


| | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------------|
|  | | Overview & Scrutiny Committee 3 June 2008 | Agenda Item No. |
| Title | | Plastic Bags | |
| For further information about this report please contact | | Councillor Bill Gifford, email bill.gifford@warwickdc.gov.uk or telephone 01926 338776 | |
| Service Area | | Councillor | |
| Wards of the District directly affected | | None | |
| Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 | | No | |
| Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number | | 19 March 2008, Environment & Economic Policy Committee Minute number 1009. | |
| Background Papers | | As detailed in the scope of the review appended to the report. | |

| | |
|--|----|
| Contrary to the policy framework: | No |
| Contrary to the budgetary framework: | No |
| Key Decision? | No |
| Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number) | No |

| | | |
|---|-------------|-----------------|
| Officer/Councillor Approval | | |
| With regard to officer approval all reports <i>must</i> be approved by the report authors relevant director, Finance, Legal Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder(s). | | |
| Officer Approval | Date | Name |
| Relevant Director | | |
| Chief Executive | 13/5/08 | Chris Elliott |
| CMT | | |
| Section 151 Officer | | |
| Legal | 20/5/08 | Simon Best |
| Finance | 13/5/08 | Marcus Miskinis |
| Portfolio Holder(s) | 13/5/08 | Michael Kinson |
| Consultation Undertaken | | |
| A meeting was held with a Warwick Chamber of Trade representative, Councillor Mrs Higgins who had proposed the review to Council and the relevant Town Centre Manager. All of these parties were also consulted on this report. | | |
| Final Decision? | | No |
| Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below) | | |
| The reports contains recommendations to the Executive for them to agree. | | |

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following a notice of motion to Council, by Councillor Mrs Higgins, regarding an initiative by Warwick Chamber of Trade to stop using single use plastic carrier bags, a working party was established to see how Warwick District Council could assist this initiative.
- 1.2 This report outlines the findings of the working party and their recommendations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the following recommendations be made to the Executive for their approval:
- (1) the Chambers of Trade within the district be asked to work with the Town Centre Managers to produce a business case, for consideration by the Warwick District Council Executive, for funding an initiative based on the following principles:
- Single use plastic bags be replaced by reusable and sustainable bags;
 - The original costs of bags is met by Chambers of Trade, Warwick District Council and potentially other initiatives detailed in the report who the Chambers of Trade would liaise with to agree funding;
 - The cost of bags would be recouped by traders and initiatives using them;
 - The money recouped from the bags would be centralised and used to purchase the bags as required;
 - Bags would be stored centrally in bulk and in small quantities at businesses; and
 - Those contributing and participating in the initiative would have their company name over printed on the bag, along with the relevant Town Centre Partnership logo on the other side.
- (2) Warwick District Council commits to no longer using plastic bags and these are replaced by a reusable and sustainable bag such as ones made from cotton or jute; and
- (3) the recycling/reusing tips on the Council website be promoted further.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 There was no firm initiative from Warwick Chamber of Trade which Warwick District Council could support at present.
- 3.2 There were a number of small businesses, market traders and other local initiatives who were interested in no longer using single use plastic carrier bags.
- 3.3 If single use plastic carrier bags were to be replaced there would be a need to ensure that their replacement was from a sustainable source which had a lesser environmental impact than single use carrier bags.
- 3.4 Replacements for single use carrier bags needed to be readily available for small businesses and easily stored.
- 3.5 There was a public issue in that society needed to be educated on the issue of single use carrier bags, which was beginning to happen via media campaigns.

- 3.6 With both forms of carrier bags there were arguments for and against and these needed to be considered in any proposal to ensure that replacement bags were the better option.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Working Party considered if Warwick District Council could provide marketing and/or financial support for the initiative. However, because there was no firm proposal for the initiative or any specific details of how Warwick District Council could assist, the Working Party thought the proposed recommendations were the best route to follow before the Council made a firm commitment.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 There are no budgetary implications for the Council with regard to recommendation 2.1(1) at present however the business case would potentially lead to a bid for resources.
- 5.2 If the Executive agrees to recommendation 2.1(2) there would be a need for service areas to fund the purchase of bags as required from their existing budgets.
- 5.3 There are no budgetary implications for 5.3 because this can be done via the website itself and can be included in other existing publications.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The recommendations of the report to the Executive would relate to the Council's Corporate Strategy aims of waste minimisation and town centre promotion.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Councillor Mrs Higgins had a motion supported by the Committee which they agreed to investigate.
- 7.2 The notice of motion was as follows:
"that Warwick District Council supports the Warwick Chamber of Trade's initiative for the phasing out of free plastic bags; and the Environment and Economic Policy Committee be asked to investigate and recommend to the Executive (a) how this Council can support this either financially or through assistance in promotion of the scheme; and (b) how other Chambers of Trade can be encouraged to follow the example of Warwick".
- 7.3 A working Party was established by the Environment & Economic Policy Committee which agreed the purpose of the review as set out below. The full scope of the Working Party is attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

"To provide recommendations to the Executive with regard to:

- (1) whether the Council can provide financial support to the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade;
- (2) whether this Council can assist in the promotion of the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade;
- (3) how this Council can encourage other local Chambers of Trade to take on the initiative established by Warwick Chamber of Trade;

(4) what this Council's position/policy on plastic bags is.”

7.4 The Working Party met with a Warwick Chamber of Trade representative, Councillor Mrs Higgins who had proposed the review to Council and the relevant Town Centre Manager to discuss the review. The minutes of the meeting are attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

7.5 The Working Party established that very few Council departments issue any plastic bags to customers and those which do would be interested in joining the initiative. A breakdown of these departments is as follows:

- (a) The Art Gallery & Museum offer a small white plastic bag with each purchase with a Pump Rooms Logo on it. Currently they have about 2500 in stock out of 5000 purchased about four years ago.
- (b) The library service/Warwickshire Direct currently has stocks of plastic bags, but they were hoping to move to an environmentally friendly bag. This would seem like an opportunity to join up
- (c) Plastic envelopes are used for distributing bulky and confidential mail to Councillors to ensure that it arrives intact with Councillors. Alternatives have been and will continue to be tested but these have proved not as robust and raise confidentiality issues. However progress is being made with regard to reducing the significant size of some agendas and electronic access to confidential reports for Councillors, it is hoped this will reduce the number of plastic envelopes used.
- (d) Home News is posted to tenants/leaseholders in clear plastic mailing bags. The plastic is 100% recyclable. Housing Services are currently reviewing this to see if it is the best packaging to use.
- (e) Private Sector Housing, in its guise of promoting energy efficiency in dwellings, issued packs of energy saving light bulbs to elderly people. For convenience, we placed these in distinctive plastic bags with the Energy Saving Trust logo on them. We do not have any bags (or bulbs) left.

Should we decide to do a similar promotion again – very likely – we will not issue plastic bags. But I would be happy to use other types of bag if they were free. The light bulbs are free and I don't have any budget. I would, however, be amenable to passing on someone else's message.

Scrutiny Review Outline

| | |
|---|--|
| Review Topic (Name of review) | Plastic Bag Working Party |
| Working Group Members | Councillors Gifford, Grainger and Vincett |
| Key Officer Contact | Graham Folkes-Skinner, Waste Management Graham.folkes-skinner@warwickdc.gov.uk |
| Scrutiny Officer Support | Graham Leach, Members Services (01926 456114) graham.leach@warwickdc.gov.uk |
| Rationale (key issues and/or reason for doing the review) | Councillor Mrs Higgins had a motion supported by the Committee which they agreed to investigate. The notice of motion is as follows “that Warwick District Council supports the Warwick Chamber of Trade's initiative for the phasing out of free plastic bags; and the Environment and Economic Policy Committee be asked to investigate and recommend to the Executive (a) how this Council can support this either financially or through assistance in promotion of the scheme; and (b) how other Chambers of Trade can be encouraged to follow the example of Warwick”. |
| Purpose/Objective of Review (specify exactly what the review should achieve) | To provide recommendations to the Executive with regard to: (1) whether the Council can provide financial support to the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade; (2) whether this Council can assist in the promotion of the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade; (3) how this Council can encourage other Local Chambers of Trade to take on the initiative established by Warwick Chamber of Trade; (4) what this Council's position/policy on plastic bags is. |
| Scope of the Topic (what is specifically to be included/excluded) | To specifically consider the proposal by Warwick Chamber of Trade and any relevant supporting evidence for this within the UK |
| Indicators of Success (what factors would tell you what a good review should look like) | The provision of viable recommendations to the Executive for consideration. |
| Specify Evidence Sources (Background Information documents to look at) | Notice of Motion to Warwick District Council on 28 November 2008, from Councillor Mrs Higgins; Notice of Motion to Warwick District Council on 25 February 2004 from Councillor Mrs Begg; Notice of Motion to Warwickshire County Council in July 2007 from Councillor Mrs Goode; Coventry Evening Telegraph Article about Coventry City Council going bag free 5 Dec 2007; Response from LGA to WCC on 24 August 2007; Response from defra to Warwickshire County Council 5 |

| | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| | <p>September 2007; Response to Warwickshire County Council from Jeremy Wright MP 3 August 2007; Response from Bill Olnor to Warwickshire County Council on 17 August 2007; www.plasticbagfree.com; Wording for submission of motion to Council by Councillor Mrs Higgins Boris Johnson Article of 15 November 2007 Article by Charles Clover "Brown Urges ban on plastic bags"; Article on Rebecca Hosking; Article by Lewis Carter 12/11/07; Letter to news paper by Ronald Buyers 17 Jan 08; Observer Article 10 Jan 08 "Call for plastic bags to become a thing of the past"; Courier Article 5 October 2007 "Should Warwick ban plastic bags"; and Letter from Councillor Mrs Higgins to the working party. http://www.abolishplasticbags.org.uk/</p> | | |
| Specify Witnesses/Experts (Who to see and when) | Warwick Chamber of Trade Warwick District Council – Town Centre Management Team Councillor Mrs Higgins | | |
| Specify Site Visits (where and when) | N/A | | |
| Consultation with Stakeholders (who should we consult?) | As per witnesses | | |
| Level of Publicity (what level is appropriate and what method should be used) | To be decided as appropriate. | | |
| Barriers/dangers/risks (identify any weaknesses or potential pitfalls) | The Council has very little control over the subject matter; The subject matter is very high profile; The new scrutiny arrangements may affect the membership of the working party; Government Policy may be introduced; The proposals are not supported by the public and retailers. | | |
| Projected Start Date | 7/3/08 | Draft Report Deadline | 1 May 2008. |
| Meeting Frequency | | Projected Completion Date | 3 June 08 and report to Executive on 16 July 08 |
| Date to evaluate impact | Not applicable | | |
| Methods of tracking / Evaluating | Not applicable as the recommendations should be progressed by the Executive and in due course they would consider a business case if appropriate. | | |

Plastic Bag Working Party

Notes of the meeting held on at 1.00pm, 1 April 2008 at Court House, Warwick.

Present: Councillor Gifford (Chair); Councillors Grainger and Vincett.

Also present: Graham Leach and Graham Folkes-Skinner.

1. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Grainger declared a personal interest because she was the owner of a shop within Warwick District.

2. **Questioning of Councillor Mrs Higgins**

Councillor Mrs Higgins attended the meeting to answer questions from the Working Party in support of her notice of motion which had instigated this scrutiny exercise.

- (a) What is the proposal by Warwick Chamber of Trade with regard to plastic bags?

The initiative was instigated by David Way of present days to replace single use plastic bags with re-useable and sustainable cotton or jute bags.

At present nearly every shop within Warwick will ask if you would like a bag for your shopping rather than just providing one.

- (b) How do you think the Council can provide financial support to the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade? & (c) How do you think the Council can assist in the promotion of the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade?

The Council could assist with the scheme by helping the Chamber of Trade promoting and adding its support to the scheme.

- (d) How do you think this Council can encourage other local Chambers of Trade to take on the initiative established by Warwick Chamber of Trade?

The Council could use its weight to ask the other Chambers of Trade within the district to support the initiative. The Town Centre managers liaise between the chambers of trade during there every day work.

- (e) What do you think should this Councils position/policy be on plastic bags?

The council should actively discourage the use of single use plastic carrier bags within the District.

- (f) How do you feel the Central Government strategy might have/not have a contribution on the proposals?

In general the Central Government recognition of this problem was welcomed and this Council could add weight to this proposal by aiding the

introduction of the proposed scheme of the Chamber of Trade within the District.

- (g) Any other points to be added for the Working Party to Consider?

Councillor Mrs Higgins had not undertaken any cost analysis of the problem and did highlight that in Ireland following the original drop off of the purchase of bags this was now rising as was the number of purchases of bin bags.

Councillor Mrs Higgins saw Warwick Market as being a problem, because all traders used single use carrier bags and if this could be tackled it would make a visible and significant contribution to the scheme.

- (h) Summing up from this session

This was a commercial issue which would need to be resolved by the commercial sector as this Council did not have any power to enforce this on local businesses.

The Council could ensure that its own house was in order first.

There would also be the need to take into consideration not only the financial burden this could put upon small businesses but also the potential of having to use more space for storage of bags made from alternative materials.

There would be a need to clarify what cost there would be to the Council to assist in the PC scheme and what PR the Council be expected to undertake.

However this would help the Council to promote its waste minimisation strategy and could lead to good publicity for the district.

3. **Questions for Warwick Chamber of Trade**

Sue Butcher from the Warwick Chamber of Trade attended the meeting to answer questions from the Working Party on the proposals from the Chamber of Trade with regard to plastic bags.

- (a) What is the proposal by Warwick Chamber of Trade with regard to plastic bags? (b) How many members of the Chamber of Trade have agreed to this proposal, and who are they? (c) How do you think the Council can provide financial support to the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade?

There was no definitive proposal from the Chamber of Trade. They had emailed their members asking their thoughts on a suggestion of reducing plastic bag usage and the suggestion has escalated from there.

Some members of the Chamber of Trade would like to see that no bags are issued and this was how the idea had developed. There had been a limited response to the email but the aim was to generally reduce plastic bags.

However the Chamber's aim is to specifically reduce the number of single use plastic bags handed out by shop keepers.

Some members of the public have contacted the Chamber of Trade in support of the scheme but conversely some have also voiced their concerns.

The Chamber of trade does not have the finance to drive forward and promote a scheme to the same level of Warwick District Council.

- (d) How do you think the Council can assist in the promotion of the scheme established by Warwick Chamber of Trade?

The Council could use the its website and newsletters to promote the scheme.

- (e) How do you think this Council can encourage other local Chambers of Trade to take on the initiative established by Warwick Chamber of Trade?

No discussions have taken place with other local chambers of trade and there is not a formal process for this although though all three Chairs of the local Chambers of Trade do discuss matters.

The Warwick Chamber of Trade felt that this would be an opportunity for Warwick District Council to be seen in a positive light by local businesses as it was felt by them that they received very little support from the Council.

- (f) What do you think should this Council's position/policy be on plastic bags?;

It should be remembered that Modbury was a very small town and achieving the same goal within Warwick and eventually the district would be significantly harder.

- (g) How do you feel the Central Government strategy might have/not have a contribution on your proposals?

At present it was felt the government did not really have a proposal although its threat to tax plastic bags was a step in the right direction. Ideally the approach undertaken in Ireland of banning all free plastic bags was a good one. However following the initial decline in bag numbers this is now rising as people are purchasing more bin bags.

The introduction of a charge on all bags from Marks and Spencer was welcome but again not really resolving the problem as the plastic bag still exists. For this reason charges may work but would require all shops to remove plastic bags and introduce a bag made from a sustainable source that was reusable and, once disposed, of easily biodegradable.

- (h) General points of discussion following the questions?

It is very hard to resource paper bags and they take up more storage space than plastic bags, which is an issue for small shops.

Leamington BID is a marketing facility instigated on set terms and these would need to be amended to include this campaign if there was a desire. The proposal could be included as part of the Warwick BID.

There are lots of things which can be done to simply reduce the number of plastic bags being handed out by using alternative forms for transporting goods.

There was also potential for Action 21 to buy into this proposal and assist with the development and promotion.

4. **Questions for Warwick Town Centre Manager**

It was agreed that because Councillors had the information required, that rather than questioning the acting Warwick Town Centre Manager it would be more beneficial to discuss with the Acting Warwick Town Centre Manager how this proposal could be carried forward.

Whilst being aware of the idea by Warwick Chamber of Trade to address the issue of single use plastic bags the approach to resolve this issue would depend on what exactly they wanted to achieve.

For this to be a success it requires one business or person to drive the initiative to ensure that it is a success.

The issue covers two key targets of Warwick District Council, waste minimisation and promotion of town centres.

Jute expo bags cost £1.80 a bag with a minimum order of £1000. These would be too expensive for many small businesses without recouping costs from customers which would increase shop prices. In addition they take more room to store and would reduce the storage capacity for produce.

However they could be purchased collectively (e.g. by the Town Centre initiatives or Warwick District Council) and used as a promotion tool for the town centre. The cost could be passed on to the consumer and this money could be centralised to purchase the next set of bags. Therefore the bags would continually pay for themselves.

Kenilworth Market had already approached the Council to seeking to work on an initiative to promote the market and this could be the opportunity.

This was a commercial issue which businesses needed to resolve however Warwick District Council, as a business, could provide the funding to act as the catalyst to start the project. In addition the Chambers of Trade could work together to combine resources for the purchase of the bags.

The bags could be overprinted to promote the relevant Town Centre and the name of those who have contributed to the scheme. This would be a walking promotion of the town centres and those who have contributed to the scheme.

Kenilworth Town Centre Management steering group had not progressed the idea as they could not guarantee that the bags were from a sustainable source and were less damaging to the environment than single use plastic bags, because of the way they were produced.

There were a number of initiatives locally that were thought to be keen on joining a project of this nature, they were:

Warwick and Kenilworth Town Councils

Transition Town Initiative
Kenilworth Town Centre partnership
Hill Close gardens
Leamington BID
Chambers of trade
Action 21

The key was to give consumers an option if they required a bag.

Kenilworth Market initiative and small trades were the best people to target.

The cost of bags is coming down. If demand suddenly goes up there would be a price rise as there would be less bags to go round. However in the long term, costs would come down.

Any scheme which was progressed would need a justified business case which includes a full risk analysis of the initiative before Warwick District Council could release any capital to it.

5. **Review of meeting and definition of next steps**

There is no firm initiative from Warwick Chamber of Trade which Warwick District Council could support at present.

There were a number of small businesses, market traders and other local initiatives who were interested in no longer using single use plastic carrier bags.

If single use plastic carrier bags were to be replaced there would be a need to ensure that their replacement was from a sustainable source which had a lesser environmental impact than single use carrier bags.

Replacements for single use carrier bags needed to be readily available for small businesses and easily stored.

There was a public issue in that society needed to be educated on the issue of single use carrier bags, which was beginning to happen via media campaigns.

With both forms of carrier bags there were arguments for and against and these needed to be considered in any proposal to ensure that replacement bags were the better option.

It was noted that Norfolk County Council had issued a sustainable bag to each household and although this was an option it left the Council open to criticism and there appeared to be little benefit.

The Panel therefore felt they were in a position to ask the Senior Committee Services Officer to draft a report for their approval based upon the contents of this meeting and with the following recommendations:

- (1) the Chambers of Trade within the District be asked to work with the Town Centre Managers produce a business case, for consideration by the Warwick District Council Executive, for funding an initiative based on the following principles:
 - Single use plastic bags be replaced by reusable and sustainable bags;

- The original costs of bags is met by chambers of trade, Warwick District Council and potentially other initiatives detailed in the report who the Chambers of Trade would liaise with to agree funding;
 - The cost of bags would be recouped by traders and initiatives using them
 - The money recouped from the bags would be centralised and used to purchase the bags as required;
 - Bags would be stored centrally in bulk and in small quantities at businesses; and
 - Those contributing and participating in the initiative would have their company name over printed on the bag, along with the relevant Town centre partnership logo on the other side.
- (2) Warwick District Council commits to no longer using plastic bags and these are replaced by a reusable and sustainable bag such as ones made from cotton or jute; and
- (3) the recycling/reusing tips on the WDC website be promoted further.

(The meeting ended at 3.00pm)