

Christmas cheer for Northern Ireland Councils

Councils throughout Northern Ireland were celebrating some early Christmas cheer today after being named amongst the finalists for the first ever Northern Ireland Local Government Awards. The awards celebrate the best services, best officers and best councillors from Northern Ireland councils.

The awards have been brought about through collaboration between the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), Local Government Staff Commission NI (LGSC), Local Government Training Group (LGTG), Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), Society of Local Authority Chief Executives NI (SOLACE NI) and the William Johnston Memorial Trust to help promote the sharing of best practice in public services.

APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien said *"There has never been any doubt about the quality of the services provided by councils in Northern Ireland but they have not been as proactive as they might have been about sharing their achievements with others. That's what these awards are ultimately about"* He added *"Councils need to make the most of opportunities to tell local people about the quality of services they provide and to celebrate those officers and councillors who are committed to providing the best possible public services but who are often unsung local heroes"*

- § The awards attracted 87 submissions from councils across Northern Ireland and the award judges were particularly impressed by the scope and quality of the submissions received
- § The partners will come together again in 2009 to showcase the awards winners and finalists in a learning event as part of the process of self help between councils and to secure the awards in the local government calendar for future years.
- § The award winners will be announced at a special Gala dinner hosted by NILGA on the 26 February at the Armagh City Hotel
- § The winners will also be asked to speak about their services at other events run by the partners.

Ends

The finalists are as follows:-

1. Service team of the Year - Sponsored by APSE

Armagh City and District Council – Exercise for Health
Banbridge District Council - Waste minimisation and recycling team
Craigavon Borough Council – Parks Service
Magherafelt District Council – Leisure's inspiration and innovations

2. Change Champions in Practice - Sponsored by Local Government Staff Commission NI (LGSC)

Antrim Borough Council - Fuel Poverty Team
Derry City Council - Self insurance programme
Limavady Borough Council - Celebrating the total value of workplace health and wellbeing
Magherafelt District Council - Felt the need for a venue like this! Meadowbank sports arena

3. Innovative HR in Practice - Sponsored by Local Government Staff Commission NI (LGSC)

Armagh City and District Council - Striving for excellence in HR
Belfast City Council - Corporate HR
Newtownabbey Borough Council - Human Resources Section
Strabane District Council - Human Resources Strategy

4. Innovative Training Initiative - Sponsored by Local Government Training Group (LGTG)

Antrim Borough Council - Learning Week
Newtownabbey Borough Council - Managing in a political environment
Omagh District Council - Women Redress Advancement in the Public Sector WRAPS
Southern Group Environmental Health Committee - The STEM Project

5. Best Initiative by a Councillor - Sponsored by NILGA

Banbridge District Council – Cllr. Wilfred McFadden
Derry City Council - Civic Alcohol Forum
Down District Council – Cllr. Dermot Curran
Magherafelt District Council – Cllrs. Paul McClean, Jim Campbell, Sean McPeake, George Sheilds and Patsy Groogan - From aircraft to leisure craft

6. NILGA President's Award for Sustainable Development - Sponsored by NILGA

Craigavon Borough Council - Sustainable Oxford Island
Derry City Council - Active citizenship through sport
East Border Region Environmental Website - SustainandBuild.com
North Down Borough Council - Waste Management Facilities powered by Green Energy

7. Best Joint Initiative between Councils - Sponsored by SOLACE NI

Ards Borough Council / North Down Borough Council - Visible Women
Coleraine Borough Council / Ballymoney Borough Council - Wildcats and multi skills clubs
East Border Region Environmental Website - SustainandBuild.com
Newry and Mourne District Council / Louth County Council - Challenge of Change Project
Southern Group Environmental Health Committee - The STEM Project

8. Employee of the Year - Sponsored by William Johnston Memorial Trust

Gary Boyd – Ballymena Borough Council
David Neill - Belfast City Council
Wesley Bonar – Newtownabbey Borough Council

Notes to editor

APSE is the Association for Public Service Excellence, a not for profit local government organisation committed to developing continuous service improvement in public services.

The Northern Ireland Local Government Awards are dedicated to awarding excellence in front line local government public services through the partner organisations of APSE, NILGA, SOLACE NI, LGTG, LGSC and the William Johnson Memorial Trust

The judging panels looked for examples of best practice, innovation and evidence of service improvements and better outcomes for the service users.

For more details please contact Mo Baines at APSE on mbaines@apse.org.uk or telephone 07971 843515