



news update

Welcome to the 24th 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

New APSE interim manager

Peter Appleton, an APSE interim manager, has been selected by an authority in Northern Ireland to act as an interim Director of Leisure. The post will last for three months. Peter is an experienced senior manager with extensive public sector experience and a strong track record of change management, improvement, and service re-design transformation and achievement in a broad range of sectors. This is the second interim manager that APSE has placed in Northern Ireland in the past year. All our interim placements come with the support and knowledge base of the APSE secretariat as well as appropriate access to performance networks, briefings and training to name a few.



Vehicle Maintenance Value for Money Review

APSE have just been appointed by southern member authority to establish the extent to which the vehicle maintenance service represents value for money. This review will also identify opportunities for further cost and performance improvements. APSE will adopt an evidence based approach to evaluating the service, utilising a

range of performance indicator data, including APSE Performance Networks and cost data from recent tendering exercises. The scope of the review will include:



- An assessment of the competitiveness of the vehicle maintenance service compared to other local authorities and external service providers of municipal vehicle maintenance
- Review of current workshop practices including maintenance programming, record keeping, maintenance costing reporting systems, working hour arrangements, breakdown cover, etc.
- An assessment of user needs, liaison with fleet users and a review of the Service Level Agreement (S.L.A.) between the workshops and fleet users
- Vehicle maintenance recharging arrangements
- Spare parts management
- Qualitative assessment of the service including customer satisfaction focus, consultation procedures and performance monitoring arrangements
- Independent resource appraisal to establish optimum number of vehicle maintenance staff and scope of workshop equipment

The Appliance of Science- Unlocking the Potential of Services

APSE associate consultant Peter Moffatt outlines some key steps on the journey from employment to consultancy in local government. Peter has recently completed a major service review for APSE with a member authority.



In front line services, the emphasis is always on “the appliance of science”. Here strategy must become reality, not something simply talked about, or written up in lengthy documents. It’s all about outcomes, and measured, beneficial, outcomes are what clients increasingly need, when procuring a consultancy project, or interim management solution.

This is what I feel gives APSE and its consultants a unique edge when it comes to providing a solution to a client’s problems, or to unlocking their potential strengths. We have been there, and done that. When I left Warrington, my colleagues literally bought me the T-shirt! APSE understand both the strategic and operational sides to services. Although there are many very bright people working for the major consultancy firms, this experience of life at the sharp end of local government is often absent. This can lead to a loss of focus on delivery of measured, real world outcomes, in some cases.



In 31 years in the local government life, I'd been involved in a range of services almost as wide as the scope of local government itself. After running various services at Liverpool and St Helens, including managing some of the Council's DLO's, I started to notice that, however much trouble a service might be in, somewhere in the team would be the ideas, hidden strengths and potential for service improvement. If no one within the team had the answers, someone elsewhere in local government would have found a way through. This is where I came across APSE. At advisory groups in Manchester, we could meet our opposite numbers to share best practice.

Soon we were straightening out our problems, and sharing our successes with colleagues who'd helped us out along the way. Our Grounds section, once regarded as the weakest in the Council, won the UK Service team of the Year Award for Excellence, based on the quality systems we'd introduced and changes made by unlocking the potential of the team.

After this, I was asked to manage Highways and other services before a move to my last authority, neighbouring Warrington. At Warrington, the culture was very different, but the fundamentals the same. After spells as Assistant Director managing Construction DLOs, and Acting Director of Neighbourhood Services, I was appointed Head of Service for Property & Facilities.

By this point, I'd begun to notice the advantage managing front line operational services had given me. Anyone who has managed these services knows there is a massive "real world" element to their delivery. This isn't always present in the management of some "white collar" services, in both the private and public sector. Managing very different front line services, in

different organisations, had shown me the importance of good diagnostic skills and techniques, to promptly assess current status and opportunities for improvement - key skills in interim management and consultancy.

APSE and its consultants understand that every pound spent on consultancy and interim management needs to be justified, publicly, and in terms of the client's bottom line. This leads to realistic, competitive pricing and a remorseless focus on measured benefits to the community.

Since 2009, I've set up my own Consultancy and Interim Management company, and have worked with services as diverse as Leisure, Construction, Grounds, Waste, Transport and Schools' IT. The location may change, but the principles tend to stay the same:

- Look for the strengths, as well as the weaknesses within the team. They're almost always there, sometimes hidden, or stifled.
- Seek to unlock these strengths, wherever possible
- Look for best practice elsewhere (APSE networks, including the Performance Networks database can be invaluable here)
- Develop a vision of what success will look like
- Use your own, real world, experience and expertise to suggest new ways of working, where needed
- Seek "buy-in" to your ideas and proposals from those who'll have to implement, and live with them
- Make sure success can be measured
- Maintain good relationships with stakeholders, and leave the door open to them, in the longer term

By these methods, the full potential of services can be unlocked. That way, communities can get the service and value they deserve, and all too often depend on, for a decent quality of life.

Is your service operating at optimum efficiency?

The consultancy is offering a new service for our member authorities - the option of an annual



health check. This is a proactive tool to assess the current service provision on a regular basis and check it is achieving the optimum efficiency and performance. This can use your latest Performance Networks PI standings and Direction of Travel reports to provide swift in depth analysis and recommendations for improvements based on your current performance.

To find out more about how the consultancy can help you, please contact Andy Mudd or Gayle Gibson on 0161 772 1810 or amudd@apse.org.uk or ggibson@apse.org.uk

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