

REPORT TO SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE – 27 FEBRUARY 2019

PLASTIC-FREE COMMUNITIES

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 **Discuss the Plastic-Free Communities initiative, and specifically the Local Governance objectives (2.6), for which the organisers, Surfers Against Sewage, have asked for our support in Aberdeenshire.**
- 1.2 **Instruct the Head of Economic Development and Protective Services to further investigate whether Aberdeenshire Council can reasonably commit to the Plastic-Free Communities Local Governance objectives (2.6) in Aberdeenshire.**
- 1.3 **Should the Sustainability Committee approve 1.2, instruct the Head of Economic Development and Protective Services to propose a resolution, to go before Aberdeenshire Council, committing the Council to meeting the Local Governance objectives (2.6) of the Plastic-Free Communities initiative.**

2 Background / Discussion

- 2.1 The Scottish Parliament has acknowledged the *'cumulative damage that plastics are doing to the environment and economy, not just domestically but also globally'* and *'supports the aim to both encourage behaviour change in society and to seek legislative solutions to this problem'* ([7 February, 2019; Item 3](#)).
- 2.2 Through its Environmental and Climate Change Policy, Aberdeenshire Council has committed to *'preventing pollution'* and *'reducing waste'* and to *'Lead by example and use our influence to raise awareness and understanding of environmental and climate change issues and actively encourage responsible practices and behaviours'*.
- 2.3 Further, through its draft Resources and Circular Economy Commitment, which was presented to the Sustainability Committee ON 14 November, 2018, ([Item 8](#)), Aberdeenshire Council is proposing to *'Promote, effect and support circular economy principles and practice internally and in our external areas of influence'* and has identified the reduction in single or limited use items (which would include plastics) as an area for action.
- 2.4 Surfers Against Sewage is an active UK environmental charity who, having started in 1990, and having successfully campaigned for sewage reduction and cleaner waters at our UK beaches, now works with coastal communities to fight plastic pollution through its Plastic-Free Communities (PFC) initiative.

Hundreds of communities across the UK and dozens in Scotland are working towards PFC certification, seeking to meet the [five set objectives](#):

1. Local Governance
 2. Resistance Hubs: Local Businesses;
 3. Plastic-Free Allies
 4. Plastic-Free Rallies
 5. Set up a steering group
- 2.5 Surfers Against Sewage are active in Aberdeenshire and are currently working with the community in Stonehaven to gain PFC Certification for Stonehaven, with officers and members providing support.
- 2.6 The Local Governance objective requires the following:
- Local council (Town, Parish, or Community) passes a resolution supporting the journey to PFC status, committing to plastic-free alternatives and plastic-free initiatives within the constituency.
 - Council must lead by example to remove single-use plastic items from their premises.
 - Council to encourage plastic-free initiatives, promoting the campaign and supporting events.
 - A representative of the council must be named on the PFC steering group.
- 2.7 Surfers Against Sewage has engaged Aberdeenshire Council to discuss meeting the requirements of objective one of PFC (above) for Stonehaven, but also across Aberdeenshire. In discussion with Surfers Against Sewage, it has been noted that the requirements tie in with a lot of the work that is ongoing within Aberdeenshire Council, including the development of draft Resources and Circular Economy Commitment. It is also noted that if there was a Council-wide 'resolution', this would cover all coastal communities in Aberdeenshire, supporting any subsequent PFC Certifications in Aberdeenshire.
- 2.8 In order for Stonehaven and other Aberdeenshire communities to meet objective one of the PFC initiative, a resolution would need to be raised which specifically mentions single-use plastics and the PFC initiative, as well as committing the Council to removing single-use plastic items from our premises, supporting PFC initiatives, and having a presence on local PFC steering groups (see 2.6). Incorporating these requirements into the currently under development Resources and Circular Economy Commitment (RCEC) has been considered, but is not deemed appropriate on account of the RCEC being a high-level principles document, and these requirements being specific to single-use plastics and the PFC initiative.
- 2.9 The community engagement and environmental consciousness of the Surfers Against Sewage PFC initiative is to be commended. If any resolution is raised by Aberdeenshire Council in support of the Local Governance objective (see 2.6), consideration should be given to ensuring that the support given is balanced, as a campaign focussed on a single issue (single-use plastic in this

case) has the potential to overlook the wider sustainability picture: a picture in which the understood path towards improved sustainability is ever evolving. The particular danger in this case would be to have a blanket condemnation of single-use plastics without due justification.

- 2.10 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this and their comments are incorporated within the report. They are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section S paragraph 1.1 (a) of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance, as it relates to monitoring the Council's work in respect of sustainable development and climate change.

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken at this time.
- 4.2 There are no direct staffing or financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.3 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level – Risk ID ACORP010, as it relates to Environmental challenges within the Corporate Risk Register. The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level – Risk ID ISSR004, as it relates to Climate Change in the Directorate Strategic Risk Register.
- 4.4 A Town Centre Impact Assessment has not been undertaken at this time.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by: Joel Evans, Internal Waste Reduction Officer 12 February, 2019

