

ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

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| Report to | Environment and Amenities Committee |
| Meeting date | 9th February 2026 |
| Report author | Cllr Gabby Barody |
| Agenda item | 10 |

Revised proposal for a single use plastic (SUP) policy for Abingdon relating to stall holders in the marketplace and vendors at our outdoor events

1. Purpose of the Report

To give consideration to introducing a revised proposal for a Single Use Plastic Policy (SUP) for Abingdon, relating to stall holders in the marketplace and vendors at the Council's outdoor events.

2. Summary

2.1 Plastic pollution takes hundreds of years to break down and inflicts severe damage on our ocean, rivers, and land. It is also a source of greenhouse gas emissions, from its production and manufacture to the way it is disposed.

2.2 There is evidence to confirm that people across England use 2.7 billion items of mostly plastic single-use cutlery, and 721 million single-use plates every year, but only 10% of these are recycled. If 2.7 billion pieces of cutlery were lined up, they would go round the world more than eight-and-a half times.

2.3 The previous UK Government published its 25-Year Environment Plan in January 2018, which includes a target of "achieving zero avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042". In line with national policy, reducing SUP has become a priority for many local authorities across the UK and elsewhere. The goal from the current Government is to ensure all plastic packaging on the market is recyclable, reusable, or compostable feeding into the broader 2042 target.

2.4 Current Government Law

No business – whether retailer, takeaway, food vendor, or part of the hospitality industry – will now be able to sell single-use plastic (SUP) cutlery, balloon sticks nor polystyrene cups and food containers in England. The supply of single-use plastic plates, trays and bowls has also been restricted.

2.4 DEFRA: Single-use plastics bans and restrictions 2024

You must not supply certain single-use plastic items in England, except for some exemptions.

3. Action Required and Proposals

3.1 I am asking Abingdon Town Council to support the introduction of a policy which will commit Abingdon Town Council to act in the reduction and where possible, the removal of single use plastics from the Council's operations, services, our stall holders within the marketplace and at our outdoor events. This will include items such as food packaging, bottles, straws, containers, disposable cups, cutlery, and grocery bags.

This will require a proposer, a seconder and a vote.

4. Link to Strategic Plan & Objectives

4.1 The introduction of a SUP Policy supports the Council's key objectives.

5. Background

5.1 The former Environmental and Amenities and the Communities Services Committees jointly agreed to act on this issue in 2024. The discussions relating to this issue have been held regularly with Carbon Cutters, One Planet Abingdon and our other partners over the past two years and we are reviewing and revisiting this as part of the newly formed Environment, Amenities and Infrastructure Committee as we have reached a point where significant change is now warranted, given other towns have successfully adopted a policy and also the ongoing and current climate emergency and threat to biodiversity and wildlife.

6. Key Information & Options

6.1 Why implement a policy

- i. The proposed policy would align local practice with national direction on waste prevention and reuse.
- ii. The proposed policy would also enhance our working partnerships with for example Carbon Cutters and One Planet Abingdon so there is visible
- iii. It would help to remove problematic single-use plastics from council operations and procurement.
- iv. Apply clear requirements to council-controlled events and the marketplace through terms and conditions
- v. Support traders with practical guidance and phased implementation.
- vi. Improve the green responsibility and credentials for Abingdon on Thames.

6.2 Comparable approaches have been adopted by other UK councils, including Brighton & Hove's single-use plastics policy for council suppliers and events, and Manchester's use of reusable cup systems at events. Between 2021 and 2023, Abingdon Town Council supported events that promoted reusable cups and wider sustainability measures, demonstrating local feasibility and interest. The current context provides a timely opportunity to revisit and formalise this work through the adoption of a clear single-use plastics or essential plastics only policy, aligned with established practice elsewhere. The policy should have:-

A clear “essential use” exemption list (accessibility, hygiene where required, safety)

Approved alternatives list (reusables, paper/card where suitable, deposit-return cups)

Compliance approach through contract/licence conditions (with phased enforcement)

Compliance with DEFRA (2024) list of exemptions and non-exemptions

6.3 Proposed Timeline

Phase One

A: Current

Remove all single use plastics from the council services in general (offices, catered events etc.). No plastic cutlery or polystyrene to be used in the Town by any establishment, vendor, or stall holder (Achieved).

B (April - July 2026):

Voluntary transitional period

Market stallholders and outdoor event vendors will be asked to significantly reduce the use of single-use plastics, limiting their use to essential plastics only where no reasonable alternative exists and selecting the least harmful option. Reusable or recyclable alternatives will be actively encouraged. Abingdon Town Council will reintroduce a pledge for local businesses, including cafés, food outlets, and event organisers, to explicitly commit to reducing single-use plastics and other disposable items. This phase will focus on engagement, support, and practical transition rather than enforcement.

Phase Two (August 2026 onwards):

Formal adoption and implementation of the policy

Following a review of progress and feedback from Phase One, Abingdon Town Council will formally adopt the single-use plastics policy in full. From this point, all market stallholders and outdoor event vendors operating on council-managed land or events will be required to comply with the policy, including the use of reusable or recyclable alternatives in place of non-essential single-use plastics. This phased approach allows the Council to assess readiness, address practical challenges, and implement the policy in a proportionate and effective manner.

7. Climate Change/Green Implications

7.1 The introduction of a SUP Policy will support action against climate change and is a green initiative.

8. Financial Budget Implications

8.1 This proposal should have no financial implications.

9. **HR Implications**

- 9.1 The introduction of this policy will need to be managed by the Project Manager:
Property and Place in respect of the Market and by the Project Manager: Business and Communications in respect of outdoor events held by the Council.

10. **Supporting papers and appendices**

Resources (links):

<https://relondon.gov.uk/latest/relondon-london-councils-one-world-living-team-and-wrap-launch-single-use-plastics-pledge?>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/single-use-plastics-bans-and-restrictions>

<https://ww3.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/single-use-plastic-policy.pdf>

New bans and restrictions on polluting single-use plastics come into force – Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 29 September 2023

Together, let's stamp out single use plastic in Weymouth, 2 December 2021