

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 9 FEBRUARY 2004
REPORT ON: LEVY ON PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS
REPORT BY: ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY PLANNING)
REPORT NO: 112-2004

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To recommend a proposal that the Government introduce a levy on plastic shopping bags

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee

- a) agree to support a proposal that the Government introduce a levy on plastic shopping bags, the proceeds of which should be used to fund environmental initiatives
- b) remits the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to Dundee's MPs and MSPs confirming the Council's support for such a levy

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications of this report. However, adoption of the proposal could reduce the costs involved in waste disposal and provide an opportunity to bid for funding for environmental initiatives.

4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

None

5. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

This report has an impact on the Local Agenda 21 themes which relate to using resources efficiently and minimising waste; limiting pollution; and creating safe, clean, pleasant environments

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Around 10 billion plastic bags are given away at supermarket check-outs each year in Britain. These bags are a major source of litter and waste, with some plastics taking hundreds of years to decompose naturally.
- 6.2 In March 2002, the Republic of Ireland introduced a levy of around 9p on plastic shopping bags, which shops must pass on to their customers. (Note that all bags are not included in the levy – there are exemptions for small bags holding fresh meat, fish and poultry and loose items such as fruit and vegetables). The levy generated over £5 million in the first year, which went into an Environmental Fund for waste management, litter and other environmental initiatives including funding to local authorities for recycling centres and civic amenity sites. It is estimated that the number of bags issued has reduced by 90% as shoppers re-use bags to avoid the levy – precisely the change in public behaviour which was intended. The levy has had a major

impact on visual litter and has been very effective in raising public awareness of waste issues.

- 6.3 It was reported in May 2002 that the UK Government was considering a similar levy, but no plans have yet been announced. However, the idea has been welcomed by a number of major supermarkets and appears to have public support. A survey by MORI in February 2003 found that 63% of those questioned supported the idea of charging 10p a bag, compared to 27% who were against. People who supported the levy did so because it had clear environmental benefits and the money raised would also go to environmental initiatives.
- 6.4 At its meeting in December 2003, Aberdeen City Council unanimously approved a motion calling on the Council to launch a campaign for the introduction of a levy, and has subsequently written to other Councils seeking their support.
- 6.5 It is therefore recommended that the Council agree to support a proposal that the Government should introduce a levy on plastic shopping bags, and that the Chief Executive be remitted to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and to Dundee's MPs and MSPs confirming the Council's support.

7. **CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executives and Head of Waste Management have been consulted on this report.

Chris Ward
Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning)..... 11/02/04