



# news update

Welcome to the 25th edition of the best value consultancy news update. A monthly news sheet to keep clients and associate consultants informed of what we are undertaking and also our future projects

## Diagnostic work for service efficiency

APSE have just undertaken diagnostic workshops in a member Scottish authority around service transformation in building cleaning.

The purpose of the workshop was to identify, target and refine areas in which the service could benefit from external support, in the development of a robust and deliverable service improvement plan to meet the Council's wider efficiency objectives.



The workshop was attended by the full management team of the building cleaning service and utilised established business planning tools to conduct a high level assessment of business processes and factors which influence current service outcomes. This included an evaluation of the external pressures affecting the service, internal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and began to explore performance outcomes in relation to the operating environment and the services key business processes. The workshop looked in some detail at the most recent performance data submitted to APSE Performance Networks benchmarking group and in overview at comparative trends over recent years.

## Don't take your eye off the ball

APSE associate and interim manager Rodney Cook has over 30 years experience of managing front line services in local government, including Building Maintenance, Cleansing, Refuse Collection, Highways Maintenance, Grounds Maintenance, Parking Services, Customer Services, Facilities Management, Fleet Management, Administration and Vehicle Maintenance.



A DREADFUL goalkeeping error from Robert Green cost England a winning start to their World Cup campaign ... overlooking health and safety when making "efficiency savings" could also prove very costly!

As local authorities continue the drive to make substantial reductions to annual budgets, while waiting for news for yet more cut backs in funding from the government to be announced this autumn, Rodney Cook has a warning.

Reviewing services and cutting costs is now becoming one of the largest projects which many local authorities have ever encountered. The reviews are authority-wide and no service is exempt. Some local authorities have already commenced to downsize and thousands of job cuts are predicted across the UK.

As posts are disestablished, not only will local authorities lose experience, but local arrangements allocating responsibility for health & safety will

need to be reviewed, changed and implemented. Rodney, who has experience of implementing local arrangements for health & safety in local authority front line services, advises that bypassing health & safety could prove very costly.

Health and safety law states that organisations must, amongst other things, arrange for the effective planning, organisation, control, monitoring and review of preventive and protective measures.

A local authority may have good local arrangements, however when downsizing it is easy to overlook health & safety, as there are many other concerns and difficulties to consider. Downsizing is a difficult time for any local authority; for employees, union representatives, management and Councillors.

The Directors and senior managers must be aware of the potential pitfalls that downsizing can introduce. Apart from making sure that local arrangements are in place and that remaining staff are suitably trained and are aware of their responsibilities, downsizing can have other adverse effects.

Downsizing and organisational restructuring can have profound adverse effects on worker safety, health and wellbeing. If the way in which downsizing is managed by Councillors and Management is poor, then this can lead to demotivated employees. With recent and ongoing pressure on local authority budgets, some staff may go through repeated episodes of restructuring and feel job insecurity,



and this can increase their stress levels. The 'survivors' may experience significant changes to their task, their work load and work intensity.

Staff who do not feel 'on top of their work', or who are not suitably trained for their new responsibilities, such as carrying out risk assessments, or overseeing contractors, could result in a breach of health and safety law or the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act.

Chief Executives and Directors are well advised to ensure that "health & safety arrangements" appears on the checklist used for managing downsizing and to ensure that the project team is well advised so that health & safety does not get missed.

APSE provides experienced consultants and interim managers to provide an external view on the health & safety arrangements in the front line services in your authority. APSE regularly provides training on health and safety topics such as Corporate Manslaughter, Construction, Design and Management (CDM 2007) Regulations, Accident Investigation, Managing Contractors safely, and Health and Safety for senior managers.

## Process benchmarking

In the past few years there has been a demand to develop an approach to process benchmarking through the Scottish Advisory Groups. Process benchmarking is a way to look beyond the data, identifying specific areas of performance to examine in more depth and to tease out the different processes/activities that took place across different councils.

Whilst process benchmarking has in the past been self-facilitated by the groups themselves, the benefits of using an APSE associate consultant include:

- full analysis report

- detailed benchmarking of specific topics

- facilitated meetings

The Building Maintenance Process Benchmarking project (now 19 authorities) was the first commissioned and have compared the processes used in the management of over twenty topics including Capital Investment Programmes, Gas Servicing, Repair And Maintenance, Kitchen Refurbishment, Response Repairs, Voids, Sickness Absence, Asbestos, Stores and Procurement and Periodic Testing.

Members of other Advisory Groups heard about the process benchmarking work of the Building Maintenance group and the APSE associate consultant attended their meetings to describe the process and to answer questions raised by individuals. Other process benchmarking projects currently being undertaken in Scotland by the consultancy are:

The Parks, Grounds and Street Cleansing group (14 authorities participating) is comparing processes used in the management of Workshops, Machinery & Vehicles, Cemeteries and Street Cleansing and are currently pricing a Bill of Quantities for a Generic Park.

The Roads and Street Lighting group (12 authorities participating) is comparing processes used in the management of Communication, Procurement, Fleet Management and Risk Assessment.

The Waste Management and Recycling Group (12 authorities participating) is comparing processes used in the management of Waste Streams Tonnages and Sources, Resources, Fly Tipping and Bulky Uplifts.

The APSE Associate Consultant drafts questionnaires around specific topics chosen by the participating authorities,

these are then discussed and agreed. Following ratification they are issued to the participants by the Associate Consultant, thereafter the information provided is collated and analysed by the Associate Consultant who will lodge a final report on the PN web portal of the APSE web site.



The reports are discussed at benchmarking meetings that follow on from the Advisory Groups. At these meetings any issues for follow-up or clarification along with the next tranche of topics are identified and a decision made as to whether the groups themselves or the Associate Consultant will progress the identified issues.

It is at this point that post project support for any non-finite projects is offered to participating authorities by APSE's Performance Networks and an opportunity is given to the groups to decide on any topics they wish to have reviewed on an annual basis through the PN templates.

**To find out more about how the consultancy can help you, contact:**

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