

Improvement Support to Councils on Climate Change

Purpose:

For direction.

Summary

Following the LGA's declaration of a climate emergency at the annual conference in July and councils requesting support in this area, the Leadership Board set up a Climate Emergency Sounding Board. Over the summer, the board has met to address the challenges that councils are facing, to share good practice and to discuss how the LGA can provide support through lobbying and improvement. This paper sets out the recommendations for the future improvement approach to climate emergency work.

Recommendation

That the board supports the recommendations in this report to address the LGA's response to Climate Emergency issues.

Actions

1. Set up a Member climate change improvement working group to guide this work.
2. Officers to continue developing a pilot climate change improvement offer.

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Improvement Support to Councils on Climate Change

Background

1. In July 2019, the LGA General Assembly passed a motion calling upon the government to explore the domestic implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through funded partnership roles with local authority areas, encouraging councils to continue to link local priorities with the overall ambitions of the SDGs and declaring a climate emergency.
2. The above motion was discussed at the last Improvement and Innovation Board meeting in July 2019, including the need for sector-led improvement support to help councils tackle the issue of climate change. While the LGA already provides support and advice relating to the environment, climate change, energy and waste, set out below, there was a recognition that further support is needed in light of recent developments.
3. In order to take forward the LGA's work over the summer, the LGA Leadership Board set up a Climate Emergency Sounding Board. The Sounding Board met twice to identify the climate emergency challenge that councils are facing, good practice in addressing these and how the LGA can provide support through lobbying and improvement.
4. While local councils have placed great importance on tackling this issue, there is a recognition that the role of councils is not to do this in isolation, but to work cross sector, developing strategic partnerships through their leadership of place and to empower, as well as challenge, other sectors to work together on taking this forward.

Recommendations from the Sounding Board

5. The Sounding Board was aware of increasing demands from councils for support in developing their local work. The Board agreed that there was a need to develop a wide-ranging improvement offer to support councils in addressing the issue of climate change. Below is a set of long term and short term recommendations for the Improvement and Innovation Board's consideration, to help shape the LGA's future improvement approach to climate emergency work:
 - 5.1. Leadership support, by incorporating climate change issues into programmes for councillors and officers (for example a number of councillors have requested a leadership essentials course on taking responsibility as a leader/portfolio holder after declaring a climate emergency).
 - 5.2. Support for long term action-planning and setting strategic objectives, for example through the deployment of 'climate experts'.
 - 5.3. Accelerated learning pilots in partnership with experts in the field, including leading academics and institutions, to offer practical suggestions to the sector.

- 5.4. Support for communications approaches including engaging with residents and local activist groups and managing expectations.
- 5.5. Support to the sector in understanding best practice and most effective actions at the local level, for example through a bank of case studies.
- 5.6. Support through 'Don't be left in the dark' guidance and more detailed toolkits to help councils to take immediate action.
- 5.7. Workshops and events to help councils develop a better understanding of climate change issues and how these can be tackled.
- 5.8. Working with the LGA's research and information team to explore the possibility of conducting a climate change survey to follow up on the survey commissioned in 2010.
- 5.9. Continue engaging with the sector about the support they need to help inform the offer and conversations with central government.

Current Improvement offer

6. The LGA's improvement programme is set out in our Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). While there is currently no specific deliverable that relates to climate change, we have been supporting councils to address issues relating to the environment, climate change, energy and waste through our main improvement offer and policy advice. This includes:
 - 6.1. A number of our productivity programmes have enabled councils to address both efficiency and climate change issues. For example, councils have used design concepts to tackle harmful air pollution through our Design in the Public Sector programme, applied nudge theory to improve recycling through our Behavioural Insights programme, and used our productivity experts to invest in renewable energy and improve energy efficiency.
 - 6.2. We published an '[Acting on climate change](#)' councillor workbook in 2017 to help Councillors think about the roles, opportunities and drivers for council-led action on changing climate, both to reduce local carbon emissions and to build resilience to extreme weather.
 - 6.3. Our website contains advice and guidance including on [climate change and adaption](#), [waste](#), [litter and fly-tipping](#), [electric vehicle charging infrastructure](#), [severe weather](#) and numerous other topics.
 - 6.4. Over the past few years we have gathered numerous case studies and best practice examples, including those showcased in the Innovation Zone.

- 6.5. This year, we developed a Leadership Essentials programme on taking responsibility as a leader/portfolio holder after declaring a climate emergency, which will take place in November and is now fully booked.
- 6.6. Earlier this year, we published the New Conversation 2.0 comprehensive guide to engaging, enabling better dialogue with residents at every level, from consultation through to people's everyday interactions with the local authority, including on issues of climate change.
- 6.7. Local Partnerships, funded through our SLI grant, has been running the Re:fit programme helping councils implement energy efficiency and local energy generation measures to their buildings or their estate, to reduce carbon emissions and achieve savings.

Proposed programme of improvement activity in 2019/20

7. During the financial year of 2019/20 it is proposed that the board approves the proposals to take forward the following options from the main recommendations:
 - 7.1 Develop an online hub to be hosted on the LGA website, which will bring together all the published guidance, support and information relating to climate change.
 - 7.2 Incorporate climate change issues into our leadership programmes for Councillors and officers.
 - 7.3 Explore the potential for the development of a self-assessment tool or maturity index to help councils with long term action-planning and setting strategic objectives.
 - 7.4 Publish further information such as 'Don't be left in the dark' guidance and more detailed toolkits to help councils take immediate action.
 - 7.5 Host a national event and regional workshops to help councils develop a better understanding of climate change issues and how these can be tackled.
 - 7.6 Explore the option of developing a forward-looking climate focused 'peer challenge'-style support to help councils with their action planning on climate change.
8. We will be looking to develop this offer further during 2020/21 and look to include a climate change deliverable in the 2020/21 MoU with MHCLG. We propose that this work should be directed by a member-led Climate Change task and finish group. This offer will also be informed through our engagement with councils, leading organisations and experts in the field to help ensure it is fit for purpose.
9. Separately, the Environment, Energy, Housing and Transport board has been taking forward work on lobbying and colleagues have put forward a number of asks from government.

Implications for Wales

10. We have already engaged with our WLGA colleagues and will be looking to share learning and work collaboratively on any common issues.

Financial Implications

11. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for 2019/20, which helps shape the improvement programme, has been agreed with MHCLG and does not currently include deliverables relating to climate change. Some of the programme can be adapted under the current arrangement however, more substantial changes would require agreement from MHCLG or funding from elsewhere. Consideration should also be given to MoU negotiations with MHCLG for 2020/21 to ensure that climate change is included in the deliverables.

Next steps

12. Set up a Member climate change improvement working group to guide this work.
13. Officers to continue developing a pilot climate change improvement offer.