

Adaptation

EA1: Managing Own Estate

Obtain Senior Management and Political Support

A crucial lesson drawn from the experience of other local authorities who have undertaken work on climate change adaptation is that an Action Plan is unlikely to be effectively delivered unless it has the support of Elected Members, senior managers and key staff.

As a general rule, time spent in building support before an Action Plan is in development can therefore be invaluable in delivering successful outcomes.

Key steps to consider:

- Ensure that the development of a Climate Change Action Plan is drawn up in full consultation with the portfolio holder and/or is discussed and agreed by the council cabinet or committee at an early stage. Involvement of the corporate management team is also key to getting support across all service areas. In order to ensure that the issues around climate change adaptation are fully understood by members and senior management it is worth preparing a briefing for circulation before any meetings that explains the challenge of climate change, the policy context, why the Council needs to consider an adaptation response and what the benefits to the Council will be of developing an Action Plan. Of course the focus for adaptation is likely to be on particular local issues but it is also useful to show how these fit into the national and regional context. In some areas recent weather related events will bring adaptation to the top of the agenda but in other areas immediate impacts of climate change will be less obvious and it will be important to make clear links with corporate priorities such as risk management.
- If there is a recognised champion for Climate Change or sustainable development issues among cabinet members, the relevant committee or the corporate management team try and meet with them in advance of any meeting to discuss the approach to adopt.
- Encourage the Council Leader and/or Chief Executive to alert all relevant departmental heads to the development of the Action Plan and to stress its importance
- Identify any cross-departmental structures that could help support action on adaptation (for example existing officers groups on Emergency Planning, Flood Defences or Coastal Management) and meet with all key people involved to explain the project and the benefits for their work (see section on appointing climate adaptation lead and team)
- Consider your existing communications channels within the council – for example do you have a staff forum, a staff newsletter or intranet updates daily? It is worth getting some communications out to staff through some of these routes as work progresses to keep everyone aware of the Action Plan and of progress over time

Appoint climate adaptation lead and team and agree approach

In the majority of Local Authorities, one or two people should act as a focal point to take overall responsibility for co-ordinating the process of developing an adaptation action plan. This is a crucial role, as the process will require input from a range of different individuals and departments within the LA.

The activities that this individual will be required to carry out include: overall co-ordination and communication; liaison with senior management and departmental directors; stakeholder engagement; information/data gathering and review; and development of the action plan. Typically, the following individuals have assumed the role of focal point and taken responsibility for directing the process:

- Sustainable Development Officers, Local Agenda 21 Coordinators and Environmental Managers.
- Property and Facilities Managers, Emergency Planners, Planning staff.

It is important that the individual has sufficient authority and time, which has been authorised by senior officers, to oversee development and implementation of the Action Plan. Additionally it might be necessary to communicate from a senior level to all staff the time commitment that might be asked of them in helping take the action plan forward.

In most cases the designated focal point will need to draw on support from individuals in a range of different departments and it may be appropriate to establish a core team of officers to work with the focal point to deliver individual tasks. Officers with some of the following corporate management responsibilities might form part of the core team:

- Property services.
- Engineering services.
- Human resources.
- Financial management.
- Facilities management.
- Procurement.

The Action Plan team could either meet on a regular basis to track progress or the focal point can draw on them as and when required. As with the focal point, it is important that senior officers have approved the time and effort that will be required by individuals in the core team (see Allocate Resources).

If you are developing a joint adaptation and mitigation Action Plan you will need to consider whether one team can manage both aspects of the climate change response or whether you are better establishing two separate teams, each with responsibility for one strand. If you do establish two teams ensure that the lead officer/focal point sits on both to ensure that progress is co-ordinated properly.

Allocate Resources

As with any Council plan or strategy, a Climate Change Action Plan will not be effectively delivered unless sufficient staff and financial resources are allocated to the task. At the start of the process you will need to consider:

- The timetable for obtaining agreement for the plan within your own council's corporate planning cycle and council meetings cycle and at which stage of development will the plan need to go to cabinet/overview and scrutiny/corporate management team meetings. You will also need to assess how this fits with your staff resources in terms not only of preparing the action plan but also committee reports, attending meetings and providing briefings.
- How long the process of preparing an Action Plan will take, who needs to be involved and what costs will be incurred in gathering the required information, preparing the plan and consulting relevant stakeholders. If you have not been involved in preparing a Council Strategy or Action Plan before it would be worth consulting another member of staff who has.
- The time availability of all those involved in your Action Plan team. You will need to determine whether all the staff you wish to involve will have the time to contribute fully to the process at every stage. If it appears that there will be significant time or cost constraints on individuals or departments you need to contribute to the process it might be necessary to revisit the prioritising of the plan with officers and/or members. At the outset it helps if there can be full clarity on the resources required and any unforeseen increases are identified quickly.

Undertake initial training

Before beginning the process of preparing an Action Plan you will need to ensure that all staff involved have a good understanding of:

- The climate change challenges facing your area.
- The national, regional and local policy context.
- Possible adaptation actions to address the predicted changes in climate for each aspect of the council estate.
- What the action plan is trying to achieve and what the timetable for completion of the process should be.

It may be best to achieve this through holding a half-day or day-long training event or workshop involving all the staff involved in your climate change team and also others such as interested Elected Members and senior managers. You may wish to run the workshop yourselves or utilise the Energy Saving Trust Practical Help service which can offer free workshops – call **0870 241 2089**.

The event should lead to a greater capacity within your team and to the production of an outline structure of the Action Plan and a clear timetable for the completion of the stages of the process.

If you have decided to prepare a joint Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Action Plan you may wish to hold one event that involves staff responsible for developing both strands of the Action Plan. Alternatively, you may feel that it is better to keep the two strands of the process separate at this stage.

Checklist

- Have you secured endorsement from senior management and/or Cabinet or the relevant committee for developing a Climate Change Action Plan for your LA?
- Has financial support to enable the completion of the process been secured?
- Has a Project Leader been appointed to the programme, who has the right personal characteristics for the task and who has been given sufficient time budget and authority to carry out the programme?
- Has a Core Team been identified who can back-up the Project Leader in carrying out the Programme and producing its outputs?
- Has initial training been provided to those involved in developing the Action Plan and other interested parties?

The Output of this Stage is the establishment of a Project Leader and Core Team, backed by high level political and managerial support for the preparation of a Climate Change Action Plan.

