

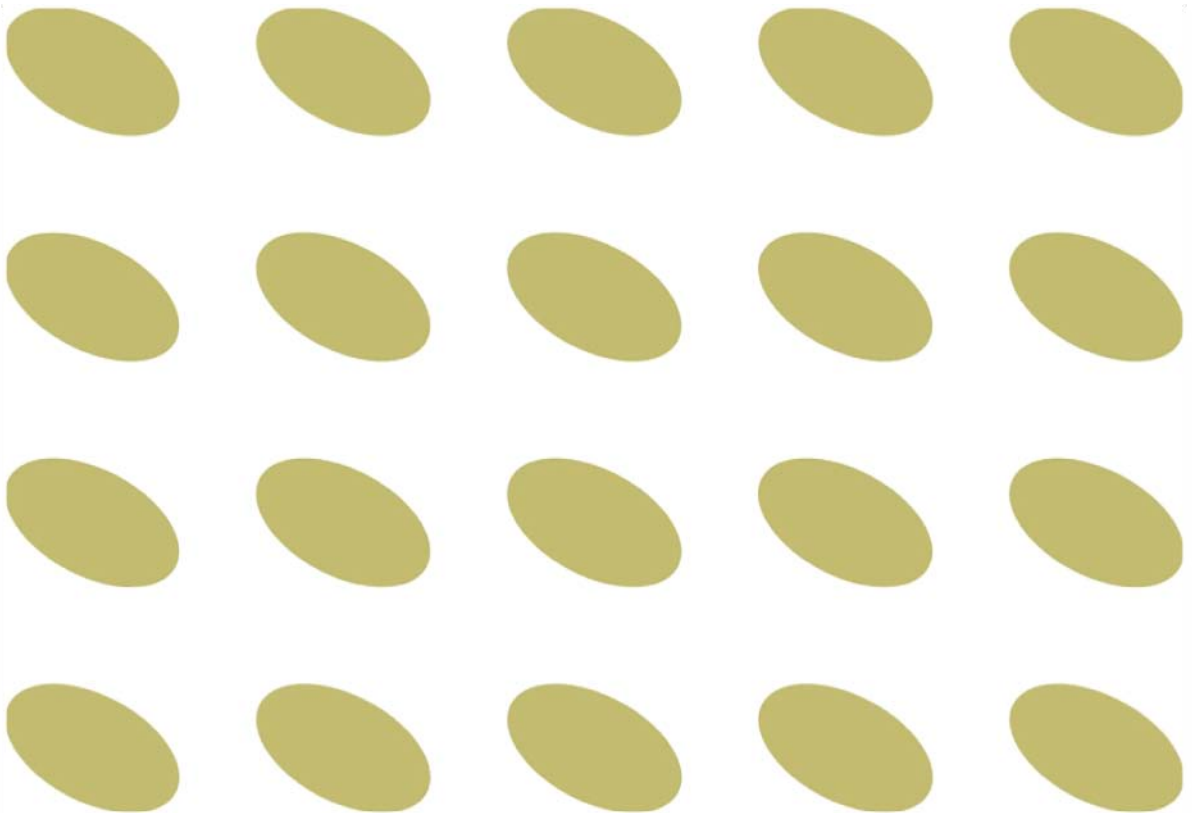


membership resources

# State of the Market Survey 2008

## Report

# Local Authority Cleaning Services



Briefing 08/49  
October 2008



The state of the market survey was conducted by Rob Bailey, APSE Principal Advisor for Cleaning Services

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## Local Authority Cleaning State of the Market 2008

APSE conducted an on-line survey during July and August 2008, sent out to over 900 local authority cleaning contacts throughout the UK. 107 responses were received representing a statistically significant response rate of just under 12%.

A series of questions were asked covering attitudes to the issues currently facing cleaning services, their organisation and challenges for the future.

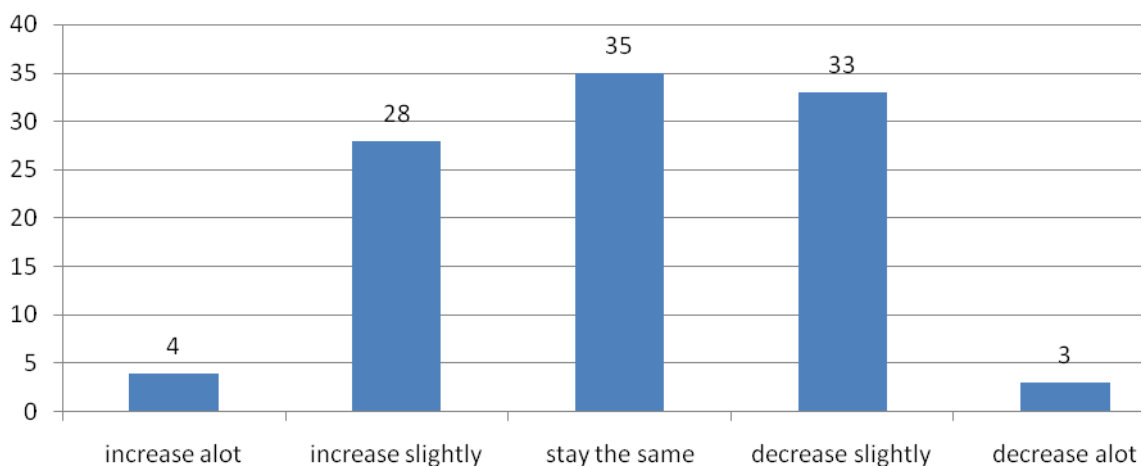
Cleaning managers are becoming increasingly commercial in their outlook with:

- significant numbers selling their services to the private sector and other public bodies;
- a heightened interest in alternative structures, including a facilities management approach, in a bid to reduce costs;
- an emphasis on marketing and tendering, both within and outside the public sector.

## Results

Of those completing the survey, 89.3% were in-house service providers of whom 2.9% expected the service to be outsourced over the forthcoming year. 10.7% were already distinct from their host authority including contractors and wholly owned companies.

### Expectation for budgets



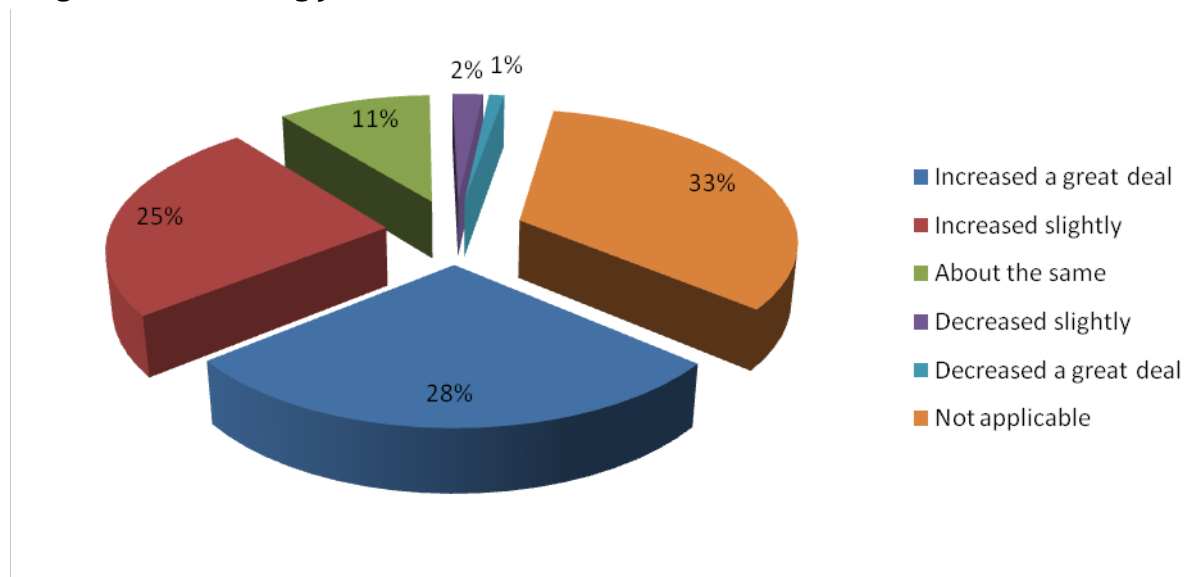
Cleaning budgets continue to be squeezed although there is no consistency across the local authority sector. 31.1% predict an increase in budgets, 34% that they will remain the same and 34.9% a decrease.

Maybe as a result of the uncertainty, it is noticeable that cleaning departments have been highly active in seeking work outside of their authority. 37.8% already sell their services to private sector clients and almost half (47.8%) to other public sector bodies like PCTs and police authorities.

Facilities management is increasingly the organisational form taken by local authority cleaning and catering departments. 39.4% regarded themselves as being in such a structure and a further 29.8% anticipated being so within 2 years. Only 21.3% saw themselves remaining as a defined unit.

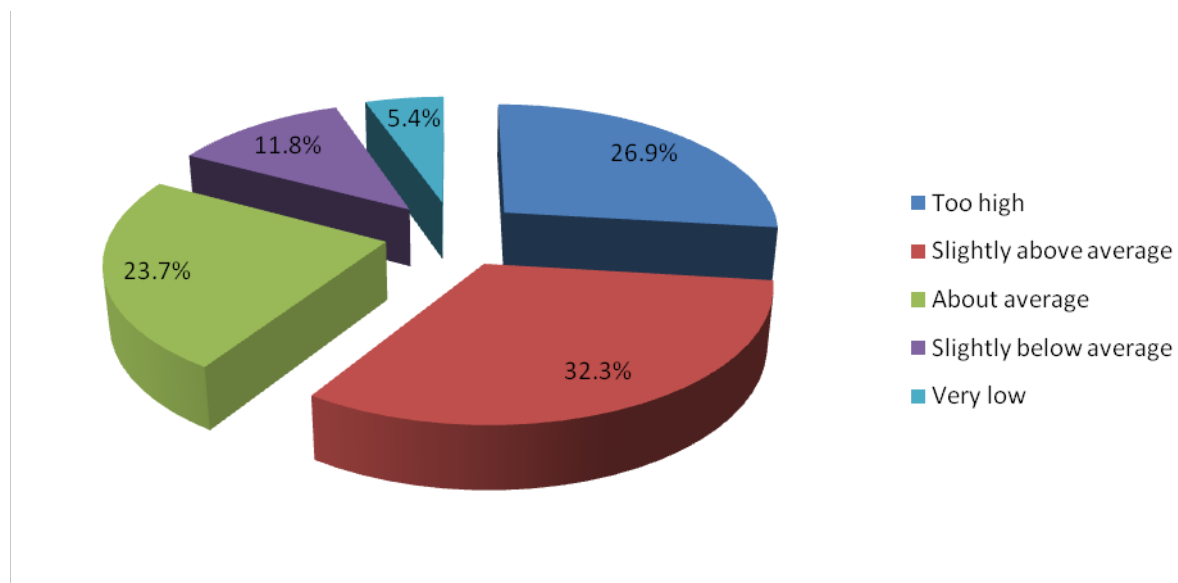
In-house providers have no separate legal status to the rest of the authority so typically use service level agreements as a substitute to contracts with the departments and schools they supply. Whilst the majority 70.2% have SLAs in place a further 20% have no agreements at all.

### Wage costs following job evaluation



58.3% had completed job evaluation within their authority, with 91% of those stating that it had the effect of increasing wage costs of whom 48% said that costs had increased a great deal. A small minority (3%) had seen decreases in wage costs. The average hourly wage for a cleaning assistant was given as £6.25, but ranges from a minimum of £5.81 to a maximum of £8.30.

## Attitude to absence



Personally 74.8% of cleaning managers anticipated an increase in their workload over the next 12 months, reflecting a 40.2% increase in that of the cleaning section as a whole. Attitudes to absence were mixed, although a clear majority (59.2%) regarded absence as too high or above average. Only 17.2% regarded absence as below average.

Local Authorities have been active in supporting staff with 55.6% holding the IIP Award, 84.4% undertaking regular staff training. 70.0% hold regular staff appraisals and 54.4% produce a regular staff newsletter for cleaning staff.

Data collected by APSE performance networks for 2006/07 across 58 authorities shows an average absence rate of 5.24% in cleaning services. The 2007/08 figures are anticipated shortly and preliminary figures show absence to be stable with the average across all direct services of 5%.

## Comments on the future

Respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on potential factors that would either increase or decrease take up in the short to medium term.

Many were realistic about the effects of a squeeze on local authority budgets and anticipated a reduction in cleaning as Councils rationalised their number of buildings. Several were unhappy that they were being denied the opportunity to tender for work in new PFI and BSF schools whilst others saw significant number of schools organising cleaning internally.

The most pronounced aspect of the comments left by catering managers related to their attempts to diversifying their service base, reflected by the numbers selling the services beyond their host authority. Cleaners are becoming increasingly commercial in outlook with some seeking to loosen the perceived constraints of local authority control. The Local Government Act 2003 provides flexibility for trading (s95) and charging (s93), although few it appears are yet to fully exploit it.

When asked what beneficial assistance APSE could provide, substantial numbers mentioned help around tendering and service marketing. Many also recognised that possibility of reducing costs and increasing their marketability by offering a facilities management approach.

## APSE

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular advisory groups, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The advisory groups are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

Advisory groups are a free service included as part of your authorities membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE advisory group meetings and would like to be added to our list of contacts for your service area please email [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk).

Our national advisory groups include:-

- Efficiencies, procurement and service transformation
- Building cleaning
- Citizen engagement
- Local authority, police and fire authority partnerships
- Community safety and security
- Housing management, construction and building maintenance
- Parks, horticultural and ground maintenance
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Social care
- Leisure management and community venues
- Vehicle maintenance and transport operations
- Waste management, refuse collection and street cleansing
- Workforce strategy and employee relations