations single use plastic footprint.

The work of the single use plastics task group and this report is a local answer to that call for action. Some of the 10 recommendations will be easier than others to implement however, Merton Council has time and again proven its community leadership credentials. By increasing its current efforts to further reduce our plastics use and increase recycling it will cement its reputation as one of the best councils across our four nations.

It's more common for plastic products to find their way to the oceans and landfill than to recycling facilities. In their latest outlook the energy company BP state that there could be a worldwide ban on single-use plastics by 2040. Until that day it's up to national and local governments to take action.

It was pleasure to chair this task group whose membership was drawn from across the political spectrum of the council. I wish to thank everyone who gave evidence to the committee – council officers, civic leaders, residents; our Democratic Support Officer Stella Akintan for her work organising the committee. Finally, special thanks to the 171 staff who completed our staff survey and contributed to our final recommendations.

Task group membership & acknowledgements

Cllr Aidan Mundy (Chair)	Labour	Pollards Hill Ward
Cllr Laxmi Attawar	Labour	Colliers Wood Ward
Cllr Ben Butler	Labour	Abbey Ward
Cllr Daniel Holden	Conservative	Hillside Ward
Cllr Dickie Wilkinson	Merton Park Ward	Merton Park Ward
	Independent Residents Group	

Scrutiny Team support Stella Akintan

List of oral evidence

Claire Potter, Chief Executive, Plastic Free Pledge
Diana Sterck, Chief Executive Sustainable Merton
Mike Robinson, Public Health Consultant, Merton Council
Mark Humphries, Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Transactions
Dawn Jolly, Head of Commercial Services
Lyla Adwan-Kamara, Chief Executive, Merton Centre for Independent Living

Members would like to thank all those who supported the task group's work, including: those who gave oral evidence; members of the public who submitted written evidence; and, 171 Merton Council staff who feed into the work through a staff survey.

Executive summary

This report was commissioned by a cross party group of Merton Councillors with a remit to investigate and recommend options to reduce the use of single use plastics in Merton Council buildings by influencing individual choices and behaviour.

It finds that Merton Council is making good progress in the reduction of single use plastics. Through strong staff engagement and questioning of expert witnesses ten further opportunities to further reduce plastics use have been identified. By implementing the recommendations in this report Merton council will be sending a strong signal to Boroughs across London that despite the financial pressures on local government every authority in their own way can contribute to the global effort to reduce single use plastics.

Terms of reference

Following an initial meeting on 15th September 2018 the task group members agreed terms of reference for its work. These terms had a specific focus on the reduction of single use plastics in Merton council building and supply chain. The full terms of

reference approved by a meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 1st November 2018 are:¹

- 1) Review the council's procurement of single use plastics;
- 2) Explore how behaviour change amongst council staff and visitors in council buildings can be promoted;
- 3) Consider as a pilot how local businesses in Morden town centre can be encouraged to reduce single use plastics.

List of recommendations

Recommendation 1 Encourage partners to reduce the use of non-recyclable plastics through the procurement process by including a measure on single use plastics within the Social Value Toolkit.

Recommendation 2: Co-design a cross site campaign with council staff to improve its information about what plastics can be recycled. As part of this campaign a measure of success and method of monitoring should be made available to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Recommendation 3: Communications team to address and implement remedial action following staff feedback on signage on the importance and methods of recycling in communal areas.

Recommendation 4: Encourage local businesses to join the London Mayors Refill Programme.

Recommendation 5: Following staff feedback implement measures to ensure a parity of recycling across all Merton owned and operated sites.

Recommendation 6: Verify recycling and non-recyclable waste is kept separate, the contribution staff currently make to reducing plastic waste and circulate information to staff.

Recommendation 7: Following staff request and moves by the council to increase domestic food recycling, produce an implementation plan and an impact assessment for Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on food recycling in council buildings.

Recommendation 8: The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to monitor the progress with implementing the changes to reduce single use plastics.

Recommendations 9: Circulate to Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel a plan to recognise local businesses who measurably reduce single use plastics consumption.

¹ Minutes Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel 1 November 2018 p.2

Recommendation 10: Council to publish information on an annual basis on the use of single use plastics in leisure and theatre facilities across the borough.

Background

Single use plastic is part of our everyday lives and will be with us for many years to come. From food preparation and storage to sterile packaging for medical equipment this miracle material has revolutionised our way of life.

Demand for all types of plastic is growing. In 2014, 311 million tons of plastic were produced globally, 20 times more than in 1964. And production is forecast to double by 2036. ²

The way we manufacture, use and discard plastic is one of the biggest global environmental challenges of our time. Much of the plastic produced including, plastic bottles, grocery bags, straws, stirrers and foam take-away containers are used only once or a few times before being discarded. In the UK alone packaging accounts for 67 per cent of our total plastic waste. Much of this waste is thrown away and will end up in landfill, and some will litter our streets which costs local authorities £778 million a year to keep clean and enforce the law. ³

The durability of plastic means much of it cannot be recycled and it is difficult to dispose of in a sustainable way. Most plastics do not biodegrade. Instead, they slowly break down into smaller fragments known as microplastics. Studies suggest that plastic bags and containers made of Styrofoam can take thousands of years to decompose, contaminating soil and water.

There is also increasing evidence of micro plastics making its way into the food chain. Small plastic pieces have been documented in all marine habitats. High concentrations of plastic materials, particularly plastic bags, have been found blocking the breathing passages and stomachs of hundreds of different species. Micro plastics have also been detected in our air, water and food. The long-term impact on our health are still unknown. ⁴

On 4th June 2018 at a cross party group of Merton councillors identified the need to address the issue of single use plastic.

Plastic pollution can be tackled either through improving the waste stream or influencing individual choices and behaviour. This task group chose to focus on the latter and considers what more can be done to support staff and those who visit the buildings to use sustainable alternatives and recycle.

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² [Plastics in a circular Economy](#) P.2

³ Plastic bottles: Turning Back the Plastic Tide, House of Commons: Environmental Audit Committee, 22 December 2017

⁴ Checking out on plastics, Environmental Investigation Agency and Greenpeace, 2018.

Reducing Single Use Plastic through the procurement process.

The task group met with the Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Transactions and the Head of Commercial Services to consider how to influence purchasing practice across the council. Merton has a devolved procurement model, overseen by a procurement board which sets the standards for how procurement work should be conducted. All teams then carry out their own procurement within these guidelines. The task group wanted to ensure mechanisms were in place to disincentivise the purchase of unnecessary plastics.

The task group considered if a social value measure could be incorporated into the procurement process when asking businesses to tender for a service. This encourages a bidder to think about simple ways to reduce plastic and spark a change in culture. Business who have a sustainable approach to plastic use would be given a competitive advantage.

The Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Transactions and the Head of Commercial Services reported that a social value toolkit had recently been developed by the council and would be sent to Cabinet for agreement early in 2019. This document is also enshrined in legislation in the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 and requires the Council “to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts; and for connected purposes”.

The toolkit defines Social Value as *a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment.*

The aim of the Act is not to alter the commissioning and procurement processes, but to ensure that as part of these processes, councils give consideration to the wider impact of the services delivered.

The Merton Social Value Toolkit provides guidance for staff on how to embed social value measures in procurement and commissioning practices.

Recommendation 1 Encourage partners to reduce the use of non-recyclable plastics through the procurement process by including a measure on single use plastics within the Social Value Toolkit.

[Discussion with Partner Organisations](#)

The task group met with Claire Potter, Chief Executive of Plastic Free Pledge who highlighted some of the work councils and businesses are doing across the country to reduce plastic use. Examples included Brighton and Hove City Council who are working to reduce plastic using their procurement policies, and the City of London is working with businesses to encourage behaviour change.

Plastic Free Pledge advise organisations to begin by eliminating plastic straws as it is considered a ‘quick win’. Plastic straws are one of the biggest culprits in waste and littering, they are not needed by the majority of people and there are cheaper alternatives. The Chief Executive of Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton

Cil) advised against this approach. This organisation provides a range of services to deaf and disabled people across the borough including advice and advocacy. They have responded to a government consultation on a proposed straw ban and conducted a Twitter campaign opposing any change on plastic straws given they are an essential requirement for some disabled people for drinking and medication.

Merton CIL highlight reservations regarding the alternatives to plastic straws for those who rely on them daily. They stated that if a ban was put in place it will mean disabled people will have to make special provision to have a straw. They claim this would put further undue social and possible financial burden on disabled people because of their disability. Additionally, evidence received by the task group relating to the reduction in plastic straws in council facilities states no complaints have been received on the issue.

The task group also considered the existing work in the borough to reduce plastic pollution. The task group met with Sustainable Merton who run an online campaign entitled 'Plastic Free Merton'. The campaign encourages residents to consider the three R's when using plastic; Refuse, Re-use, or Re-cycle. Sustainable Merton consider the campaign to be a great success and they are receiving feedback on positive change stories on their website. They also use community champions to speak to residents about the issue.

In October 2018, the Merton Chamber of Commerce brought together the borough's businesses to address the issue of single use plastics. A member of the task group attended the session, in addition of our London Assembly Member Leonie Cooper. Businesses were encouraged to seek out alternatives to plastic.⁵

Staff engagement

The Task group commissioned a staff survey to give staff a voice in how to reduce plastic use in council buildings. The survey ran from the 11 January until the 13 February 2019 and 171 responses were received. The survey found:

The majority of respondents (90%) concurred with Councillors that addressing single use plastics is an important issue and the vast majority of staff (83%) already regularly recycle at work however, many (68%) want to learn what more they can do to further improve recycling across the council.

Staff requested clearer information on what can and cannot be recycled and clarification on current arrangements for the use of recycling bins in the kitchen areas. This also included clarification on whether recyclable and non-recyclable waste are mixed when bins are emptied.

Recommendation 2: Co-design a cross site campaign with council staff to improve its information about what plastics can be recycled. As part of this campaign a

⁵ <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/leonie-cooper/merton-businesses-to-crack-down-on-plastic-waste>

measure of success and method of monitoring should be made available to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Recommendation 3: Communications team to address and implement remedial action following staff feedback on signage on the importance and methods of recycling in communal areas.

Recommendation 4: Encourage local businesses to join the London Mayors Refill Programme.

Recommendation 5: Following staff feedback implement measures to ensure a parity of recycling across all Merton owned and operated sites.

Recommendation 6: Verify recycling and non-recyclable waste is kept separate, the contribution staff currently make to reducing plastic waste and circulate information to staff.

Recommendation 7: Following staff request and moves by the council to increase domestic food recycling, produce an implementation plan and an impact assessment for Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel on food recycling in council buildings.

Reducing Single Use Plastic in the Civic Centre

Task group members found that the facilities team are actively working to keep the corporate use of single use plastics to a minimum. All kitchens are equipped with reusable mugs. There are water dispensers on every floor which should discourage the purchase of water in plastic bottles. Although through feedback some staff found it difficult to use the dispensers with larger bottles. The council do not provide plastic cups in any buildings. IT equipment and stationary are recycled. Plastic recycling bins are provided on every floor with the exception of the committee corridor.

The task group were told that plastic cups are given out at meetings with external visitors. It was thought that these are purchased by individual teams. The Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Transactions agreed to purchase glasses for every floor to combat this activity.

The biggest area of plastic use in the civic centre is in the purchase of food and beverages. The Civic centre catering is provided by a commercial catering company (Gosto Fino) and is operated on the basis of a formal concessionary contract. The Council receiving income based on a percentage of the sales achieved.

The Council is unable to change the current contract however, indirect influence can be applied to some operational elements. This includes encourage the supplier to adopt ideas and general good practice where this is commercially viable.

- The Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Transactions highlighted a number of actions which are being taken to reduce single use plastics, these include:

- Bamboo Reusable cups for sale with Gosto Fino company name printed on; customers would then receive a discount on future beverages purchased when reusing the cup.
- Discount for customers using their own cups for hot drinks, smoothies, milkshakes and freshly made juices.
- They no longer provide plastic cups unless a customer specifically asks for one.
- They are currently trialling biodegradable paper straws.
- They have always provided wooden stirrers only and will trial wooden knives and forks.
- They are looking to replace salad containers and hot food containers in foil or recyclable plastic.

Recommendation 8: The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to monitor the progress with implementing the changes to reduce single use plastics.

Influencing staff behaviour

The task group sought advice from Merton's Public Health Consultant on encouraging staff to be more mindful in their material consumption choices. The task group agreed that encouraging and supporting staff to adopt a more sustainable approach is the goal of further working in this area. The public health consultant reported that the behaviour change model is a continuum from a blanket ban to a gentle nudge. Education and raising awareness is important to influence decision making as well as offering practical solutions.

The task group considered ways to make it easier for staff to use alternatives to disposal plastics. One idea which was explored through market testing with staff was a Merton produced re-useable cup, sold at cost price. However, following results from staff survey and oral evidence that Gosto Fino and local cafes around council buildings have introduced similar offerings the task group agreed not to explore this option further.

The Assistant Director of Infrastructure and Transactions agreed to improve the signage in the public café area at the civic centre to promote the Gosto Fino discounted re-fills when a re-usable cup is used. Task Group Members perceived few people knew about this offer, and this was later supported with staff survey results.

Council staff have a strong presence in the local economy around council buildings regularly purchasing food and beverages. The task group considered how the council can influence local businesses to reduce plastics. The Greater London Authority have run several schemes including 'refill London' to reduce the disposable

nature of consumption. Local organisations who qualify to join GLA scheme could be listed on the staff intranet. The task group would like officers to consider if a scheme from the GLA or other local recognition scheme could be implemented in the borough.

Recommendations 9: Circulate to Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel a plan to recognise local businesses who measurably reduce single use plastics consumption.

Considering the role of partner organisations.

The task group considered written submissions from the New Wimbledon Theatre the Canons, Morden and Wimbledon Leisure Centres on the extent of plastic use in their buildings as the council manages the service contract for these organisations. All organisations were taking steps to reduce plastics, by providing re-cycling facilities and encouraging customers to refill their water bottles. As commercial organisations implementing alternative materials is limited by the additional costs which may be incurred.

The greatest use of plastics in leisure centres are use of overshoes in wet areas. The Theatre uses almost 6,000 plastic cups a month for customers purchasing beverages as they are restricted by licensing requirements with glass prohibited in the auditorium.

In her evidence to the group the Chief Executive of Plastic Free Pledge stated there is good practice constantly emerging from around the country of organisations finding alternative materials and innovative solutions to plastic reduction, especially as many organisations are not able to implement changes which incur additional costs. For example deposit return schemes for eco-friendly cups are an alternative solution to handing out plastic cups at events.

Recommendation 10: Council to publish information on an annual basis on the use of single use plastics in leisure and theatre facilities across the borough.

Changes as a result of this inquiry

During the course of this task group inquiry, the issues raised by members were of concern to all those who participated. Actions were taken and implemented as a result of this review before the report and recommendations were finalised. These include:

- Public health team held a lunch and learn session to look at Single use Plastics
- The Facilities Management team implemented new signage at Gosto Fino to clearly show discounts for free coffee re-fills in re-useable cups.
- The Facilities team provided glasses in the kitchen on each floor to deter purchasing plastic cups for visitors.
- Over 170 staff members were engaged on the issue of single use plastics through a staff survey. This approach also encouraged other task groups

to consider the use of surveys in their work. The most prominent is the Road Safety Task Group.

Conclusions

While addressing the opportunity to increase food recycling across Merton Council was outside the terms of reference for the task group, task group members felt sufficiently strong on the issue following staff feedback to recommend opinions be presented to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel for their consideration and a future task group to address.

Through the implementation of 10 recommendations in this report Merton Council will be sending a strong signal to Boroughs across London. Despite the extreme financial pressures on local government every authority in their own way can contribute to the global effort to reduce single use plastics.

Appendix 1: Staff survey results

1. Is the issue of single use plastics important to you?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		90.59%	154
2	No		2.94%	5
3	Undecided		6.47%	11
			answered	170
			skipped	1

2. Do you recycle at work?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		82.25%	139
2	No		4.73%	8
3	Sometimes		13.02%	22
			answered	169

2. Do you recycle at work?

	Response Percent	Response Total
skipped		2

3. Do you have enough information on what plastics are and are not recyclable?

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Yes	30.18%	51
2 No	69.82%	118
answered		169
skipped		2

4. Do you use reusable items such as a coffee cup?

	Response Percent	Response Total
1 Yes	71.18%	121
2 No	17.06%	29
3 Other (please specify):	11.76%	20
answered		170
skipped		1

Other (please specify): (20)

1	do not buy takaway coffee
2	Sometimes (I forget)
3	sometime
4	I don't buy takeaway drinks. make my own at work
5	use a proper mug

4. Do you use reusable items such as a coffee cup?

		Response Percent	Response Total
6	I have a mug		
7	Lunch box, china mug		
8	When I can- but don't usually buy hot drinks at work.		
9	water bottle		
10	not all the time but i do have one		
11	jute carrier bags		
12	i have my own mug		
13	reusable sandwich wrap		
14	Water flask and re-usable plastic glass		
15	When I remember but sometimes decide ad hoc to grab a coffee on the go and don't have a reusable cup with me		
16	Carrier bags, storage containers.		
17	Proper cup/mug		
18	Water Bottle		
19	fabric shopping bags		
20	I peel of the paper as most cups are not recyclable		

5. If you don't have a reusable cup, what is stopping you from buying one?

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Availability (not many places sell them)	0.75%	1
2	Cost is too high	4.48%	6
3	Paper cups are more convenient	3.73%	5
4	N/A	78.36%	105

5. If you don't have a reusable cup, what is stopping you from buying one?

		Response Percent	Response Total
5	Other (please specify):	15.67%	21
		answered	134
		skipped	37
Other (please specify): (21)			
1	in 23 years, i have never bought a drink from the restaurant. I always make my own from the hot water machine.		
2	Don't buy take away coffee very often (less thanb once a month)		
3	I don't buy takeaway coffees very often - Tariro also take back their paper cups for composting		
4	Paper cups are provided by internal caterers which makes it easier instead. Not sure of what the caterers view would be if I brought my own cup. it is not advertised much that they welcome people bringing thier own cups. This would give me confidence to do this.		
5	Have own mug at work		
6	Don't often get hot drinks from cafes when out, so don't carry a reusable cup with me		
7	dont' need one		
8	always use a china mug at work and don't buy coffee outside		
9	i dont buy enough takeaway coffee to carry one around		
10	I mean to buy one but keep forgetting!		
11	Carry it around when I already carry access passes and the like for the 5 authorities I work for		
12	Keep buying them for other people - I don't drink much coffeee		
13	too cumbersome to carry		
14	inconvenience of carrying it around		
15	i bring in my own coffee and drink it at my desk.		
16	inertia and inconvenience of carrying around		
17	i forget to take it		
18	Don't want to carry one about with me		

5. If you don't have a reusable cup, what is stopping you from buying one?

		Response Percent	Response Total
19	too heavy to carry around as I am not always office based		
20	Don't drink tea or coffee		
21	9th floor kitchen is alway dirty - staff do not wash up the sponge is used on the floor etc. Some day I take home my cup, plates etc to wash or go to another floor! If the kitchen was in a cafe it would be closed down		

6. Would you consider buying a Merton Borough branded reusable coffee cup with a design by local school children?

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes	27.06%	46
2	No	45.88%	78
3	Maybe	27.06%	46
		answered	170
		skipped	1

7. If you said you wouldn't buy a Merton Borough reusable cup, what is the reason for this?

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	I already own a reusable cup	62.50%	65
2	I don't want a reusable cup	3.85%	4
3	I don't want to pay for a Merton branded reusable cup	21.15%	22
4	Other (please specify):	24.04%	25
		answered	104
		skipped	67

Other (please specify): (25)

7. If you said you wouldn't buy a Merton Borough reusable cup, what is the reason for this?

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Goodness. Most homes are brimming over with spare mugs...why are we talking about using valuable resources and asking children to produce even more unnecessarily? Aren't we going round and round in circles here? Why not have a mug collection point in the Civic for all the people that can't manage to pop one in their bag and bring one in, or afford to buy one???		
2	Why cant Merton give staff a free cup?		
3	Don't do it - you'd just be creating more plastic waste! Already loads of reusable cups on the market. They're not hard to find.		
4	I don't mind using a generic reusable cup, I just forget to bring it with me to work sometimes		
5	I'd rather have a batman branded reusable cup		
6	Remove the merton brand - money should go to charity		
7	I wouldn't mind a water bottle!		
8	I dont want anything Merton branded or with a unknown childs design on		
9	n/a		
10	There are so many re usable cups would be a waste of money to make a merton one.		
11	There are so many re usable cups would be a waste of money to make a merton one.		
12	Don't often get hot drinks from cafes when out		
13			
14	N/A		
15	Dont want merton branded unless it's free		
16	Not sure I want a merton branded cup in my life unless it was free		
17	I use mugs - dont buy coffee out		
18	I'd rather choose my own design		
19	Why produce more - There is already enough being produced. Does Merton really need to do this too		
20	If lots of people buy and use them in the civic centre the chances of getting them, mixed up is higher.		
21	I dont think children design things very well		
22	I have a reusable glass		

7. If you said you wouldn't buy a Merton Borough reusable cup, what is the reason for this?

		Response Percent	Response Total
23	Seems like a rather over-engineered solution. Why not just use a cup from home?		
24	I do not drink tea or coffee		
25	Why should i promote Merton! When the council actual steps up and do the right thing for the environment/planet! might		

8. Is there anything you would like to add? We would love to hear your comments and ideas on how we can make it easier for staff to reduce the use of single use plastics in the building. How could Merton Council be more proactive? Use the box below to tell us what you think.

		Response Percent	Response Total
1	Open-Ended Question	100.00%	85
1	Please can you lobby to have a crisp bag recycling point installed at Merton libraries - particularly those with a café or at least the Civic Centre - https://www.walkers.co.uk/recycle , https://www.terracycle.co.uk/en-GB/brigades/crisppacket currently our nearest recycling location is New Malden Fire station. We would like to introduce centralised recycling stations within the Civic Centre to improve the recycling in the building. More comms surrounding the issue needs to be prioritised but with the outsourcing of waste services it is confusing and a long winded process trying to find out who is responsible for what. I understand that Gosto Fino have plans to introduce their own branded bamboo reusable cups in the near future perhaps some kind of collaboration here would be of mutual benefit?		
2	There is scheme whereby non-recyclable plastic can be turned into bricks for house-building etc. Here's the site I found that have more information. https://wasteaid.org/toolkit/how-to-turn-mixed-plastic-waste-and-bottles-into-ecobricks/ We could do this.....		
3	Have plastic recycle bins near desks rather than only in the kitchens.		
4	Discount from the coffee shops in the civic centre when you use your own mug and advertising this to staff. Discount on bringing your own pot if you have the salad bar. Takeaway knives and forks from the Civic Centre coffee shop to be non plastic		
5	I feel recycling is not promoted within civic at all and it is unclear what can be put where. Think of all the tea bags that we get through as a building, how about trailing food waste collecting? Also the cleaners need reminding that the blue recycle bins do not just get put with all the rubbish from the other bins in the same black sack!!!! (This means any effort to recycle is pointless exercise if its all put together). I know on my floor I am always extracting cans and things from normal bins and putting in recycle bins so would welcome a more active approach throughout Merton Departments. Again.... all depends if the waste and recycling is then collected properly.		

8. Is there anything you would like to add? We would love to hear your comments and ideas on how we can make it easier for staff to reduce the use of single use plastics in the building. How could Merton Council be more proactive? Use the box below to tell us what you think.

		Response Percent	Response Total
6	<p>My main concern is with the recycling of plastic containers with unnecessary additions to the packaging that are both superfluous and not able to be recycled, i.e. the plastic sleeve on a Ribena bottle.</p> <p>I also do not think that the current approach to rubbish and recycling for residents is particularly effective. The current system has become far more complex (5 different containers? Is there really no better way?) and requires far more regard. My worry is that this will put more people off of actively recycling as they simply will not bother to sort items.</p>		
7	<p>Why not go back to the use of good old glass which can at least be recycled. We all know it can be dangerous, but then, we're all adults.</p> <p>Straws were always paper anyway when I was a child, and so were cups. More recyclable than plastic.</p>		
8	<p>Why are we concentrating on single use plastic? What about food recycling in the Civic Centre too?</p>		
9	<p>I would like to see the Civic Centre recycle more waste and it annoys me considerably when colleagues do not dispose of items appropriately even when they have the opportunity to use the kitchen waste bins and the card/cardboard recycling bins.</p>		
10	<p>The problem is supermarket packaging. Work with them to reduce their use of plastic.</p>		
11	<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>I trust you all are well. I would request you also take into consideration sites off-site that are Merton owned, such as the children's centres, Brightwell, pre-schools, as I am aware that re-use and ecological practices aren't always followed. Even with a recycling bin available, staff and customers throw recyclable plastic in the waste-bin, especially water cups, straws, coffee cups, cutlery, water bottles.</p> <p>It might also be worthwhile making staff aware of bamboo and hemp products that are biodegradable and are used for making products such as straws, toothbrushes, combs, refillable cups, etc, and where to buy them. Metal straws are also available online. TK Maxx stocks the bamboo hot drink cups. The toothbrushes, combs, may not be entirely building related, but it still doesn't hurt to educate staff and partners as holistic beings.</p> <p>It might be worthwhile speaking to the catering services at all sites, and asking them to consider purchasing fruit and produce from sellers who do not wrap vegetables etc in plastic. And who use less plastic, and more ecological materials that biodegrade easily.</p> <p>Many thanks for this initiative, as this is an issue we all are responsible for, and it's not going to disappear!</p>		
12	<p>Greater awareness promoted by communications would be best. The means and information already exists, it just needs to be promoted well.</p>		
13	<p>Ensure stationery is purchased that is in recyclable packaging and not over packaged. Merton branded 'bags for life' on sale at libraries</p>		
14	<p>Cut down / restrict the use of plastic and other non-recyclable materials in the café.</p>		

8. Is there anything you would like to add? We would love to hear your comments and ideas on how we can make it easier for staff to reduce the use of single use plastics in the building. How could Merton Council be more proactive? Use the box below to tell us what you think.

		Response Percent	Response Total
15	<p>Could Merton join the Go-Brik campaign? We are doing this at home - you can get an awful lot of plastic in one 2litre bottle.</p> <p>Do the muffins etc on the trolley need to be individually wrapped?</p> <p>Have our stationery suppliers considered the cellophane wrap on packs of wallets, post-its etc?</p>		
16	<p>I am really shocked by the amount of single use plastic that staff throw away rather than use the recycling facilities provided. The facilities provided aren't insufficient so why don't people take a couple of seconds to wash out plastic pots.</p> <p>there is confusion as to what goes in the paper and card bin, some staff put co-mingled waste in them but I have no idea if this is correct or not?</p> <p>I'd like to offer my support with this task group, its something I feel very strongly about.</p>		
17	Pilot a refundable deposit scheme on single use plastic bottles purchased in the building		
18	<p>The recycling bins in the kitchens are still not being used correctly by staff. I often see plastic bottles in the general waste bin or people are putting food waste into the recycling bin.</p> <p>People sitting at their desks simply put their plastic into their desk side bins (ie general rubbish) rather than walk to the kitchen to recycle. I feel that a campaign needs to be launched to target these staff. To rinse out a yoghurt pot and put in the kitchen bin should be easy... maybe they just need reminding.</p>		
19	I work at Gifford House where we try to recycle as much as possible - can any schemes that are introduced at the Civic Centre be introduced at other sites as well?		
20	<p>Gosto fino claimed to cut down on single use plastic but still use it.</p> <p>More eco friendly 100% recyclable envelopes/ literature sent out to residents?</p>		
21	Work with the internal caterers for them to promote people bringing in their own reusable cups. this would give people confidence to take their own cups rather than having to use the plastic cups.		
22	<p>Discounts in the staff cafe for people with a reusable cup.</p> <p>Staff bulletin with ideas on how to do more outside of work</p> <p>Stall in the foyer promoting this issue</p>		
23	the plastic recycling containers in the kitchens should be labelled more clearly and made more prominent. Reminder on the general waste bin would prompt good habits - seen so many milk containers put in general waste.		
24	<p>Replace the water machines with bigger machines to make it easier to fill up big reusable bottles.</p> <p>More signage around recycling bins.</p>		
25	<p>Redesign the kitchens - have a plentiful supply of standard plain mugs and a dishwasher on each floor just for mugs.</p> <p>Install a hot drinks machine on each floor too.</p>		
26	It might be an idea to have a sticker on waste bins reminding people not to throw away recyclable items (plastic bottles, paper etc.).		

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		Response Percent	Response Total
	I have seen cleaners actually trying to sort rubbish that has been thrown away - picking out recyclable items but I'm sure they won't always have the time to do this.		
27	Work with local cafe's to reduce plastic at the point of sale. Incentivise change. Merton Junction could give the 15% discount to those who use re-usable cups and others get 10%?		
28	Remove all Waste bins from people's desks and have main bins for recycling etc near the printer and or in the kitchen. No other offices in London have bins at desks as this encourages people not to recycle.		
29	Remove all Waste bins from people's desks and have main bins for recycling etc near the printer and or in the kitchen. No other offices in London have bins at desks as this encourages people not to recycle.		
30	people often finish using a plastic bottle etc when they are in meetings, but the rooms do not have recycling facility. Maybe notices reminding people to recycle or possibly put dual purpose bins in the committee rooms, café and merton junction as well		
31	The amount of waste I see ie photo copying etc when we don't need to. Lots of waste of plastic etc in the building and in Merton Junction - crisp packets - paper bags etc		
32	Why just plastic, as well as plastic, please can you do something to help change the paper culture in Merton - as that's just as important (just not as trendy at the moment). Too many people printing needless reams of paper, it drives me mad. Please incorporate that into your campaign.		
33	Many staff do not recycle despite facilities being available. Stronger messages to staff should be put up to emphasise the need to recycle. Rates might increase if there were consistent facilities across floors, i.e. the recycling bins look the same and accept the same items. Often the facilities change on the same floor. On the 7th floor in the kitchen the bin goes from paper only, to all recycling and back to paper as it is changed. If you want people to do something - make it easy. Food Waste recycling should also be introduced on all floors. If we expect residents to do it, we should lead by example.		
34	Each kitchen area could be furnished with sets of cutlery for use by staff to reduce the need for the café to provide plastic cutlery for takeaway meals. Likewise plates and hot covers to reduce the need for polystyrene boxes.		
35	Remove small office 'waste paper bins' and replace with clearly labelled recycling bins to segregate landfill and recyclable waste streams. Run an awareness campaign for staff. In the area that I work in waste is not separated well in either the office or kitchen despite there being some recycling bins available. If this is replicated across the council our recycling rates for all streams not just plastics would be very low.		
36	Everyone has lost faith with recycling since we found out it was mostly shipped to China and then probably dumped as landfill or burned.		
37	Recycling does not happened within the Merton Building. I see cleaners putting all recycling paper bin into the black bag every day and not used as it suppose to be done.		

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		Response Percent	Response Total
	Very appalling		
38	Please make it as easy as possible for Merton Council staff to recycle in the Council building		
39	stop selling food and drink packaged in plastic in the building		
40	There needs to be a much stronger message about recycling by Council employees and especially in Civic Centre		
41	Well done for looking at this issue. I think recycling needs to be a lot clearer. Good idea to work with the caterers Gosto Fino in the civic centre as well to reduce single use plastic. Maybe a few posters with ideas/ advice on how to reduce- or just reminders to reduce, re-use and recycle		
42	Perhaps introduce plastic recycling bins around the office - like the blue bins we have for paper. In my experience a lot of colleagues find it an effort to go to the kitchen to recycle plastics in the big recycle bin. I am very active in encouraging my team to recycle and also discuss office recycling as part of the induction process for new colleagues.		
43	Have shops in the borough that sell groceries without packaging. Have a scheme in the borough (similar to the one in Hastings) where cafes etc will refill people's water bottles. Have water fountains in the community where people can refill water bottles		
44	What if there were a system where you were served your hot drink in the junction in an easily identifiable mug (so they wont get muddled with all the other mugs). You could then take it up to your desk to drink (the mugs might need lids) and when finished leave it in an allocated spot, then when the trolley was going round you could hand it in, or if staff were willing they could collect them, and they could be taken downstairs and then put back into circulation. They'd probably have to go through the washer downstairs, but maybe adding a small amount onto every hot drink sold would all add up and cover costs for this? or you could charge extra for a disposable cup? Merton could pay for the mugs so the cost wasn't put onto the café? Also charging extra for single use plastics like cutlery, straws etc. might not be a bad idea. it seems to work for plastic bags.		
45	where possible I try not to use plastic		
46	If you want to promote Merton branded reusables I think it would be helpful to make it so cutting edge design people really want to sign up to the product. Why don't you go to somewhere like Kingston University and offer it as Graphic design competition - they have students who lead on design. if not them find somewhere in Merton like that and make it relevant.		
47	Enrol on the GoBrik project and encourage schools to do this. Great idea and lots of creations could be made!		
48	To ban plastic straws being used.		

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		Response Percent	Response Total
	Provide designated bins, also, for plastic water bottles and cups only.		
49	Sticker on the bins with picture for what goes in and what doesn't? We're still not clear what goes in what. Ask Sharon Foster - the cleaner on 1st floor. She gets very fed up with it.		
50	I think a coffee cup is scratching the surface. you need to consider what people use everyday like plastic carrier bags for example, this would be far more useful than a coffee cup		
51	reminder posters on what can be / can't be recycled as a lot of people are still unclear - for instance people try to recycle coffee cups. also clarify on how clean containers need to be eg rinsed out or not.		
52	I am surprised at how much plastic ie bottles etc is thrown into the normal waste bin. Maybe the council should take away the normal rubbish bins or make the recycling bins more prominent. I try were possible to shift the recycling into the correct bin		
53	we need more awareness raising on this issue		
54	My biggest concern at Civic is the introduction of the plastic salad boxes in the Junction. I used to select a plate and add the salad - however, I now have to choose a plastic box, add my salad, walk to the counter and he then tips my salad out onto the plate and throws the box away! I questioned this but was told that people add too much to plates. This is purely a profit issue. Huge waste of plastic and I won't buy my salad there now.		
55	provide further information about what is single use plastic and what isn't (some are obvious but others aren't). tell us about alternative eg bamboo etc, wax wraps rather than Clingfilm provide statics on the number of single use cups used and how this would impact on the environment		
56	Gusto Fino rarely ask what cup is required and default to disposable cup. If we are to use disposable cups in the civic, and wider LBM buildings, can these be green compostable cups to ensure that where possible zero waste goes to landfill and that cups used are not plastic or made from virgin paper		
57	The available recycling bins in the building are often contaminated with general waste.		
58	more info on what plastics are and are not recyclable would be helpful		
59	Give gentle reminders about the importance of recycling and be specific: it's not just about paper. Most people will know about the issue of single use plastics, and appreciate the need to do better on this front - but from what I've seen it's not front of brain for them so things that could be recycled just get lobbed in the bin. You could always have a let's recycle day with some basic A3 posters to jolt this back into people's consciousness.		
60	They could gift everyone a cup that they take to get filled and pay for the cup to be filled rather than to buy the cup		

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		Response Percent	Response Total
61	This is more generic more information about what plastics are recyclable could be helpful for Veollia collections..		
62	I mostly drink coffee 'in' rather than take-away so use china/glass cups.		
63	When they're meetings I've been forced to use plastic cups for visitors absent any other solution. Would you consider having glasses/crockery for such occasions and ensuring they're easily available? - ie not locked up like the crown jewels. As well as the waste of plastic, it sends out quite a poor message to the outside world.		
64	I use the small blue recycling bins in the office to put paper and card in, but have noticed that the cleaners combine the blue bin contents and the other bin contents into a single black plastic bag.		
65	<p>I have a metal water bottle. these are fantastic as they look good and keep cold drinks cold and apparently hot drinks hot -0 I haven't tried as yet. They are double walled so don't get hot on the outside. Please also consider options around promoting these to stop people buying water in the plastic.</p> <p>Also consider more water fountains.</p> <p>The Royal Marsden have reusable branded cups and a sum of the cost goes to a charity, perhaps if we as a council do that it could go to Sustainable Merton?</p> <p>In the review please also consider the London Mayors Refill Programme which asks businesses to advertise that they provide water stations. We could encourage staff to become water champions to promote the scheme as much as possible.</p>		
66			
67	the more we can do to lead the way on issues of sustainability and the environment as a local authority the better. We should be setting an example for residents and local businesses to follow.		
68	Run a treasure hunt around the building - the first person to find 20 (or whatever number you think right) items that are single use plastic in a given time limit wins a reusable coffee cup and a free coffee. I think this would be a bit of fun and would illuminate what people think of as single use plastic.		
69	We desperately need more information available in the public domain on what can or cannot be recycled. There is nothing on the Merton website apart from basic information - people are more liable to ask about new items etc.		
70	Are you thinking beyond reusable cups?? We need more certainty that when we make the effort to recycle, it is taken away by the council and properly recycled.We also need clearer guidance as to what can be recycled.		
71	I am confused - this is about single use plastics which I take to mean water bottles etc. not coffee cups which are usually cardboard?? Why no questions about use of re-usable water bottles. Or plastic cutlery and plastic lunch boxes - they are way more relevant.		
72	I think the issue of plastic bottles and plastic packaging is also important. One local coffee shop sells fully compostable coffee cups (tariro) which is another good solution. Also plastic bag use needs to be tackled.		

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		Response Percent	Response Total
	Maybe we could have a plastic bag store that people could borrow from if they go out to buy shopping when they are at work and have not brought in their own bags?		
73	I and many of my library colleagues would gladly recycle more goods via our staffroom and the recycling bins in the public areas of Morden Library. Unfortunately we were told that we could only recycle card and paper from our site. We are also not sure if some members of the cleaning team are distinguishing the recycling bins from those used for landfill refuse. It seems a shame if the council is committed to increasing recycling across the borough, that we cannot recycle more from the library e.g. plastics, tins and glass.		
74	Make recycling easier/ clearer especially in the civic centre building with clear notices in the staff kitchen areas.		
75	All effort should be made to reduce plastics demand at source by talking to the supermarkets about packaging		
76	All effort should be made to reduce plastics demand at source by talking to the supermarkets about packaging		
77	café Gosto Fino provides plastic cutlery with every take away meal. that may not be necessary; most people who buy take away food there work in the building and may have regular cutlery in their lockers.		
78	In the Civic office and other Merton buildings other than paper recycling is not available.		
79	This should not just be about 'cups' and straws - there needs to be a more concerted effort to stop using plastic folders, clear plastic sleeves etc. Files need to be card and paper not neoprene. In fact perhaps staff should be encouraged to have their 'own pen' that the council provide refills for so that we become more possessive of the item and stop using disposable biro's. This is not about being stingy or adopting hair shirt policies but simply more mindful about if a document or file really need to be shiny new plastic, especially when so much stuff is digitised.		
80	Just hurry up and do it! Why are we as council so, so, so, slow at doing things -the right thing?!		
81	Its great we have recycling opportunities at work - so would completely want to support		
82	In my previous role we used plastic spoons. I asked my manager to change these to the small wooden sticks which is what is ordered now. Only a small step but a change at least. When you see the devastation that these plastics are now causing especially to the wildlife its heart breaking. Everyone should be trying to do a little more.		
83	It's not entirely clear what kind of waste goes in which bin, and they are anyway always entirely contaminated by those who do not have a perspective of personal responsibility.		
84	It's not entirely clear what kind of waste goes in which bin, and they are anyway always entirely contaminated by those who do not have a perspective of personal responsibility.		

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		Response Percent	Response Total
85	It's not entirely clear what kind of waste goes in which bin, and they are anyway always entirely contaminated by those who do not have a perspective of personal responsibility.		
		answered	85
		skipped	86

Appendix 2: Discussion with officers and the executive

On Friday 12th April the task group meet with officers and a representative of the executive to discuss this report's recommendation.

The task group acknowledges the proactivity of Mark Humphries and his team for the work they have done to date. A selection of the actions they have taken following the conclusion of the task groups work can be read below.

Water

In response to requests to replace current water dispensers with alternatives that allow bigger bottles to be filled, the corporate facilities team is obtaining details from its supplier to establish if a cost effective alternative can be provided that has been manufactured with sports bottles in mind and will fit most standard bottles.

Facilities Management have purchased reusable cups within all the kitchens with appropriate signs encouraging staff to use and return and will be monitoring usage and replacing where required.

Recycling

The cleaning contract manger from Birkin has produced an easy to follow step by step information sheet, which is being used as part of regular 'tool-box talks' with the cleaning staff to reinforce the importance of keeping the two strands separate.

The Facilities Management team is also exploring ways to improve recycling at the civic centre (including Morden Library) and other corporate sites, for example by introducing battery recycling. An initial trial on two floors of a centralised binning approach is being implemented in part to improve the signage and layout and make it much clearer, easy and obvious to staff how and what

they can recycle. They are also exploring how to introduce a commercial food waste collection from the civic centre.

Catering

The Civic centre catering is provided by a commercial catering company (Gosto Fino) and is operated on the basis of a formal concessionary contract, for which the Council receives income that is based on a percentage of the sales achieved.

Items that have been introduced or where improvements are planned are listed below.

- **Re usable cups** – Gosto Fino are committed to introducing these during 2019 as an alternative to plastic lined paper cups. They would be purchased by customers as a one off cost and then would provide a discount on any future beverages purchased.
- **Customers own cups** – Customers are encouraged to bring their own cups to obtain a discount for coffee, and smoothies/milkshakes. This is displayed on the menu boards and social media pages and Gosto Fino are looking to see if this can be made more prominent.
- **Plastic cups** – These are no longer being provided unless a customer specifically asks for one.
- **Plastic straws** – These are no longer being supplied and suitable biodegradable paper alternatives are now given to customers.
- **Plastic cutlery** – Generally customers will use metal cutlery when consuming food within any of the restaurant areas. However, the supplier has been trialling the use of disposable wooden knives, forks and spoons for take-away meals.
- **Plastic salad containers and Expanded foam hot food containers** – The supplier is reviewing suitable biodegradable or recyclable alternatives at reasonable cost.

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