



APSE comment to Public Servant magazine: The impact of public spending cuts

It might seem expedient for all political parties to be talking tough on spending decisions and announcing austerity measures within the public sector. But it really is not that simple. The UK is still in a fragile state of recovery from recession and public services have a vital role to play in supporting the national and the local economies. Research by APSE has shown that for every £1 spent by the public sector at least £1.64 is returned to the local economy and that helps to support local businesses and provide much-needed jobs and stability.

So what should we do? APSE would argue that whilst there are always efficiencies to be made, we need to guard against changes that are too rapid and ill-thought out. What may produce quick hits in the savings stakes it could leave us wanting in the longer term. Job losses, whether in the public or private sector ultimately drag down the economy replacing tax revenues with benefit payments, as our research for the TUC shows. Killing off programmes such as those that help tackle obesity and ill health may be viewed as part of the 'Daily Mail public sector non-jobs' campaign, but such programmes are an effective investment in the longer term health of communities – and ultimately a preventative approach helps us to manage the long term spiralling costs of health care.

Equally we can't afford to side-line the progress that we have made on climate change. Investment in new technologies will help local government deliver ambition programmes of waste-to-energy schemes and tackle the problem of landfill. We need to stop the hysteria and take a measured approach to bring the UK's finances back into kilter. Part of the solution must be to look at longer term investments to reap deeper economic, social and environmental rewards, as APSE's forthcoming research on using public procurement positively to make local economies more resilient demonstrates.