



# Civic, cultural and community venues trend analysis

This briefing provides details of the latest Performance Networks trend analysis for civic, cultural and community venues (CC&CV) performance on cost, quality and productivity. It is provided to local authority chief executives, councils leaders and all APSE CC&CV contacts

## Key issues

1. Within local authorities, Civic Cultural & Community Venues are an important public service and the public expect these to be of a high standard and well maintained.
2. APSE performance networks benchmarking for CC&CV is now in year 9 (2006/07) of data collection examining cost, quality and productivity issues.
3. This briefing highlights the key findings and highlights some key issues for future development, including broadening out the model to include:

Major venues  
Town halls  
Community centres  
Arts/cultural venues  
Libraries  
Multi-use venues

## 1. Introduction

Civic, cultural and community services (CC&CV) are an often under-valued resource in local government but provide an important focus for community activity. However,

elsewhere within the public sector and the wider economy the service is still very much demand driven. There are significant cost pressures on the service despite improvements in the management of sickness absence, and productivity improvements. This briefing highlights the key findings of APSE performance networks data on CC&CV services and provides an analysis of the sector within local government.

## 2. Overview of trend information

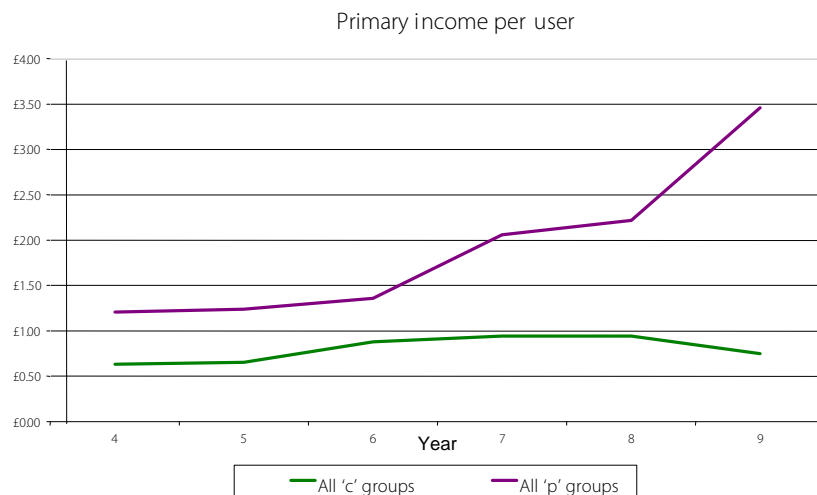
The civic, cultural and community venues (CC&CV) performance report provides an essential performance analysis tool. This executive summary concentrates on the trend analysis of a range of the key performance indicators; covering financial, usage and quality dimensions. This analysis is based on trends from 2000/01 to 2006/07.

The differentiation is significant between the groups in terms of both the nature and scope of the facilities, the catchments they service and their position in the service provision continuum. Prior to looking at the family groups, it may be easier to define the family groups. Civic and cultural venues, known as 'p' groups are defined as a significant other public building, main council complex, major publicly owned dedicated entertainment venue, or major publicly owned functions and events venue. A facility cannot be defined as a civic/cultural venue if the seating capacity of its main room is not 250 plus. Community venues, known as 'c' groups are defined as any other facility not falling into the above category definition of a town hall.

## 3. Key cost and productivity indicators

### ***PI 06 Primary income per user***

The growth trends in income per user highlighted last year have, in general, continued, with the notable exception of the 'c' groups whose general growth trends had begun to slow and now have declined back to levels of 3 or 4 years previous. Perhaps unsurprisingly, primary income from the larger and generally more commercial civic and cultural venues continues to grow, and by a significant amount.



### ***PI 07 Catering and merchandise income per user***

Catering and merchandise incomes have remained relatively stable in the 'p' groups and indeed have been almost totally static for three years. 'C' groups have seen a steady

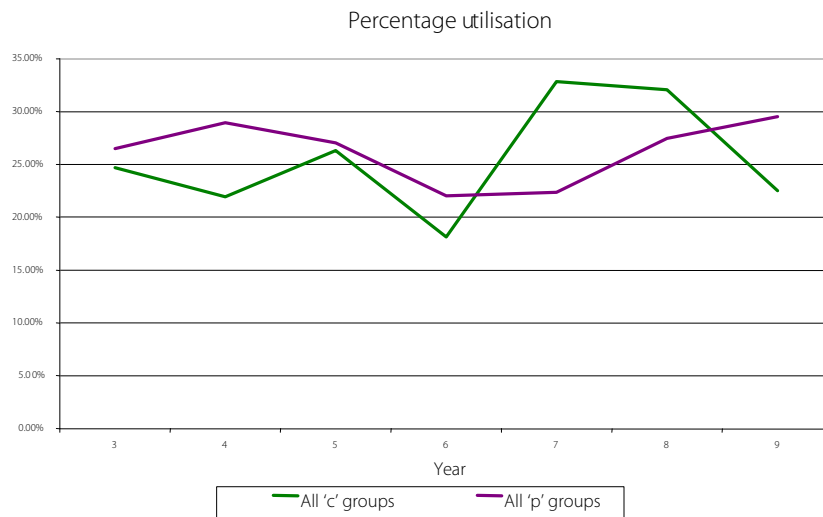
decline in these incomes for the duration of performance networks and now represent less than 5% of overall income, the lowest figure we have ever seen. This is possibly due to cost benefits on the provision of catering and merchandise, which can be difficult to sustain in smaller venues.

**PI 08 Operational recovery ratio**

This particular PI provides an overall general financial health check and looks at the amount of expenditure recovered through income. Last year we saw a reduction in scores for both 'c' and 'p' groups after a number of years of steady increase. This trend has not continued this year with 'c' groups seeing a 0.57% increase and 'p' groups a significant 6.99%. This is likely to be as a result of the significant increase in primary income per user for 'p' groups this year.

**PI 13 Percentage utilisation**

As can be seen in the graph below this PI continues to fluctuate. 'C' groups had stabilised a year ago, having been at their highest level since performance networks began, but have now fallen back to levels similar to 2002/03. 'P' groups, having had a downward trend in the early years, have seen growth again this year by a further 2.07% bringing the highest average levels since performance networks began.

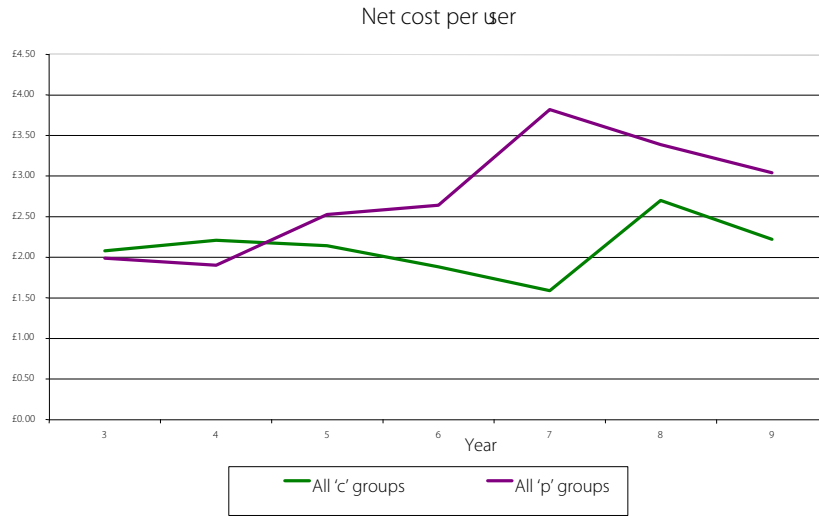


**PI 15 Visits per head of population**

The summary last year identified that visits per head of population for the 'c' groups have remained remarkably consistent over the last five years and this pattern has continued in 2006-07. 'P' groups have again exhibited a significant increase, following the trend of recent years. It was commented last year that market penetration seems to be improving in this area as primary income (PI06) had also increased. More visits and increased incomes are again evident this year.

**PI 18 Net cost per user**

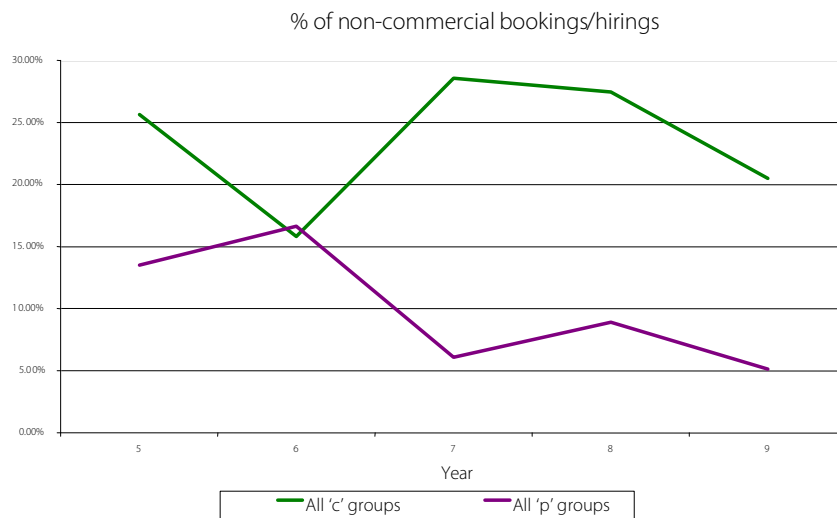
The graph below shows some interesting similarities as both groups have followed almost identical pathways. Net cost staying relatively stable in early years (with 'c' groups seeing some decrease) to be followed by dramatic increases and now parallel falls. This situation is helped by increased primary income and visits in the 'p' groups. This however is not the case in 'c' groups, which indicates greater efficiencies in expenditure areas.



**PI 25 Percentage of non-commercial bookings/hirings**

The trends for last year in both groups had been anticipated; with 'p' groups seeing a significant fall in non-commercial bookings and a commensurate decrease in commercial activity in the 'c' groups. In both cases, these large changes have now stabilised, which would indicate a balancing of programming in both areas. Last year, non-commercial bookings increased in the 'c' groups and decreased in the 'p' groups, which is to be expected. This follows several years of wild fluctuations, possibly explained by differing mixes of facilities submitting data.

This year shows both 'c' and 'p' groups reducing the percentage of non-commercial bookings, with the 'p' groups at an all-time low. Whilst this is not surprising for the generally larger and more commercially orientated 'p' groups, it is unexpected for the 'c' group facilities. The APSE benchmarking group for civic, cultural and community venues will be analysing this trend further for the coming year.



**4. Future focus**

The Government believes that performance management arrangements have in the main been successfully embedded into local government. As part of the Best Value

agenda, it was considered a vital tool to help improve the quality of public services. One implication over recent years has been a general move to lessen the amount of performance measurement which has to be reported back to Government as well as a reduction in terms of audit and inspection of the better performing local authorities.

This focus has been consistent across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the different contexts in each country. The focus on accurate and robust data is important but is seen as only the first stage in a performance management framework. Data must be used to track performance, inform priorities highlight particular issues and direct resources. There is also a responsibility on local authorities to inform people about the level of performance so they are aware of changes and can make the link between how the council is managing and providing services and what they are experiencing as service users.

The need to consider outcomes, reflecting the impact on people's lives of services provided, as part of a performance management framework (as well as inputs and outputs) has gained momentum. As such, the performance networks templates will be developed further to incorporate more outcome focused performance indicators as they arise.

The move towards more regular performance management reports has fuelled a call for more frequency in comparison across the local authority family. The practicalities of developing performance networks in this way will also be investigated.

The requirement to collect, analyse and compare performance will remain with local authorities meaning the benefits of using benchmarking arrangements such as those provided by performance networks will continue to increase.

## **5. APSE comment**

Civic, cultural and community venues provide a useful function within local authorities and it will remain of critical importance that this service area continues to provide both a cost effective and quality service. However, it is important that all those involved in the management of civic, cultural and community venues have a role to play in educating the public about the importance of using the venues.

APSE held a focus group in February 2008 to further develop the model to accommodate for major venues, town halls, community centres, arts/cultural venues, libraries and multi-use venues. This includes widening out the performance information beyond bookable rooms to look at levels of usage for the venue as a whole, which will then allow for further analysis on how well venues are meeting the needs of their catchment population.

APSE intends to minimise the burden of data collection, to make it easier to complete returns with a view to aligning the data collection process with management information systems that are in existence by all member authorities. APSE will also continue to lobby the Government on behalf of its membership focusing on the wider benefits of providing effective civic cultural and community venues.

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