

<b>Report on</b>	Call for Evidence to Eliminate Plastic Waste Pollution
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Mark McAdoo, Head of Environmental Services
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Karl McGowan, Waste Disposal and Contracts Manager

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To inform members on the Council's proposed response to a public Call for Evidence on a Plan to Eliminate Plastic Pollution in Northern Ireland.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) launched a public Call for Evidence on the 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2021 on a plan to eliminate plastic pollution in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland Executive committed to the development of this plan in the New Decade, New Approach document.
2.2	This Call for Evidence seeks information on the wide range of actions that are taking place across NI to eliminate plastic pollution, what the key challenges and opportunities might be for NI in eliminating plastic pollution, and to hear from a broad range of sources of evidence and expertise (local, national and international) that could help inform the Northern Ireland Plastic Pollution plan.
2.3	A paper outlining the purpose and scope of the Call for Evidence is attached as appendix. The closing date for submissions is 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2021.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The purpose of this Call for Evidence is to help ensure the Department is capturing all the actions that are taking place across Northern Ireland which are aimed at tackling and eliminating plastic pollution. Actions submitted may be brought forward for inclusion in the plan to showcase Northern Ireland's achievements in addressing the problem.
3.2	The proposed submission by the Council is attached as an appendix and details the actions that the Council has taken over the last number of years to reduce plastic pollution within the district; including the following:

- Promoting recycling throughout the district and moving the handling of waste plastics up the waste hierarchy by minimising the use of landfill, recycling waste plastics where possible and recovering energy from lower grade plastics. In the latest Local Authority Waste Management Statistics Report by the NIEA (January – March 2021) Mid Ulster District Council achieved the highest recycling rate of 54.8%, the second highest energy recovery rate of 42.2% and the lowest landfill rate of 3.8% of all Councils.
- The Councils integrated marketing and communications activity has contributed to on-going improvements in recycling rates and reductions in contamination levels. The use of single use plastics and plastic pollution have increasingly been at the centre of the waste and recycling communications message. Recent campaigns included the Be Plastic Fantastic campaign, the annual Eco-Speak competition and the Refillution campaign in conjunction with NIWater.
- The Council is a frontline service in reducing plastic pollution in the countryside through its extensive street cleansing and litter picking operations and by supporting Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. It has also helped support community clean ups over the past year, loaning out over 4,500 litter pickers and donating almost 12,000 bags to be used in community clean ups at 60 different locations throughout the district.
- Promoting the reduction of single use plastics by selling reusable green waste sacks, distributing promotional Jute bags-for-life and sourcing approx. 1,000 water bottles through the Refillution campaign by NIW.
- Sourcing recycled plastic products for distribution through the Councils schools educational programme and recycled street furniture for use in parks such as seats, picnic benches and bins as well as road nameplates.
- The Council operates a reusable nappy scheme to encourage the use of reusable cloth nappies. Each child wearing disposable nappies over a 2.5 year period will require 4000-6000 of these which is enough to fill approximately 160 black bags, equalling approximately 1.5-2 tonnes of black bin waste, costing parents/carers approx. £900 during that time. By swapping to reusable nappies, Mid Ulster residents with small children in their household can dramatically reduce the amount of plastic waste as well as saving money. Through Mid Ulster Councils Reusable Nappy Scheme, users are reimbursed £30 when they spend £50 or more on the purchase of reusable cloth nappies.
- Council ES Officers have also been involved in a project with Queen's University, Belfast and will potentially be participating on an advisory board for a novel project to convert non-recyclable plastics into high value carbon nano tubes (used for adding structural strength to building materials but also in electronics, plastics and medicine). The project is in the very early stages and the Committee shall be updated on progress in a future report

3.3	In terms of future actions it is noted that 6 of the 11 Councils have now signed up to the Plastic Promise, a scheme promoted by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, where organisations make a pledge to reduce their plastic footprint. Schemes developed by other Councils include bring your own reusable coffee cup / water bottle schemes, reduction of single use plastics and promotion of compostable packaging to shops and takeaways. It is anticipated that this Council will also sign up to the Plastic Promise in due course and Recycling Officers are currently investigating potential projects to run alongside the next communication campaign
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
4.1	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: None.
	Human: None.
	Risk Management: None.
4.2	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: None
	Rural Needs Implications: None
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the proposed submission to the Call for Evidence on a Plan to Eliminate Plastic Pollution in Northern Ireland.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	DAERA paper outlining the purpose and scope of the Call for Evidence
6.2	Proposed submission to the Call for Evidence Plan to Eliminate Plastic Pollution