



OFFICER REPORT TO CABINET MEMBER

OFFICER REPORT ON THE ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE TASK GROUP REPORT

10 MARCH 2009

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

1. The Adapting to Climate Change Task Group has produced a report asking the Cabinet Member for Environment to agree a number of recommendations to improve the management of risks and impacts associated with climate change. This report is attached as Annex A.

BUSINESS CASE:

2. Surrey County Council is required to report annually on its plans for adaptation to climate change (national indicator NI188). The County Council is seeking to improve its understanding of exposure to risks associated with climate change impacts and to ensure that the design and delivery of services incorporates management of those risks appropriately.
3. The Task Group was set up to investigate the impacts of climate change on Surrey and on provision of County Council services. The Task Group heard from a range of witnesses including the UK Climate Impacts Programme, the Surrey Wildlife Trust, Hampshire County Council and Surrey County Council officers.
4. Some key issues arose from these sessions and from further work that was carried out to review the financial and business continuity issues arising from extreme weather events in Surrey. A number of witnesses talked about the observed impacts including increased incidence of flooding and other extreme weather events and changes in biodiversity including arrival of new species and indigenous species under threat.
5. The Task Group recommendations reflect learning from other organisations and from evidence of existing impacts in Surrey. They cover a number of areas outlined below.
 - The need for **improved communications** on the observed impacts and their implications for service planning and delivery in the future for the county council, partners and residents. This will be delivered through commissioning a short study of climate impacts in Surrey, drawing on existing research and evidence, which will provide the basis for a communications strategy with residents, businesses, partner organisations as well as members and officers

of the Surrey local authorities. Funding for the study has been allocated from the existing climate change budget.

- The need for **improved dialogue with residents** about the feasible level of public service during extreme weather events. It is clear that with rising incidence of extreme weather events and pressures on local government budgets, more work is required to support local resilience and to focus efforts on key strategic routes.
- The need to embed consideration of risks associated with extreme weather events and climatic change into **corporate risk management**
The Task Group identified the need for improved dialogue with all heads of service on managing the risks associated with climate change and to ensure that the corporate risk management processes support services in building climate risk into the service planning process. This work can be met through existing staff resources.
- More detailed investigation in **specific areas of risk**, including highways asset management and health and adult social care.
The witness sessions identified a number of specific areas of service provision where more work is required. This included aspects of capital investment where long term planning is required as well as service provision for vulnerable groups. The select committees have been identified as the best route for further investigation in these areas.
- Improved **leadership and scrutiny** involving all relevant partners in Surrey to ensure that risks and impacts are understood and managed in the most cost effective and appropriate way. The task group heard from Hampshire County Council where an ongoing Committee of Inquiry has brought together senior people in key organisations to provide leadership on tackling climate change across the county. The Task Group felt that a similar model in Surrey could provide ongoing scrutiny and leadership. Further work is required to review options for achieving these aims. Existing structures such as the Surrey Climate Change Partnership could provide the basis for such an approach. As an initial stage, officers within the climate change partnership could be tasked with reviewing options and reporting back to the full partnership.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

Financial and value for money implications

6. The work of the Task Group identified that climate change is a matter of risk to the County Council. The Surrey Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) attempted to quantify the costs to the County Council of responding to extreme weather events. Although financial information was limited, the study estimated a cost of £6.9 million to the County Council over the ten years from 1999-2009. This relates to cost of damage to buildings, insurance claims against the Council, lost man hours due to closures to schools and council offices and additional costs of response to events.
7. The main costs associated with the proposed recommendations are:
 - (i) Funding for short study into Surrey in 2050. The costs to be met through the existing climate change budget (allocated)

- (ii) All other costs are likely to be related to officer time in improving risk management and putting in place appropriate mechanisms. It is anticipated that these activities will all be delivered in house and will be focused on actions that can prevent longer-term costs.

Equalities Implications

8. The evidence from the Surrey Local Climate Impacts Study identified that some groups are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of extreme weather events. This includes both the direct health impacts of, for example, heatwaves and the indirect impacts of social care provision being hampered during extreme weather events such as flooding. The elderly and those with health problems, including mental health problems may be particularly vulnerable and more work is required to consider the implications for service provision to some groups.

Risk Management Implications

9. The County Council's work on climate change adaptation is essentially about improved risk management of current and future impacts of climate change on Surrey County Council's services and operations. Without adequate planning for adaptation, services risk being ill-prepared for climatic events. Further work is required to ensure that climate change is fully integrated within corporate risk management.

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy/Local Area Agreement Targets

10. The work of this task group will contribute to fulfilling the vision for Surrey set out in the Surrey Strategic Partnership Plan, particularly addressing the need to put measures in place for adapting to climate change. This will have a direct impact on the following indicator:
- (a) NI 188 planning to adapt to climate change.

Furthermore, the planned Energy Use Task Group will help address the following indicators:

- (b) NI185 CO2 emissions from County Council operations
(c) NI 186 per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area (included in our LAA).

Section 151 officer commentary

11. The Section 151 officer confirms that all material financial and business issues and risks have been considered in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment:

Endorse the need for more scrutiny focused on specific aspects, namely that:

- The Adults and Community Care Select Committee are tasked with considering the implications for vulnerable groups.
- The Health Scrutiny Committee are tasked with considering the implications of extreme weather events and climatic change on the provision of health services.

- The Environment and Economy Select Committee are tasked with reviewing the impacts of highways asset management.

Support the need for weather and climatic impacts to be integrated into the County Council's approach to risk management and service planning.

Recommend that an internal and external communications strategy is developed in order to improve awareness and understanding of climate impacts and their implications for service provision and quality of life in Surrey.

Recommend that the Surrey Climate Change Partnership consider how existing structures could support provision of improved leadership and scrutiny on climate impacts including wider engagement.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To help the County Council manage risks associated with a changing climate and to meet national performance monitoring requirements.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

That the Adapting to Climate Change task Group monitor the progress of the recommendations made in the report.

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Sources/background papers: None