

news update

Welcome to the fourteenth edition of the best value consultancy news update, a quarterly news sheet to keep clients and associate consultants informed of what we are undertaking and also our future projects.

Local Government Reorganisation: Meeting the Challenges

There may not be many officers and members in England who remember the last major reorganisation but the Best Value Consultancy can provide Consultants with direct experience of going through the process in other parts of the United Kingdom. APSE is a UK wide body and can therefore draw on a huge range of expertise. This experience can be invaluable to those authorities that are currently gearing up for change.

The consultancy is involved with Councils on both sides of the reorganisation equation – some that will be taking on unitary status and some that will cease to exist. For those second tier authorities taking on additional functions the challenge, at a strategic level, is to get up to speed with initiatives such as Every Child Matters. At an operational level priorities are to plan for the provision of services to nominally independent bodies such as schools. Examples of work undertaken include helping prepare a business case for a district direct services department seeking to take on school meals and other County Council services and assisting to establish a business case for a non LEP approach to Building Schools for the future.

On the other side of the coin are authorities that are to cease to exist. The main problem they have at present is staff retention and recruitment, along with associated issues around knowledge capture and transfer. Our Interim Solutions service is able to assist by providing

management expertise to keep services going in the run up to reorganisation but also to help to ensure that knowledge expertise built up over years is not lost during the reorganisation process. Of course these authorities are also concerned to know that the services they are proud to provide are preserved in the new authority. The consultancy has worked with authorities in putting together evidence that will assist their successor authority in making sensible business case decisions about how to provide services in the future.

A Member Driven Approach to Continual Improvement

The Consultancy has spent the last year working with one district council on a unique member driven approach to service improvement. The council's 4 scrutiny committees have been using a toolkit developed by APSE to carry out a series of studies focussed on value for money across the full range of Council services. The project has forced service management teams to evaluate the effectiveness of their business processes and required them to provide comparative evidence to show how they are delivering continual improvement in service performance. The results confirm that this is a pretty good Council but the process will help officers to ensure that they do not rest on their laurels.

A spin off from the project has been the opportunity for councillors to hone their analytical skills and to get to grips with the vernacular of performance management. By the end of the year these members have become used to interpreting

benchmarking spreadsheets and examining business processes for evidence of inefficient transactional relationships. The skills they have developed will stand them in good stead as they go back to the more usual scrutiny committee functions.

Important news for public sector buildings

From 1st October 2008 public sector occupiers of buildings over 1,000m2 will need to display a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) in a prominent place, clearly visible to the public. Action is required now to ensure annual energy information is available by 1st October 2008. This obligation was introduced by Law and will be enforced by Trading Standards Officers.



Best value consultancy has the resources and capabilities available to carry out these assessments and issue DEC's and Advisory Reports for buildings. A Display Energy Certificate shows the energy performance of a building based on the actual energy consumption as recorded annually. DEC's need to be updated each year.



Property managers affected by this law will need to have annual energy meter readings.

Service review

Although much of the Local Government world is caught up with issues about how best to organise Councils and the optimum way to procure and deliver services, those responsible for service provision still need to take a regular look at how well they are doing. APSE assists this through the Performance Networks benchmarking group and the Best Value Consultancy, which still spends the bulk of its time carrying out service reviews. We have highly experienced people to cover all service areas in all parts of the country. Over the past year operational reviews have covered catering (school, civic and welfare), building cleaning, grounds maintenance, transport, fleet management, highways, building maintenance, legal services, refuse collection, waste disposal, recycling, street cleansing and leisure services. So whilst the consultancy is always ready to get involved at a strategic level we do not underestimate the need for independent, expert input at the front line.

Can sustainability be sustained?

The best value consultancy has been requested to assess the potential to use 'waste oil' derived bio-diesel to run council vehicles. The aim of the report is to assist the council in determining the feasibility of running the entire fleet on used cooking oil. Considerable debate is ongoing within the scientific community with regard to the environmental benefits of biofuels, in addition financial viability and problems with warranties and increased servicing can create obstacles. As sustainable resources continue to remain at the forefront of

environmental issues, such research is essential to the future delivery of services.

Could your service benefit from the expertise of interim management?

Interim Managers are increasingly becoming a positive part of local authorities' recruitment strategy, fulfilling positions at short notice, backfilling maternity or other absence, providing change management and short term expertise. Interim managers can develop talent within an organisation, identify problems, implement change and incorporate best practice.

APSE Interim Solutions builds upon the experience already gained through the provision of interim managers by the Best Value Consultancy. We only work with people who share APSE's values, promoting continuous improvement in the delivery of excellent, cost effective and efficient public services to local communities. With a substantial and ever growing pool of highly experienced people, Interim Solutions is confident it can meet your requirements.

If you feel Interim management could benefit your service please check out our website or send us an email.

Interim Solutions - onwards and upwards

APSE Interim Solutions is now back in house and we have appointed Emma Barrow as the new full time Client Coordination Officer. Our primary aim has been to personalise the service and to establish Interim Solutions as the first port of call for APSE member authorities. We have had a positive response so far, from both clients and interim managers and look forward to developing the service further

alongside all of APSE's resources. Our interim web page is now up and running, providing a wide range of information on interim solutions for both authorities and consultants.

Staffing update!

It is with great fondness we said goodbye to Senior Consultant Rob Bailey as he begins his new position as a Principal Advisor, we wish him all the best with his future endeavours and look forward to working with him in his new role. We also look forward to welcoming Damian Walshe to the consultancy. He will be taking over the role of Senior Consultant on a 12 month secondment. Damian is a highly experienced senior manager who successfully ran the transport department at large local authority. We hope you will join us in welcoming Damian when he commences his duties from the beginning of September.

Could you be an Interim Manager?

We are looking for experienced managers at all levels in all services to join us as associates in our network of interim managers.

If you would like to discuss things further, please send us your contact details and we will be in touch.

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

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