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Environment Update

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

This report provides a brief update on our work on environmental issues. The report predominantly focusses on the role councils will be playing around environmental protection and improvement in the future. Cllr Judith Blake will present on the work that Leeds is doing to address climate impacts. The report also highlights some key activity coming up over the next few months. In paragraph 12 questions are set out aimed at guiding the discussion of the Boards future priorities for this wider policy area.

Recommendations

That Members consider the issues set out in this paper and through the questions set out in paragraph 12, provide direction on the future priorities for the broad area of environmental protection and improvement.

Action

Officers will take action as directed.

Contact officer: Sonika Sidhu
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 07775802327
Email: Sonika.sidhu@local.gov.uk

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Background

1. A number of factors have come together to raise environmental protection and improvement up the political agenda at national and local level including:
 - 1.1. A step change in public awareness of environmental issues and activism
 - 1.2. Exit from the EU will lead to a greater role for the UK in setting, monitoring and enforcing environmental standards
 - 1.3. The UK will be determining a post-CAP system of grants for farmers and landowners that will focus on the provision of environmental public goods such as greater biodiversity and flood defences
 - 1.4. Poor air quality in many parts of the UK and the failure to respond to this effectively has led to the Government being successfully challenged in the courts and a subsequent strengthening of the mitigating measures that local government is expected to put in place to address the issue
 - 1.5. The recent *IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C* and the Committee for Climate Change's publication, *Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming*, reiterate the scale of the problem and how the UK should respond
 - 1.6. The government's commitment to improving the recycling rates for a range of materials and has consulted on reforms aimed at achieving this outcome.

Current Activity

2. The term environmental protection encompasses many issues and associated services. Councils are already doing a great deal to protect the environment, to mitigate and adapt to the effects of a warming climate and to address those environmental issues that affect the health of our communities. However, we can expect that the pressure on councils to do more will increase. Currently councils and the LGA are involved in shaping the national agenda and the policy responses that are emerging. Councils are also active locally in partnership with communities and others to shape local responses to these challenges.
3. The Government has sought to bring some strategic coherence to the UK's approach to the environment through the publication of a 25 year environmental plan. But in practice environmental policy is spread across a range of strategies and legislation. Below we have set out what the LGA is doing in the various policy areas covered by the board:

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Theme	Current LGA Activity
Climate Change	-Supporting Knowledge Hub Climate Local materials on website -Involvement in development of National Adaptation Plan
Governance	-Responded to DEFRA consultation on Office of Environmental Protection -Member of DEFRA Governance stakeholder group -Actively shaping relevant chapter of Environment Bill
Waste Management	-Fully engaged in responding to DEFRA waste consultations -Responding to HCLG Select committee -Developing second phase lobbying strategy -Actively shaping relevant chapter of the Environment Bill
Bio diversity net gain	-Engaged with DEFRA regarding concerns about practical implementation of proposals -Delivered bio diversity net gain workshop for planners -Actively shaping relevant chapter of Environment Bill
Air Quality	-Calling for additional air quality funding -Responding to Government consultations and strategies -Providing a forum for councils to come together to discuss their responses -Joint publications with DEFRA and Public Health England -Actively shaping relevant chapter of Environment Bill
Energy	-LGA energy efficiency publication 2016 -LGA energy procurement strategy 2017 -Local Partnerships re-fit programme -Lobbying on fuel poverty
Flooding	-Regular flooding lobbying across a number of specific flooding issues
Transport	-Regular transport lobbying across a range of issues to promote more sustainable transport -Future transport programme

Future Activity

4. There is a range of environmental activity which will be taking place over the next few months which provides an opportunity for councils to reflect on their current role and activities:
5. **The Environment Bill:** The Government will bring forward an Environment Bill after the summer recess. The Bill is needed to fill the governance gap in oversight and enforcement created by the UK's exit from the EU. However, it is the first such Bill in 20 years and the Government will use it to seek to fulfil its commitment to leave the environment in a better condition than it found it. The Bill will include measures to:

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- 5.1. Establish a system of green governance including the Office for Environmental Protection;
 - 5.2. Improve air quality;
 - 5.3. Restore and enhance nature;
 - 5.4. Improve waste management and resource efficiency; and
 - 5.5. Improve surface water, ground water and waste water management.
6. Only the first of these issues has been set out in detail in a published draft Bill. We anticipate that many of the Bill's provisions will provide reserve powers to the Secretary of State to bring forward secondary legislation.
7. **LGA Conference:** at Annual Conference we will be holding a Clean Energy and Clean Air workshop, as well as debating the Sustainable Development Goals in our General Assembly. 88 councils have declared a climate emergency and of those many have agreed a target of being net-zero carbon by 2030.
8. **Environment Summit:** In response to the various environment issues councils are raising the LGA have asked councils to provide the LGA with examples of the environmental protection activity they are carrying out or have planned and we will hold an environment summit in October (date to be confirmed). The summit will identify how local government provides effective leadership on these issues and what best practise we can share across the sector.

Next steps and recommendations

9. The renewed focus on the environment prompts a number of questions and provides an opportunity for councils to reflect on their current role and activities. There is often a tension in debates on these issues between a desire for national direction and nationally applied measures and the need to reflect local circumstances if solutions are to be effective.
10. However there is a local component to all of these strategies and initiatives and the local challenge is clearly stated in the 25 Year Environmental Plan: "*At a local level we want environmental effort to be guided by the goals we have outlined but also to reflect local needs and priorities as well as being more integrated and efficient*". This aim is not helped by an often fragmented approach to policy development and funding.
11. At previous meetings of the EEHT Board members have indicated an interest in having environmental issues dealt with in a more all-encompassing manner rather than individually. There is a clear opportunity now for the Board to look at the range of issues and start to consider what a clearer leadership role for councils on environmental

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protection and improvement would look like, what policy support councils may need and what resource implications it could have for councils in the future.

12. Much of the Board's work on the environment in recent months has focused on waste and resources and this work will continue as the Government finalises its reforms. The Board will also want to contribute to the development of the Environment Bill. Climate change is not explicitly covered in the Bill, but many councils are making it a priority that will have policy and financial implications. Members are asked to consider:

12.1. What further work around the issues highlighted above would be helpful to the Board as it identifies its priorities for the coming year;

12.2. Identify any key issues Members would like officers to focus on;

12.3. Invite DEFRA to a future meeting to discuss the Environment Bill and their future vision for environmental protection and improvement.

Resources and Waste Consultations

13. DEFRA officers are working through the responses to the Resources and Waste Consultations. They are hoping to provide an official response to the submissions sometime in August. We currently anticipate that there will be some form of more detailed secondary consultation later on in the year. Our lobbying work on the consultations will continue over the summer. We recently briefed the shadow waste Minister and met with Pepsi. We anticipate further work with DEFRA and WRAP to take these issues forward.

Environment Committees

14. Mayor Philip Glanville represented the LGA at the HCLG Select Committee meeting on 10 June. The select committee was focussed on the implications of the resources and waste strategy. It was a good opportunity for the LGA to press its key lines as outlined in the consultation responses.

15. On 11 June Cllr Adele Morris represented the LGA at an APPG run by Policy Connect focusing on Food Waste Prevention. This was a good opportunity for the LGA to signal its support for food waste collections and new burdens funding whilst flagging up the fact that food waste prevention needs to be the first step.