

## Adapting to climate change - local authority case study

### Bournemouth Borough Council - Embedding Climate Change into the Corporate Risk Management System

#### Overview:

Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils have a joint Adaptation Action Plan to reach National Indicator 188: Planning to adapt to climate change (NI188) Level 3 by March 2011. Whilst the coalition government has announced that the National Indicator Set will be replaced, Bournemouth Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2011/12 remains committed to climate change adaptation. One of the Council's top corporate priorities is "**An Improving Environment**" for which the Council plans to have "**Increased activity to respond to climate change**".

The Council's Climate Change entry in the Strategic Risk Register has been updated to give consideration to both severe weather (informed by the Community Risk Register) and future climate change.

To supplement this top level risk assessment, and inform the development of an Adaptation Strategy, the Council has developed a **Climate Change Impact Assessment Tool** that aims to assist services in carrying out risk assessments for climate change and embedding these risks into the existing Corporate Risk Management Process.

#### Adaptation measures:

The Tool has been devised with reference to the climate change risk management process in Dorset County Council and includes the following:

- Identifies **climate change variables** for both the near term (up to 2015) and the medium term (up to 2050s). The UK Climate Projections 2009 (UKCP09) medium emissions scenario has been used to identify these variables, providing a description of both regional climate change projections, and also absolute climate projections for Bournemouth up to the 2050s.
- Provides **climate change impacts and opportunities reference material** to be used as 'prompts' for considering the consequences of the climate change variables. The references have been informed by the Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) work and Business Areas Climate Impacts Assessment Tool (BACLIAT) assessments completed by Service Units in an Adaptation Workshop.
- A **climate change risk assessment template**, which is based on the corporate risk assessment pages, offers assistance on **determining a risk score** for the climate variables. The 'likelihood' for each variable has been determined and fixed in the risk assessment template to ensure consistency in application. These 'likelihood' scores have been provided giving consideration of UKCP09 under the medium emissions scenario.

A series of Climate Change Workshops will be held throughout 2011, where the Tool will be introduced to Risk Champions and other users. The workshops will be used as an opportunity to revisit climate change adaptation with services, explain the Tool, and provide an opportunity for support in completing risk assessments.

Each Service Unit will be required to carry out a climate change risk assessment co-ordinated by the risk champion, and update their Operational Risk Register appropriately with an entry for near-term (up to 2015) and medium-term (up to 2050s) that have risk scores reflecting those climate variables that are deemed to have impacts to the service.

The risk assessments will be used to carry out a strategic level analysis of climate change vulnerabilities across the Council, informing the development of an Adaptation Strategy. The Strategy will then be used to revisit and reinforce adaptation efforts, and also to engage the wider community in adaptation measures.

### Benefits:

- 1) Integrating climate change risk assessment into the existing corporate risk management system is thought to be the best approach for Bournemouth Council. It ensures that the process is self-maintaining and is not reliant on a single individual/team (e.g. climate change officer) to ensure that risks are reviewed and up to date. This is particularly relevant when considering the financial cuts to public spending.
- 2) Council-wide guidance and an information resource for climate change risk assessments, and placing the responsibility with services to consider the risks of climate change, provides the opportunity for education and capacity building.
- 3) Fixing the 'likelihood' of climate variables within the risk assessment process provides consistency in application (comparable between services), which will be useful when considering strategic planning/adaptation strategy.
- 4) Robust evidence base of risks and adaptation measures, which will assist in future monitoring.

### Challenges:

Challenges to integrating climate change risk assessment into the existing corporate risk management process:

- 1) *Some services already have severe weather or business continuity risks and consider these to sufficiently cover climate change, but not many consider future climate change. The challenge is how to ensure consistency in language, and create better transparency of climate change risks to the Council without adopting a top-down approach to risk assessment.*

The Tool builds on existing risk assessment work carried out by services (i.e. impacts identified to services by LCLIP and BACLIAT assessments) by building this into a central resource. A 'testing workshop' with selected users was also carried out to refine tool and get 'buy-in' from users.

- 2) *Ensuring climate change risk assessments are proportional whilst remaining useful i.e. ensuring that a service area's risk assessment is comprehensive in coverage of climate change variables and temporal scales, but that their Operational Risk Registers are not disproportionately weighted with climate change risks.*

The Tool was developed by working closely with the Risk Management Team to find a proportionate but useful Risk Assessment Template that included all climate change variables but with only 2 entries (near-term and medium-term) into operational risk registers



### Further thoughts:

It was important to seek wide engagement with services when developing and testing the tool.

It would be good timing to carry out 'themed' workshops (e.g. frontline services, administrative/office based services, community care services etc.) close to service planning reviews.

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