
URGENT DECISION OF THE

Waitematā Local Board

**Auckland Council draft submission on a proposed mandatory phase
out of single-use plastic shopping bags**

AUTHORITY TO EXECUTE THIS URGENT DECISION

Urgent Decision Process WTM/2016/1

- a) That the Waitematā Local Board:
- i) adopts the urgent decision process for matters that require a decision where it is not practical to call the full board together and meet the requirement of a quorum.
 - ii) delegates authority to the Chair and Deputy Chair or any person acting in these roles to make an urgent decision on behalf of the local board.
 - iii) requests that all urgent decisions be reported to the next ordinary meeting of the local board.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Ministry for the Environment is currently consulting on a mandatory phase-out (ban) of single use plastic shopping bags, which are considered to have a detrimental impact on terrestrial and marine environments.
2. The associated consultation document outlines the options available for reducing single use plastic bags, which includes a mandatory phase out, a charge on bags, a formal agreement between government and industry, and mandatory product stewardship.
3. Council staff are preparing a draft regional submission on this proposal to the Ministry of Environment by the closing date 14 September 2018.
4. Local Boards have an opportunity to formally provide feedback on the government's proposed mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags.
5. The regional Auckland Council submission will be recommended to the Environment and Community Committee for their approval on 11 September 2018.
6. All local board feedback needs to be received by the Environment and Community Committee before 11 September 2018 if it is to be considered and attached to the regional submission.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Waitematā Local Board:

- a) approve the feedback, as contained in attachment A, on the government's proposed mandatory phase out of single use plastic shopping bags.
- b) note that the Waitematā Local Board feedback will be attached verbatim to the Auckland Council submission which will be recommended to Environment and Community Committee



for their approval on 11 September 2018 and sent to the Ministry for the Environment by the due date of 14 September 2018

REASON FOR URGENCY

7. The case for an urgent decision is made due to the need for local board input into the Auckland Council submission to be made by 10 September 2018.
8. Council's draft submission will be provided to Environment and Community Committee for their approval on 11 September 2018.
9. The Waitematā Local Board's next scheduled business meeting will be held on 18 September 2018 meaning the local board cannot resolve on their feedback until after the matter has been considered by the Environment and Community Committee.
10. The urgent decision will be reported to the full local board during the next scheduled meeting on 18 September 2018.

DISCUSSION

11. The New Zealand Government is seeking feedback on a proposed mandatory phase out of the sale or distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags. The phase out would be enacted through regulation under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 and introduced over a six-month timeframe.
12. Single use plastic bags impact on terrestrial and marine environments, the amenity and aesthetics of our streets, parks and beaches and the collection of plastic bags as litter also has high resource and financial costs to councils (and thus ratepayers). Contamination caused by the incorrect disposal of plastic bags by consumers in comingled recycling collection systems also has significant consequences to council.
13. The recognition by the Ministry for the Environment that over the longer term, plastic waste needs to be designed out of the system is aligned with council's aspiration for zero waste.
14. The Ministry for the Environment's consultation document outlines a number of options for reducing the use of plastic bags, including a:
 - mandatory phase out
 - levy, tax or charge
 - deposit refund system. This puts a new cost onto a product, which is refunded to the consumer when they bring the material back for recycling
 - formal agreement with government and industry, in which retailers are required to charge for bags
 - mandatory product stewardship scheme in which producers that put certain goods on the market are required to be responsible for environmentally sound end-of-life management of the product
15. The Ministry's consultation document considers each of these options and concludes that the most effective option is a mandatory phase out of sale or distribution of single-use plastic bags through regulations under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008.
16. The recognition by the Ministry for the Environment that over the longer term, plastic waste needs to be designed out of the system is aligned with council's aspiration for zero waste.
17. Auckland Council's Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2018 includes three priorities relating to plastic:

e

- i. The plan recognises plastic waste as a high priority for avoidance and has identified it as one of three priority waste streams to be addressed.
 - ii. Reducing litter is also a priority included in the plan. Managing plastic bags as littered items has a high resource and financial cost to council as well as the natural environment.
 - iii. The plan includes a priority relating to reducing marine litter and pollution from plastic waste. This priority was added to the draft plan as a result of significant public concern and feedback on this topic during the consultation period.
18. The Waitematā Local Board has adopted the following advocacy position in relation to single use plastic:
- Single Use Plastic- support mechanisms to reduce single use plastic and eliminate single use plastic bags
19. The draft council submission makes the following key points:
- That Auckland Council supports option one in the consultation document – a total and mandatory ban. Reducing plastic use, litter, and marine pollution are priorities in the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan 2018. The inappropriate consumption, use and discarding of plastic bags has significant impacts on Auckland’s natural environment and our waste collection systems.
 - The ban should apply to all retailers who distribute single-use plastic bags, rather than just the larger retailers. An incomplete ban will dilute the effectiveness of this behaviour change intervention on consumers.
 - Support for the proposed six-month phase-out timeframe.

General

20. The recommendations contained in this report fall within the local board’s delegated authority.

DECISION

[Democracy Advisor to complete this section after the urgent decision meeting]

AUTHORISED FOR RELEASE

Trina Thompson
Relationship Manager/Senior Advisor, Waitematā Local Board

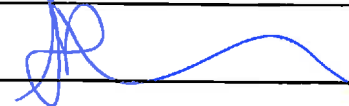


SIGNATORIES

Pippa Coom
Chair, Waitematā Local Board



Shale Chambers
Deputy Chair, Waitematā Local Board



DATE:

10 September 2018

Memorandum

10 September 2018

To: Penny Hulse, Chair, Environment and Community Committee
Alf Filipaina, Deputy Chair, Environment and Community Committee

Cc: Sonja Tomovska, Governance Advisor
Sophien Brockbank, Team Leader Strategic Planning, Waste Solutions
All Waitematā Local Board members

Subject: Feedback on Auckland Council submission on proposed mandatory phase out of single use plastic shopping bags

From: Waitematā Local Board

Purpose

1. To provide Waitematā Local Board's feedback on the Auckland Council submission on the Government's consultation on the proposed mandatory phase out of single use plastic shopping bags

Summary

The Waitematā Local Board supports the Auckland Council submission on the government's proposed mandatory phase out of single use plastic shopping bags.

We suggest that Auckland Council utilises the submission process to advocate for further government action to address the problem of plastic pollution in our city. These include asking the government to:

- introduce container deposit legislation for drink containers
- consider further bans on single use plastic items like straws and picnic utensils
- explore national packaging standards for other plastics
- work with businesses, councils, scientists and environmental groups to develop an action plan to eradicate plastic pollution in the marine environment

Context/Background

2. The border of the Waitematā Local Board area is the Waitematā Harbour. The health of the marine environment is important to us. Consequently, we support all efforts to improve water quality and reduce litter to the marine environment through the storm water systems and lessen plastic pollution.
3. The third outcome of the 2017 Waitematā Local Board plan is:
 - *The natural environment is valued, protected and enhanced.*
4. This outcome seeks the following goal:
 - *The health of our environment is enhanced, our waterways are healthy and the urban forest cover has increased. People have adopted low carbon lifestyles and live sustainably. Caring for our environment is part of who we are.*
5. A relevant objective in the local board plan is:

- *To improve the air and water quality and the health of our waterways*
6. Our work in this area includes supporting localised food waste collections to reduce waste to landfill and working with neighbouring local boards to complete the Central Community Recycling Centre in Western Springs.
 7. Additionally, we have funded local initiatives that encourage waste minimisation and educate local residents on behaviour change – including Grey Lynn Waste Away and their efforts on reducing single use plastic bags by making and distributing reusable shopping bags.

Responding to specific submission points

8. The Waitematā Local Board supports the proposal for a mandatory widespread ban of light weight single use plastic bags. We do so because
 - Focussing on consumer behaviour change has not been enough to reduce single use plastic bag news significantly
 - Soft plastic recycling is expensive and does not reduce plastic bag use. It is also resource intensive and there is limited use for the down-cycled material produced from the re-processed material.
 - Voluntary measures by businesses to reduce single use bag use have been short-lived and have disadvantaged some retailers over others. A mandatory system means there is an even playing field for businesses.
 - Small businesses also need to be included to provide a consistent message for shoppers to bring their own bags.
9. We generally agree with the Ministry's definition of single use plastic bag. We agree that biodegradable, degradable and compostable bags single use shopping bags are included in the ban as they all contribute to litter in our storm water systems and are hazardous to marine life.
10. We share the concerns outlined in the Auckland Council submission that there may be negative consequences from basing the exclusion to the ban on the thickness of the bags as the means to determining what is "single-use."
11. An alternative mechanism could be to include a definition of a reusable bag – for example that a reusable bag is made from material that allows it to be re-used up to 120 times.

Further action required

12. The Waitematā Local Board also supports the government's intention to utilise natural resources more efficiently by moving to a circular economy where resources are used over and over again and away from the take-break-waste use of resources. We recognise that moving towards a ban on single use plastic bags is a first step in this direction.
13. We encourage Auckland Council to advocate that government provide leadership on plastic pollution and other items from the waste stream.
14. Container Deposit Legislation that would introduce refunds on drink containers, for example, would have an immediate impact on reducing litter in our streets, parks and waterways. Currently it costs local boards between \$2000 - \$3000 per public place recycling bin in a public park which generally will have a 50 per cent contamination rate so are one of the least effective mechanisms for dealing with litter.
15. Container deposits turn plastic and glass bottles, cans and tetrapaks into a valuable resource and creates a clean stream of valuable recyclable material. It would also create a community funding mechanism, create jobs and reduce the cost to Council for the household recycling collection. Council already has some of the infrastructure in place for take-back depots for drink containers with the network of community recycling centres that local boards have championed.
16. Further we ask Auckland Council to urge the government to consider phasing out other single use plastic disposable items like straws and picnic utensils. Government action in this area would not only reduce plastic pollution but also trigger the production of alternatives made from renewable, less harmful resources. In France, for example, where they announced this type of

phase out for plastic and polystyrene picnic-ware, these items have been replaced with items made from natural easily compostable material like bamboo and wood pulp.

17. The Waitemata Local Board also supports advocacy to the government to introduce packaging standards to control packaging of both locally produced and imported goods. With China having closed its doors to most of our country's plastic the price of plastic has dropped dramatically and the international commodity market for recyclable material shows no sign of improving in the short to medium term. Our country has yet to catch up with local processing of plastic material and there are only one or two types of plastic that can be re-processed here at the moment, so it makes sense to reduce the amount of waste created through packaging.
18. Finally, while a ban on single use plastic bags and the other solutions proposed will reduce plastic pollution in the future, our country also must deal with the problem of the plastic pollution contaminating our marine environment right now.
19. Consequently, we encourage Auckland Council to advocate to the government to join with businesses and retailers, environmental NGOs, scientists and academics and councils to develop an action plan to both stop plastic pollution and remediate our environment from the existing impacts.

