



Improvement support to Councils on climate change

Purpose of report

For approval.

Summary

Following the declaration of a climate emergency at the LGA conference in July 2019, the LGA has been developing an improvement and support offer to councils to address the climate response.

The purpose of the LGA programme is to enable councils and residents to reach their local carbon reduction goals to prevent the onset, and mitigate the effects, of climate change.

This paper covers the progress made since the last board meeting with regards to an array of support offers, alongside plans for the financial year ahead.

Recommendations

That the Improvement and Innovation Board notes the update on the actions taken to address the LGA's response to the Climate Emergency issues and supports the proposals for the coming year.

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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. LGA officers have gathered feedback and intelligence on the support offer from a range of different sources. In addition to seeking the views of both Members and officers, contributions from organisations such as the Association of Directors of Environment, Planning and Transport, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the County Councils Network, the District Councils Network, Universities and Charities have also been sought. This has ensured that the support offer is fit for purpose and meets the needs of local authorities.
3. The Improvement and Innovation working group for climate change met on March 18 2020 for the second time. The Improvement and Innovation Board will be updated at the meeting of any further recommendations for the proposed 2020/21 programme.

Issues

Progress since the last board meeting

4. The LGA [Climate Change web hub](#), which houses all the information about our existing and developing offer, including numerous [case studies and best practice examples](#) was launched at the beginning of the year and continues to be updated with new offers of support and good practice.
5. We are continuing to work on the 50 examples of council actions on climate change.
6. Councils are continuing to make use of the 'Climate Emergency Network' Knowledge Hub online group to ask questions, share practice and discuss key issues.
7. The second [climate change Leadership Essentials programme](#) for Leaders and Portfolio Holders took place in February 2020 which received excellent feedback.
8. The Centre for Public Scrutiny were commissioned to produce guidance on '10 Questions to ask when scrutinising services to tackle climate change' providing advice on key issues on which scrutiny boards might need to inquire in order to effectively scrutinise those issues. It will be published on the LGA webpages in April.

9. An LGA climate change baseline survey opened for all councils to complete. This asked questions to both baseline progress amongst councils and will inform the improvement and support offer, as well as the sector's policy asks to government. The survey will close on March 27.
10. Local Partnerships is providing [services](#) in key climate response areas including energy efficiency, waste, housing, regeneration and growth, air quality, energy, finance, infrastructure, digital transformation and health and social care.
11. 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](#).

Deliverables for 2020/21

Sharing good practice

12. **Regional events:** Following the LGA's involvement with the regional workshops run by ADEPT, the LGA will be leading on organising a series of regional events on climate change to offer the sector an opportunity to share learning and hear from leaders in this space inside and outside of local government. Notable practice will be shared nationwide online for everyone to access. Some workshops may also take the form of a webinar.
13. **A series of multimedia packages:** Led by senior leaders in the sector, topics such as 'Don't be left in the dark on climate change', engaging your whole place in climate action and climate terminology will be covered to provide a foundation of knowledge and skills for everyone.
14. **Peer to peer support:** We are currently developing a peer based bespoke offer of support. At the beginning of the project, the LGA will look to match make councils with a wider array of partners including universities, alongside the councils who have been early adopters in their climate change work. On March 30, the LGA and the University College London are piloting a match making virtual event for academics and councils to develop their thinking and next steps after declaring a climate emergency. The outcomes and feedback from the pilot will feed into the evolving peer support offer.
15. **Corporate Peer Challenge:** The peer challenge stocktake is currently taking place which will report to the Improvement Innovation Board in May. This will likely include a recommendation that CPCs include a consideration of the Council's preparedness for and or approach to tackling climate change. A council has already requested that this be included in their challenge and a pilot is being carried out.
16. **Communications:** We have published the [New Conversation 2.0](#) guide about engaging in dialogue with residents, from consultations through to people's everyday interactions with their local authority, including on issues of climate change. We have commissioned a supplier to create new guidance for councils on engaging with their communities, activists and government on the issue of climate change. This is due to be published in

summer 2020 and will be part of [#FutureComms](#) – our online resource to help councils to develop and deliver effective communications.

17. LGA Annual Conference: A plenary on climate change will be delivered in July 2020 for Leaders and Chief Executives under the title of *What should local leaders expect from central government as we head towards COP26?* Examples of councils' climate change innovative practice will also be showcased at the Innovation Zone.

Productivity

18. Innovation

18.1. Our [Design in the Public Sector](#) programme, which equips councils with design skills and techniques to apply to their toughest service challenges, will focus solely on climate change for 2020-21. Councils have already made use of the programme and best practice has been shared on the LGA website.

18.2. A number of councils have made use of our [Behavioural insights Programme](#) to help residents make better choices for themselves and society, including around waste, recycling, idling outside of schools and sustainable travel. Amongst other services, the programme will continue to provide support to councils to tackle climate change issues. The LGA will also produce guidance to help councils to use Behavioural Insights tools and techniques to address local climate change challenges.

18.3. The [Productivity Experts Programme's](#) purpose is to help councils in making savings. Councils have used the support to become more energy efficient using renewable sources and to review their waste management services. Such support will again be available in the coming financial year.

19. Procurement

19.1. The LGA will be updating the LGA sustainable procurement guide in 2020.

19.2. We are focusing on promoting social value in procurement, of which the environment is a prominent part. A series of events are planned for local authorities to attend.

19.3. The LGA is working with the Business Services Association for councils and suppliers to come together and identify how procurement practice and contracts will need to change given the climate emergency. An event is planned for June and learning will be shared more widely afterwards.

Leadership

20. Member leadership:

20.1. We will continue to run the climate change Leadership Essentials programme for Leaders and Portfolio Holders in the next financial year with revisions as the context of this topic evolves.

20.2. We published an [‘Acting on climate change’ councillor workbook](#) in 2017, which is designed to help councillors think about the roles, opportunities and drivers for council-led action on changing the climate. This is due to be refreshed in 2020.

21. **Officer leadership:** We will explore through our partnership with SOLACE opportunities for officer development.

Research and information

22. **Data:** We recognise a need from councils to consistently baseline their carbon analysis data nationwide in order to measure impact and compare successes in a standardised way. We are exploring ways in which we can support councils to do this.

23. **Research:** Councils have also expressed an ask for some research to be done under the following question: ‘What can councils and their partners do in the immediate, medium and the longer term which will have the greatest impact in reducing carbon emissions?’ We would like to commission some research to explore this further.

Implications for Wales

24. We have already engaged with our Wales Local Government Association colleagues and will be looking to share learning and work collaboratively on any common issues.

Financial Implications

25. The support offer will be largely funded through our Improvement Grant from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government through the Memorandum of Understanding and therefore is subject to agreement with them. A new climate change deliverable has been received positively and we await full sign off on the grant.

Next steps

26. Officers to continue delivering the climate change improvement and support offer.