

Theme 3: Urban Resilience

Local Resilience Act

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

The independent think tank, Localis, is exploring the potential of a 'local resilience act' to help strengthen local authorities' ability to respond to current and future risks arising from a changing climate. In line with the Board's interest in urban resilience, Joe Fyans, Head of Research at Localis, has agreed to attend the Board meeting and provide an overview of this campaign.

LGA Plan Theme: Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

Recommendation(s)

That the Board note the background briefing provided by Localis, attached at Appendix A, in advance of a presentation at the meeting.

Contact details

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Outcome and Purpose

1. City regions face an increasing variety of physical, political, economic and social risks. The Board's work on urban resilience aims to help leaders of urban areas understand the nature of these risks, what it means to be resilient and how our city regions can become resilient.
2. This work will also look at the implications of the Government's National Resilience Strategy for urban areas. The purpose of this strand of work is to influence Government's plans to take forward the proposals in the strategy, ensuring they are of relevance and value to urban areas.
3. This work has relevance for the LGA's Safer Stronger Communities and Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Boards. Officers will join up strands of work from across these three Boards and look to ensure that the work of these Boards reflects the challenges that urban areas face.

Background

4. Urban resilience has been of interest to the Board for some time. In 2020, the Board commissioned WPI Economics to look at the drivers of urban cost pressures. This work included looking at how urban areas might be particularly vulnerable to changes and was a useful tool for understanding what might make urban areas financially resilient.
5. In January 2023 the Board heard from Lucy Vilarkin and Alex Minshull from Bristol City Council to present Bristol's work in developing an urban heat resilience plan. And at the urban summit in March 2023, attendees had the opportunity to hear from Ed Parham, the Founder of Space Syntax, about the role of data in building resilient city spaces.
6. Following the urban summit, LGA officers were approached by the independent think tank Localis, with a view to discussing their campaign for a 'local resilience act' – a mechanism to simplify and clarify the powers, funding and responsibilities for developing climate resilience in local communities. Consequently, Joe Fyans, Head of Research at Localis has agreed to attend the June Board and give a presentation on this project.

Proposal

7. Board members are asked to read the briefing note, prepared by Localis, attached at Appendix A in advance of a presentation on the campaign at the Board meeting.

Implications for Wales

8. The accompanying briefing note suggests the territorial extend of the proposed local resilience act would only cover councils in England. While many of the policy and funding levers associated with increased climate resilience are devolved, it may be worth exploring with the Welsh Local Government Association the extent to which they would support a UK-wide act.

Financial Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications arising from this paper.

Equalities implications

10. Disadvantaged or discriminated against groups are more likely to be affected by social, economic or environmental shocks, and deprived areas are also more likely to take longer to recover. For example, the LGA's A vision for Urban Growth and Recovery report found that during the pandemic, low income and Black and ethnic minority groups were more likely to work in occupations where the risk of virus transmission was higher, and that low earners were 2.4 times more likely to work in a shutdown sector. Any work to improve urban resilience must take into account these disparities and not assume that all communities have the same ability to absorb or recover from shocks.

Next steps

11. In line with the steer from members there may be further opportunities to develop the theme of urban resilience as part of the next board cycle.