

'No hiding place' on performance, minister tells APSE conference

Outputs for citizens must be at the heart of local government performance management in these difficult times, the Welsh local government minister told APSE's annual seminar in Cardiff.

In his keynote address at Cardiff's City Hall, Dr Brian Gibbons, the Welsh Assembly Government's Minister for Social Justice and Local Government, said: ***'Variations in performance will be challenged and the new system will assess the outcome for citizens rather than just relying on inputs.'***

He told delegates on 9th September, there is ***'no hiding place for any of us involved in public service'*** in these austere financial times. ***'People rely on the public sector and turn to councils when they are in dire straights.'***

He praised the role of APSE in improving local government performance: ***'All local authorities in Wales are now members of APSE, which is an important landmark for all of us in local government in Wales. APSE has played a key role in promoting quality of public services.'***

The minister described how the Beecham Review set a radical agenda for re-examining public services in Wales. The relationship between central and local government is now under review and will be subject to a ***'total redesign'***, he said, with a new approach to performance and benchmarking. Strategic guidance, under which public authorities will have a general duty to secure continuous improvement, is on the horizon. Performance Indicators will be reduced to around 20.

Dr Gibbons highlighted the value of APSE's performance networks, the largest voluntary benchmarking system in the UK in promoting high quality front-line services. ***'It works because the PIs are owned by local authorities themselves,'*** he said. The Assembly has listened to local government's messages about prioritising and avoiding duplication and a new performance framework will replace the Best Value regime, according to the minister.

APSE's chief executive, Paul O'Brien, commented: ***'Communities are inevitably looking to local government to provide more for less in these difficult times and focusing on the performance of front-line services is more important than ever. I am pleased the Minister recognises the role of APSE in promoting excellence in public service delivery, but more importantly, that the Welsh Assembly Government is working to place citizens at the heart of its new performance regime.'***

Ends

Notes to editors

- APSE is the Association for public Service Excellence and is a not for profit body committed to promoting and developing excellence in front line public services.
- APSE works with over 300 local authorities throughout the UK
- The Minister addressed the APSE annual seminar 2009 held at Cardiff City Hall
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