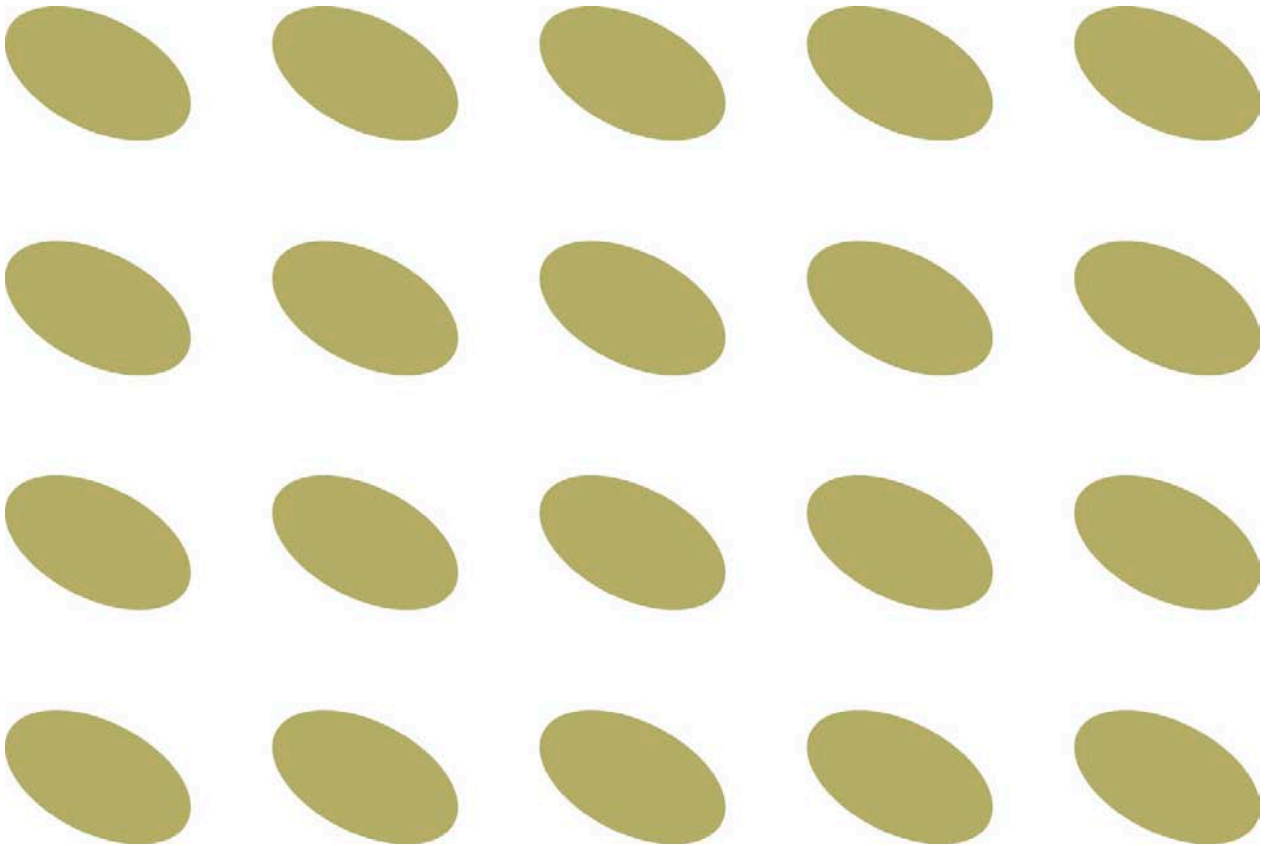


Manifesto 2009



1. Democratic accountability

Local service delivery

- APSE believes that whether services are delivered directly or through other forms of provision, they should be subject to the maximum form of democratic control and scrutiny. The Association supports the involvement of the widest number of councillors in decisions which impact upon the quality and range of services provided to the public.
- The range of possible objectives for such a role should include:
- Accountability for and promotion of the role of in-house services in delivering best value to the public.
- Ensuring that employment standards and practices are of the highest quality and that training is a vital component of service delivery.
- Involvement in strategic commissioning and procurement decisions including a balanced consideration of options for service delivery including in-house services.

The ensuring state

- APSE supports the notion of the 'ensuring state' as one in which local authorities maintain their core capacity to determine and ensure the delivery of strategic outcomes across their localities
- That APSE pursues a strategy in the new localism debate aimed at reinvigorating current local democratic institutions as opposed to unelected, unaccountable nominated bodies.
- APSE believes that local government is central to the delivery of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) in England, Local Service Agreements (LSAs) in Wales and Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) in Scotland and supports local partnership working to meet agreed objectives within a framework of effective democratic scrutiny and accountability to elected local councillors.
- APSE believes that police authorities should be subject to democratic accountability and scrutiny of locally elected councillors.
- APSE will continue to promote trust in democracy and democratic politics. As the role of local government becomes more fragmented the democratic deficit continues to grow with fewer councilors involved in key decisions taken by unaccountable QUANGOS. APSE will therefore campaign to reinvigorate the role of elected members in accountable local government and to strengthen scrutiny as one of the means of holding public authority to account on behalf of citizens.

Devolution and local government reorganisation

- APSE believes that the devolved Parliament for Scotland and Assemblies for Wales and Northern Ireland are positive developments and supports moves to enhance the roles of devolved administrations.
- APSE supports the devolution of power from central Government to local democratically accountable institutions and the decentralisation of central Government departments to the regions and welcomes the debate about the future role of local government initiated by the Government's 10-year strategy for local government.
- APSE also welcomes the commitment of the Government to devolving more power and responsibility to a local and neighbourhood level, but believes that there should be a clearly defined role for local authorities as service providers as well as community leaders.
- APSE believes that the number of Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisations (QUANGOs) should be significantly reduced and those that remain should be brought under the democratic mandate of local government. As a result of the Review of Public Administration in Northern Ireland many QUANGOS could be abolished there.
- Where local government reorganisation takes place, APSE aims to support its member authorities and act as a conduit to share experience of its members throughout the U.K. who have experience of similar exercises. APSE will also monitor closely the impact of the review of public administration in Northern Ireland on its membership.
- APSE recognises the importance of the European Union in terms of its legislative impact upon local government and the potential to attract additional investment in local infrastructure and will endeavour to use its lobbying influence to promote the aims and objectives of the Association in Europe to support its member's interests.

2. Citizen Engagement and participation

- APSE believes that citizen engagement and local democracy are not mutually exclusive concepts.

APSE will lobby and campaign for the following themes:-

- Citizen engagement and participation can be an effective tool in the delivery of continuous improvement in public services.
- Citizen engagement and participation can however lead to the exclusion of some to the benefit of others and must be developed in a robust, fair and transparent fashion.
- Citizen engagement should not impact on core service delivery which can undermine the universality of access to public services
- There needs to be a deliberative and structured mechanism to avoid disproportionate weight being given to the loudest voices

- Children, older people and disabled people are often unheard and any engagement strategies should ensure effective engagement of these groups.
- The role of elected members in citizen engagement and participation is essential, whether as panel chairs or members of consultation boards, citizen engagement and participation routes should not be the preserve of council officers but an opportunity to enhance the role of elected members.
- Citizen engagement and participation is not a substitute for effective democratic accountability and control of local public services.
- Local authorities should make effective use of front-line staff in engaging with service users and communities. Those responsible for providing services are close to the concerns and needs of local communities and can act as the 'eyes and ears' of the council in ensuring responsive and personal services to meet the demands and rising expectations of citizens.

3. Local government finance (incorporating efficiencies)

APSE supports:

- A fair and transparent system of local taxation to fund for local services
- Bringing business rates under effective local authority control to help redress the balance of central/local funding
- A thorough exploration and debate, as to the viability of a more balanced form of funding between central administrations and local councils.
- APSE supports the development of bonds and other financial instruments, alongside existing prudential and supported borrowing schemes, as a means to secure best value on capital finance schemes.
- A review of risk to the public sector through PFI schemes should be established to ensure that any new PFI schemes are able to provide both financially sustainable investment and long term value for money for the public sector

APSE also:

- Continues to support performance benchmarking to enable effective performance management of public services
- Continues to support the concept of shared service developments to promote a holistic approach to delivery of public services but believes that governments across the UK and Northern Ireland must ensure value for money is demonstrated

- Continues to campaign for greater accountability for public money in cross-service delivery areas. This should be of paramount importance. APSE will continue to lobby for greater democratic accountability with all partners for public money spent in the local place
- APSE will continue to support the concept of efficiencies, delivered through a range of methods such as collaborative procurement and shared services but believes that each and every case should carry an impact assessment on the local economy and local well being prior to finalisation.
- APSE believes that there is a balance to be achieved between achieving challenging efficiency targets and ensuring that local communities receive the most effective services. There is a need to recognise that budget reductions and efficiencies can impact on the level and quality of services to the public.
- APSE believes that strategic service delivery partnerships should not be 'ring fenced' when it comes to meeting efficiency targets and that there should be an equitable approach to achieving efficiency gains which does not fall disproportionately on directly provided services.
- APSE believes that all those delivering public sector services, through whatever delivery model, should be subject to the same level of performance management with open and transparent scrutiny processes to ensure best value is being delivered.
- APSE believes that where as a result of local authority activity or interventions there is a measurable direct benefit to the public purse in terms of reducing costs elsewhere in the public sector e.g. in achieving better health outcomes for communities, there should be an equitable sharing of the costs and rewards.
- APSE believes that during an economic recession the pressure on public services will increase and that reducing public spending will be counterproductive if it leads to other hidden costs from rising unemployment, and the increased demand for local government services arising from the recession.

4. Commissioning and Procurement

APSE will lobby and campaign on the following key themes:

- Commissioning can be an effective route to deliver better outcomes for the public sector and citizens. Commissioning should not promote enabling to the exclusion of providing. To be a true commissioner local authorities need capacity to deliver services as well.
- Commissioning is not simply a procurement route but should be seen as an opportunity to plan for and develop 'fit for purpose' local public services capable of responding to the needs of current and future populations with effective democratic control and accountability

- Commissioning strategies should allow for the comprehensive involvement of all local public service providers, through localised agreements rather than complex outsourced contractual arrangements, which may fetter future service development and delivery based on local need
- APSE's competitiveness continuum provides a comprehensive approach to ensure continuous improvement is delivered through fully utilising and acknowledging the value of elected members, citizens, service users, staff and trade unions in service planning and delivery
- Procurement strategies need to encompass and enhance the local economy supporting the UK's aims to enhance economic competitiveness and productivity in line with its European and global partners¹. Procurement initiatives should avoid damaging SMEs
- Procurement should be used as a vehicle to drive forward sustainability objectives and meet the UK's statutory commitment on carbon reduction
- Procurement decisions should be based on factual evidence based decision making including benchmarking and performance management information
- The public sector should work towards a genuinely diverse market place and avoid and help diminish private sector monopolies in the public sector supply market
- Public sector suppliers and contractors should be subject to 'open book' accountancy principles and rules of transparency to avoid any potential conflict of interest
- Commissioning and procurement strategies should afford for the retention of core capacity within the public sector in order to regulate private service providers and to regulate price

5. Personalisation and choice

- APSE will seek to ensure that the system to deliver personalisation and choice in local government services provides a consistently good standard of service remains democratically accountable and recognises the diversity of service users.
- APSE will promote the importance of the local authority role in co-coordinating and commissioning adult social care services and housing allocation.
- APSE will highlight the additional costs and necessary funding required to run multiple delivery systems for social care alongside individual budgets.
- APSE will highlight the problems encountered in commissioning social care services purely on cost, including reverse auctions.
- APSE will collect and publicise evidence of good practice and also market failure.

- APSE supports better collaboration between local authority adult services and Primary Care Trusts and organizations where it enhances joint service provision and more responsive services.
- APSE will promote high standards in training and service delivery of social care services.
- APSE will lobby for funding streams for adult social care to be channeled through the local authority to avoid duplication and confusion over benefits paid.
- APSE will promote the focus on healthy outcomes from Local Area Agreements (England), Single Outcome Agreements (Scotland) and Local Delivery Agreements (Wales).

6. Environment and sustainability

APSE will lobby and campaign on the following key themes:-

- Sustainability should be central to all local government activities and supports the development of sustainable community strategies by local authorities and their partners.
- Climate change represents the most important challenge to our environment, economy and society and believes that local government has a leading role to play in combating climate change and building a more sustainable future for our communities.
- Well managed public services have a key role in improving the sustainability of their local area. Such services also help to alleviate the conditions which lead to inequalities in the quality of the environment which ultimately impact on the health and well-being of citizens.
- Visible front line services are essential for community engagement and the sustainability of environmental improvement projects.
- Local authorities should have a 5-year plan to meet the requirements of the Climate Reduction Commitment and deliver the targets for reducing CO₂. They should also have an effective environmental management system in place that integrates environmental management into their daily operations and long-term planning.
- Local authorities and their partners should work together to develop and deliver strategies to improve energy efficiency and the use of sustainable forms of energy.
- Local authorities can use their place-shaping role to improve the local environment alongside other partners and in consultation with local people and businesses.
- APSE supports the waste hierarchy designed to reduce, reuse and recycle. The Association will continue to lobby Government and the waste industry in order that the manufacturers and primary producers of waste products are held responsible for their contribution to producing waste particularly in the form of packaging, rather than simply penalising householders through regressive charging regimes.

- National government should encourage industry to minimise the environmental impact of packaging and packaged goods with the overall aim of reducing waste at source. National government should provide guidance to businesses on reducing packaging in the production and distribution processes and should have enforcement powers for where companies breach national guidelines.
- Procurement should be used as a vehicle to drive forward sustainability objectives and meet the UK's statutory commitment on carbon reduction.
- Local Communities deserve long term sustainable benefit from the vast sums of money invested in public sector infrastructure in their areas. Community benefit clauses should be used to maximise the impact that local authorities have on sustainable communities.
- APSE promotes the importance of a core of in-house services to the delivery of sustainable communities. Democratically responsive services have an invaluable role to play in contributing to social inclusion and improving the environment.
- Local authorities should be given the flexibility in how they achieve the targets set in terms of waste minimisation, recycling and carbon reduction. Methods used by different councils will vary greatly according to local circumstances and demographics.
- APSE sees the rationale behind setting up Joint Waste Authorities in terms of pooling LATS allocations and delivering efficiencies in terms of joint procurement, sharing facilities and joint reporting. However, whilst waste disposal can operate at a more regional level, APSE believes that waste collection and enforcement are local services that should be provided locally at a district or unitary level.
- APSE will continue to examine and promote options aimed at ensuring a sustainable waste industry across the U.K. and Northern Ireland
- APSE promotes the key role of the local authority in developing and providing sustainable initiatives through well managed public services.
- APSE believes that sustainability criteria should be incorporated within all reviews, service specifications, tenders and evaluation.
- APSE supports the need for sustainability to be a cornerstone of procurement decisions and incorporated within all local procurement strategies.
- APSE believes that there is a need to invest in the skills and expertise needed to ensure a carbon neutral future and that local government can play a leading role in providing the necessary skills and training for the wider economy and society.
- APSE will press Government to ensure that the carbon trading scheme under the CRC from 2010 is equitable and does not impact adversely on local government services. APSE will further press for a better means of measuring achievement under the scheme and appropriate rewards for local authorities tackling CO2 emissions.

7. Healthy communities

- APSE will campaign to ensure recognition of the contribution of leisure, exercise and diet in reducing future health burdens and the requirement to divert funding streams accordingly.
- APSE recognises that leisure is a discretionary service and will promote the wider role of leisure and sports development in the health of the community.
- APSE will highlight and promote joint initiatives between the health service and local authorities to encourage increased participation in leisure.
- APSE welcomes free swimming for the over 60's and under 16s, but recognise and lobby for additional funding to ensure a sustainable future. It is also APSE's view that consideration should be given to supporting other sports and physical activities where it can be demonstrated that this can contribute to wider participation and involvement in such activity and that local authorities should have the flexibility locally to determine how best this can be developed.
- APSE will continue to promote the health benefits of wider participation in sport and physical activity including walking, cycling and other forms of social activity involving formal and informal exercise.
- APSE supports initiatives to increase school meal uptake and better nutritional standards, however recognise that activity outside of school is as important in combating obesity.
- APSE will promote the use of school sports facilities for community use and encourage local authority support for increased leisure usage of community venues e.g. dance, aerobics.
- APSE will develop survey solutions through APSE performance networks and APSE best value consultancy to assist local authorities in assessing local need and the determination of the best approach for future leisure/health projects
- APSE will emphasise the link between high quality local services including cleansing, street lighting and community health.
- APSE believes that there is a clear relationship between the availability and access to high quality and safe public open spaces and healthier lifestyles and will seek to promote the value of parks and other open spaces in improving health outcomes for local communities.

8. Housing and regeneration

- APSE believes that as the lead body in localities, local authorities can use their place-shaping role to enable and deliver housing and regeneration projects alongside other partners and in consultation with local people and businesses.

- APSE believes that housing remains the major element in most area based regeneration and as such local authorities should have access to the same level of resources to invest in housing irrespective of management arrangements
- APSE believes that all local authorities with housing responsibilities should have the capacity to both deliver housing strategy and investment, which is the primary catalyst for the successful delivery of sustainable regeneration.
- APSE will campaign to ensure that there is a level playing field in both access to capital and revenue funding for local authority and other public housing in order that local authorities are not unfairly disadvantaged in managing and maintaining their own stock relative to other options such as stock transfer or arms length management arrangements.
- APSE supports the ongoing need for increased flexibility in the funding of council housing and other publicly funded housing in order to meet the range of circumstances found across UK regions and addresses the issue of sustainability in rural areas.
- APSE believes that council and public housing should be a quality affordable option for all not a safety net for some.
- APSE believes that local authorities are uniquely placed to address housing market failures and supports a large scale council led house building programme to provide homes for to meet the housing needs of the country. APSE also supports the use of local business in the supply chain for building schemes and the inclusion of local labour clauses, apprenticeship schemes and other community benefits in contracts for large scale building projects.
- APSE supports a Decent Neighbourhood Standard to build upon investment in the physical fabric of homes and address those factors which improve the neighbourhood within which homes are situated.
- APSE promotes the value of in-house services as a collective force for the delivery of sustainable communities and regeneration. Democratically responsive services have an invaluable role to play in contributing to social inclusion and the regeneration agenda.
- APSE supports the development of sustainable forms of construction for all new homes for rent or purchase and investment in training to ensure that construction skills within the industry are capable of building the 'eco homes' of 21st Century.
- APSE supports the consideration of specific issues of regeneration that affect the future sustainability of rural communities including issues of transport, housing and employment.
- APSE will continue to lobby for the greater co-ordination and streamlined distribution of critical funding resources.
- APSE believes that the main drivers for area based regeneration are skills, technology and investment.

9. Employment and workforce matters

- APSE is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity in employment and supports measures aimed at bringing this about.
- APSE supports the sharing of peer group best practice to include local government unions, in order to promote different ways in which local authorities have met the requirements of single status and equal pay and to develop 'win / win' solutions to the modernisation agenda.
- APSE will press the Government to recognise the need to ensure that local authorities implement fair and transparent pay and grading systems based on recognised Job Evaluation Schemes and that where there are cost implications this is fully reflected in funding settlements to local authorities.
- APSE supports the need for audits of the pay and grading structures of local authorities and where action is identified for the implementation of lawful remedies.
- APSE supports investment and training to tackle skills shortages in local communities through initiatives such as the New Deal Programme, stimulate local economies and provide local people with the opportunity to become part of the local authority's own workforce. Linking up with local colleges and businesses to support the development of young people is key to the achievement of this aim.
- APSE supports greater investment in skills training for the whole local government job family including, managers, frontline workers and Elected Members and the use of appropriate quality management systems including IIP.
- APSE supports investment and training to skill local communities, stimulate local economies and provide local people with the opportunity to become part of the local authority's own workforce
- APSE supports local authorities linking up with local colleges and businesses to support the development of young people and to tackle skills shortages across the economy
- APSE supports the further development of work life balance initiatives to retain secure employment with a recognition that services which are now required beyond traditional working hours are not impacted
- APSE will promote the changing face of traditional industries such as construction where many female employees are now emerging.
- APSE supports the "skills pledge" commitment under the train to gain programme which states that all employees should be supported to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good GCSEs)

- APSE will promote innovation in service delivery e.g. cleaning staff jointly working as home helps thus enhancing full-time career options.(Telford & Wrekin)

10. Continuous Improvement and Service Transformation

- APSE supports continuous improvement in the delivery of excellent, cost effective and efficient public services to local communities
- APSE believes that a strong core of local services should be provided in-house in order that Councils have both the capacity and expertise to deliver innovative, flexible and high quality services, and effectively manage other supply arrangements. Continuous improvement and service transformation should relate to the improvement of services through the use of an effective management framework including performance management, business planning, process mapping and the effective use of new technologies as opposed to market testing and outsourcing.
- Whilst it is recognised that step change can be achieved in some circumstances, it is often high risk and in reality, improvement in public services is only guaranteed by a continuous improvement approach. Service transformation can be implemented through adopting an incremental approach which is often a more effective means of achieving change for local authorities.
- Any effective service transformation will involve gathering knowledge on the service and reviewing this, the involvement of peers, stakeholders and elected member challenge, developing a business plan and monitoring progress. Improvement should be seen as a continuous cycle as opposed to a one-off exercise.
- APSE believes that effective performance management and the sharing of good practice are crucial to continuous improvement of public services.
- APSE believes that citizen engagement is central to transforming services and that front line services are an important channel in connecting with service users.
- In choosing consultation methods, local authorities need to safeguard against limited consultation exercises with 'the usual suspects'. Consideration needs to be given as to how best to promote engagement of hard-to-reach groups, such as young people, minority ethnic communities, and people with disabilities.
- The use of local performance management systems in feeding into national performance frameworks is welcomed by APSE. Local authorities have developed comprehensive systems over the past 10 years which should be used and this will ultimately lead to a reduction in duplication.
- As local authorities improve, APSE supports the reduction in external audit to a more proportionate, risk-based approach.

- APSE believes that there should be greater support for improvement provided to local authorities where they are under-performing.
- APSE will promote training and development of staff as integral to the delivery of improved public services.
- APSE believes that joined up services can be used as an effective route to deliver more efficient and effective services.
- APSE believes that the benefits of collaborative procurement need to be seen in the context of the impact this will have on the local economy.
- APSE believes that service transformation is about eliminating processes that do not add value. By integrating service delivery and eliminating the artificial layers between client and contractor that existed under CCT, services have become more efficient and effective.