

# Cutting through the green tape: the powers councils have to tackle climate change

# Overview

- LGA publication, part of wider campaign
- Encourages Councils to:
  - Take responsibility for reducing carbon emissions
  - Prepare for the consequences of more extreme weather in their areas
- Councils central to tackling climate change

# Purpose

- Highlight key powers
- Signpost tools, organisations and resources
- Practical examples

# Wellbeing powers

- Enables a LA to do anything it considers likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of its area
- Examples
  - Islington Council Climate Change Fund
  - Watford Council home energy efficiency project

# Powers to change own estate and operations

- Invest in more efficient and alternative energy systems
- Maintain and operate buildings at optimal environmental performance
- Change staff behaviour – within the work place, travel to work, interaction
- Examples
  - Brighton & Hove sustainable in-house postal and courier service
  - Decentralised energy generation

# Community leadership powers

- Land use policies – balanced communities, local
- Food policies – match gardeners with space, markets for local produce
- Energy efficiency standards
- Behaviour in energy use
- Examples
  - EST CAfE initiative

# Power of the people

- LGA poll – clear support across the country and all age groups for action to be taken at a local level
- Elected members can support this through neighbourhood forums, taking part in workshops, encouraging public participation in scrutiny, public opinion surveys

# Joint working powers

- Joint working through LAA and/or MAA
- LSP framework for joint work on climate change
- Joint committees with other LAs
- Examples
  - single planning framework for an area with a shared climate risk
  - Green Award Schemes
  - Association of Town Centre Management Business Climate Champions



# Planning powers

- Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 should be used to support initiatives designed to tackle climate change
- Section 39 - statutory duty re sustainable development
- Compulsorily purchase land to facilitate climate change infrastructure
- Impose climate change 'improvements' as part of other large scale capital projects

# Planning powers 2

- Statement of community involvement
- Mitigation and adaptation into LDF
- Community Infrastructure Levy/Section 106
- Examples
  - Enfield Council's sustainable design and construction policy
  - Uttlesford Council's SPD on home extensions

# Transport powers

- Local Transport Bill 2007/8 offers more powers:
  - Car, bike or van sharing
  - Fixed penalty notices for stationary idling
  - Congestion charging and workplace parking levy schemes
  - High occupancy vehicle lanes
  - Smarter driving
  - Park and ride
  - Section 106
- Example – Nottingham Workplace Levy

# Housing powers

- Provide shops/recreation grounds/other buildings in connection with housing provision
- Lay out streets/roads/open spaces in connection with housing provision
- Provide assistance for the purpose of improving living conditions
- Build in energy efficiency
- Fuel poverty and links to health
- Examples
  - Falmouth Beacon housing estate
  - Woking energy efficiency projects

# Financial powers

- Prudential borrowing e.g. energy efficiency, waste projects, mitigation and adaptation
- Trading and charging e.g. Woking's energy and environmental service company
- Housing Assistance e.g. interest free loans to residents installing renewable energy technologies

# Emergency planning powers

- Powers to incur expenditure and make grants or loans
- Facilitate investment in areas where potential climate change incidents are likely
- Examples
  - Cambridgeshire guidance on flood prevention and resilience for local business
  - Hampshire inquiry into impacts of climate change
- LA powers may change in future following Pitt Review

# Environmental protection powers

- Provide funding/support to local groups for promotion of environmental protection
- Link air quality and transport plans
- Range of powers, duties and functions which can help tackle climate change – air quality, pollution, litter, hazardous substances, smoke, emissions trading

# Sustainable Communities Act

- Opportunity for new thinking on challenges
- Channel for local people and councils to ask for best action for the area
- October 2008 – proposals invited from secretary of state
- More detail from LGA shortly



# Subsidiary powers

- Statutory duties, inc NERC Act 2007 and CC and Sustainable Energy Act 2006
- CC and/or environmental improvement targets
- Action plans by Secretary of State relating to promo of sustainability by LAs
- Communication and documentation of initiatives – FoI Act 2000
- Procurement – social and environmental
- School and education improvement

# Next steps/ challenges

- Development of borough wide Climate change Action Plan
- SD embedded in all service areas, not one or two “experts”
- Joint working/shared knowledge
- Integrate economic and environmental policies
- Awareness of/ preparedness for future requirements from government e.g. CAA