



# news update

Welcome to the 23rd 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

## Holistic benefits of retained council housing

Gayle Gibson is the senior consultant within the Association's best value consultancy team. Gayle joined APSE in January 2010 from the



London Borough of Wandsworth, where she worked in housing policy. She also provided policy support for the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH). She is now working on a range of projects, and her experience provides the consultancy with a valuable resource through her knowledge of housing policy and her work with ARCH.

APSE has launched new research demonstrating that councils that own and manage properties are delivering value to local communities in addition to their housing role in partnership with the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH).

Under One Roof: The holistic benefits of retained council housing examines the way in which direct control of housing stock can help fulfil wider economic, social and environmental goals and enable local services to be delivered in a more joined-up way. The report was published jointly by APSE and ARCH a launch event on 25th March at the

Tower of London.

The research found:

•Tackling anti-social behaviour is the area where retaining ownership and management of housing has greatest impact followed by; community cohesion, efficiency and value for money, community engagement, health and well-being, environmental challenges, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.

•Owning and managing stock helps councils' strategic housing role, particularly in terms of homelessness, allocations and sheltered housing.

•Staff working within a single organisation can liaise more closely when delivering different services to the same individual or family.

•Involvement of council tenants in decisions about their homes is a catalyst for engagement in local democracy and involvement in improving local services.

The report places retained council housing within the current policy context and features survey results and case studies demonstrating holistic housing benefits. Examples include:

•West Lancashire, where an 11% drop in crime has been achieved due to the housing department funding a member of staff in a multi-disciplinary team.

•Midlothian, where new council housing is helping meet social and

environmental sustainability and economic regeneration goals as well provide affordable homes.

•South Derbyshire, where being a stock retained authority is bringing advantages in fulfilling the authority's strategic housing role.

•Carmarthenshire, where health improvements are being delivered due to a holistic housing standard.

•Wandsworth, where emergency control, highways, anti-social behaviour, dealing with dangerous dogs, democratic engagement and providing new properties are enhanced through owning and managing housing.

## Highways Verge Cutting Procurement Review

APSE have been commissioned by a

Southern county council to undertake an extensive review of the highways verge cutting.



The overall objective review is to establish if the in-house provision for the maintenance of the Councils' highways verges can achieve the required service standards within the existing budget and to highlight for the Council any added value and risks associated with this procurement option.



In order to undertake an "in-house" resource and cost evaluation of the highways verge maintenance work, TUPE transfer, SLAs, budget scope and other issues will have to be thoroughly assessed which will involve discussions with key stakeholders involved in the service.

## Council communications

*Peter Heaton is an APSE associate whose experience covers every aspect of the marketing communications mix including strategic communications, change, issues, and crisis, management, internal communications, all media relations, acclaimed public engagement and stakeholder management, event management, Royal and ministerial visits and web development. He has strong experience in reviewing organisations' communications, recommending improved arrangements and recruiting, establishing and leading new communications teams.*



The one constant in a massively changing world for local authorities is their need to engage and communicate internally and externally in planned, inventive ways.

Amidst a spectrum from Prince 2 planning to sheer panic, change is happening everywhere and will not go away. It's happening to councillors, employees, local residents, partners and pressure groups. Whether they understand why or not, the council is changing.

Overall, it will cost a council no more to have properly planned and executed communications. Chief

officers need to ensure they have a senior communications professional at the top table alongside them. Not an amateur needing 'career development'. If they don't have an experienced professional communicator, they should get one.

In brief, here's what you need to do to get your engagement and communications right:

- Integrate communications across the council
- Afford your communications status and weight
- Ensure you have proper, professional communications
- Plan engagement and communications at the very start
- Identify all possible stakeholders' groups and how you will reach them
- Implement in a planned way – timing is all
- Listen to the advice of your communicators: they will see things you won't



- Review and evaluate engagement and communications activity
- Ensure there is room and freedom for tactics and opportunism – this is one area that isn't just about plans.

If you do all this, your change programmes will be less painful, less costly and more productive.

## Best Value Review of Environmental Services

In August 2009, a member authority commissioned APSE to carry out a legal review of their Environmental Services contract with specific reference to the street cleansing and grounds maintenance aspects of the contract. This included looking at what the consequences of early termination would be for the council and the service. The outcome of the legal review was that the Council should consider carrying out a best value review of the service using the provisions in the contract.

Following this recommendation, APSE are currently undertaking the best value review of environmental services encompassing all aspects of the service including refuse collection, street cleansing and grounds maintenance.

*If you would like to find out more about how APSE can help you with consultancy and interim management support please contact Andy Mudd or Gayle Gibson on 0161 772 1810 or [amudd@apse.org.uk](mailto:amudd@apse.org.uk) and [ggibson@apse.org.uk](mailto:ggibson@apse.org.uk)*

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