



Single-Use Plastic policy



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Elmbridge
Borough Council

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Introduction

What are Single Use Plastics (SUPs)?

SUPs, often referred to as disposable plastics, are commonly used for packaging and are intended to be used only once before they are thrown away. They include, among other items, food packaging, bottles, straws, containers, cups, cutlery and grocery bags. SUP is also often described as being 'avoidable' when a reusable or recyclable alternative could have been used.

Surrey's [Single Use Plastic Strategy](#) Surrey's categorises SUPs based on the difficulty to eliminate:

Easy - plastic drink bottles, plastic drink cups, plastic food takeaway boxes, plastic cutlery, plastic grocery bags, straws, stirrers, sauce sachets and tea bags with plastic wrappers.

Moderate - hot drink cups and lids, coffee capsules and stationery.

Hard - bin bags, food wrappers, yogurt pots, milk bottles, composite food packaging (e.g: chocolate boxes, biscuit trays, crisp bags, soup containers), cleaning supplies (e.g: washing-up fluid, other cleaning fluids and wet wipes), food packaging film, protective packaging for fragile items etc.

The challenge of SUPs

Although the benefits of plastic have their place, the global ability to cope with plastic waste is already overwhelmed. The United Nations Environment Programme revealed that only 9% of the nine billion tonnes of plastic the world has ever produced has been recycled. Items that are used 'on the go' such as SUPs are often the most littered, creating an environmental pollutant and reducing the possibility of managing their end of life effectively.

Policy context

National Commitments and Policies

- Simpler Recycling Consultation (2023) - Consistency in household and business recycling in England
- A Green future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment (2018)
 - Commitment to eliminate all avoidable plastic waste by 2042.
 - Ban of sale of products containing microbeads in 2018
 - Ban on plastic strirers, straws and and cotton buds in 2020
- DEFRA's new Waste and Resources Strategy (2018)
- Goverment Guidance: Single-use plastics bans and restrictions
 - Ban on single use plastic plates, bowls, cutlery, ballon sticks and trays, polystyrene food containers in 2023



Surrey's Single Use Plastic strategy (2019)

- Five year action plan to support Surrey to become a SUP free county
- Aim to end the sale and provision of SUP products in order to phase out their use across their estates
- Aim to work with their suppliers and contractors on the procurement policy for zero avoidable SUP use
- Aim to raise awareness across Surrey and support action towards making their own locations avoidable plastic free zones



Elmbridge Borough Council - Single Use Plastic policy

- Policy aligning with overal National and Regional strategies and commitments
- Internal commitments focusing on sustainable procurement and employee behaviour change
- External commitments to raise awareness across Elmbridge to support communities, schools, businesses towards making their own buidings and events SUP free zones

Our Aim

What's it for?

The Single Use Plastic policy commits Elmbridge Borough Council to act to reduce, and remove where possible, the use of Single Use Plastic from the council's operations and services as well as working towards finding positive answers for reducing plastic use across the borough. We aim to lead by example and share best practice in reducing unnecessary waste across the borough.

We aim to align with Surrey's Single Use Plastic strategy and find positive solutions in reducing Single Use Plastics both in-house and within the borough.

The journey so far

Since the council declared a climate emergency in the borough in 2019, we have been working through the council's operations and services to identify how we can remove as much single use plastic as possible.

So far, the council has:

- Partnered with Rethink Waste to deliver an interactive 'Green Redeem' scheme to Elmbridge residents providing tips on how to reduce their Single Use Plastic consumption.
- Launched bottle refilling stations including a refill station in the Civic Centre reception and businesses within Thames Ditton and Cobham have signed up for the Refill programme, providing free tap water to those who need to refill bottles.
- Introduced segregated recycling bins across the council Civic Centre and Centres for the Community to help best practice recycling amongst employees.
- Introduced segregated recycling bins across the high streets to differentiate single bins and those on green spaces.
- Continued to provide Elmbridge borough residents with kerbside recycling service to enable them to recycle plastic materials.

Who will the Single Use Plastic policy effect?

Internal objectives - phase 1

Suppliers/contractors - Elmbridge Borough Council Offices and operations through procurement policy

Employees - Behaviour change

External objectives – phase 2

Residents, communities, schools and businesses – Raising awareness and support SUP reduction actions

Objectives and commitments

The Single Use Plastic policy has 4 objectives with specific commitments for each:

Objective 1: reduce single use plastic in council operations (Phase 1)

Objective 2: working with suppliers and contractors (Phase 1)

Objective 3: support greater awareness and action in finding sustainable SUP replacements wherever appropriate and encourage higher recycling rates across our estates (Phase 2)

Objective 4: raise awareness across Elmbridge and encourage higher recycling rates across the borough (Phase 2)

Commitments

We want to continue to reduce SUPs across our services and operations as well as across the borough. Our commitments are listed below and establish the basis of the SUP Action Plan appended to this policy.

Objective 1 commitments:

- Explore where the council can achieve reductions in avoidable plastic use and eliminate SUP across operations.
- Demonstrate best practice and raise awareness internally around SUP use

and how it can be avoided.

- Ensure that we seek to reduce and work towards eliminating avoidable SUPs at internal and external events where possible.

Objective 2 commitments:

- Ensure that our sustainable procurement policy and procedures require our suppliers to reduce SUP use wherever possible. Refer to Draft Sustainable Procurement policy for further details.
- Revise existing sustainable procurement policy and procedures.

Objective 3 commitments:

- Explore the use of eco-friendly alternatives to SUP.
- Integrate the SUP commitments into best practice across the council's other services.
- Enable our employees to recycle better by improving their knowledge of recycling facilities, which are provided in-house and across our own estate.
- Enable our employees to recycle better by improved labelling.

Objective 4 commitments:

- Support local initiatives that aim to strive to address SUP avoidance.
- Promote schemes to help residents and businesses to reduce SUP.

Monitoring

The SUP Policy will be monitored and the status of the actions within the action plan will be outlined in the council climate change update within the quarterly performance report.