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## **SUSTAINABILITY IN COUNCIL CATERING AND CLEANING**

**Report by Service Director Assets and Infrastructure and Service Director, Young People, Engagement & Inclusion**

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### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**17 September 2021**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out progress following a presentation by the Youth Ambassadors for Sustainability to the Sustainable Development Committee on 5 March 2021 on the subject of 'Stopping the Use of Plastic Bottles in Schools'.**
- 1.2 The report contends that, while progress in decommissioning plastic bottles, particularly single use bottles, in schools is objectively and symbolically important, it remains an individual step in a broader suite of actions aimed at delivering a sustainable Catering and Cleaning Service.
- 1.3 The report places action in the context of the global climate and nature emergencies, the legal and regulatory obligations upon public bodies to prioritise and take account of climate and the circular economy in their procurement activity and the Council's own commitments pursuant to the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map, including the commitment to embed Net Zero practices in SBC's own operations, capital programmes and value chains.
- 1.4 The report describes the progress made through more sustainable product packaging choices in the region's primary and high schools, catering generally and cleaning. It identifies some of the practical challenges in balancing occasionally conflicting priorities to maintain nutritional standards, while also removing unsustainable packaging. Waste and our collective responsibility to reduce, reuse and recycle is highlighted, together with the vital importance of education, cultural and behavioural change, with schools playing a central role. Current progress on both these workstreams is set out.
- 1.5 It is acknowledged that a holistic approach is essential to making further progress in ensuring that our products and processes are as fully sustainable as possible, supported by a strategic approach which builds in qualitative and quantitative performance metrics. Lastly, it is proposed a follow up report on Sustainable Procurement in Catering and Cleaning be brought to the Sustainable Development Committee on 3 December 2021.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 I recommend that the Committee agree:**

- a) To note the progress made in decommissioning the use of single-use plastic bottles for sale as part of the Council's catering offer within Scottish Borders Primary Schools.**
- b) To note the progress made in substituting products for sale as part of the Council's catering offer within Scottish Borders schools which are assessed as more consistent with the Council's sustainable procurement duties.**
- c) To endorse the broader approach (set out in paras 3 and 4) to prioritising and taking account of climate and circular economy in the Council's procurement activity.**
- d) To note that progress on Sustainable Procurement sits within the Resilience Theme of the Climate Change Route Map and that Officers are progressing a holistic approach to embedding further sustainable practice, bringing together Education, Catering and Cleaning, Procurement and Waste Services to support further action.**
- e) To note that it is proposed to scope and seek approval for a pilot waste management exercise in a high school which will involve the provision of comprehensive recycling facilities to assess the behaviour patterns of users of the buildings and the quantities of materials deposited. Subject to approval, progress of the pilot would be reported to the Sustainable Development Committee.**
- f) The Council will provide dedicated support to develop the Learning for Sustainability (LfS) agenda within all Scottish Borders Council schools. This Officer resource will link strategic management decisions to curriculum opportunities supporting positive behaviour changes both within schools and in wider domestic and community life.**
- g) A follow up report on Sustainable Procurement in Catering and Cleaning, setting out further progress, shall be brought to the Sustainable Development Committee on 3 December 2021.**

### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 4 March 2021, the Scottish Borders Youth Ambassadors for Sustainability, Liberty Barber and Ruby Finn, presented to the Sustainable Development Committee (SDC) on the subject of 'Stopping the Use of Plastic Bottles in Schools'. The presentation highlighted that plastics, particularly single-use plastics, remain a common feature in school canteens in the form of food wrappers, plastic drink bottles and disposable cutlery. The benefits of reducing plastic volumes in terms of greenhouse gas emissions through industrial processes in production, through distribution, waste and recycling were highlighted together with the benefits for nature and humanity of reducing the volume of plastics in our environment and the baleful effects of failing to do so. The presentation promoted circular economy principles and considered possible measures for reducing the volume of plastics, suggesting that to stop selling plastic water bottles would be a good start in seeking to replace single use plastic in schools.
- 3.2 The SDC welcomed the presentation and agreed that, in terms of decommissioning single use plastic bottles in schools, discussions on the implications of this proposal should take place with colleagues in Education, Catering and Finance and that a report on possible options for implementation be brought to Council as soon as is practicable.
- 3.3 Officers have met on a number of occasions to assess and review the issues and to develop practical proposals which respond to the Youth Ambassador's presentation on single use plastic bottles and the forward approach agreed by the SDC.
- 3.4 A number of issues have emerged from those discussions and we set these out below, building on the brief verbal report to the SDC on 4 June.
  - a) Most immediately and significantly, it is obvious that a focus on single use plastic bottles alone is insufficient. Paras 4 below deals with this in greater detail, but, in short, officers concluded that the Council could not rationally target decommissioning single use plastic bottles in schools without also confronting the wider issue of sustainability in our product use. It's also true that the line needs to be set somewhere, so that meaningful practical action can be identified and delivered. Therefore, this report looks at all 'procurement activity' within its Catering and Cleaning Service. By 'procurement activity', we mean all processes within the service, which rely on procured products of any kind, including their packaging, delivery, storage, distribution and disposal. To this end, progress in decommissioning single use plastic bottles in schools should be seen as an individual step (albeit an objectively and symbolically important one) in a broader suite of actions which, taken together, ensure a clear and irreversible sustainable direction of travel across the service and across the Council.
  - b) It is clear that we do not address the issue of decommissioning single use plastic bottles in schools from a blank sheet of paper. There are many different developments which impact or influence this agenda which are progressing at different rates and they are not always effectively correlated with each other.

These changes include:

- Changing national/legal requirements and strategy with respect to the nutritional content which has influence on the kind of products and, consequently, the type of packaging etc that is provided.
- SBC is already making progress in removing some less sustainable products from the Council's Catering and Cleaning Services
- Some notable progress has been made in bearing down on single use plastic bottles and wider sustainability in the catering offer within schools.

Progress includes extensive decommissioning of single use plastic bottles in Scottish Borders Primary Schools. This has been possible in Primary Schools, because all primary pupils are served their lunch within the dining hall on site. As noted in para 5, the catering offer in High Schools, where a proportion of students are likely to leave the school site and where a broader suite of dining options is the norm, presents a greater challenge which will take further work and assessment of options.

- c) The lack of a blank sheet of paper is further complicated by the fact that the issue of catering sustainability is cross-cutting. To address issues around the procured products we use across the Council (including packaging, delivery, storage, distribution and disposal) draws in not only the Catering and Cleaning Service, but our Education Services, schools and Waste management, as well as suppliers and users (whether individual pupils, Council staff etc).
- d) Lastly, the issue of sustainability in our catering services and more widely in product use within and beyond the Council is intimately related to matters of education, understanding and behaviour change. To make lasting progress, we must address not only the mechanics of what appears in canteens, but the cultural and behavioural factors which underlie the supply, purchasing and disposal of products. Changes in culture and behaviour are themselves underpinned by education and improving literacy on sustainability issues among staff (within and beyond schools), students, their families, and more widely.

#### **4 THE CONTEXT FOR DEVELOPING SUSTAINABILITY IN COUNCIL CATERING SERVICES**

- 4.1 As the Youth Ambassadors on Sustainability noted in the presentation to the Sustainable Development Committee on 5 June 2021, there are significant benefits to be gained from reducing plastic volumes in terms of reducing fossil-fuel use from which plastic products are typically made, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions, as well as benefits for nature and humanity in reducing the volume of plastics in our environment.
- 4.2 For the Council, striving to deliver these benefits has policy and legal force:
  - a) The global climate emergency is a strategic national priority and, together with the interrelated nature emergency, forms a central tenet of a green recovery;

- b) New regulations introduced in November 2020 require Scottish public bodies, including Scottish Borders Council, to report on, where applicable, “targets for reducing indirect emissions of greenhouse gases” by 2022;
- c) Public bodies (again including the Council) must demonstrate in their organisational Procurement Strategies how their organisation will prioritise and take account of climate and circular economy in their procurement activity and, reporting ongoing progress against these commitments in their annual procurement reports, demonstrating how they are using procurement to support Scotland’s response to the global climate emergency;
- d) Recent guidance from Scottish Government SPPN 1/2021 ‘Taking Account of Climate and Circular Economy Considerations in Public Procurement’ and on social impact and procurement (SPPN 10/2020), provides practical advice and examples of how public bodies should use their public procurement spend to support climate and circular economy ambitions.
- e) The Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map (CCRM) makes the following commitments directly relevant to this agenda:

#### Building Resilience

BR3 Embed Net Zero practices in SBC’s own operations, capital programmes and value chains

- BR3 SBC spends approximately £180M per year on goods and services from third parties, and how it spends that money can shape the decisions and actions of the supply chain. The Council’s Sustainable Procurement Charter is an important framework for this influence and the Council will continue to apply the principles and practice of the Charter with rigour

#### Waste

WM1 Minimise waste generation and maximise effectiveness of the Council’s waste services

- WM4 Support the delivery of a circular economy in Scotland and the Scottish Borders

4.3 In conclusion, as a matter of national policy and its own policy, the Council has a leadership responsibility and legal duty to consider and act on opportunities to improve environmental wellbeing. The Council must lead by example and act as enabler through our response to the global climate emergency. This includes using the Council’s public procurement spend to support climate and circular economy ambitions. That spend is clearly not restricted to ‘plastic bottles’ or ‘single-use plastic bottles’. A broader approach is required, and we consider progress made on this broader front in the next section.

## 5. CURRENT PROGRESS

### A - Our Current Progress in Schools

- 5.1 As noted in para 4.3, the Council is not coming to the issue of sustainability in its Catering and Cleaning Services only now. It has been making progress in a range of products for some time and the efforts of the Youth Ambassadors for Sustainability have further catalysed progress.
- 5.2 Paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 below detail those products which have been removed and the products they have been replaced with (where appropriate) in the region's High Schools and Primary Schools. There are a number of important drivers of this procurement activity:
- Cost
  - Availability
  - Nutritional content of foods
  - Sustainability
- 5.3 Most directly relevant to the Youth Ambassadors' presentation and the Sustainable Development Committee's deliberations, single-use plastic bottles have largely been removed from the catering offer in the region's Primary Schools. With one exception, bottled water is no longer used; water is now served in cups. The exception is - pupils who take their lunch on to aftercare, or home on a Friday still have the option of bottled water, reflecting the requirement for mobility beyond the school dining hall. As a proportion of the on average 5040 primary school meals served daily by the Council, those lunches taken on to aftercare or home comprise around 18% of the Friday total (around 3.6% of all primary school meals).
- 5.4 Below are additional sustainability actions, which have been implemented across the school estate:-

#### Primary Schools

In primary schools, the Council has:

- Ended use (save as noted) takeaway bags for the Friday packed lunch option. This option is now served on a tray. However, as with bottled water, pupils who take their lunch on to aftercare on a Friday still received their lunch in a takeaway bag. As noted, this is around 18% of the meals served on Friday.
- Ended use of plastic sandwich wedges. These have been replaced with a brown paper bag.
- Ended use of plastic zip bags for crudités. They are now served in a small bowl.
- Following implementation of the Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations, SBC Catering identified an opportunity to change the yoghurt served in primary schools from a single serving plastic tub to a bulk product that is served in a reusable bowl.

All meals in the primary school sector are served in the traditional manner using reusable trays, cups and cutlery. As noted, disposables are used only on a Friday when pupil attendance at after school care requires a mobile option in the form of 'Grab and Go'.

Lastly, all primary schools hold the *Food for Life Served Here* Bronze Award. For customers *Food for Life Served Here* means meals cooked from scratch, using sustainable fish, free range eggs and ingredients that can be traced back to the farm.

*Food for Life Served Here* standards are set by an independent Standards Committee, which is made up of industry experts from a wide range of sectors. The standards are created with public health priorities and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in mind.

To meet the Bronze award Primary Schools had to meet the following standard:-

**Ingredients**

- All eggs are free range
- No genetically modified ingredients
- No undesirable additives or trans-fats
- Animal welfare standards are met

**Good Practice**

- Minimum 75% dishes are freshly prepared
- Training is provided for staff
- Free drinking water is available
- Nutritional standards are met

**Customer Care**

- Menus meet dietary and cultural needs of the customer
- Positive marketing about where ingredients have come from
- Seasonal ingredients are used and highlighted

Primary Schools have held the award since January 2020, and retained the award for 2021 following an annual inspection.

## High Schools

In High schools, the Council has:

- Reintroduced the use of crockery and cutlery for pupils eating within the dining area. Only pupils taking lunch away are given takeaway boxes and disposable cutlery.
- Removed single use plastic sandwich wedges and replaced them with brown paper bags.
- Removed plastic teaspoons and replaced them with wooden stirrers.
- Removed film fronted bags, and replaced them with a brown paper bag or a napkin depending on the product being served.
- Changed our takeaway box from Vegware to Bagasse as this product is seen as a more environmentally friendly material currently being used in the food service industry. Appendix A to this report provides a description of Bagasse.
- Changed our disposable cutlery to Green cutlery as it is made from Corn Starch which is a renewable resource and does not contain harmful chemicals often associated with conventional plastics. However, this product is only compostable in industrial composting facilities, reflecting the need for the Council to continue to develop and refine its approach.

## Challenges in School Catering

- 5.5 Like other councils, SBC has had to increase the amount of Fruit and Vegetables on offer with every meal in response to the Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools (Scotland) Regulations 2020. This has proved challenging while also trying to reduce the amount of packaging. Being wet products, they can't be placed in a brown paper bag, but are served in a plastic bag or salad pot for all students under the 'Grab and Go' option.
- 5.6 Generally, Scottish Borders high schools present a more challenging environment for the removal of packaging than primary schools, because of the need for more flexible and mobile serving options. This need is a function of the limited capacity within our high school dining halls. With the exception of Eyemouth High School, our dining halls do not have the capacity to seat all pupils in a single sitting. As is common practice throughout the region and other parts of Scotland, capacity pressures are partly addressed by allowing students to have lunch beyond the confines of the dining hall. In turn, that requires products/containers which make for portability. While the materials from which products are made continue to develop and sustainability continues to improve, for the present plastics remain an important element of the means required to deliver a varied and nutritional diet in compliance with regulatory requirements. Efforts have been made to pilot alternatives at Peebles High School (as set out in para 5.12).
- 5.7 At the moment no pupils are eating in dining halls and high schools have introduced a staggered lunch-break with pupils coming to the counter in their year group at set intervals to reduce congestion at the counter. Pupils also have the option to pre-order their meal, using Fusion a pre order APP. This also helps with congestion as pupils pick up their lunch from a designated area based on the year group.



5.8 Due to COVID within Primary schools and the requirement for pupils to stay in bubbles the following schools are currently using disposables:

- Philiphaugh PS
- Burnfoot PS
- Edenside PS

Pupils in these schools are eating in class. Owing to the distance the pupils need to carry their meal, it is not practical nor safe for them to be carrying hot meals on a tray. This constitutes around 3.5% of the daily average of 5040 primary school meals being temporarily served with the provision of disposables. Those disposables will be removed when pupils in these schools return to the dining hall and normal dining service can resume.

5.9 Once COVID restrictions are lifted and the students return to dining halls across the region's schools, the Catering Service will reintroduce the use of crockery and cutlery for students using the dining hall but disposables will continue to have to be made available for pre-ordered lunches and for students who wish to take their meal outwith the dining hall, acknowledging that while this is a matter of personal choice, it alleviates dining hall capacity pressures.

5.10 The Scottish Government has made clear in its 'Healthy Eating in schools guidance' that students should be supported to make healthier dietary choices and the food and drinks options that we provide and the eating and drinking habits they instil can also serve as an example for positive dietary choices. If we remove all disposables and remove the facility for pre-ordering, there is concern that this could encourage an increased number of students to choose less healthy dietary options and potentially less sustainable food and packaging options outwith the school. Such an outcome would run counter to the aims of Scottish Government guidance and objectives. Recognising the value of the nutritional and balanced diet that can be provided in schools, highlights the importance of the Council taking a measured approach to potentially conflicting objectives. In particular, it reinforces the need for the Council to work with suppliers in continuing to look for more sustainable packaging.

5.11 It might be asked whether staggered lunch-breaks could provide a long-term solution to maximising the numbers of students dining in school dining halls, thereby reducing the need for portability and, with it, the need for containers made from plastics. While no options are off-limits, there are concerns that adjustments to the lunch-break must not impact timetabling, which could impact the curriculum, disrupting the delivery of students' education.

#### 5.12 Peebles High School

In addition to the steps taken in all high schools described above, the following have been implemented Peebles High School:-

- Removal of single use pasta pots and replaced with reusable.
- Removal of single use salad/fruit pots and replaced with reusable.
- Removal all drinks served in plastic bottles. While this has limited choice for pupils, cans of water were introduced as an alternative to plastic bottles

5.13 Unfortunately, the results of this exercise cannot currently be evaluated, owing to the disruption caused by the fire at Peebles High School, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is already clear that a significant number of the containers purchased to eliminate single use have not been returned to catering staff and will need to be replaced. The loss of reusable serving products and the investment made in those products highlights the extent to which operational change cannot deliver alone the sustainability outcomes we seek. A more limited exercise to replace disposable coffee cups with reusable cups at Eyemouth High School was discontinued when it became clear that large numbers of the reusable cups were not being returned. It is clear that educating students around return and reuse is a prerequisite to introduction of product and procedural change. This is picked up in para 6B.

#### 5.14 Food Service

SBC's Catering Service continually looks to the market for new products as they are developed for the food service. There is a close working relationship with the Council's disposables supplier (Instock) with whom staff communicate regularly to keep abreast of all new developments within the industry. The Catering Service also regularly attends meet the suppliers on line events, conferences and exhibitions where suppliers launch new products.

5.15 As the service removes products that are no longer suitable and introduces more sustainable products, the Catering Approved Purchase List is updated to reflect the changes. The products are also removed from Business World, the relevant operational system.

### **B - Our Current Progress Elsewhere**

#### 5.16 Catering 'non school'

The Café at Council HQ, which will be operated by the Council's Catering Service, will open when the lifting of COVID restrictions permit. Some products will be pre-packaged for direct sale (e.g. sandwiches, filled baguettes, tray bakes etc) as the kitchen is not equipped for the preparation of food on site. All products not pre-packaged for direct sale will be served on crockery. Coffee, tea and all hot drinks will be served in cups and staff and customers will be encouraged to bring their own cup to the counter for refilling.

#### 5.17 Cleaning

The Council's Cleaning Service is actively looking at ways to work more efficiently while reducing our carbon emissions impact and improving sustainability. Over the last two years, the following products have been removed:

- Disposable Cloths
- Pre-mixed Cleaning Chemicals (single use plastics)
- Multiple Cleaning Products
- Dolly-mop system

- Multi branded hand towels, toilet rolls and soap: Previously several different product ranges and types were used across the entire estate

In place of these products, the following have been introduced:

- Microfiber Cloths – These multi wash cloths can clean marks without the use of chemicals and can be washed at low temperatures for up to 100 washes.
- Ecodose Chemicals – These undiluted products are 5x more concentrated meaning less packaging and less stock needed. The pouches are also designed to completely empty reducing wastage.
- Only 3 Ecodose chemicals are now required to achieve the same results that previously 4-5 different single cleaning products did - again reducing wastage and packaging
- Ecodose Dispensers – these solar powered units have been installed into all the schools estate. The dosing system is not only energy efficient but also does not require a water source to operate it. Three pre-set buttons allow the user to dispense the exact quantity of chemical for the receptacle they need to fill reducing wastage and preventing over use/dosing.
- Turbo Spin Mops & Buckets – This method of mopping allows more control on the amount of water you can place on different hard floor surfaces due to the special spin mechanism on the bucket. The multi-use mop head can also remove 99% of bacteria with just water alone.
- We are currently in the process of rolling out new washroom dispensers and products to all of the Council's estate. This uniform approach is more eco-friendly and will help manage stock levels, reduce unnecessary waste and over use.

Future Scope will involve the service looking into:

- The role out of the ecodose chemicals and dispensers across all of the estate and not just education.
- Further research and understanding into potentially chemical free cleaning
- The purchase of more energy efficient electrical equipment moving away from wired machinery to battery powered models
- Testing new innovations to the market place.
- The replacement/upgrading of our fleet from diesel vans to electric vehicles (We have currently started this process and have a few in operation)

#### 5.18 Waste

Between 2018 and 2019 Scottish Borders Council achieved the single biggest recycling increase of any local authority in Scotland. Latest figures issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) confirm that Scottish Borders Council recycled 49% of its household waste in 2019, which is well above the national average (44.9%).

This recent improvement in recycling performance coincides with a significant reduction in waste being sent to landfill and carbon emissions. This is the result of Council's decision to close its landfill site at Easter Langlee, Galashiels, invest in excess of £5 million in its waste

management infrastructure across the Borders and enter into a new residual waste contract.

This step change in the approach to managing residual waste has ensured compliance with the ban on biodegradable waste going to landfill well ahead of it coming into force in 2025.

The Council regularly runs education and awareness campaigns on how to 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle', to residents, businesses, schools and community groups. The most recent of which has been the 'Millions of Reasons to Recycle' programme which aimed to highlight the environmental and financial need to recycle.

In September 2019 the Council launched the Zero Waste School Champions project. A number of schools took part in the pilot, which aimed to help pupils, schools and families think about recycling to help save resources, save energy and protect the environment. We are also working with Levensat Ltd to develop a **Schools Resource Pack** covering various waste topics including; the waste journey, reducing waste in schools & communities and the carbon impact of waste. This project is being delivered as part of the Community Benefits package, which forms part of the new Residual Waste Contract. The aim is to issue the Schools Resource Pack to a limited number of schools in August 2021 in order to gain feedback from teachers. The Pack will then be updated to reflect the feedback for wider roll out ensuring it aligns with the curriculum for excellence.

All Schools receive a comprehensive waste collection service in line with those provided to households and businesses across the Scottish Borders. The effectiveness of this service, in terms of recycling performance, is directly dependent on the waste management arrangements/practices within the schools i.e. communication, signage, bin location, type and size.

In order to understand how we can better manage waste generated in schools, it is intended to run a Pilot Waste Management Exercise to assess behaviour and quantities of materials deposited. Further work is required to determine how this would be delivered but it is expected to involve monitoring the current waste management practices in one high school, closely followed by an exercise to introduce best practice. Metrics gathered from the exercise would then be used to determine the benefits of the new arrangements and if successful how this could be introduced across the school estate. As a pilot would have resource and budgetary implications, it is intended to map this for approval by committee/under delegation as required before reporting to the Sustainable Development Committee upon initiating the pilot, and updating the Committee subsequently.

## 6. NEXT STEPS

### General

- 6.1 It is clear from the work done to date, and as explained in para 3.4c) that a holistic approach is essential to making further progress in ensuring that our

products and processes are as fully sustainable as possible. As noted in para 4, Sustainable Procurement sits within the Resilience Theme of the Climate Change Route Map, and Officers are currently developing workstreams under the CCRM's themes. Progressing our holistic, but still developing approach to embedding further sustainable practice will be among the priorities to be taken forward. This will seek to reinforce the bringing together of Education, Catering and Cleaning, Procurement and Waste Services to support further action under a fully strategic approach which builds in qualitative and quantitative performance metrics. A Sustainable Procurement Officer is due to be recruited, and will have a critical role in facilitating these efforts.

- 6.2 Specifically, it is proposed a follow up report on Sustainable Procurement in Catering and Cleaning, setting out further progress, shall be brought to the Sustainable Development Committee on 3 December 2021.

### Education, Culture and Behavioural Change

- 6.3 It is a theme of this report that operational changes and unilateral decisions by the Council on product choices and packaging etc will not by themselves secure long-term sustainability in our product use. These changes must be accompanied by education, culture and behavioural change, which both informs and is informed by changes in our product choices and process changes.
- 6.4 As individuals, we each have a responsibility to change how we live on a day to day basis to reduce the further onset of dangerous climate change. We can all play our part together and then many small changes will multiply into a large contribution. Behaviour change tools and techniques are vital resources for councils to work with their local communities to sustain or change residents' behaviours to reduce climate change and increase our sustainability. Schools have a particularly important role in this regard, in shaping the outlook of our future citizens through education.
- 6.5 The themes of Learning for Sustainability underpin the General Teaching Council of Scotland Teachers Professional Standards highlighting young people's entitlement to Learning for Sustainability and the responsibility of practitioners to deliver on these approaches.

The Standard for Full Registration Mandatory Requirements for Registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland Formal Enactment 2 August 2021.

Scotland's Professional Standards actively support, embrace and promote the principles and practices of sustainability across all aspects. This means understanding and valuing environment, culture and heritage, developing a sense of place and belonging to the local, national and global community. It also means having a deep connection to the natural world and understanding the significance of the choices we make – now and in the future.

The personal and professional qualities of sustainability and social justice, integrity, trust and respect and professional commitment are crucial if we are to inspire and prepare learners for success in our increasingly complex, interdependent and rapidly changing world. 'Learning for Sustainability' is a whole-school commitment that helps the school and its wider community

develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and practices needed to take decisions which are compatible with a sustainable future in a just and equitable world. Learning for Sustainability has been embedded within the suite of Professional Standards to support teachers in actively embracing and promoting principles and practices of sustainability in all aspects of their work.

- 6.6 In relation to Learning for Sustainability Registered Teachers are expected to:
- Embrace global educational and social values of sustainability, equality, equity, and justice and recognising children's rights.
  - Respect the rights of all learners as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and their entitlement to be included in decisions regarding their learning experiences and have all aspects of their wellbeing developed and supported.
  - Demonstrate a commitment to engaging learners in real world issues to enhance learning experiences and outcomes, and to encourage learning our way to a better future.
  - Act and behave in ways that develop a culture of trust and respect for self, others and the natural world.
  - Create opportunities for learning to be transformative in terms of challenging assumptions and expanding world views.
  - Contribute to a rights-respecting culture where learners meaningfully participate in decisions related to their learning, wellbeing, learning environment and their school;
  - Develop partnerships which: - support decision-making that is compatible with a sustainable future in a just and equitable world; - connect learners to their dependence on the natural world and develop their sense of belonging to both the local and global community; and - connect relevance of learning to skills for life, learning and work.
  - Create opportunities for learning to be transformative in terms of challenging assumptions and expanding world views
  - Encourage learners to respect and care for themselves, others and the natural world.
- 6.7 The recent secondment of a Learning for Sustainability Development Officer to support schools and settings for 3 days per week demonstrates our commitment to educating and equipping our young people with the skills, knowledge and values to live economically, socially and environmentally sustainable lifestyles.
- 6.8 The Officer will represent Scottish Borders on the Education Scotland Learning for Sustainability Local Network and will work with practitioners and settings throughout the authority to develop and implement learning for sustainability approaches which will include raising awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals with practitioners, learners and settings.
- 6.9 In addition to supporting our schools and practitioners in the planning and delivery of climate change and action within the curriculum, the Officer will work with other services across the authority to ensure a coherent approach and delivery to the Climate Change Route Map from an educational perspective

6.10 A key contributor to the Learning for Sustainability Agenda is our children and young people. The CYP Leadership group have committed to furthering Article 12 of the UNCRC for all children and young people in the Scottish Borders through the co-design of a Participation and Engagement Strategy. We will utilise our partnership resources and relationships to listen to the voice and experience of children and young people, and their families.

## **7 IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Financial**

Current costs associated with increasing sustainability in the Council's Catering and Cleaning Service have been met within the relevant departmental budget. However, it is clear that more sustainable disposables and packaging is generally more expensive than less sustainable alternatives. For example, within initiatives pursued at the Peebles High School a disposable pasta pot and lid, cost £0.15, was replaced with a reusable pot and lid at a cost of £3.26. In that case, the non-return of many of the pots and lids raises questions about the sustainability of that option.

As noted at para 4.2e), SBC spends approximately £180M per year on goods and services from third parties, and how it spends that money can shape the decisions and actions of the supply chain. The Council's Sustainable Procurement Charter is an important framework for this influence. It follows that if the Council is to exercise its influencer and leadership role to optimal effect, and also to maximise the sustainability outcomes from the purchasing choices it makes, then this is likely to require additional resources at least during early phases of our transition to genuinely sustainable product/supply chains. Any specific budget implications will be identified and reported to the appropriate committee as required.

### **7.2 Risk and Mitigations**

There are broadly three key risks -

- a) Failure of the Council to deliver against its legal and regulatory duties under current and developing climate legislation and policy commitments. The purpose of this report is precisely to develop and strengthen the kind of cross-cutting and holistic approach to the issue of sustainability in the Council's Catering and Cleaning Service to deliver a sustainable service across the Council's schools and estate. Regular monitoring and review processes will ensure compliance and delivery which will include the activity of the Sustainable Development Committee.
- b) The Council has through the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map (CCRM) made commitments directly relevant to this agenda, including -  
BR3 Embed Net Zero practices in SBC's own operations, capital programmes and value chains. The Council will face significant reputational risk if it fails to deliver on this commitment and on the commitments proposed within the CCRM.
- c) There are also potential financial and service delivery risks associated with not addressing the need for sustainability, which relate to emissions, pollution and further sustainability pressures. If the demand upon finite resources and the speed of using resources remains same as

it is currently, then the available resources will be exhausted and coming generations will be deprived of all kind of needs. This report, the progress it outlines and the structured and holistic approach it highlights are a vital Council contribution to delivering sustainability for future generations, as well as crucial example of leadership by the 'local government' of the Scottish Borders.

### **7.3 Integrated Impact Assessment**

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken. This has reinforced the need to ensure that our approach to sustainability in Catering and Cleaning, as with our broader approach to Climate Change, must be 'just'. This means, in the Scottish Borders as elsewhere, developing policies and delivering actions which ensure the benefits of sustainability action are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those less able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes.

### **7.4 Sustainable Development Goals**

The UN SDGs comprise 17 interlinked goals. Most relevant is UN SDG 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. This includes:

- Effect sustainable procurement policies and conditions
- Raise awareness of the importance of sustainable production and consumption

which are addressed in this report. However, the UN SDGs are broadly relevant to the agenda and some like 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss have a very strong relationship to this agenda.

### **7.5 Climate Change**

The purpose of this report is to establish a fully effective approach to sustainability in the Council's Catering and Cleaning Service. This goal sits within the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map (CCRM) and is directly related to the objective of transitioning to net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045, and appropriate adaptation and resilience measures.

### **7.6 Rural Proofing**

This report is underpinned by the Council's commitment to deliver on the Climate Change Route Map (CCRM), the UN SDGs, and our duties under Equalities legislation. Thus an equalities based approach is built in. The aim of the approach broadly is a 'just transition' - ensuring the benefits of climate change action and wider sustainability efforts are shared widely, while the costs do not unfairly burden those less able to pay, or whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly at risk as the economy shifts and changes, including in rural settings. Accordingly, the purpose and recommendations of this report are fully complementary and conducive to the objective of Rural Proofing.



### 7.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

### 7.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes are required to the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council, Corporate Communications, and the Procurement and Payment Services Manager are being consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the report.

8.2 The Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer has been consulted in relation to the Integrated Impact Assessment and is supportive of the report.

### **Approved by**

**Name - John Curry & Lesley Munro**

**Title – Service Director Assets & Infrastructure & Service Director, Young People, Engagement & Inclusion**

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**Background Papers:** [insert list of background papers used in compiling report]

**Previous Minute Reference:** [insert last Minute reference (if any)]

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Michael Cook can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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