

# MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

## REPORT FOR INFORMATION

**COMMITTEE:** Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny

**DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> January 2008

**SUBJECT:** Chorlton Pilot – Plastic Bag Free Chorlton

**REPORT OF:** Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To outline the Chorlton Campaign and the Council's support for the campaign. The report also details other plastic free bag schemes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the report.

### FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET

None.

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### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

### WARDS AFFECTED

Chorlton

### IMPLICATIONS FOR

Anti Poverty   Equal Opportunities   Environment   Employment

No

No

Yes

Yes

## **1. Background to Chorlton Campaign**

- 1.1 In Chorlton, a number of the retailers are issuing re-usable bags, or biodegradable bags. The group responsible for the campaign is Sustainable Chorlton. The group consists of residents and shop owners. They meet regularly and put on workshops for making both promotional signage, and fabric bags. On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> of December the group, with other volunteers, were out persuading shoppers in Chorlton to use bags for life for their Christmas shopping. Around 15 of the 40-targeted shops have so far signed the pledge to ban plastic bags. There are a number of jute bags and customized paper bags in circulation in the area, with a school in Didsbury designing a bag, and some local shops having their own reusable bags, which are being sold to shoppers. However, the organisers of the campaign have recently said that they feel that they need a different approach to the complete ban of plastic bags as some traders expressed concern that they would lose custom if they banned plastic bags. They are looking towards smaller steps based on promoting alternatives to plastic bags before agreeing to phase out plastic bags. We are prepared to assist the campaign group to make this change and will continue to promote alternatives to plastic bags. We are writing to all businesses in the area to explain the environmental impacts of plastic bags and to encourage them to use alternatives.
- 1.2 It is clear that there could be a citywide campaign to promote reusable bags. In summer 2007 the Council carried out a Little Green Bag campaign to highlight the need to reduce and stop using plastic carrier bags. One thousand reusable cotton bags were distributed to members of the public at exhibitions held on Albert Square and at Harvey Nichols. We intend to capitalize on this interest, during the 100 Days campaign. It seems that bags with visual designs of a strong local identity are popular with shoppers. Plus schools seem very interested in the campaign. As part of our plans for the campaign we will talk to local groups about running a competition with schools or shops to design a bag for life. In Chorlton the group of volunteers clearly have their own momentum, and our approach is to support them where we can and look to doing specific projects across the city. A city wide approach will highlight that it is estimated over 85 million plastic bags are issued to Manchester residents every year.

## **2. Plastic Bag Free Towns**

- 2.1 Eighty towns and villages have introduced or are considering a ban on plastic bags. Modbury in Devon was the first. From 1<sup>st</sup> May 2007 all 43 traders in Modbury came to a joint agreement to ban the use of plastic bags in order to help sustain the local environment. The campaign made Modbury residents start to question how and where products are made, how they are transported and where they go when they're finished with them. For those customers without their own bags, traders sell 100% biodegradable cornstarch carrier bags (which the South Hams District Council has agreed as being green waste and completely compostable) and several styles of recyclable paper carrier bags, for a small charge. All traders sell these bags for the same price. The shops tailored towards tourists have benefited from the increased publicity, others report business as usual. The traders funded the launch of the scheme themselves (£50 each) to pay for bag designs, posters and website. No traders have gone back to using plastic bags.
- 2.2 All the 33 London Councils have deposited a private bill in parliament called the London Local Authorities (Shopping Bags) Bill to ban the supply of certain shopping bags (with a few exemptions) by retailers in the London Boroughs. The local authorities would be able to apply a penalty charge to those that don't comply this is proposed to be a London-wide ban, not a national one.