

LOCAL CLIMATE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME NATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP - MEETING 2 NOTES

16th June 2022

MEETING OVERVIEW

This was the second meeting of the Local Climate Engagement Programme (LCE) National Advisory Group (NAG). The meeting had the following agenda:

- 1) Welcome & Introductions
- 2) Update on the LCE Programme & follow up from last meeting followed by substantive discussion
Break
- 3) Councillor & Senior Leader Training followed by substantive discussion
- 4) Programme Advocacy & Communications Update
- 5) AOB

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION POINTS

HOW CAN WE ENSURE ONE-OFF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES SEE LONGER-TERM INSTITUTIONAL OR POLICY CHANGE?

Partners shared an update on the Programme and initial learning from the work delivered so far, especially in terms of delivering training to councils. Partners asked the Advisory Group for feedback on this update and the question above. A summary of the feedback is outlined below.

Understanding the local context

- Every council is different with a different centre of gravity and power and understanding of engagement too – need to understand this first and tailor approach accordingly.
- Understanding the internal priorities and issues and culture is key including officer day to day priorities.
- Link programme with council priorities so this is solving a problem the council is facing.
- Need to be able to offer separate or combined learning routes for officers and councillors depending on context. This needs to be able to flex according to people and changing pressures too.

Political context

- Find where this work fits politically in order to help councils embed these processes into their work.
- Explain if councils are not involving and engaging people, they will have a political problem.

Power, privilege & inclusion:

- How do we shine light on the question of power & privilege? It's not participatory if there isn't acute awareness of power, privilege, inclusion & equity.
- Not a truly deliberative process if don't consider structural inequalities around these processes.

Decision-making process

- Find a key issue that councils need to make decisions on that will help drive this work forward.
- Recognise that decision-making process within councils can sometimes not reflect pressures of climate issues as may not be relevant to that specific department for example.

Securing buy in

- Ensure at least one elected member and senior officer are involved from the very beginning of the work. Essential for building momentum and embedding culture shift.
- Need a point of contact who is the focus for responsibility and cascading info throughout the council.
- Need to understand early on what the value proposition for the council is – is there a budget line that matches this work?

SENIOR LEADER & COUNCILLOR TRAINING DISCUSSION

Partners shared an outline of the training that will be delivered to Senior Leaders and Councillors as part of the Local Climate Engagement Programme. Partners asked the Advisory Group for feedback on this outline. A summary of the feedback is outlined below.

Explain value of participation approaches

- Participatory processes shore up the representative role councillors play and provides another opportunity for social intelligence gathering.
- Participation allows councillors to get at real needs of real people and gives them the mandate to act. Participation approaches also can give councillors political cover to act in areas that they worry might be controversial or where they could be afraid of a public backlash if they take a firm position.
 - This can provide meaningful ways to engage public with the science that can get to the emotional response and contextual response from individuals which provides much more information and insight for councillors.
- Explain how these processes can help someone make an impact as a councillor.
- Recognise how much councillors know and care about their communities and their communities know them – this only helps build on that rich dynamic and is a complementary process.
- These processes will help councillors hear from a lot of people they wouldn't normally hear from.
- Make sure it's clear we understand public has been raising their voices all the time we and these processes haven't just invented it.

- Tackle the myth/question of “what if the public gives us the wrong answer” – use case studies to tackle this.
- Emphasise how participation allows for diversity and inclusion and how much this should be a motivator too.
- Explain the co-benefits of these processes.

Climate change as a local issue

- Explain the urgency of this issue now – councillors may be seeing climate issue as a global science problem.

Understand councillors’ priorities

- Find out what councillors are focusing on and how this work can help them.
- Do opportunity mapping with councillors.
- Test the training with local councillors directly.
- Identify whether these processes can do one of the following for councillors?
 - Contribute to their legacy
 - Help them get re-elected
 - Address a challenging situation

Share good practice examples

- Gather and share good practice all the time and place a focus on this in the training. Help people think in different directions and show councillors how this has been done by other councils – especially key to hear from other councillors themselves.

Political context

- Consider party politics when delivering the training to councillors – sessions could be delivered to councillors of the same political party separately. Officers will help inform this decision and how best to work with councillors.
- National messages around climate can be accepted in some areas and really jar in other areas. Start with what matters to you as a community – [Ambition Lawrence Weston](#) example.
- When you bring people together they may often come to the same conclusions as councillors but a party may need this to come from another source.
- Indicate opportunities that could come from climate change issue but do so in a culturally sensitive way e.g. being aware of the attachment for some communities to mining in areas like Cumbria.
- Link this work up for councillors into wider contextual challenges happening at the time e.g. cost of living rise and how this links with the climate agenda.

LCE PROGRAMME ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS DISCUSSION

- Climate piece is part of solutions institutions need – must frame this engagement as an opportunity.
- Messaging needs to be anchored in what's good to look forward to around environmental future.

- Current energy crisis has focused people more on energy and conversations around changes needed on energy production, energy use, energy efficiency, heating systems etc have been pushed up the agenda.
- Messages around opportunity for cheaper energy once renewables are embedded into our infrastructure are not publicised enough – this links to need to educate lots of different actors on opportunities of climate piece.

RESOURCES TO FOLLOW UP ON

- <https://creativendundee.com/cultivate/>
- <https://realisingjustcities.demo3.creativeconcern.com/blog/event-report-21st-century-councillor-framework-tested>
- https://realisingjustcities.demo3.creativeconcern.com/sites/default/files/Co-production%20in%20local%20climate%20politics_Policy%20Brief%2008.11.21%20%281%29.pdf
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=4luyo0leZQg
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/13/opinion/sway-kara-swisher-john-doerr.html?referringSource=articleShare>
- <https://www.newlocal.org.uk/publications/communities-climate-change/>
- <https://pcancities.org.uk/net-zero-catalyst-delivering-levelling>
- <https://www.progressive-policy.net/ign/resources/quantum-collective-research-for-the-ign>
- <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/improving-operational-delivery-in-government/>
- <https://bristoldef.org.uk/community-climate-action/>

NEXT STEPS

1. Involve to arrange dates for future meetings.
2. Involve to update the Senior Leaders & Councillors training plans with feedback from the NAG.
3. Involve to have follow up conversations with anyone who missed the meeting and any NAG members who would like to have a more detailed conversation.
4. LCE partners to look into possibility of in person NAG meeting.
5. Involve to produce summary note from the meeting to:
 - share with NAG members;
 - inform possible learning case studies to share with local authorities;
 - inform delivery between project partners & successful local authorities;
 - publish on programme website to contribute to the shared learning from the project.