

# Hollowed out

APSE's latest research looks at how financial localisation will lead to the wilting of vital frontline services



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# Editorial



Paul O'Brien  
Chief Executive, APSE

## New year, fresh challenges

So where did 2018 go? It seems like just a few days since the start of the year and yet here we are looking forward to another year in local government in 2019! So first of all a very happy new year to you all and I hope that it will be prosperous and fulfilling both personally and professionally.

We face a further year of a challenging environment particularly when it comes to local government finance. The promises of an end to austerity has not yet materialised for local councils. Regardless of political colour, councils have had to show great innovation to keep on providing services as budgets tighten and demand rises. The problems experienced in Northamptonshire may not be a 'one off', as the media narrative has suggested, but symptomatic of the parlous state of local government finance. The reliance on council tax and business rates for English authorities, without an ability to redistribute within the local government system and in its current format, where locally raised taxes subsidise central government, is an unsustainable model. Unless we have a long-term solution to funding social care there could be more 'Northamptonshires' on the 2019 horizon.

All that being said we still have much to celebrate in local government. At the 2018 Performance Networks seminar I was personally overwhelmed by the commitment of the APSE membership in sharing best practice and comparing service performance. Delivering the very best for local communities remains at the heart of the benchmarking network. Over the course of the seminar, and across 14 different service areas of local government, officers got together in workshops and forums to interrogate each other (in the nicest possible way!) on what is working and what is not, in improving service performance. With workshops discussing everything from driver shortages to planting regimes, the seminar has once again proven the resilience and commitment of our local councils to their frontline services. The Performance Networks Seminar proves to me that taking an evidence based approach to using data dynamically is still a sure-fire way to improve our frontline services; more importantly the family of committed APSE data enthusiasts is second to none!

Have a wonderful 2019!

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# Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events



APSE's Paul O'Brien discusses local government funding on BBC Sunday Politics North West. Paul is joined on the sofa by Councillor John Bell, Leader of the Conservative group on Tameside Council; and Jane Kennedy, Police & Crime Commissioner for Merseyside.

## BBC Sunday Politics North West

APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien was interviewed on BBC Sunday Politics North West to discuss local government funding and the precarious state of neighbourhood services. You can watch the full interview on the APSE YouTube channel.

## APSE in the MJ

On 26 November, APSE was asked to comment on Permanent Secretary to the MHCLG Melanie Dawes's announcement that the local government sector is 'sustainable' for the rest of the spending period as authorities only needed to provide statutory services. Paul O'Brien said, "I'm not as confident as Ms Dawes is. I think it's a sad day when we are pruning services back to statutory responsibilities and we are happy about the level of service." To read the full article, visit the MJ website.

APSE was also asked to provide comment on the Government's recent announcement that in the summer of 2019, a handful of suppliers will participate in pilots aimed at transforming procurement from a system of mere contracting to one that takes stock of social value. This will include drawing up living wills – a contingency plan for the continued delivery of services should the supplier fail. Speaking to the MJ, Paul O'Brien said that, while outsourcing was a fad during the 1990s and 2000s, asking suppliers to draw up contingency plans now shows that the Government's 'unquestionable faith in the market's ability to deliver' has been shaken. To read the full article, visit the MJ website.

## Latest Briefings

APSE has released the latest state of the market reports in: transport; sports and leisure; street lighting; winter maintenance; and highways. A briefing focusing on the outcomes described within the Care Quality Commission's State of health care and adult social care report 2017/18 has been uploaded to the APSE website. You can also download APSE's analysis of the Budget 2018.

## BBC Radio 4's In Touch

On Monday 29 October APSE Principal Advisor Wayne Priestley was a guest on BBC Radio 4's In Touch talking about how local authorities are helping the visually impaired get the right rubbish into the right bin. You can listen to the interview on the APSE YouTube channel.



APSE's Wayne Priestley is interviewed by the host for Radio 4's In Touch, Peter White.

## Meals on Wheels Survey 2018

In collaboration with the National Association of Care Catering (NACC), APSE presented the findings from the Meals on Wheels Survey 2018. The survey finds that 24% of the UK's local authorities have stopped offering a Meals on Wheels service to elderly and vulnerable people since 2014, and just 42 per cent of local authorities now offer any kind of Meals on Wheels service to elderly and vulnerable people. The full report is available to download for free from the APSE website.

## APSE Energy

The APSE Energy webpage is updated regularly so you can keep up to speed with the latest energy news. The webpage includes the latest insight into the House of Commons briefing paper "Brexit: Energy and Climate Change", as well as recent cases of energy companies ceasing trading and the recent well-attended electric vehicle event in Oxford run by the City Council alongside APSE Energy.

## APSE Parks Portal

APSE has recently launched the APSE Parks Portal; a free online resource for members who want to keep abreast of developments in parks and horticultural services. The portal includes information on relevant APSE briefings, state of the market reports, advisory groups, seminars, research and our role in the Parks Action Group.

## London Councils Summit 2018

APSE exhibited at the London Council Summit at Guildhall, City of London on Saturday 17 November. The conference was open to London councillors of all political parties and senior borough officers from the 32 London Boroughs and the City of London Corporation. Keynote speaker James Brokenshire paid tribute to the passion of London councils for their communities but acknowledged the need for long term action on social care.

## Environmental Services Innovation Awards

APSE is delighted to announce the winners of the Environmental Services Innovation Awards 2018, as well as Streetscene and Horticulture Apprentices of the Year! The winners were presented with their awards at the APSE Refuse, Recycling, Street Scene, Grounds and Parks Seminar in Nottingham on 18 October.

A summary of each of this year's (and last year's) shortlisted finalists have been included in the APSE Environmental Services Innovation Awards Brochure. We also include a summary of this year's award winners on page 24. The brochure can be downloaded for free from the APSE website.

## BBC Radio 4's You and Yours

On Thursday 1 November APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien was interviewed on BBC Radio 4's You and Yours about local authorities and their invoicing processes and record of payment. You can listen to this interview on the APSE YouTube Channel

## Goodbye and good luck!

In December we said a double goodbye to our IT and Data Analysis Officer Adam Payne and Finance and Administration Assistant Jessica Mistry. Adam is leaving for a career in Greater Manchester Police whilst Jessica is moving into a career in human resources. Having been with APSE for a combined total of 8 years, both will be sorely missed by everyone and we wish them all the best for the future.

## Welcoming our newest staff member!

APSE is delighted to announce our newest member of staff, Business & Administration Apprentice James Courtney. Having recently been studying Computer Science at the University of Derby, James will be working in APSE's Southern Office and he can be contacted on [jcourtney@apse.org.uk](mailto:jcourtney@apse.org.uk).

## Home Improvement

APSE has relocated...to just down the road! After 17 years at our old address next to Old Trafford cricket ground, we have moved to a bigger office overlooking Old Trafford football stadium. Some of you will have the chance to see the office over the coming months as APSE will also be holding some advisory groups in our new location. You can find our new address at the bottom of page 3.

## A New Year message from APSE National Chair Cllr John Kerr Brown



Happy Anniversary!

As we celebrate the arrival of 2019 it is timely to reflect on a more significant celebration for APSE; that of its successful 20 years in local government.

When APSE was first formed from its predecessor, ADLO, local government was at a cross-roads. For too long Compulsory Competitive Tendering had focussed almost exclusively on cost or price considerations over and above those of service quality. The arrival of 'Best Value' in 1997 provided a new opportunity for local councils to prove both the value of services but to also focus on quality; setting standards that service users could expect and which they would proudly deliver upon. The road to Best Value was not a smooth one and some mistakes were made along the way but the strong signal, that quality actually mattered, was an enduring one and still holds true today.

Over the past two decades APSE has never faltered from its commitment to local government frontline services. We have been at the forefront of arguing the case for those frontline neighbourhood services even when the modus operandi of some was to promote outsourcing and privatisation. We were at the fore of developing the pillars of best value; economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have never argued for local government in-house services at 'all costs' but we have been vocal in arguing that well-run direct services would ultimately provide greater cost efficiency and effectiveness and retain capacity to positively influence outcomes for our local residents and local economies. We have worked on new models of delivery but we have cautioned against enthusiasm for passing bandwagons; we have always argued the need to evidence the changes grounded in independent analysis and facts, not a narrative that is wedded to any given ideological stance. The unashamed commitment to local council frontline services has gained support across all political parties and across the UK's four very different administrations. Our APSE National Council will often find at least seven different political parties represented at its meeting but there is a consensus approach to APSE policy development; something many other organisations will be envious of. We are not 'A-political' but we are not 'party political'. Our values are grounded in frontline services for our local communities.

In our 20 years we have developed an increasingly broad range of services for our members. From our respected APSE Solutions providing ground-breaking advice on service transformation, our training services delivering unique courses in local government, our performance networks service which remains the largest UK wide voluntary data benchmarking in local government, to our relatively new APSE Energy service placing municipal energy at the heart of local communities, we have never tired of developing entrepreneurial outcomes. Our membership resources team provides dozens of briefings, advisory group meetings, networking events, seminars and regional forums as well as hundreds of hours of advisory time to our members.

Throughout 2019 we will be reflecting on the past two decades but more importantly we will be celebrating our achievements and looking forward to the next two decades. Local government does not stand still and neither of course will APSE! Watch out for more details on our 20 years of success on the APSE website. And as APSE is you the membership, a very happy anniversary!

# Not just a cleaning service

After scooping the Best Service Team of the Year in the Facilities Management and Building Cleaning category at the APSE Annual Service Awards 2018, APSE Direct caught up with Ian Hammond at Powys County Council to learn more about the secrets to the team's success.



Powys County Council's Cleaning Service has transformed over the past 18 months to ensure income generation to counteract losses out of its control, securing its continued relevance and value within the Local Authority and community. With the continued struggle of budget pressures and the general climate of cleaning services within local authorities, Powys Cleaning Service experienced a huge reduction when 80% of schools took their cleaning in-house in 2016. This prompted us to take a fresh look at our work streams and the services we were offering. Working closely with the Councils Housing Service on void property cleans in recent years, we identified many opportunities in the cycle of tenancy management, complementing the service we were already offering, to enable Housing to support tenants in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

A fresh portfolio of services has largely replaced the traditional roles of our team. These recent changes have created a wider-skilled, multi-functional workforce, able to deal with most situations as they arise, often carrying out emergency, adhoc works.

This extension to services has been instigated on a needs basis. When needs of the property or tenant are discussed, we have offered to assist with anything that was not within the remit of the existing Property Management Service. These additional works were varied and we quickly developed an ethos greatly appreciated by our internal partners: "If it needs doing, why can't we do it?" Utilising existing resources and the skills of our team members, we found there was very little we could not do!

Our willingness and 'can do' approach has secured us more work from other services, including our property, education and social services teams. This has now brought us to a position whereby we are often the first port of call for services looking to source a provider for various works.

We now carry out the following on a regular basis: Void property cleans and deep cleaning; De-cluttering and cleaning for tenants with physical or mental health conditions; Property clearances for abandoned tenancies and deceased tenants; Removal service for tenants and internal departments; Redistribution of unwanted furniture and household items; Painting and decorating; Garden clearances and general gardening, including grass, hedges, guttering, windows and pressure washing; Specialised cleaning services; (Floor Care) Training external cleaners; (Schools) Monitoring cleaning standards within schools (via SLA with Education); Provision of storage facilities; School Kitchen duct and extraction unit cleaning.

The initial aim of this development in our service was to sustain the business and open new streams of income generation. Our objective was to become a 'one-stop-shop' for general cleansing, maintenance and related supportive services, open to all services within Powys County Council. With these new opportunities, our main challenge was to ensure the team were fully engaged and motivated to carry out these additional works. This meant a change in mind-set and a considerable amount of 'thinking outside the box' of which we had for many years worked within our own silo. Employees would also be required to undertake new training to enable them to carry out the new works in a safe and competent manner. These changes would take our employees out of their comfort zones, for training purposes, particularly computer literacy; also with now having to work with the public and other departments where previously they only had working interactions with their internal cleaning colleagues. Health and Safety requirements were a time consuming process as we had to update and create new risk assessments for all additional works we would be undertaking.

Close management was essential to ensure effective work flow and lead times, along with being able to deal with unexpected issues that may have arisen in order to adjust procedures if appropriate. One issue that arose was the turnaround time for property redecoration: We pride ourselves on a high standard of work but the demand for properties meant Housing needed them ready to re-let very quickly. We looked at this as a service issue and with the planned additional works were able to employ an additional member of staff, skilled and experienced in painting and decorating. This person now leads on redecoration works, allowing us to better assess and quote costs and timescales of works, and carry out the jobs more efficiently.

After initial reluctance from some team members at the prospect of these new works, which was softened by clear communication and motivation from our management team we now have a team united in positivity, embracing our fresh outlook and committed to problem solving and customer satisfaction. They have taken on board the reasons behind our service development strategy and welcome the prospect of new challenges, to the extent that they are actively seeking new work opportunities as they go about their daily duties.

They are a much happier workforce, enjoying the variety in their working weeks and developing new skills. Now working closely with the general public and supporting many residents in vulnerable positions.

We are now looking to develop a 'Handy-Person' type service to carry out household jobs. This would be available to all households for one-off visits on request or regular servicing. From discussions with our housing team we have found there is a great appetite for this service. This service would allow clients to request our existing services but also for small jobs like putting up a curtain rail or just re-arranging furniture; jobs that people may struggle with due to mobility or health issues. We would not be looking to carry out trade works (ie. major electrical, plumbing or building works) but basic jobs that will enable clients to maintain and enjoy their homes, improving their own well-being and perhaps the safety of their home. A further benefit to this scheme is that we could act as a point of contact for some residents, particularly the elderly or immobile. If our team had any concerns regarding a client's wellbeing, we would forward these on to an appropriate service. We are also exploring the possibility of undertaking fumigation and pest control.

It has taken the will and hard work of the entire team to develop these new services. They have been rewarded with excellent levels of customer satisfaction and ever-increasing opportunities for the development of work streams.

The outstanding levels of customer service are ensuring repeat business and positive promotion through our internal and external partners, along with the general public. We firmly believe we are a good news story for Powys County Council (PCC), working in the best interests of both the Authority and its residents.

*Ian will be speaking at the APSE Facilities, Catering and Cleaning Management Seminar 2019. Visit the APSE website to book your place.*

## apse seminars

### Raising the game: adapting in changing times

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# Point of view



## Rental Exchange: Supporting tenants to improve their credit rating

Cllr Andy Dunbobbin  
Flintshire County Council

Flintshire County Council had a Stock Transfer ballot. With a resounding 88% of the vote, residents wanted the housing stock to remain with the Council. This clearly showed the confidence many of the tenants have with the Council being its landlord. And it's been from this base we have been able to develop, improve and grow our housing stock.

Building the first Council houses in a generation is something we are really proud of in Flintshire. But there's more to it than providing a house. We want our tenants to turn it into a home.

The failure of the current housing system is widespread. The social and economic inequalities caused by the private rented sector is worryingly acute. The vulnerable and those on low incomes are significantly disadvantaged. Poverty among renters has roughly doubled in the last decade, leaving thousands of people trapped in insecure, expensive housing. The shortage of supply, issues with regulation, affordability, access, quality and security has lent itself to a pervaded, dysfunctional private rented market. Private rentals continue to rise and the need for change – especially in high-cost areas – is urgent. This is where we, as social landlords, are able to be innovative. We can use our powers, to help our valued tenants, a solution in making their life a bit easier. We can play a significant role in making the social landlord sector work better and improve the experiences for tenants.

Through some research, I came across a scheme called the 'Rental Exchange'. Rental Exchange is a national scheme being adopted by an increasing number of social landlords as a way of supporting tenants to be able to improve their credit rating. Credit ratings really matter when our residents try to access loans or other sources of financial support such as mortgages because without a good record they face more expensive borrowing costs or worse still are forced to rely upon unscrupulous lenders. It has also come to my attention that Council tenants who pay rent on time do not have their payments recognised on their credit reference report. There is an inequality here because those who have a mortgaged property and make that payment on time, see it reflected on their credit file. This is simply not fair.

By participating in the service and working with credit reference agencies, Flintshire County Council are offering tenants the opportunity to build a positive credit history. Getting rewarded for paying their rent on time. I believe it also had major benefits for things like applying for goods and services, including responsible and affordable financial services, online shopping or even helping a tenant who wants to apply for a mortgage as part of a transition into buying their own home.

This scheme will help to support Flintshire County Council tenants, but as a progressive and forward thinking organisation who support all our local authorities throughout the United Kingdom, we should share our experiences.

I would be more than welcoming if you'd like to join me on this journey. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to do so. •

# Regenerating Stevenage



Pat Lewis, Assistant Director for Regeneration at Stevenage Borough Council, shares his perspective on the true value of urban regeneration today and upcoming plans for Stevenage.

Stevenage occupies a unique place in British social history. As the first of the post-war New Towns, in 1946 it set down the blueprint for modern urban living in the UK. It was built to be a utopia, a place where normal people could have great lives.

The opportunity is emerging to reimagine Stevenage in a modern setting against the initial vision of a place where “a new type of citizen, a healthy, self-respecting person with a sense of beauty, culture and civic pride” would be created.

The ambitious regeneration programme has the potential to once again place Stevenage at the heart of modern urban development in the UK and beyond.

This offers a real opportunity to reinvigorate the town and will provide a catalyst to produce significant benefits, far beyond physical regeneration, for all living, working, visiting or investing in the town.

As a place to do business Stevenage contains some of the greatest companies in the world, and most people probably don't even know it! It is home to the headquarters of huge multinationals; GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) produces life-saving drugs that are distributed across all continents, and Airbus are responsible for building a quarter of the world's satellites, and the Mars Rover. Stevenage truly is an innovative, progressive, and ambitious place that is already helping businesses to change the world.

Like other places, the town itself does need some uplifting. Its buildings look a little tired, and many shops appear unloved. Furthermore, the town centre isn't attracting the evening economy it once did, which makes the environs feel uninviting at night; although in reality this is far from the case. Stevenage Town's high street is by no means broken, but the ambition is for Stevenage to be the exciting destination town it once was, and we are committed to regenerating it back to its former glory and making it even better.

Much of our vision is for the restoration of most of the original town centre to its 1960s 'cool'. We are planning many new buildings, whilst ensuring there won't be any unsightly juxtaposition between the old and new, and our design approach incorporates and pays homage to our original 1960s architecture.

We want the town to reclaim its status of days gone by. Stevenage Town of the 1950s embraced modernism and became a place where the arts and culture flourished, and to which famous artists and sculptors flocked. Back in the 1960s, The Rolling Stones played in Stevenage and a Henry Moore sculpture was commissioned for the town. Stevenage was the place where people could live great lives, and we have that same vision for today's and tomorrow's citizens.

Our key role as a local authority is to kick start the regeneration journey based on active place-making objectives. The clear social justice objectives of the early post-war New Town planners underpin our urban planning for tomorrow's Stevenage.

We are planning an initial programme of at least ten years for the first major phases, with potential to continue work for a further ten years. It will be crucial for us to work together with private sector developers and embed a range of schemes, so we generate public interest and excitement early on and establish momentum.

**Our key role as a local authority is to kick start the regeneration journey based on active place-making objectives. The clear social justice objectives of the early post-war New Town planners underpin our urban planning for tomorrow's Stevenage.**

We are already working on restoring our main town square to its former Mondrian-inspired glory. The authority has also been renewing the public realm in three other of the town's squares.

In May of this year, we appointed Mace as the developer of SG1, a 6.8 hectare site in the centre of the town. They will create over 1,200 homes, 50,000 square feet of leisure facilities, and 100,000 square feet of office space. Part of the approach is to create an evening economy around a new garden square with a public sector hub, which incorporates: health services, the voluntary sector and a library.

Part of the main retail street, Queensway, is to be revitalized through a £50m investment, which includes restoration of the main shopping street, with new retail, a gym, offices, and over 100 homes. The aim for this is to start on-site in January 2019.

We know from experience, that when the private sector gets on board and recognises the full potential regeneration has to offer, it will drive it forward, helping us to work to secure our broader social and economic aims.

For us at Stevenage Borough Council, the time is right – we recognise that transforming Stevenage Town will deliver a range of social benefits and real economic opportunity for the local residents and businesses. Elsewhere in Stevenage we have built new council properties, which includes 162 council homes across the borough, with upward of 300 additional homes planned over the next three years.

We want Stevenage and its town to be an exciting place to live, work, relax, and socialise; a place where people think about their future, are genuinely proud of the town and feel part of its fabric and identity.



The background of the entire page is a photograph of a group of people, likely attendees at a seminar, looking towards the left. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. In the top right corner, the 'apse' logo is displayed in white lowercase letters inside a white-outlined purple oval.

apse

# performance networks seminar

# 2018

## **Report back**

*A quick look at this year's innovative speakers and thematic forums*

## **Best and Most Improved Performer Awards**

*Check out the winners and finalists of this year's prestigious APSE Performance Networks Awards*

# Stats Rock!

## Performance Networks Seminar Report Back

Missed the 2018 Performance Networks Seminar and wished you were there? No need to panic. We give you a round-up of this year's speakers, forums and topics.



APSE's Debbie Johns addresses delegates.

Data intelligence has become an integral part of service delivery. Therefore, the place to be for those who work in frontline services was beside the seaside at the Performance Networks Seminar 2018. The working seminar is an essential part of the performance networks timetable, and remains an invaluable shared learning experience for councils facing financial uncertainty.

On the morning of 6 December, delegates from across the UK arrived en masse at the Grand Hotel in Blackpool. There they enjoyed two days of expert insight from thought-leaders in local government, and were offered an opportunity to share best practice with fellow delegates.

On the first day of the seminar, delegates heard from various high-profile keynote speakers discussing the ways council services can leverage their data to demonstrate competitiveness and improve performance. In the afternoon, delegates could attend one of six informative and engaging forums and then one of twelve service-specific workshops. The forums and workshops allowed delegates to discuss issues of local concern and develop solutions with colleagues through problem solving surgeries.

### Using performance intelligence at a local level

Opening the seminar Adrian Phillips, Interim Chief Executive of Preston Council, explored the impact of austerity in places like Preston that have lost significant sums of money. However, through a mixture of innovation and pragmatism, the Council has created positive results for local communities. Adrian also paid tribute to the frontline workers on the ground who deliver the services which really matter to local communities, adapting and changing to meet the emerging needs of their local residents in spite of the financial pressures.

### How are frontline services performing

Paul Smith of Suration followed on from this theme of residents in sharing the results of the APSE / Suration 2018 public opinion survey. Paul explained that some of the key highlights from the report were that four times as many still trust the local council over the Government to make decisions about how services are delivered in local areas; six times as many trust local Councillors over Government ministers to make decision about their local area and four and half times as many trusted Councils to provide services in their local area over a private company, with people trusting the council five times

more than the Government. Interestingly Mr Smith also said that 80% of the public would like the Government to give more money to local councils to spend at the local level for services that are in their neighbourhood. This shows there is huge support amongst the public for those neighbourhood level services that councils deliver on a daily basis to residents.

### Maintaining or improving performance?

APSE's Debbie Johns was up next to provide a picture of performance within the UK from the data sets in performance networks. Debbie opened her address by noting how UK local government spending as a share of GDP, already below the 1979-2014 minimum, is projected to go on falling to 2020.

How has this reduction in spend been reflected in performance networks data on neighbourhood services?

In terms of the direction of travel for frontline services, Debbie explored a variety of data over different service areas and shared her findings. For example in areas like Parks key productivity indicators like the numbers of hectares maintained per FTE front line employee has shown a 30% increase since 12/13; whilst in one sense this is a positive outcome it also reflects reduced staffing numbers, and changes to the services due to budget pressures. In sports and leisure services, for both wet and dry facilities, operational recovery ratios have improved over the period. This appears to demonstrate a much more commercial mind-set in the sector where ancillary sales and returning customers are of increasing importance to council facilities.

In areas like refuse collection the ongoing pressure to reduce landfill and increase recycling is shown in a positive picture for the sector. The percentage of residual household waste going to landfill each year has seen a reduction of 27% since 2009/2010. However, Debbie warned to continue this achievement it is likely that new investment would be needed in both collection methods and waste disposal plants. This was, she argued, vital to address environmental concerns. There was also a theme to emerge in the street lighting sector where the increase in LED lighting has led to both a reduction in CO2 emissions of 36%, and significant cost reduction in energy costs per light reducing by 11% from 2012/2013.

Debbie then updated delegates as to the progress being made by the Performance Networks Service in expanding its influence, launching new projects and improving user-experience.



Suration's Paul Smith shares the results from the latest APSE and Suration public opinion survey.



Lancaster City Council's Mark Davies shares his experiences in the "Commercialism and performance" forum.

The pilot on corporate services - ranging from HR, IT to legal services and democratic services - has been a success and will therefore be rolled out within the suite of service areas for next year. Following on from a successful pilot with NABMA last year, APSE has successfully rolled out markets this year as a full service area.

The project to assist councils in Northern Ireland to achieve the benchmarking duty is going from strength to strength; branching out into other service areas as part of this project, including Planning, Economic Development, Building Control, Community Development and Arts and Heritage. Subject to demand, these may be rolled out to the UK in future years.

Performance Networks is working with CAMMS on developing the new database for performance networks to make it easier to report and analyse data and to build a platform for future web-enabled services. We are currently testing and piloting the new system.

In September APSE launched a new app so our members can collect inspection data on parks, grounds, streets and cemetery land required for LAMS. This has been developed with BBITS/Love Clean Streets.

Debbie closed her address by announcing the launch of the new web portal for all corporate and service contacts. This is a massive improvement from the previous web portal as it's customised to members and gives them access to their reports.

## Forums and workshops

In the afternoon, delegates attended thematic forums then workshops that honed in on particularly pressing issues and a range of local government frontline services.

The forums explored a range of hot topics. In the forum "Financial sustainability, liveability and environmental services", Andy Mudd of APSE Solutions and Craig Hatton, Executive Director of Place at North Ayrshire Council, explored corporate transformation, service redesign and how best to manage demand. Delegates shared their experiences of financial challenges and the solutions they have arrived at.

In the forum "Commercialism and performance" APSE's Mo Baines was kindly joined by Mark Davies and Councillor Brendan Hughes of Lancaster City Council who presented a case study in how their council is generating income for social purposes. Brendan and Mark



APSE's Rob Bailey leads the discussion in the Transport workshop. were able to show delegates how they are measuring their success

through performance.

The "Involving volunteers in improving service delivery" forum looked at the ways councils can engage the public in street scene inspections. Facilitators included Phil Pritchard, Contracts Manager at Telford and Wrekin Council and Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive. The facilitators also looked at the pilot in APSE's new Land Audit Management System, (LAMS) as well as user feedback from the LAMS App.

Other forums looked in detail at managing your facilities, transforming performance management as well as developments in performance networks.

After lunch, day one of the seminar ended with twelve highly informative workshops. With various frontline service experts facilitating the discussions, each workshop looked in depth at ways frontline staff can identify and overcome challenges, and thereby improve their effectiveness.

## A future beyond austerity

The second day of the seminar opened with Dr Peter Kenway of the New Policy Institute. Following his latest report with APSE, Dr Kenway discussed the prospects for local government, and neighbourhood services in particular. Dr Kenway noted that, in the face of financial localisation, it is difficult to come up with a common message with such variations between councils in neighbourhood services. There are real prospects for some to grow their tax base, whereas others will really struggle. You can read more about the report on page 22.

The seminar concluded with a panel discussion, made up of a number of senior frontline service managers from across the UK, discussing life beyond austerity. The panel included: Kenny Gillespie, Head of Housing at Falkirk Council; Paul Wright, Open Spaces Manager at Halton Borough Council; Elaine Bridge, Head of Service at Bolton Metropolitan Council; Ruth Hunter, Waste and Recycling Manager at Wyre Council; APSE Associate Andrew Martin, former Director of Highways and Emergency Planning at Dorset County Council; and Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive

Elaine Bridge opened proceedings discussing future challenges to the education catering sector, particularly rising food costs. This was followed by Kenny Gillespie providing his thoughts on the challenges facing the housing sector, namely that councils do not pay enough attention to outcomes. Ruth Hunter then took to the podium to acknowledge the importance of volunteers to her service; with Wyre having 137 volunteers in their Countryside service. Andrew Martin talked highways and how the upturn in the construction industry is making it very hard to retain talent and skills in local government highways services. Finally delegates got to hear from Paul Wright who emphasised the importance of passing information and skills to the new generation of local government workers •

If you would like to view any of the speakers' presentations, please visit the APSE website. Alternatively, email Vicky Starmer on [vstarmer@apse.org.uk](mailto:vstarmer@apse.org.uk)



[L-R] Panel discussion with Paul Wright, Halton Borough Council; Ruth Hunter, Wyre Council; Elaine Bridge, Bolton Metropolitan Council; Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive; APSE Associate Andrew Martin; and Kenny Gillespie, Falkirk Council.

# Best and most improved performer 2018

A big thank you to our lead sponsor:



The APSE Performance Networks Awards 2018 recognised 'Best Performers' and 'Most Improved Performers' across frontline local government services on a range of cost and quality performance indicators, promoting excellence and continuous improvement. This year's finalists demonstrated an exceptional commitment to frontline service provision and are brilliant examples of how measuring and comparing services can lead to real change.

The awards ceremony took place at the performance networks seminar at the Grand Hotel, Blackpool on the evening of Thursday 6 December 2018. It was our great pleasure to have award-winning broadcaster and journalist Jacqui Oatley MBE as the host for the evening.

The charity awards dinner is a special event in the local government calendar and in recent years has raised many thousands for Parkinsons UK.

APSE National Chair John Kerr Brown said, "APSE's data benchmarking service allows local government to recognise those top performing local councils alongside those who are striving to continuously improve their frontline services. Right across local government our member councils are driving forwards on service improvements and placing quality at the heart of what they do. These worthy finalists are showing a real commitment to those services which we all value at a neighbourhood level."

## Congratulations to all finalists and winners!

### Building Cleaning

#### Best Performer



#### Finalists

- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- East Renfrewshire Council
- Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
- Inverclyde Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Scottish Borders Council
- South Lanarkshire Council

**WINNER: SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

#### Most Improved Performer



#### Finalists

- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- East Renfrewshire Council
- Inverclyde Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Scottish Borders Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Tayside Contracts

**WINNER: INVERCLYDE COUNCIL**

## Building Maintenance

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Caerphilly County Borough Council  
 Falkirk Council  
 Oxford City Council  
 South Ayrshire Council  
 Swansea City and County Council  
 Waveney District Council  
 West Lothian Council

**WINNER: BARNSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Caerphilly County Borough Council  
 Durham County Council  
 East Ayrshire Council  
 Falkirk Council  
 Fife Council  
 Oxford City Council  
 South Ayrshire Council

**WINNER: EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

## Cemetery and Crematorium Services

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Conwy County Borough Council  
 Kettering Borough Council  
 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Middlesbrough Borough Council  
 Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council  
 North Lincolnshire Council  
 Oxford City Council  
 Stafford Borough Council

**WINNER: CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Durham County Council  
 Kettering Borough Council  
 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council  
 North Lanarkshire Council  
 North Lincolnshire Council  
 Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Stafford Borough Council  
 Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

**WINNER: KNOWSLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Education Catering

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Aberdeen City Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Derbyshire County Council  
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council  
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council  
Hartlepool Borough Council

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Sunderland City Council  
Wolverhampton City Council

**WINNER: GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Derbyshire County Council  
East Ayrshire Council  
East Renfrewshire Council  
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council  
Hartlepool Borough Council  
Inverclyde Council

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Tayside Contracts  
Wolverhampton City Council

**WINNER: TAYSIDE CONTRACTS**

## Environmental Health

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Dumfries and Galloway Council  
Orkney Islands Council  
Preston City Council  
Renfrewshire Council  
South Ayrshire Council  
Stroud District Council  
West Lothian Council

**WINNER: ORKNEY ISLANDS COUNCIL**



## Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural Services

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Aberdeenshire Council  
 Broxtowe Borough Council  
 Conwy County Borough Council  
 Eastleigh Borough Council  
 Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Halton Borough Council  
 Oxford City Council  
 Royal Borough of Greenwich

South Lanarkshire Council  
 Stafford Borough Council  
 Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

**WINNER: EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Aberdeenshire Council  
 Cambridge City Council  
 East Dunbartonshire Council  
 Gedling Borough Council  
 South Lanarkshire Council

**WINNER: SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL**

## Refuse Collection

### Best Performer



### Finalists

East Renfrewshire Council  
 East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
 Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Kettering Borough Council  
 North East Derbyshire District Council

South Northamptonshire District Council  
 Wakefield Metropolitan District Council  
 West Lindsey District Council  
 West Lothian Council  
 Wyre Borough Council

**WINNER: KETTERING BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

City of York Council  
 Darlington Borough Council  
 East Renfrewshire Council  
 Eastleigh Borough Council  
 North Lanarkshire Council  
 Nottingham City Council

Oxford City Council  
 Wakefield Metropolitan District Council  
 West Lothian Council

**WINNER: DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Angus Council  
 Caerphilly County Borough Council  
 Dundee City Council  
 East Dunbartonshire Council  
 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
 Pembrokeshire County Council  
 Shetland Islands Council

Slough Borough Council  
 South Ayrshire Council  
 Telford and Wrekin Council  
 Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

**WINNER: SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Dundee City Council  
 East Renfrewshire Council  
 North Lanarkshire Council  
 Nottinghamshire County Council  
 Pembrokeshire County Council  
 South Ayrshire Council  
 Stirling Council

Swansea City and County Council  
 Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council  
 Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

**WINNER: EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL**

## Sports and Leisure Facility Management

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Ashfield District Council:  
*Lammas Leisure Centre*  
 Broxtowe Borough Council:  
*Bramcote Leisure Centre*  
 Chelmsford City Council:  
*Riverside Ice and Leisure*  
 East Riding of Yorkshire Council:  
*East Riding Leisure Beverley*

Hackney London Borough:  
*Clissold Leisure Centre*  
 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council:  
*Rotherham Leisure Complex*  
 South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council:  
*Haven Point*

**WINNER: EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Broxtowe Borough Council:  
*Chilwell Olympia Sports Centre*  
 Chelmsford City Council:  
*Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre*  
 East Riding of Yorkshire Council:  
*East Riding Leisure Beverley*  
 East Riding of Yorkshire Council:  
*East Riding Leisure Francis Scaife*

Hackney London Borough:  
*Stoke Newington West Reservoir Centre*  
 Nottingham City Council:  
*Nottingham Tennis Centre*  
 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council:  
*Rotherham Leisure Complex*  
 Telford and Wrekin Council:  
*Abraham Darby Sports and Leisure*

**WINNER: BROXTOWE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Street Cleansing

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Conwy County Borough Council  
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Eastleigh Borough Council  
Gedling Borough Council  
Kettering Borough Council  
North East Derbyshire District Council

Oxford City Council  
Stafford Borough Council  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

### WINNER: EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Cambridge City Council  
Cheshire West and Chester Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Dumfries and Galloway Council  
East Renfrewshire Council  
Eastleigh Borough Council  
Gedling Borough Council

Kettering Borough Council  
North East Derbyshire District Council

### WINNER: KETTERING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Street Lighting

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Angus Council  
Denbighshire County Council  
Isle of Anglesey County Council  
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Northumberland County Council  
Renfrewshire Council

Slough Borough Council  
West Dunbartonshire Council  
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

### WINNER: WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Cardiff Council  
Durham County Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Kirklees Council  
North Ayrshire Council  
Northumberland County Council  
Perth and Kinross Council  
Swansea City and County Council

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

### WINNER: WIGAN METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Transport Operations and Vehicle Maintenance

### Best Performer



### Finalists

Dorset County Council  
Durham County Council  
East Renfrewshire Council  
North East Derbyshire District Council  
North Warwickshire Borough Council

Oxford Direct Services  
Tayside Contracts

**WINNER: OXFORD DIRECT SERVICES**

### Most Improved Performer



### Finalists

Aberdeenshire Council  
Dorset County Council  
Durham County Council  
Lancaster City Council  
Midlothian Council  
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

**WINNER: WAKEFIELD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

APSE would like to thank all sponsors of the Performance Networks Seminar and Awards 2018 for their support



## The APSE Highways Innovation Awards 2019 are now open for entries!

These awards celebrate outstanding local councils that use innovative ideas and solutions to tackle the current challenges facing their frontline services. The awards provide participating authorities with an opportunity to showcase their expertise, alongside the results that they have achieved.

The Innovation Awards are split into three categories:

- Winter maintenance and winter resilience services
- Street lighting
- Highways maintenance services

The ideal submission will contain a description of the problem or challenge faced, and the innovative approach taken to remedy it. This could be, for example, a service redesign, new training techniques, use of new materials or equipment, or new methods of responding to/communicating with the public. The submission should also include the outcomes that have been achieved. As a helpful guide, a brochure featuring the successful submissions for the 2017 and 2018 Innovation Awards is available to download.

Winners will be announced at an awards ceremony held as part of the annual APSE Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar on 21 March 2019.

Member and non-member authorities are welcome to submit an application.

Entries will be assessed on a submission basis by an independent judging panel.

Send your expressions of interest to Matt Ellis at [mellis@apse.org.uk](mailto:mellis@apse.org.uk) by no later than Friday 18 January 2019.

## New APSE Approved Partners: Welcome **AMX Solutions Ltd**



Congratulations and a warm welcome to AMX Solutions, who have now been confirmed as APSE Approved Partners

AMX Solutions Ltd, formed in 2004, are established suppliers of asset management software in the infrastructure and physical assets sectors across the UK and overseas.

The company developed and launched its latest product AMX (Asset Management eXpert) in 2012. With its customisable and flexible architecture design, AMX is fully scalable to meet changing and future requirements across multiple departments and is now being successfully used by over 50 local authorities across the UK and by government bodies, consultants and contractors all over the world. All AMX systems come with full consultancy and AMX support to provide a truly comprehensive service.

Speaking of this new partnership, APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, "Council frontline services across the UK are operating in an increasingly difficult environment; especially when one considers ongoing cuts in budgets and a growing demand for services. With AMX Solutions, our members can benefit enormously from high quality, customisable asset management software. This will enable local authorities to efficiently and cost-effectively manage all aspects of life-cycle planning for their assets. AMX takes asset management to a new level of capabilities, and I am in no doubt they will bring considerable value to everyone connected with APSE."

In terms of adding value for members, with extensive Civil Engineering experience in-house and a growing international customer base, AMX Solutions can provide APSE members with insights into alternative approaches to asset management inspections and maintenance practices and collaborate with industry leaders to develop new system functions that are tailored to specific user needs or industry standards.

Having had a long-standing relationship with APSE, Saeid Naelini, Managing Director of AMX Solutions said, "This new relationship marks another milestone for the company. We are very proud to have been accepted as a partner with APSE. This not only reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting and empowering customers by sharing best practice and industry knowledge, but gives us the opportunity to work with teams and agents to drive innovation and improve standards in the field of asset management operations across Local Authorities in the UK."

For AMX Solutions, the key benefit of becoming a partner with APSE is the opportunity to raise awareness within Local Authorities of AMX as an alternative Infrastructure Asset Management system, whilst gaining an insight into the challenges they face with evolving performance measures and new legislation. AMX Solutions will use the opportunities provided by APSE membership to listen to customers and identify areas where their solution may be improved to support new functionality for the future to achieve value for money.

For more information about AMX Solutions' excellent services and products, visit <http://www.amxsolutions.co.uk/>



# In search of commercial solutions

At the Public Sector Show in Manchester on 20 November, APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien was kindly invited to chair a panel discussion looking at how local government can develop commercial strategies for revenue generation. Joining Paul on the panel was Tim Reade of CIPFA; Cllr Russel Bowden of Warrington Borough Council; and Fliss Mercer of Telford & Wrekin Council. We bring you the highlights from what was a lively and timely debate.

Under the iconic vaulted arches and station clock of Manchester Central, visitors, speakers and exhibitors gathered in their hundreds to share ideas on how to deliver smarter, better and more efficient public services. The exhibition hall boasted five different content-streams - in technology, leadership, infrastructure, the state of local government and corporate solutions - each offering in-depth case studies, lively panel debates and insightful interviews.

It was to the corporate solutions theatre where Paul was asked to debate and moderate a discussion on whether local government commercial activity can be a viable means of safeguarding service delivery. And if it can, examples of where this has been achieved across the UK.

The venue itself provided a classic example of shrewd local government investment. The once disused and derelict former train station, purchased by Manchester City Council in the 1980s, has developed into a highly successful convention complex and commercial enterprise, earning almost £19m in revenue for the authority in 2016/17. Delegates in attendance were eager to hear of how they too could identify and leverage the potential commercial assets of their respective organisations.

To a theatre teeming with delegates, Paul's opening address welcomed the Prime Minister's October announcement that austerity would be coming to an end, though cautioned that it may take a long time before this feeds through to frontline services; cuts to funding are set to continue through 2019 and the next comprehensive spending review (2020-2023) may well offer more belt-tightening for councils. Compounding this problem, particularly for English councils, is the fact that by 2020, over 90% of local government finances will be raised through

either council tax or business rates. The pressures on frontline services show no sign of abating any time soon.

With that in mind Paul added, commercialisation provides local councils with a vital means to offset these funding pressures. With UK local government expenditure dropping down to 5.7% by 2020 - the smallest amount that has been spent on or invested in local government since 1948 - authorities have had to re-establish their thinking around municipal entrepreneurship. Initial innovations in trading and charging have now spread to major investments in energy and housing. 200 housing companies have now been established whilst municipal energy companies - Nottingham's Robin Hood Energy, Bristol Energy, Enfield's Energetik - are springing up across the UK.

However, it is important to acknowledge that these investments are not simply about revenue generation, but have also been done for a public policy purpose - whether it is mitigating the housing crisis, or tackling fuel poverty and climate change. What has been termed the "New Municipalism". Paul rounded off his opening address by saying that though commercialisation on its own will not be enough to tackle the budget cuts, it certainly helps pull some of those frontline services together that have been squeezed by austerity and the ever-growing demand on adult social care services.

Fliss Mercer was the first of the panelists to speak, giving her thoughts on what make the key ingredients for commercial success. For Fliss, the first key ingredient is leadership. As well as getting support from senior management team and elected members, Fliss's experience in Telford & Wrekin was for the need to attract the middle level of management; the staff who deliver these

commercial services on the frontline. It is really important that layer feels supported to take calculated risks.

Second is capacity: There's lots of people in authorities who have commercial acumen. The job of people like Fliss is to support those people and free them up.

Fliss's final ingredient was organisational fit. It is important for councils to do things that they are good at and that they do the easier things first, even if its very low profile and not very exciting. Councils also need to make sure it sits well with the organisation's values. Telford and Wrekin's most successful projects have been the win-win projects; those that deliver social value as well as financial value.

Up next was Tim Reade, who turned to property investments. For Tim, those authorities that are ahead and using their property base effectively are the ones who are thinking strategically. It used to be the case that asset management planning was done as a mandatory activity. However, this is not the case any more as a result of cuts and the accompanying erosion of skillsets in property teams/specialists. That has led to a conscious decision not to spend the time and money in doing strategic thinking that would link corporate objectives with that which authorities are trying to achieve with their asset base.

Cost is a big barrier; for many authorities property is their second biggest cost (after their staff). For Tim, local councils need to see their property as an opportunity to generate income; whether that's through investment, through the authority's tenanted residential portfolio, or whether it is working with other services to find ways to use the space better. Ultimately for Tim, it is vital councils regularly familiarise themselves with CIPFA's Prudential Code, and link their strategic asset management policy with their overall strategy/plan; ensuring that thread runs from the top to the bottom of the organisation.

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**Telford and Wrekin's most successful projects have been the win-win projects; those that have delivered social value as well as financial value.**

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Delegates then heard from Cllr Bowden, who began by acknowledging the very serious challenges that confronted Warrington Council at the onset of austerity. With one of the lowest settlements and one of the lowest council tax bases in the country, the future looked bleak. To protect those vital frontline services, the Council had to become a lot more self-sufficient. Therefore, a 12 month budget with little strategic vision was replaced with a 4 year budget guided by the Council's new and much more dynamic commercial strategy.



Suffice to say this transformation has borne fruit. Warrington Council now has in excess of £25m of income from the activities it has undertaken. These include:

- Loans to Housing Associations; these have provided an opportunity to stimulate housing regeneration and help mitigate the housing shortage that exists locally.
- Investing in solar farms; the Council recently purchased two solar farms in Yorkshire which will supply electricity to the council in a move forecast to save £1m per year.

For Cllr Bowden, a failure to move to a more commercial mindset would have resulted in far more savage cuts, such as are now being delivered by other councils across the UK. It therefore remains essential that the Council continues to find ways to replace Government funding with other income, and to do this requires the Council to be more innovative and creative in how it generates income streams.

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**A failure to move to a more commercial mindset would have resulted in far more savage cuts, such as are now being delivered by other councils across the UK.**

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Following Cllr Bowden's address, it was the audience's turn to have the floor. The first question enquired about nurturing the right commercial culture in an organisation.

Each panellist stressed the importance of training in creating the right culture. Fliss commented on her Council's management level "Future Leaders Programme"; essentially a talent spotting programme. It had been a real bonus for the organisation unearthing some genuine talent. Fliss also recommended specific training on sales for staff, which people in local government are not necessarily accustomed to.

Both Cllr Bowden and Tim argued that managers need to possess humility if they are to make commercialisation work. Tim is a big fan of 360 feedback; if your people have the freedom to constructively criticise, and the managers have the humility to accept they are not always going to get it right, that is the culture where ideas thrive.

For Cllr Bowden no idea is a stupid idea. Warrington Council has a Dragons Den-like panel encouraging people to come forward with ideas; some of which have delivered some serious savings.

Paul responded by saying you cannot expect people to act innovatively and entrepreneurially if you have loaded them with lots of other responsibilities and tasks; you need to create some space for them to think differently.

Moving on to the example of Orkney Islands Council, Paul spoke of how, in order to meet predicted £12m cut in available funding, the Council has a targeted approach to "sweat" their assets to the full, be they the tourism sector or naturally occurring assets.

Over the last three years the Council has seen "Harbour Dues" rise to multi-million surpluses against a corresponding 40% increase in trade. The Council has also seen aggregate manufacture rise from circa 65,000 tonnes to over 110,000 tonnes.

On the back of these successes, the Council's senior management team and politicians, guided and supported by key officers, have chosen to take further proactive and innovative approaches with future strategic projects. These include the development of a "scale" wind farm, the development of a "Private Wire" local electricity network to reduce fuel oil dependency, initially in public buildings, and the development of an "Integrated Waste Solution".

Another question that generated lots of debate amongst the panel concerned relationships with the private sector, and the importance of embedding social value in contracts.

Tim, who works extensively with the private sector, advised delegates to have a very early conversation with private sector organisations about what it is you have in common with them and why you have chosen them for the long term. The most successful organisations have been those that have established a very strong and lengthy bond - built on clear objectives about what the council wants - resulting in a mutual and highly rewarding relationship.

In citing examples where social benefits had been achieved in commercial activity, Paul offered case studies from APSE's latest research - "The New Municipalism: Taking back entrepreneurship". In Swansea, the Council has used Community Benefit Clauses in 128 contracts. This has delivered the equivalent value of 10,000 weeks of training.

In Dumfries and Galloway, the Council has been building local economy and community resilience through partnerships with SMEs and micro-employers. £17m of work has been subcontracted to 456 local firms and micro-employers; a real boon for the local economy.

The debate could have continued well into the evening but, after a highly informative session, the discussion was brought to a close. However, a considerable number of delegates remained in the theatre and queued up for a conversation with speakers afterwards.

When one considers the future health of local government finances, the only certainty is uncertainty. Developing commercial activities for revenue generation is therefore becoming more and more of an imperative for local councils.

The panel discussion at the Public Sector Show was a great advertisement for some of the innovative commercial activity being conducted around the UK by local authorities. For those who are serious about protecting their frontline services, now is the time to get on board with the new municipalism. •

*Fliss Mercer will be speaking at the APSE Policy Seminar 2019. Visit the APSE website to book your place.*

## Delivering the New Municipalism: Taking Back Entrepreneurship

APSE Policy Seminar 2019

### Includes expert speakers:

Dr Peter Kenway, New Policy Institute;  
Cllr Matthew Brown, Leader of Preston Council;  
Professor Steven Griggs, De Montfort University;  
Madeleine Bell, Harrogate Borough Council;  
Fliss Mercer, Telford and Wrekin Council;  
Nicola Taylor, South Staffordshire Council;  
Danny Mather, Warrington Borough Council.

**Wednesday 23 January 2019**

Hotel Football, Old Trafford, Manchester

## CONTENÜR

For all your container requirements.  
We are recommended suppliers on the ESPO 860 framework.



# Hollowed out

## The impact of financial localisation on neighbourhood services

New research by APSE and the New Policy Institute considers the prospects for the 'neighbourhood services' provided by local government. Though there are prospects for some councils to grow their tax base, there are many others who will really struggle. We take a look at the report's findings and what they mean for the future of local neighbourhood services.

The possibility of a no-deal Brexit has many in the Westminster commentariat talking of a looming Doomsday scenario. In the event of no-deal, official Treasury figures indicate that by 2030 the UK economy could be as much as 9.3% smaller; with potentially severe ramifications for the public purse and, inevitably, public service providers.

Those who work in local government are well accustomed to talk of a looming financial Doomsday. The risk of no-deal Brexit is but one head on a Hydra boasting a multitude of serious, and in some cases existential, threats to the delivery of frontline services. The removal of the Revenue Support Grant and reversion to business rates – financial localisation – is the Hydra head which has arguably been causing the most consternation in town halls across England and Wales these past few years.

Under the guise of localisation, council tax has represented an ever-growing share of Core Spending Power (CSP), up from 44% in 2010, to 54% by 2016/17 and 62% by 2019/20. It varies greatly according to the type of local authority, from 51% for London boroughs and metropolitan districts to 75% for shire counties.

With grants from central government continuing to fall, 88% of CSP will come from two taxes – council tax and business rates – by 2019/20. The share will range from 84% for London and metropolitan districts to 93% for counties.

In 2020, those services we consider to be neighbourhood services – road maintenance, street lighting, parks and waste collection – will be particularly vulnerable. A previous report by APSE and NPI found that, since 2010, neighbourhood services had been the hardest hit of all local government services, with the most deprived areas, on average, hit the hardest. As of 2015/16, local neighbourhood services had lost an extraordinary £3.1B of funding. That figure is now much higher.

For a few local authorities with good prospects for business rate and council tax growth, leaving councils reliant upon these two property based taxes has attractions, if they are in a good position to build new homes and attract and keep new businesses.

For less well-placed areas, the growing dependence on locally-raised finance will worsen their situation, meaning further service cuts and risking non-statutory services; the services that most councils provide but are not legally obliged to do – like leisure centres, parks and many more services delivered at a local neighbourhood level.

This hollowing out of local councils, reducing their capacity to intervene and support local services and local economies, cannot be easily patched up with piece-meal and ad-hoc funding announcements from central government.

Because it is only right that services like care for older people and

vulnerable children are prioritised, the current funding crisis means that many other council services, valued by residents and businesses, are placed at the bottom of the funding pile. This means our much loved neighbourhood services will all see funding reduced. This despite the high regard and affection these services are held by with the public; they do not want to see these services cut.

So what can be done to alleviate this funding crisis?

**Reverse subsidy**

The report finds that by 2019/2020, council tax and business rates will exceed the spending that local government controls by £7 billion per year.

This £7 billion ‘reverse subsidy’ of central government by local taxpayers rests on a comparison of locally-raised revenue with “core spending power” (CSP) plus the ring-fenced public health grant. CSP is the sum of a local authority’s council tax, revenue support grant, other specific grants from central government, as well as retained business rate income. The “reverse subsidy” is a recent development: in 2015/16, local government still got slightly more from central government than was raised in local taxation. Council tax and business rates are set to continue to rise until the end of the decade but a fall in central government grant means that councils are now collecting more than they spend. Combined with increasing demand for services, tax payers are unlikely to feel any benefit from paying more council tax.

The report also finds that because of the way in which local councils collect money and send it to the Treasury, it is central government, not local councils, who decide how this money will be spent. Although other monies are returned to local government in the form of ring-fenced grants (for example, for education or the police), they cannot be spent by councils according to locally-determined priorities.

The £7bn subsidy is enough not only to plug the funding gap in social care but to go at least some of the way towards reversing the cuts in neighbourhood services on everything from bin collections and recycling to roads and parks.

Speaking about the report Paul O’Brien, the Chief Executive of APSE, said, “We would ask the Government to now seriously reconsider the positive opportunity to fund local council neighbourhood services. By returning this ‘reverse subsidy’ directly to local councils we can go a long way to plugging the funding gap that increasingly sees cuts to those services valued by the public but often at the forefront of austerity measures.

He added, “Councils are struggling to provide the most basic of services like repairing pot holes, maintaining local parks and emptying litter bins and yet these local neighbourhood services are the very visible local services that support the local infrastructure, valued, not just by local residents, but local businesses too. At the same time councils are being forced to ration social care. If the Prime Minister’s promise of an end to austerity is to be believed then our findings show that the Government can make good on that promise by giving councils a welcome relief to the funding pressures that have beset social care and our neighbourhood level public services. Investing in these neighbourhoods services would be a very visible signal to the public that austerity is drawing to an end”.

The report was written and produced by Dr Peter Kenway and Carla Ayrton of the New Policy Institute. Dr Peter Kenway said, “Ending the reverse subsidy cannot just mean allowing every local authority to keep all the tax it collects. That would usually benefit the strongest councils most. Instead, there must be a new formula to allocate the

money between local areas according to need. The decades-old principle on which it rests, that burdens should be borne collectively, can help hold an unequal country together.

“If Government returns the £7B back to council coffers it will provide a real boost to funding social care, relieving pressure on the NHS and giving a viable future to neighbourhood services which the public most value.”

**Removing the ‘top-down’ approach to localisation**

APSE believes the Government must recalibrate its localist claims. To do so it should pin fiscal neutrality (the condition under which central government insists localisation should take place) to the date 2015/16 when it was first proposed that locally raised taxes should fund local government. That was the year when local taxes were first equal to the amount controlled and spent by local government

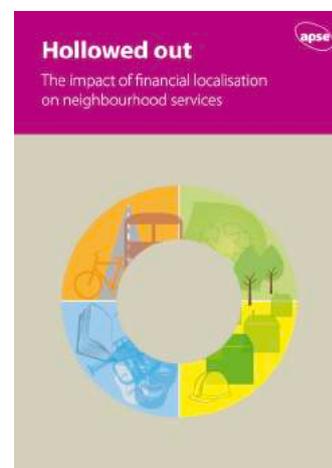
APSE also believes the Government should restore ‘need’ to pride of place in the debate about local government funding. The language of ‘need’ is a bottom up approach to the resources required by local government to best serve its local communities, both residents and local businesses.

By contrast, the language of incentives around localisation is a top-down approach. It does not work in the real-world context of some heavily deprived local authority areas.

In its place, local government should push for a system of funding whose first test is precisely that it works for the least well-placed authorities.

It would be a big understatement to suggest local authorities have their work cut out as they try push for a fairer system of funding and attempt to persuade the government to change tack. It will require authorities across the UK to come together and mount a robust defence of neighbourhood services.

According to the Greek myth, Hercules was only able to defeat the monstrous Hydra by working closely with his friend Iolaus. In a similar vein, local authorities will have to work very closely with other authorities; presenting a common front so as to protect their local economies and communities from the sharp end of financial localisation and a potential “Doomsday”. •



- You can view a digital copy of the research on the APSE website at [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk). Print copies are also available.

To order, please use the form on our website or email [Wai Lee on wlee@apse.org.uk](mailto:wlee@apse.org.uk).

# Showcasing creativity in environmental services

Following their success at the APSE Environmental Services Innovation Awards 2018, APSE Direct shines a spotlight on the three bold and highly successful initiatives that came out on top.

## Waste and Recycling

### Oxford Direct Services

#### Blue Bin Recycling League

##### The problem impeding service delivery

Oxford is a diverse and ever-changing city. With a population turnover of 25%, 33,000 students and 1,800 properties unable to store bins, the city needed something radical in place to help tackle these challenges.

The restraints around increasing recycling rates sat with the lack of education. At a time when local authorities were forced to cut education budgets, the Council had to find an innovative way to meet this challenge.

##### How did the team innovate to overcome the problem?

A range of methods were used as part of the scheme, with education and behaviour change at the heart of the work. This included door knocking (almost 17,000 doors knocked to date), holding educational road shows (roughly 100 per year) and written and digital communications.

The Council's three recycling mascots played a huge part in the scheme. The first mascot, Phil the Bin, has been joined by Felicity the Food Caddy and Oilyver in his mission to increase Oxford City's recycling rate. Having more recently had a change in service, the Council acquired Oilyver to help promote the new kerbside collection of cooking oil and fats.

Social media was another fantastic form of engagement, with over 45,000 followers on the Council's corporate Facebook account alone. Videos were created in-house, giving the team creative control over output. This allowed for exciting, engaging and original videos such as stop motion animation, gifs and boomerangs. The team even created a video lead by the campaign mascots touring a food recycling plant!

The scheme created an innovate competition in which school children got involved with recycling. The Team created a competition to design a recycling poster for recycling engagement purposes. The winning pupil won a prize and their design got displayed on

one of the Council's dustcarts which visited their school.

This scheme also encompassed a student consultancy project with Oxford University. The project allowed the Team to enhance their knowledge whilst building on the student's teamwork and business skills. A large part of this involves them working with the public to undertake surveys and research on the Council's behalf; allowing the Council to understand how to further its educational work.

During the last year the Blue Bin Recycling League organised the innovative and cross organisational Clean Green campaigns which targets key hotspot areas where litter, fly tipping and waste issues have been identified.

##### Evidence of success

The scheme started to come to fruition at the end of September 2018; with substantial success taken from the project which can be seen through the correlated increase in recycling improvement rates. Councillors decided to renew the scheme at a council level for a further three years

During work on the cross organisational Clean Green campaigns, results have shown up to a 60% reduction in litter in some hotspot areas and improved community satisfaction with a 55% increase in the positive perception of the target location.



## Parks and Greenspaces

### East Riding of Yorkshire Council

#### Transforming the Grounds Maintenance Team

##### The problem impeding service delivery

The Council's ground maintenance service is responsible for cutting 1,400 hectares of grass in each cutting cycle – an area roughly the same size as the North York Moors. The team maintains 22 hectares of shrub beds and two acres of flower beds. The areas maintained were previously recorded through the Government's regime of compulsory competitive tendering (CCT).

Using CCT charges to price for the maintenance of council assets proved to be outdated as it no longer reflected current working practices and costs. This approach limited grounds services' ability to accurately monitor and manage maintenance costs and performance. Compounding this problem was the significant reduction in funding the Council receives from the Government.

##### How did the team innovate to overcome the problem?

Grounds maintenance was tasked with accurately recording all areas of grassland maintained by the service, as well as the time taken to maintain those areas and also to calculate a cost of the service provision. Tracking devices were fitted



to all the grounds team's vehicles as they were deemed the ideal tool to measure assets through the monitoring of vehicle activity.

The devices captured GPS location and were linked to a vehicle's power take-off (PTO) so it could sense when a mower was cutting.

The data from the devices was imported into a mapping system. Areas maintained by a mower were electronically mapped and added to a map layer file. Each data point had a time stamp and so the duration of maintenance for each area was calculated.

This enabled more efficient work patterns to be created and dedicated rural and urban were set up. Each team received a planned work schedule, based on a productive time of 6 hours of cutting per day (after factoring in time for travelling and breaks).

### Evidence of success

The new schedules have reduced the reliance on employing seasonal employees through the summer. The number of seasonal posts has reduced from 54 in 2014 to 37 in 2017, a saving of £66,000. In turn, significant job losses for full time staff have been avoided.

Savings have been invested back into the service in the form of 18 new ride-on mowers to replace the existing ones.

Through smarter procurement, grounds maintenance will continue to reduce its budget, with a projected saving of more than £75,000 in the next financial year. Overall, the grounds team has reduced its costs from £1,623,587 in 2014 to £1,326,440 in 2017 – an overall saving of £297,147. Rural teams were placed on a 15-day schedule and urban teams were placed on a 10-day schedule.



**Fly tipping - See it - report it**

**Fly Tipping and the Law**  
Fly tipping of waste is illegal and is a serious offence for which a person can end up with a criminal record, an unlimited fine and/or up to 5 years in prison.  
Where a person is convicted of fly tipping, the court can make an order requiring the offender to pay for the costs associated with the clean-up, enforcement and investigation, including the seizure of any vehicles that were involved in the offence.

**SORT IT! Centres**  
Household waste can be legally disposed of at the following sites, seven days a week, however, certain restrictions may apply:  
 > Collett Way, Great Western Business Park, Yate  
 > Station Road, Little Stoke  
 > Carsons Road, Mangotfield  
 > Thornbury Industrial Estate  
 Call 01454 868008 or check out the website for information on opening times and restrictions.

**Fly Tipping See it - Report it**  
To report fly tipping or for further information, please contact:  
 Phone: 01454 868000  
 www.southglos.gov.uk/flytipping  
 E-mail: streetcare@southglos.gov.uk

Or write to:  
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**South Gloucestershire Council,**  
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**Fly tipping - See it - report it**  
01454 868000 www.southglos.gov.uk/flytip

**What is fly tipping?**

## Streetscene

### South Gloucestershire Council

#### Creating a 'Virtual' Envirocrime Team

#### The problem impeding service delivery

South Gloucestershire Council's vision includes working with local people to resolve local problems. One particular problem in the area was fly-tipping.

#### How did the team innovate to overcome the problem?

A 'virtual' Envirocrime Team was created to develop the culture of a "can do" attitude with the focus on delivering a service that would concentrate on real outcomes. Working in partnership has enabled a wide variety of cases to be resolved using this 'joined up' approach.

The Envirocrime Team is a cross cutting team made up of and lead by officers from Environmental Health, working alongside Street Care and Waste Management. The team's aims are aligned to deal with issues including litter, graffiti, fly-tipping and dog fouling. The Team have excelled in coordinating resources across these Council services and is a good example of cross service working. As a direct result time and resources spent on the consequences of these issues (e.g. clearing up fly tips) has been significantly reduced. The Team have consistently produced excellent quality of work often to tight time deadlines. There is also a close working relationship with legal services, taking enforcement action against individuals who commit crimes which have a detrimental impact on the environment.

The nature of the work is complex and the Envirocrime Team have managed this complexity excellently resulting in a significant impact on Envirocrime. Feedback from the communities which have been

impacted by the Team's work have been overwhelmingly positive which has helped to further strengthen local partnerships.

Members of the Team have demonstrated excellent qualities in taking on new work and getting to grips with the technical difficulties of an ever changing regime integrating government policy with the Council's aims of safer and stronger communities and valuing the environment. In addition to their other duties officers have demonstrated an exemplary attitude to taking on other roles and putting in significant time to develop the tools to implement a comprehensive and effective Envirocrime Strategy.

The virtual team meet regularly to discuss progress in implementing the strategy and address any challenges faced, and front line staff work together on a day-to-day basis.

#### Evidence of success

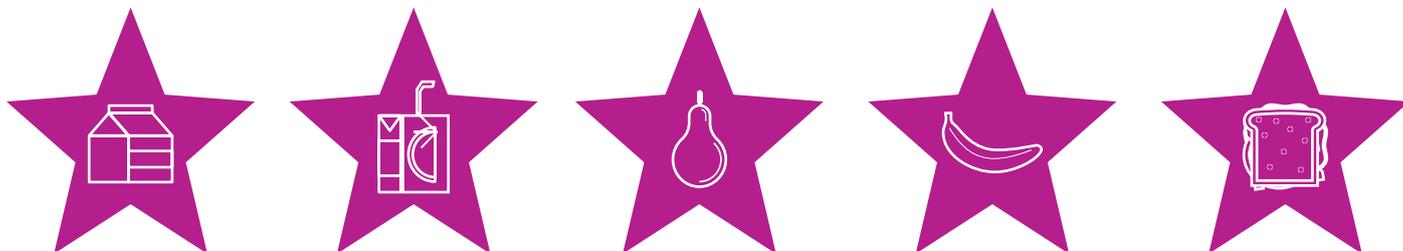
Fly tipping activity over the past 18 months has focussed on the larger scale fly tips, perpetrated by criminals operating illegal waste and house clearance firms. These are perpetrators of multiple offences, so targeting them has the greatest impact. There were 15 successful prosecutions, many of them for multiple offences (fly tipping, and no waste licence/transfer notes). This builds on 28 prosecutions over the preceding three years.

This has resulted in over £16,300 in fines and costs, one 100 hour community service sentence and one 68 week imprisonment.

*These summaries have been taken from the APSE Environmental Services Innovation Awards brochure. The brochure contains the summaries of every shortlisted submission in 2017 and 2018 and is free to download from the APSE website.*

# Evolve: A five star catering system

Trafford Council and Wigan Council's new smart catering system - Evolve - has helped to reduce queues, engage pupils and assist meal uptake, whilst increasing debt control and efficiency. APSE Direct spoke to Trafford Council's Philip Valentine and Wigan Council's Carmel Foster- Devine to hear more about this APSE Service Award-winning initiative.



The development of our Smart Catering System (SCS) originated from the recognition of a changing business and technological landscape where our customers, be they schools, pupils or parents, are exposed to intuitive, efficient and smarter processes every day, and their expectations are increasingly driven by technology assisted lifestyles.

In order to meet our customers' needs, and remain competitive, we needed to move to digital platforms for both meal ordering and on-line payments whilst remaining committed to supporting our schools and offering a living wage to our staff. Embracing new technology and digital solutions, whilst continuing to deliver a high quality, efficient service, was a key priority for the local authority.

Following early investigations, it became apparent that whatever system was procured would not be exclusive to local authority services, as there are various systems available on the open market delivering partial solutions. Thus the systems already in existence would not meet our customers' needs, or provide us with a unique selling point assisting with long term business stability, or retention of a competitive edge.

Trafford reviewed issues from a reverse perspective and, rather than a traditional school meal software developer, engaged a food manufacturing, software development company (MCG) to provide an end to end system that would be under the control of Trafford Catering Service. Thus the system was future proofed by being flexible enough to meet any changes in our business requirements, without the financial issues of increasing license and development costs.

A partnership with Wigan Council (through a Memorandum of Agreement and a financial contribution), saw the two Councils working with the private sector partner (MCG) to further develop Evolve and enable the acceleration of the online meal payment option.

Our smart catering system (SCS) reduces queues, engages pupils and assists meal uptake, increases debt control and efficiency, and reduces waste. There is added reassurance to parents, school and kitchen as dietary/allergen needs are highlighted by SCS, triggering warning alerts at key points in the process. Debt management control can be improved as ordering/taking of meals can be restricted if insufficient credit exists, or the balance has dropped below a specified threshold (which can be a negative value), agreed with the school.

SCS provides a full audit trail from parent's payments, to meal orders, to allergen/dietary needs, and kitchen confirmation of the child arriving at the servery and receiving their ordered meal. There is a 'triple lock' process to ensure that no child receives an inappropriate meal. All ingredients have allergens recorded against them, so when the child's allergen requirements have been inputted, at the point of ordering,

SCS will not offer conflicting meal choices. When the child arrives at the servery, SCS triggers allergen alerts for the kitchen staff on screen, ensuring the child does not receive anything contradictory.

SCS allows better management of menus across the schools catered for, and reduces unnecessary deviations from the agreed menu. This enables a reduction in waste as only the meals required are cooked, which, combined with increased service speed, ensures the school's lunch schedule is met. The system also allows for quality audits to be undertaken using online forms input directly into SCS, recording a range of data essential to kitchen management.

An additional benefit is that SCS is modular and schools can choose the options required, including resource management, debt management etc.

This project approach utilised the best of the public and private sector. The erasure of preconceptions of school catering by removing inhibitors for change, leveraged the skills and expertise of the public sector, combined with private sector skills, innovation and flexibilities, and created a future proof system which delivers integratable modules. The dedicated project team with their mix of commercial knowledge and expertise, and operational knowledge, working in conjunction with the staff at the software company delivered SCS which is designed for inclusivity of all age groups across current and future technology platforms – tablets, smartphones, laptops, and desktops.

The project addressed the needs of stakeholders including local authorities, school governors, head teachers and staff, parents and children.

We continue to work with MCG on the development of the system and have recently introduced a time management module across all Wigan school kitchens. The system links into the Evolve kitchen management system and will enable access to staff hours and therefore labour costs within each kitchen. Further development of this module is underway which will allow for leave to be booked and resource to be managed more effectively.

Finally, ongoing development is also taking place with MCG for a high school module that will enable pre-ordering and collection enabling a more efficient service.



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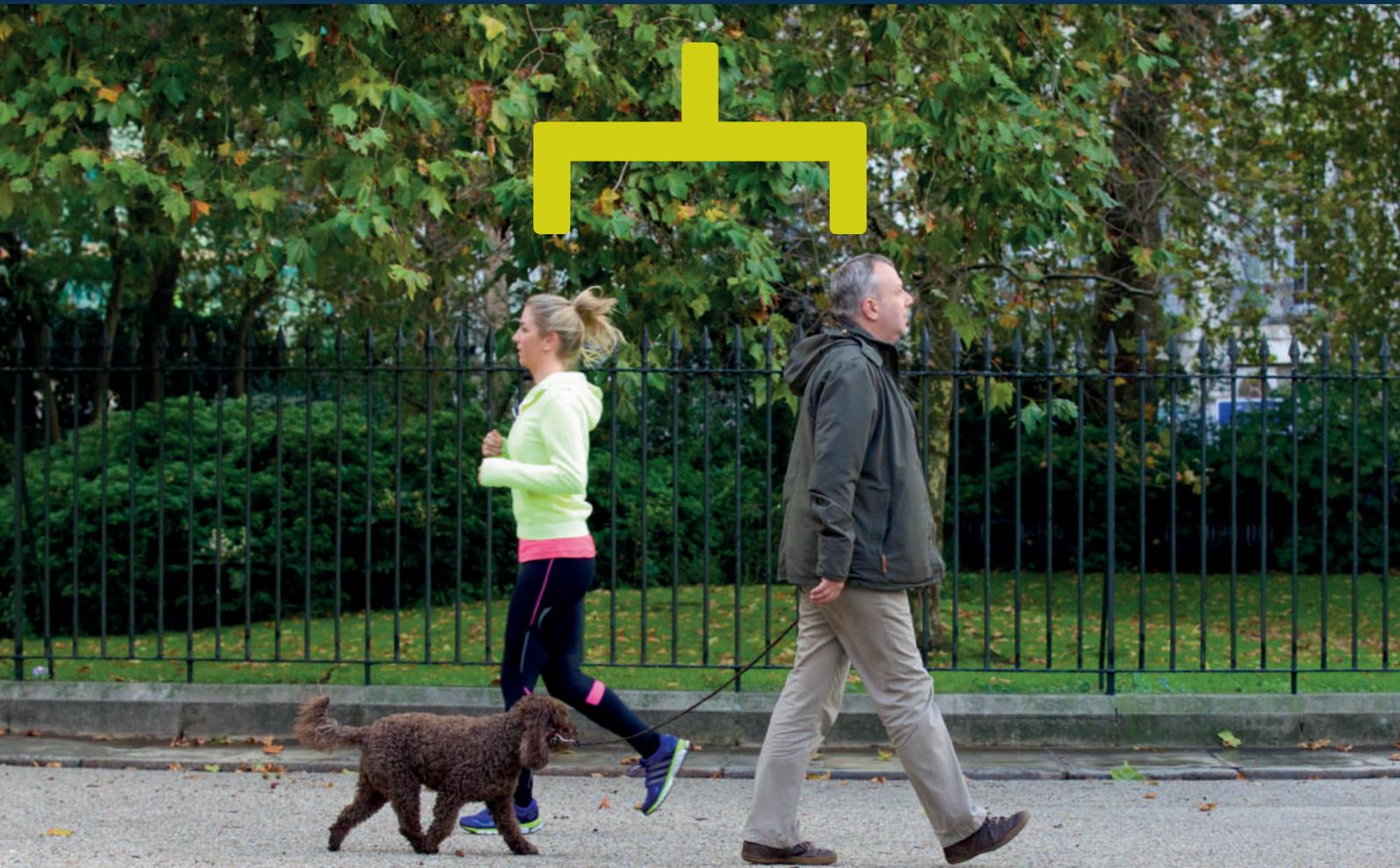


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