

27 June 2011

Item 4

Adaptation to Climate Change

Purpose of report

For discussion and direction

Summary

The report provides an update on LG Group work on Adaptation to Climate Change and new arrangements for local / central dialogue on Adaptation.

Recommendation

Members are asked to agree their preferred option for ensuring member input into a new Local Adaptation Advisory Panel.

Action

As directed by members.

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Adaptation to Climate Change

Background

1. The expected impacts of climate change present a major challenge to all local authorities in ensuring the protection of communities, the delivery of services and business continuity. There are potentially large costs for authorities and communities if we do not adapt buildings, services and local economies so that they can continue to function well in a changing climate (with the related possibility of new pests and diseases) and in extreme weather situations.
2. Local authorities are key to ensuring the country is well prepared for a changing climate, given their responsibilities for planning, managing infrastructure and buildings, emergency planning and as community leaders. This has been recognised by the Adaptation Sub Committee, the independent body set up as a result of the Climate Change Act and which advises the Government on Climate Change policy.
3. A new forum for central / local dialogue on adaptation is now being set up – the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP) - and this report provides the context for members to consider how they would like to input into the new Panel.

LG Group policy development on Adaptation

4. LG Group policy work on adaptation to climate change has emphasised the need to embed adaptation within all service areas, to identify the economic, social and environmental risks to services and the benefits of planning for the expected impacts. Many authorities have assessed the risks to services of future climate change, taken steps to climate proof buildings and services and are working with vulnerable groups to reduce risk. An LG Group publication, Winning Solutions for Adaptation, published in June 2011, includes case studies of action by authorities.
5. Members from other LG Group Boards will recognise that adaptation is not solely an issue of interest to the Environment and Housing Programme Board and it is planned to take a short report on adaptation to each of the LG Group's Boards this year, identifying adaptation issues relevant to their programme area. Members from other Boards may have an interest in being involved in or updated on LG Group work on Adaptation.
6. Flood and erosion risk management are key adaptation issues and the LG Group's Inland Flood Risk Management Group and Coastal Issues SIG provide forums for members to develop LG Group policy and for the exchange of information, ideas and advice between local government and central government and its agencies.

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Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP)

7. LG Group work on Adaptation to Climate Change has mainly been focussed through a high level national officer forum for central / local dialogue, which is now being restructured into a Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP). This will meet every 4 months, with the first meeting on 12 July 2011. The Panel is convened by Defra but the Chair and Deputy Chair roles have been assigned to local authority officers to reflect the new localism agenda. LG Group has helped to identify local authority members of the Panel. The Chair will also sit on Defra's Adaptation to Climate Change Programme Board, to ensure a strong local influence on the Government's programme.
8. The draft Terms of Reference are attached at appendix 1, together with details of Defra's Adaptation to Climate Change programme, which will implement key parts of the Climate Change Act.
9. The aims of LAAP are to:
 - 9.1 Directly influence the work of the Government's Adaptation to Climate Change Programme and its delivery bodies, including the development of the National Adaptation Programme (to ensure the policy framework properly supports local adaptation) and the provision of evidence and interpretation tools (such as Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Economic Analysis).
 - 9.2 Act as an efficient forum for two-way dialogue between local government, its partners and central government and its arms length/delivery bodies on local climate change adaptation work, with a particular focus on priority themes determined by the group.

Member input into the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel (LAAP)

10. Although the Panel is an officer forum, it is important that there is member input, to raise the profile of adaptation amongst all authorities and to ensure the Panel identifies and addresses political issues.
11. Members of the Environment Board are asked to consider various options for ensuring member input into the Local Adaptation Advisory Panel, so that your views can be sent to the first meeting of the Panel in July. Options for member input into LAAP include:
 - 11.1 A regular report from LAAP to the Environment Board, with a report / recommendations back from the Board as an agenda item for LAAP meetings.

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11.2 LG Group to convene a regular member meeting on adaptation (every 6 or 12 months with invites extended to all LG Group Boards) to help develop LG Group policy positions and provide recommendations to LAAP.

11.3 A session for members at LAAP meetings (possibly every 6 or 12 months)

12. Members are asked to consider which option(s) they would recommend (or any alternative), to ensure effective two way dialogue between members and LAAP.

Conclusion and next steps

13. Officers will let LAAP colleagues know how members would like to input into the work of the Panel and will set up any required processes. An update from the first LAAP meeting can be provided for the next Board meeting.

Financial Implications

14. The financial implications of the options above are meeting and attendance costs if members decide LG Group should convene a regular member meeting on adaptation, or attendance costs if it is decided that a member session should be added onto LAAP meetings.