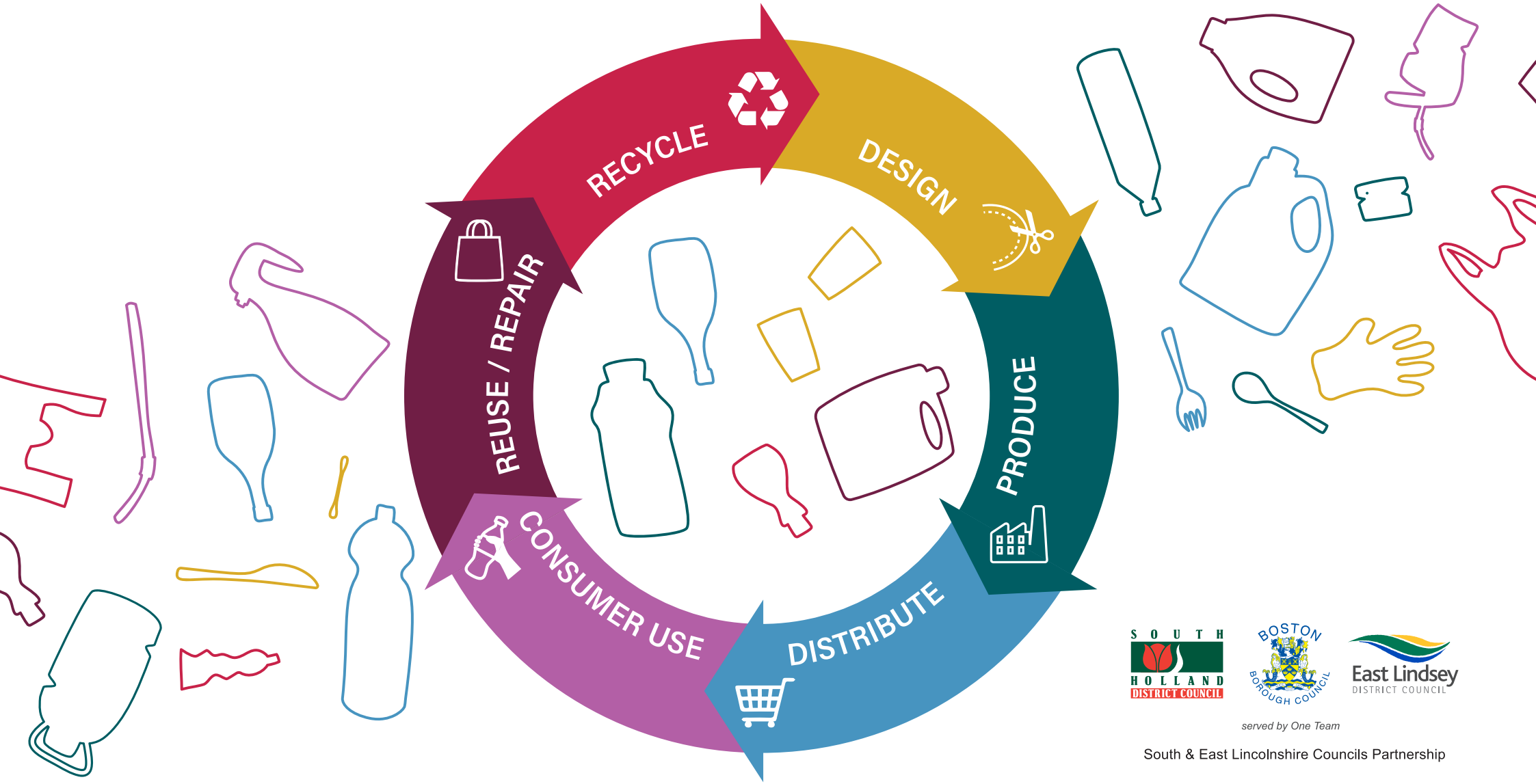
Appendix A

SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

Sustainable Products Policy



South Holland District Council
Boston Borough Council
East Lindsey District Council

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South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

Background

The production of single use products and the resultant waste from their usage and disposal is one of the greatest environmental concerns we face globally today. All single use products have an environmental impact and are typically intended to be used just once or for a very short period of time before being disposed of, either by being thrown away or recycled. Single use products include items such as paper towels, cardboard drinks cups and toilet rolls.

Some single use products such as envelopes are already widely recycled, however, they still have an environmental impact arising from production and recycling operations, which we should seek to minimise as far as possible. The Sustainable Products Policy seeks to reduce the usage of such items through education and communications which encourage the use of electronic communications and paper light methods of working.

Single Use Plastics (SUPs), also known as disposable plastics are one of the biggest contributors to this environmental problem. They are products made wholly, or partly, of plastic and they include items such as plastic bags, packaging, drinks bottles, disposable gloves and wet wipes.

The Environment Act 2021 enables tougher action on single-use plastics in England including powers to place charges on single-use items and to consider the placing of charges on items such as single use cups or sachets to encourage a shift away from throwaway culture.

The UK is a global leader in combatting plastic waste and has already taken major steps to tackle plastic pollution, banning microbeads in rinse-off personal care products, and restricting the supply of single-use plastic straws, stirrers and cotton buds.

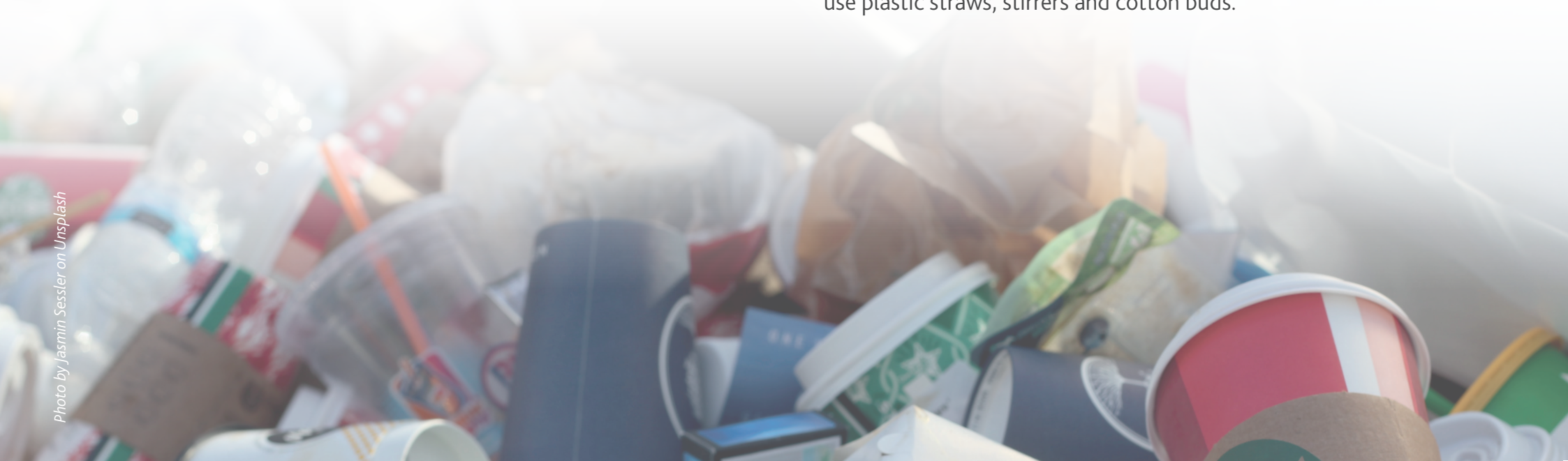


Photo by Jasmin Sessler on Unsplash

Our Commitment

The Sustainable Products Policy sets out the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership commitment to discontinuing the procurement of single use products within our internal operations, as far as possible and finding the best alternative solutions where single use products cannot be eliminated completely. This policy does not seek to strictly prohibit the purchase of single use items, however it addresses the need for the consequences of purchasing decisions to be carefully evaluated.

This policy has been developed as a partnership document to ensure the widest influence possible across the sub region, in line with the strategic aims of the South and East Lincolnshire Council's Partnership and the corporate priorities of the three Councils, seeking to ensure a sustainable approach to resource management. The implementation of this policy will ensure that as a community leader we set a positive example for others to follow.

This commitment will be realised by embedding the Sustainable Products Policy in the procurement framework, establishing a culture of reuse/recycling, and switching to plastic-free alternatives where usage cannot be discontinued, ensuring that products are disposed of responsibly and appropriately by being recycled or composted.

A comprehensive audit of single use products will be undertaken and will include the identification and potential financial implications of alternative products used both in offices and in Council services and operations.

Alternative solutions to single use products should demonstrate best value both in financial and environmental terms, and the reasons for usage of these products should be ascertained and given due consideration. Where items are purchased for Health or Safety reasons, alternatives may not be viable.

The problem

The manufacture of single use products requires a large amount of energy and resources and largely includes the use of fossil fuels in their production processes. This is particularly the case for the manufacture of Single Use Plastic products which have wasteful production processes that are very resource intensive.

The extraction, production and refinement processes used all cause huge quantities of Greenhouse Gases to be emitted, meaning that their production is contributing to Climate Change, and they are often sent to landfill or take many years to decompose, causing air and water pollution. However, the focus tends to fall on SUPs because when these items are not adequately captured and managed at their end of life, they represent a serious threat to our ecosystems. They do not biodegrade but break down in the natural environment into tiny particles known as microplastics which pollute soils and watercourses, contaminating the food web and causing a hazard to wildlife.

SUPs are also often difficult to recycle with current figures showing just 29 percent is currently recycled with that projected to increase to just 37 percent by 2030.

Coastal regions such as Lincolnshire are particularly vulnerable to the effects of inappropriate waste disposal and the amount of litter on our beaches has almost doubled in the last 15 years posing a threat to humans and wildlife alike.[1] It is therefore crucial that we address this issue without delay. Whilst the issue of Single Use Product litter on our coast extends beyond our organisational remit, it is an important consideration when seeking to understand the wider local picture and act as a community leader who represents the concerns of the broader community.

Photo by Pexels.com

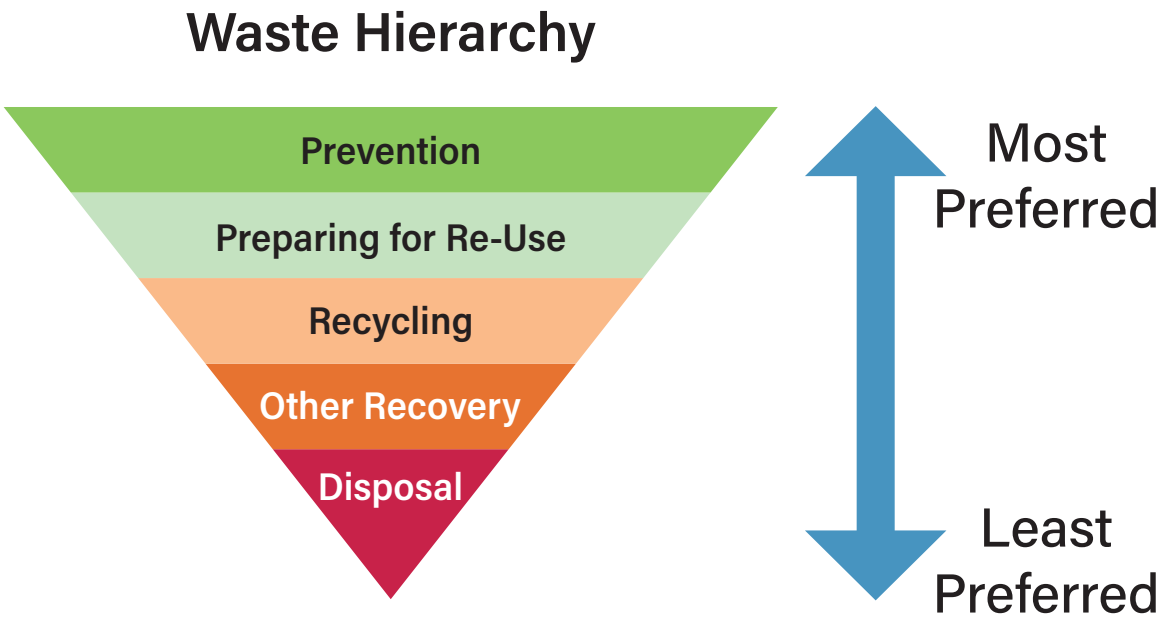
[1] *https://www.lincstrust.org.uk/plastics.*

The Solution

To tackle the problems surrounding single use waste we must first assess whether products are necessary in the first place and minimise the amount we use where possible.

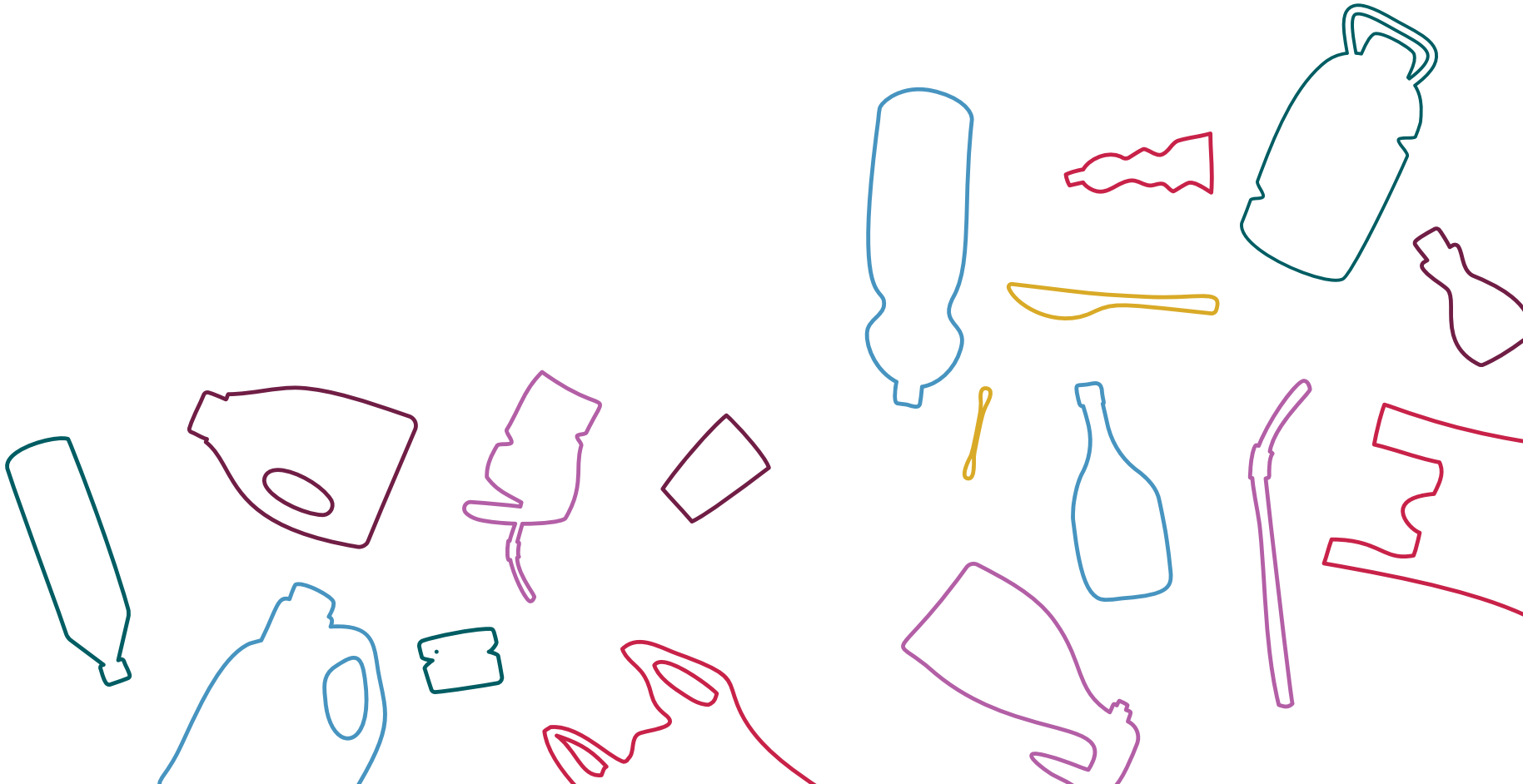
Where single-use items can't be avoided we must make sustainable choices and promote responsible and appropriate disposal. Working towards a circular economy (the principle of remanufacture, reuse, repair, recycle) will see us keeping resources in use for as long as possible and allow us to prolong their lifespan where we can.

The waste hierarchy shown should therefore be used as a guide when procuring goods and services.



We will:

- Embed the Sustainable Products Policy in the procurement framework of the three Councils whilst ensuring that due consideration is given to the green credentials of companies during the tender process for membership of future procurement frameworks.
- Discontinue procurement of single use products and switch to plastic-free alternatives where usage cannot be discontinued. Where plastic-free alternatives are not viable, other alternatives such as products made predominantly of recycled material or materials which can be easily recycled at the end of their life should be considered.
- Establish a culture of reuse/recycling and find the best alternative solutions where single use products cannot be eradicated completely, ensuring that those products are recycled or composted.
- Work with contractors and suppliers to find the most sustainable options available.
- Buy in bulk to reduce packaging.
- Encourage and promote conscious and conscientious consumption across the partnership.
- Support community led schemes which promote recycling and reduction of single use waste where practicable. These schemes are often run on a small scale by volunteers e.g. Plastic Free Boston.
- Establish best practice and lead by example.

Next Steps:

- Undertake a full audit on the use of single use products. This will include the identification and potential financial implications of alternative products used both in offices and in Council services and operations.
- Ensure the Councils' Procurement Strategy incorporates the principles of sustainability and circular economy in line with this policy.
- Ensure that recycling facilities in our buildings are well labelled, easy to access, and that staff and customers are informed of their location and understand how to use them. It is recognised that many of the proposed changes to our Procurement processes will take time to achieve and promotion of recycling schemes across our facilities will therefore ensure that the impact of Single Use Products are addressed at every stage of the product lifecycle, providing an interim solution while other operational alternatives are investigated.
- Investigate schemes such as the Terracycle scheme for soft-plastics or Refill water stations which could be implemented in Council owned buildings