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awards special**

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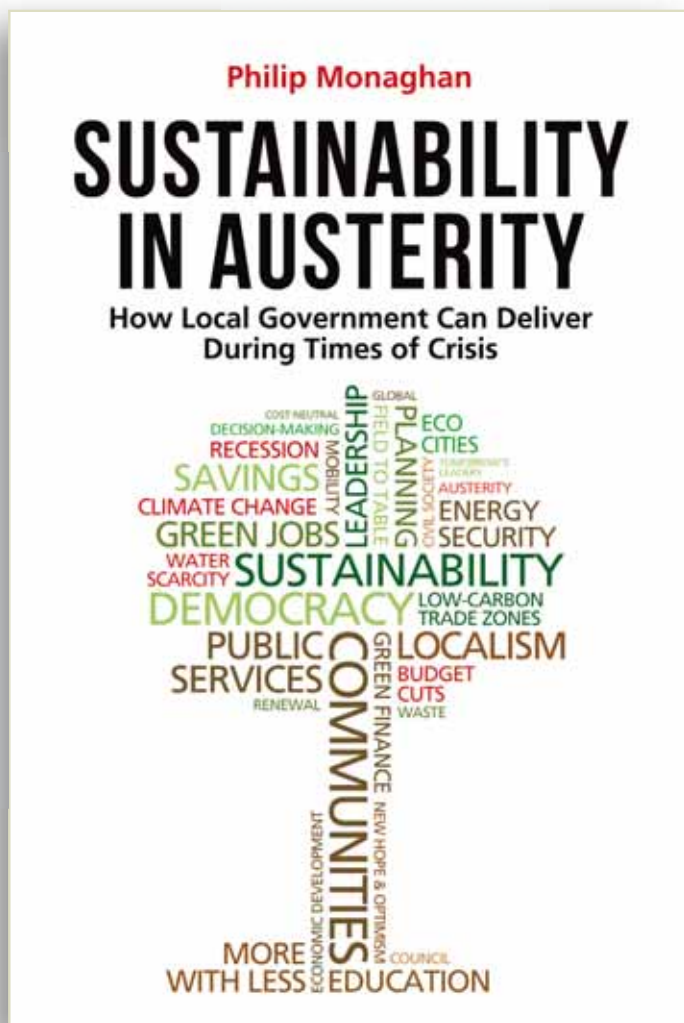
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Survival of the fittest !



**Sunita survives the tram crash to present
awards to APSE's best performers**

ESSENTIAL READING FOR MANAGERS AND COUNCILLORS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Philip Monaghan SUSTAINABILITY IN AUSTERITY

How Local Government Can Deliver During Times of Crisis

234+xxii pp Paperback 234 x 156 mm Published November 2010

ISBN 978-1-906093-57-0 List price: £21.95 **APSE offer price: £15.37**

Sustainability in Austerity is a game-changing book.

Leaders in local government are going to be asked to do a lot more work on environmental and social sustainability but with much less money. To make matters worse, increasing public scepticism about why we should deal with these dilemmas in the first place has been exacerbating the problem, notably exemplified by concerns over the robustness of the science of climate change. Local sustainability faces a perfect storm.

Sustainability in Austerity has been written to provide local leaders with a lifebelt in these turbulent times. It empowers local authorities to address the challenges they now face – by offering a treasure chest of cost-neutral and powerful ways for leaders in local government to advance sustainability as nations emerge from the global recession. The book sets out the required rules for leadership and proposes a myriad of innovative strategies for self-help achieved through habit-forming behaviour change among council members, staff and local communities alike. Packed with international case studies, anecdotes and management tips derived from a wealth of learning by like-minded peers across the world – all of whom have faced and overcome serious sustainability challenges – the book will be a touchstone for professionals working in areas such as: democracy and decision-making; corporate assets and resources; economic development and planning; waste and environmental services; fleet and logistics; and community management.

“... there is a great book coming that can help you. ***Sustainability in Austerity*** looks at how local authorities can help to make the cuts that really matter – in pollution, carbon and waste.”

Ed Mayo, Secretary General, Co-operatives UK, and co-author of *Consumer Kids*

“A beautifully useful book.”

Professor Paul James, Director, UN Global Compact Cities Programme

“An encouraging book and recommended reading for mayors and councillors.”

Holger Robrecht, Director, Sustainability Management Programme, ICLEI–Local Governments for Sustainability

“Beyond the gestures of the great and the good, Philip Monaghan has identified a treasure trove buried in the devilish details of the local, driven by unsung heroes, that will be the currency of sustainability in an era of austerity.”

Simon Zadek, Visiting Senior Fellow, Harvard’s J F Kennedy School for Government, Senior Advisor on Sustainability to the World Economic Forum, author of *The Civil Corporation*

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Editorial

It seems just a few days ago that I was writing last year's New Year message to APSE contacts and in the blink of an eye a whole year has gone by ... or maybe it's just an age thing!

But what a year it has been!

We started the year with some of the worse snow fall seen in decades and it seems we are ending with the same story. Early snowfall and unprecedented low temperatures have turned the UK into what seems like Narnia. As ever local councils have delivered against the odds. It is a timely reminder of the value and necessity of the services that local councils provide.

A new Coalition Government has been elected at Westminster, another first in decades, and with it comes a series of public spending cuts. Throughout 2010 APSE has attempted to drive home a message that a slash and burn approach to council services is not the answer. We need to ensure we work hard and stick together to learn from and share best practice, getting smarter at what we do, not simply doing less or cutting the head count.

For APSE too it has been a year of change. We have refocused our own services based on members need, concentrating on disseminating information and case studies on delivering efficiencies and a lean approach to service delivery. This is reflected in the briefings and events that we have organised which have been well received by our members. Our energies have also gone into defending our local council members. It would be all too easy to ignore local government in the debate about the future of public services but we have attempted to make sure the national, regional and local press all recognise the value of local government services to our communities and to our local economies. All senior staff are now accredited in Six Sigma to help members understand the processes by which service transformation can be applied to frontline services in local authorities. Our traded services in training, consultancy and performance management have bucked the trends of other organisations and continue to thrive. We think this reflects the value of APSE as a not-for-profit member owned association because we are delivering the support our members need at this critical time in local government, not profiteering from a crisis.

2010 has not been all doom and gloom. We should remember all those authorities who through sheer hard work have achieved successes in the APSE Service Awards 2010 and came out as Best or Most Improved Performers in our Performance Networks Awards. Well done to you all.

Finally it remains for me to say on behalf of APSE's national council and all our staff thank you for your ongoing commitment to the values of APSE. We wish you all the very best for 2011.

Best wishes

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive

Creating a revolving fund for solar PV

Leading local government lawyer and APSE associate Stephen Cirell explores how councils can help themselves to self-fund new technologies such as solar PV to not only help the environment but support the local economy.



The outlook for the public sector at the end of 2010 was not good: the UK has slid into a serious recession, which combined with the banking crisis, has led to a budgetary crisis in the public finances not seen for many years. This has caused morale in local government to dip: people worry about their jobs, the services they provide and the potential to continue to deal with an ever-increasing workload. There is very much a need for some light at the end of the tunnel.

Climate change is a pressing new agenda. It has existed for some time but has come to the fore because of increasing greenhouse gas emissions targets (both nationally and internationally) and the creation of new financial incentives by the Government.

Local authorities need to be part of this agenda but few chief officers in local authorities seem to have switched on to its significance. One of the reasons why it is so important is that it offers huge local opportunities, as well as new burdens.

To be well organized, each local authority should develop a holistic climate change strategy, setting targets and goals, building a route map towards them, and coming up with projects that form the steps on that path. A corporate approach is vital.

Solar photovoltaic panels to generate electricity are now one of the leading areas of renewable technology and this solution has been proved commercially successful around the world. Solar PV works in the UK, despite its cooler climate than Europe. The government has introduced new financial incentives for qualifying PV schemes, whether public or private sector. Local authorities have everything that they need to make the most of this agenda: buildings to convert, workforces to undertake the work and the capacity to borrow money to fund such works. This is a chance to create a new opportunity and make changes that benefit your areas and are self-funding. It is literally a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity.

In any major renewable energy project, the two major risks are obtaining planning permission and achieving a connection to the National Grid. Fortunately, a grid connection is not a problem with buildings; although planning permission is likely to be required.

Smaller PV schemes are also subject to the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS), which is an internationally recognized quality assurance scheme that demonstrates to customers that companies engaged in PV installation work are committed to meeting rigorous and tested standards. Obviously for a local authority direct services team to undertake this work, it needs to become an MCS certificated installer and to use products also certificated under the MCS.

None of these hurdles should present a problem to a local authority team already undertaking substantial building maintenance work.

It was mentioned above that there are significant benefits to any local authority that engages in renewable energy generation. These include:

- Community leadership;
- Energy security;
- Carbon benefits;
- Effectiveness and efficiency;
- Economic benefits;
- Income generation;

The best way of doing it is the 'DIY option' where the authority literally does it itself. This means it recruits and trains the people who will do the work, both preparatory and delivery; obtains the supplies and equipment itself, using its existing sustainable procurement processes; and gives active consideration to how the local economy can benefit at every stage.

But even so, the authority still wants to get the maximum value out of its project. To achieve this, it needs to create a revolving fund, where the original capital investment is recycled time after time to achieve maximum effect. Here is how such a project might be structured:

- The Council starts the revolving fund by depositing an amount of capital into the new buildings PV account. It is up to the authority how much this is;
- The Council would recruit a manual workforce, or use its existing workforce and get it trained to the MCS Accreditation standards;
- The Council needs to develop a schedule of its buildings and work plan;
- Arrangements need to be put in place to procure the solar panel kits and other equipment necessary for the work to go ahead;
- The work plan needs to determine the priority of buildings, although this is up to the authority;
- As installations are completed and linked to the grid, the feed in tariff income would start to accrue to the Council's PV account. The occupants of the buildings (whether the Council's officers or members, schools or tenants) would get the electricity created by the PV panels free;

- At some stage, the income coming into the revolving fund will be sufficient to continue to fund the operation of the team moving forwards; in other words, the operation becomes self sustainable;

- Calculations need to be undertaken as to the value of the initial capital investment, as opposed to the size and speed at which the teams would exist and operate;

- Once the operation becomes self sustainable, it can simply carry on until all the Council's buildings have been fitted with solar PV installations and thereafter offer services to other public bodies and to the public at large. In this way work for a number of additional years may be obtained for the highly trained, skilled and experienced workforce that has been created;

It is mentioned above that this is a 'once in a lifetime opportunity'. I have been involved in direct services for 25 years and, most of that time, those services have been under threat. It is a very long time indeed, since an opportunity to create some new 'family silver' has come along. An opportunity to enjoy growth as opposed to cuts; to create new skills, as opposed to a skills drain; to have a wider and wholly positive impact on other areas of the Council's operation, rather than being just a recharged central cost. This proposal offers all of those things.

Contact: Stephen Cirell is a Consultant with APSE. Contact agardiner@apse.org.uk

Stephen will be presenting his ideas on the revolving fund and solar PV at the APSE seminar 'More bang from the green buck' on the 21 January 2011 at Manchester City Football Stadium. For details go to www.apse.org.uk or email mbaines@apse.org.uk



Gateshead's gateway to success

Victoria Beattie, head of construction services, explains Gateshead Trading Company model and why she believes this route will help sustain the future of council services and generate income.



Gateshead is situated in Tyne and Wear and sits on the southern bank of the River Tyne, opposite Newcastle upon Tyne. In recent years we have become known for some exciting works such as The Sage Gateshead, the Angel of the North and the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. However, like all councils we are constantly striving to make sure we have not just great iconic architecture but a substantial and sustainable future for our local economy and local public services. In the current economic climate we wanted to develop an innovative and entrepreneurial approach to in-house services. We also needed to make sure that the future direction of in-house services sits comfortably with Vision 2030 the Gateshead strategy for sustainable communities.

Trading became an attractive option for us to consider. As a council we had already successfully participated in SCAPE, a consortium of local authorities, but the idea behind a trading company of our own was to enable a flexible, organic trading model, that would help us maximise future opportunities for trading. In areas such as Building Schools for the Future and our

primary capital programmes we needed a 'level playing field' with the private sector to help us to bid for work and for that work to be profit making. We also needed to avoid inadvertently falling foul of state aid legislation and after exploring all options a flexible trading company model was agreed by the Cabinet.

Rather than some trading company models that 'suck up' the direct service organisations our model is designed to support in-house services, by allowing us to carry out additional work, at a profit, alongside the traditional works carried out by our in-house services. This has a number of advantages.

We can use the trading route to ensure we maximise use of resources. If we have capacity to do extra work it means that staff time is more productive in generating income rather than this time traditionally being regarded as 'lost' or 'non-productive' time.

As the trading company sits alongside the in-house service we did not need to engage in a lengthy and detailed TUPE transfer of staff – we simply second staff in as and when required to carry out work for the trading company. The seconded staff time can be as little as a couple of hours to cover a specific piece of work. This flexibility on staffing has the added bonus of ensuring staff terms, conditions and pensions remain in-tact. With our model being so flexible, providing there is agreement by the Cabinet, any council service can utilise the company to trade. So whilst our initial aims were to trade in areas such as full building design service as well as construction of new build, refurbishments and repairs and maintenance, the route is equally open to soft FM services such as catering or building cleaning. This means that the council need not incur the expenses associated with setting up bespoke trading company operations for individual services. It is an effective trading umbrella that keeps us within the boundaries of EU regulations whilst allowing services to grasp opportunities, for income generation from both private and other public sector clients. The Trading Company also allows for employee and business development through working in more commercial environments.

As we see an increasing squeeze in public spending we hope that we can also retain and recycle some of our own spending within the local economy. For example on big capital schemes there has been a tendency within the public sector to be a little timid about bidding to carry out work, often resulting in contracts, and sub-contracts, going outside of the local economy. With a more entrepreneurial public sector response I hope that in the future we will be in a prime position to keep a higher proportion of that work, and therefore money, locally within Gateshead and the surrounding conurbation.

As an income generating model the trading company profits can be utilised to support expenditure, subsidise services or to reduce council tax. The flexibilities of our model means that we can achieve the most tax efficient use of any surpluses. In terms of governance arrangements the Chief Executive was given power to appoint a small board of senior officers and accounts will be provided to council and reports on progress at regular intervals.

It is early days for our model but the trading company allows us to be in a prime position to bid for work, without the need for lengthy deliberations on our approach to carrying out that work. We have intentionally not set a target sum for income generation but we hope that by building a reputation, for

effective and value for money service delivery, the business will expand to accommodate more work in future. Part of our strategy was to also allow for the company to have a separate identity. We arrived at the name 'Gateshead Trading' reflecting the links with the council but also to ensure we reflected the broad scope of the trading company, open to all council services. The name also gives the trading company a distinct identity to promote it as a brand within its own right helping to secure work in the future.

Whilst it is early days for us the foundations are in place to grow and develop income generation opportunities in the future. We are not trying to mimic private sector delivery models of service delivery. Our aims are to support value for money in the public sector and promote excellence within our in-house services. The vision Gateshead Council wants to see in the future is an entrepreneurial approach to help the people of Gateshead and that means grasping the opportunities for future income generation.

Victoria Beattie is Head of Construction at Gateshead Council

Contact: VictoriaBeattie@gateshead.gov.uk

Image left: Victoria Beattie of Gateshead Council

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apse seminars



South Gloucestershire reaps income rewards whilst supporting the local economy

Owen Jenkins, of South Gloucestershire Council, explains how a review of fees and charges has provided a catalyst for income generation and helped support the local economy

South Gloucestershire Council was rated in April 2009 as a '4 star' council by the audit commission which is something we are very proud of. In its current form South Gloucestershire was created in 1996 when the county of Avon was abolished. Our close neighbours are the Bristol City, Bath and North East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council and the shire counties of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.

The population of South Gloucestershire is around 250,000 and the main employers in the area are the Local Authority, the Ministry of Defence, Airbus AXA, Hewlett Packard, Rolls Royce and the Royal Mail. Whilst most of our population is in the northern and eastern suburbs of Bristol, there are also large population centres in the Yate-Sodbury, Winterbourne-Frampton Cotterell and Thornbury areas. All of the villages are

within the commuting belt for Bristol, Bath, Gloucester and Cheltenham.

South Gloucestershire is also home to 99 primary schools and 16 secondary schools, and post-16 centres and well as The University of the West of England.

The geographic make-up of our area and the significance of the commuter belt means services like Highways and Winter Maintenance are a vital cog within the local economy. However like most other councils we face financial pressures but rather than simply look at what could be saved from services we wanted to explore how our income generation could help us balance the books whilst keeping good local services.

We started with a review of charging mechanisms three years ago. It was surprising how many fees and charges had remained unaltered for many years and we had not implemented inflation

only rises to our prices for works and services. For example the cost of a skip licence was £30 but that had not kept pace with the cost of providing the service. This was raised to £50. In other areas we quickly realised that the charging mechanisms we had in place did not even recover the costs, for example the labour costs associated with out of hour's callout gangs, following road traffic incidents. The more we delved into our charging mechanisms the more evident it became that we were able to recover far more than we had anticipated. We now recover over 90% of our out of hours callout charges which helps to reduce the financial burden of providing the service. Our approach was not to impose unfair price hikes on members of the public but to reflect realistic charges for services that were optional for the public to use.

We then decided to look at other areas for income generation including charging others for services where we had the spare capacity to deliver. Charging is a fairly easy mechanism and there are broad powers for councils (In England and Wales) to use those available under the Local Government Act 2003. In terms of the horrendous weather in the winter of 2009 / 2010 our ability to charge for and provide services became a life line in the local economy. As a result of having to implement a 3 shift system to comply with drivers hours regulations, our Highways service has spare run capacity for gritting. We were able to help schools re-open by providing ground clearance and gritting services to school sites. This of course meant that schools could open earlier than expected and allowed parents to get back to work!

Our regional geography also means that our local airport is a vital gateway into the regional economy. We were able to provide snow-ploughs to clear the runway and allow it to re-open to air traffic within a matter of hours. For local business sites too the snow clearance and gritting service allowed them to remain open and for retail parks the customers were of course able to return.

Our Highways services to local businesses is an obvious one and probably one which other Highways departments have experimented with but we have now gone a little further with our charging and income generation. For example in the area of

street lighting where there is developer work on the installation of new lighting schemes we have worked in partnership to assist with the new schemes. Developers have found this particularly useful where there are S 38 bonds on development. It is a much smoother mechanism to ensure that the work is done to the correct standards if the people doing the work (the council) are fully aware and compliant with all the requirements of the scheme. It helps everyone involved and in a time of economic slow-down getting a job done well, and on time, with the least amount of glitches again supports the local economy.

We have also developed an offering for older people with our building maintenance services in areas such as disabled adaptations. The building maintenance team have also been able to offer services to Parish Councils. And on a wider partnership level we have successfully won work with Bristol City Council providing Surface Dressing services and with North Somerset. This helps all of the councils deliver efficiencies and is again a fairly simple means by which councils can work together to reap the rewards in either income or efficiency terms.

We have now developed a 'commercial website' offering our services on a broader basis but we are not at the point of needing a Trading Company operation. In reality whilst the website is a useful hub for what we do most of our trade is built on reputation and by word



Owen Jenkins of South Gloucestershire Council

of mouth recommendations. What we do fits in with what we can realistically achieve as a service in terms of maximising the use of all our resources; both human and capital equipment. The traded turnover can be up to £1 million and that helps us to smooth our work profile and the council balance its books, and to keep on providing four star services to our residents.

So if anyone is considering a simplistic approach to reducing costs I would say think about the balance at the other end of the business. Consider what you could achieve through charging to maximise resources and earn some much needed extra income.

Contact: owen.jenkins@southglos.gov.uk

Income generation: Help for APSE members

Trading and charging allows local authorities to bring in additional sources of income, through trading their services or charging for services, to be delivered to other organisations or individuals whether private or public. As local authorities throughout the UK strive to meet efficiencies targets and implement public sector spending cuts many direct service or direct labour organisation have sought to generate income through the trading or charging route. Whilst a recent court case may have led to some councils re-considering their trading and charging activities there remains a wealth of opportunities within the current legal framework throughout the UK.

Slightly different arrangements are in place in England, Wales, and Scotland but APSE members may find the APSE web portal dedicated to trading and charging a useful resource. This APSE web resource is for use by member authorities to help you source information, case studies and relevant information in relation to trading and charging. To make it easier for our members throughout the UK we have also included geographic areas to cover the different legislation that applies in England, Scotland,

Northern Ireland and Wales. You can access the Charging and Trading web portal through the home page of the APSE website on www.apse.org.uk. Local authority, police and fire authority powers to charge and trade for services can be complex and dependent on local circumstances. This web portal is intended to act as a guide to the wide ranging powers available and to help APSE member authorities gain information about what other members are doing in this area. It is obviously always worth seeking expert help and advice including legal advice but we would recommend a first step on the road to charging or trading would be to explore what options are available to you. APSE's consultancy service has a range of associates who are familiar with this area of work so if you would like an informal chat contact Alex Gardiner on agardiner@apse.org.uk

To submit a case study to the web portal or share best practice like Gateshead and South Gloucestershire have done in this edition of *direct news* please contact Mo Baines, APSE, Principal Advisor on mbaines@apse.org.uk or telephone 0161 772 1810.



Nottingham educates its students

Local authorities with high student populations are learning from each other on matters such as dealing with high volumes of waste at the end of term, says Nottingham City Council's student strategy manager Mike Cole

Having a large student population brings massive economic, social and cultural benefits to a town or city, but it also puts additional pressures on council services such as waste management.

Nottingham is home to two universities and 60,000 students. When I was appointed six years ago, Nottingham City Council was the first local authority to have a dedicated student strategy

manager based in its environmental health team. My role is to help maximise the advantages of having so many students living locally and ensure an integrated approach to student issues is adopted across council services; particularly housing, planning, waste and environmental health.

Nottingham has a 'Balanced Communities Student Housing Action Plan' which brings partners in the city together to address student issues. This includes

working with local communities to help students and permanent residents live in harmony, and with the student housing charity Unipol, to improve the standard of student accommodation.

The council and universities have worked closely to share information and educate students about matters such as noise, parking and waste to improve relations with permanent residents.

More councils with large student populations are now recognising

the value of such a post and learning from each other through networking and events and support from APSE and organisations such as Universities UK (UUK), which represents 133 universities nationally.

A transient student population means new links need to be built up each year. We remind students all year round to put wheelie bins away and to recycle. But the big student waste bottleneck comes for three or four weeks at the end of each term when 95% of students move out and get rid of everything. And as soon as they have gone, landlords do maintenance work on their properties and additional rubbish is generated. This means a huge amount to be collected in a short time in a concentrated area.

Momentum has developed over the years and we have found better ways to deal with the deluge of waste. We are always looking at ways of improving things however, which is why we asked APSE and UUK to help us undertake a survey on dealing with student waste, which went out to councils and universities and received a good response.

We implemented a number of initiatives in Nottingham and wanted to see what others were doing so we could share best practice. Analysis of a cross section of responses showed the same messages emerged from around the country. It is true for most places that the majority of residents just want rubbish cleared away rather than councils taking an enforcement approach and chasing fines. Most councils put on extra collections at the end of the academic year and issue information to students on how to deal with waste.

Some authorities issue extra large bin bags at the end of term and others have used skips to collect

the end of term waste, which is a good idea if it can be managed properly and removed quickly.

Recycling and re-use schemes have proved a popular way of saving money as well as addressing environmental concerns. In Nottingham, we have had boxes of kitchen equipment and other useful goods left by first years in halls of residence to pass on to new students, for example through the 'Grab a Bag' scheme at Nottingham University Freshers' Week.

Nottingham has formed networks with other authorities with large student populations over the years and we have kept in contact with others though APSE. We are looking, for example, at dealing with the proliferation of 'to let' signs in student dominated parts of the

city, which are not very popular with permanent residents and we are interested to learn from other areas like Leeds and Brighton, what they have done to deal with this issue. Parking is another matter than can be contentious in areas with high student populations and we are keen to learn from each other how this is best tackled.

The benefits of having a large student population vastly outweigh the downsides – and through working together we can certainly minimise those downsides.

Contact:

mike.cole@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Image left: Students take part in the big spring clean

Below: Humorous leaflet to students, encouraging responsible with waste



Staying alive!

Performance networks 2010

As arctic weather gripped most of the UK delegates braved the elements to make their way once again to Blackpool for the annual performance networks seminar. And there was certainly some genuine examples of 'Staying Alive' the theme of the seminar as tales were traded of cancelled trains and planes and stranded automobiles. But of course it is not just the weather that taxed delegates as they heard from a range of expert speakers about what the future of performance management holds.

Professor Helen Sullivan of the Institute of Local Government studies at Birmingham University opened the morning plenary session explaining that the significant reductions in public spending would hit local government hard more especially as the impact of the recession would lead to increased demands on services. Professor Sullivan also said that whilst it would appear that Citizens have limited faith in government, both centrally and locally there was a need for Local Government to critically assess whether in fact it had faith in itself. In a new era of government she argued that the concept of markets, of localism, and 'big society' which would inevitably mean all things to all people, sets the circumstances for a long term redefinition of the role of the state and of course citizens within it.

Local government could, she argued, be recast in a number of roles 'leader', 'enabler', 'commissioner' or 'regulator' of services. Service fragmentation could further corrode the traditional roles associated with local government. Raising a question from the floor of conference Cllr John Kerr-Brown on Warrington Council argued this could fundamentally undermine the role of local councillors in shaping and defining democratically controlled local public services. Professor Sullivan argued that ultimately it could be a question of state withdrawal or redefinition of the state and local government has a role to play in shaping that debate and the outcomes of it.

Michael Hughes the Director of Studies at the Audit Commission provided a comprehensive overview of performance data and performance management issues. Mr Hughes explained that the intrinsic value of knowing how a service is performing is to set the framework for establishing value for money services. Michael said that data has many potential uses and we should not forget the importance of benchmark data in being able to compare with previous year's figures, with other councils and against performance standards or targets. Established benchmarking data such as APSE was, he said, a valuable source to allow for data comparison by re-running figures against previous years data to explore

trends and reasons for data movement.

Performance metrics can reveal not just performance trends but provide a scale of potential improvement in performance and an insight on the cost of performance. The value to the process comes from, he said, the sector led approach to performance and of course expert practitioners within steering groups and was a valuable means to increase quality and relevance

Any new performance framework should do a number of things but specifically he included:-

- Ensure data quality
- Use good quality information to make the best decisions
- Serve the need to give an account and demonstrate transparency
- Maintain systems for comparison
- Demonstrate your successes

Mark Bramah, APSE's assistant chief executive, with responsibility for performance networks gave a passionate presentation arguing that the use of performance data alongside effective performance management was critical in the current public sector environment. He specifically argued that performance networks should be used as:

- A means of self-defence – We all need to be able to prove value for money and demonstrate efficiency.
- Using practitioner networks – Working with peers as a means of learning and sharing best practice.
- Advocacy for front-line services – Measuring the impact of cuts on service quality and performance and raising awareness and concerns.

Mark also explained to delegates that APSE was currently exploring the development of efficiency 'filter tables', which will allow authorities to specify their operational methods and identify similar authorities who have either achieved efficiency gains or increased productivity through operational changes. He described this as a kind of service area efficiency 'Swap Shop' or 'Marketplace' where ideas on efficiencies, proven through benchmark data, could be traded to allow APSE member authorities to support each other and share best practice proactively during austere times.

In closing Mark argued that the time was critical for in-house teams to make an effective case for local government services. This could not he said be left to chance but should be proven by robust and transparent means of performance data and performance management.

Day 2 of the seminar saw speakers from industry, local authorities and the legal world come together to provide some practical hints and tips. Paul Allen of BT described himself as the 'benchmarking anoraks anorak' and said that local councils could learn from industry and that there is still a great deal of reliance on benchmarking data to help improve service performance within the commercial sector. To agreement from delegates he described 'performance benchmarking' as identifying 'The height the athlete jumped' but best practice benchmarking should answer 'how does he vault that high?' Paul argued that this was the best way forward to ensure performance networks data remained of relevance and value to local councils.

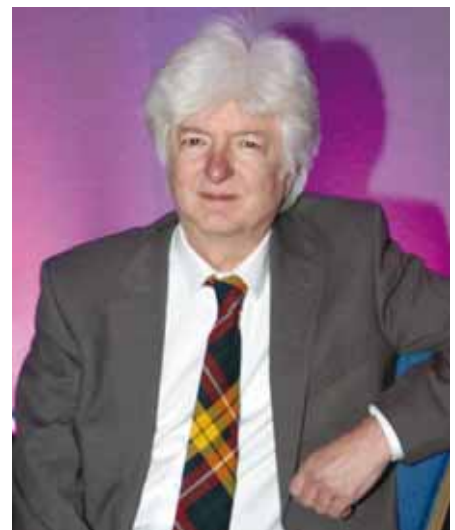
Stephen Cirell, an APSE associate and former Head of Local Government with Eversheds explained that in times of austerity there is a need to look not just at benchmarking data but at means to generate income. Using the example of cling improvements he explained that this should be used to explore the options available for waste to energy schemes. In the case of social housing and building maintenance services he argued that there was a compelling financial case to explore the use of Solar PV schemes to generate not just enough electricity for local use but to generate income through feed-in tariffs to the grid. Stephen's ideas are explored in more depth in this edition of direct news at pages 4-5.

The final speaker of the seminar was Donna Hall, Chief Executive of both Chorley Borough Council and Wyre Borough Council. Ms Hall explained that the driving a culture of performance improvement had a number of key elements, but essentially she said there must be a concerted effort to involve staff in transformation reviews. Ms Hall also explored the need to focus on adding value to the customer and ensure that messages are kept clear and simple to help build up the council's reputation. This approach and focus on customers and staff engagement had led to increased customer satisfaction (BV3) to 63% and level 3 of Equality Standard as well as Chorley achieving its status as an 'Excellent' Council with a double '4 out of 4' score. Whilst Chorley had saved £4m in revenue through reduced head count it had also achieved the 'Times Best Council to work for' listing for the first time, in recognition of improved staff morale.

Workshops provided a valuable resource to members to explore the different data-sets and the trend analysis provided throughout the seminar by APSE staff provides a useful resource in developing future action plans across the 14 different services areas covered by performance networks. So the question remains 'are we simply 'Staying Alive' well the answer appears to be that performance networks is 'Alive and Kickin!'

Contact: Visit www.apse.org.uk/performance-networks

Below: Paul Allen, Mark Bramah, Steve Cirell, Michael Hughes, Professor Helen Sullivan and Donna Hall





1 Birmingham City Council

2 Moray Council

3 Clackmannanshire Council



His worshipful the Mayor of Blackpool Cllr Don Clapham receives a gift to Blackpool on behalf of APSE from APSE National Secretary Roger Byrne

4 West Dunbartonshire Council

5 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

6 North East Lincolnshire District Council





7 Solutions SK - A Stockport Council Company



8 Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council



9 Dorset County Council

apse performance networks

1. Best performer for building cleaning

Sponsored by IQ Associates



Finalists: Birmingham City Council, Cheshire East Council, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, Warrington Borough Council

Winner: Birmingham City Council

2. Most improved performer for building cleaning

Sponsored by IQ Associates



Finalists: City of Edinburgh Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Inverclyde Council, Moray Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Stirling Council, Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council

Winner: Moray Council

3. Best performer for building maintenance

Sponsored by Trukrax



Finalists: A1 Housing Ltd - Bassetlaw District Council, Chesterfield Borough Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, West Lothian Council

Winner: Clackmannanshire Council

4. Most improved performer for building maintenance

Sponsored by Trukrax



Finalists: Caerphilly County Borough Council, Falkirk Council, Midlothian Council, Sunderland City Council, City and County of Swansea, Waveney District Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, West Lothian Council

Winner: West Dunbartonshire Council

5. Best performer for civic, cultural and community venues

Sponsored by Toltec



Finalists: Victoria Hall, Helensburgh - Argyll and Bute Council, Albert Halls - Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, City Hall - Cardiff Council, The Spa Bridlington - East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Baglan Community Centre - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Freeman Street Resource and Community Centre - North East Lincolnshire District Council

Winner: Baglan Community Centre, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

6. Most improved performer for civic, cultural and community venues

Sponsored by Toltec



Finalists: Westdale Lane Community Centre - Gedling Borough Council, Ditton Community Centre - Halton Borough Council, The Platform - Lancaster City Council, Cwmavon Community Centre - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Immingham Resource Centre - North East Lincolnshire District Council

Winner: Immingham Resource Centre, North East Lincolnshire District Council

7. Best performer for education catering

Sponsored by Fretwell Downing Hospitality



Finalists: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Kirklees Council, Manchester City Council, South Lanarkshire Council, Solutions SK - A Stockport Council Company

Winner: Solutions SK, A Stockport Council Company

The performance networks awards host for 2010 was acclaimed actress and Coronation Street star, Shobna Gulati

10 South Gloucestershire Council



11 Stockton on Tees Borough Council



12 Dumfries and Galloway Council





13 East Riding of Yorkshire Council



14 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council



15 Broxtowe Borough Council

8. Most improved performer for education catering

Sponsored by Fretwell Downing Hospitality



Finalists: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, East Dunbartonshire Council, Kirklees Council, Liverpool City Council, Manchester City Council, North Lincolnshire Council, South Lanarkshire Council, West Dunbartonshire Council

Winner: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

9. Best performer for highways and winter maintenance

Sponsored by DeMontfort University



Finalists: Argyll and Bute Council, Dorset County Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Flintshire County Council, Middlesbrough Borough Council, Midlothian Council, North Ayrshire Council

Winner: Dorset County Council

10. Most improved performer for highways and winter maintenance

Sponsored by DeMontfort University



Finalists: Argyll and Bute Council, Dorset County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Shetland Islands Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council

Winner: South Gloucestershire Council

11. Best performer for parks, open spaces and horticultural services

Sponsored by Greenspace North West



Finalists: Broxtowe Borough Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Fife Council, Halton Borough Council, North Lanarkshire Council, Oxford City Council, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, West Dunbartonshire Council

Winner: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

12. Most improved performer for parks, open spaces and horticultural services

Sponsored by Greenspace North West



Finalists: Angus Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Halton Borough Council, Midlothian Council, Scottish Borders Council

Winner: Dumfries and Galloway Council

13. Best performer for refuse collection

Sponsored by Klaruw Systems



Finalists: Broxtowe Borough Council, Darlington Borough Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Kettering Borough Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, North Lincolnshire Council, Peterborough City Council, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Winner: East Riding of Yorkshire Council

14. Most improved performer for refuse collection

Sponsored by Faun Zoeller



Finalists: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Darlington Borough Council, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Hull City Council, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, Wolverhampton City Council

Winner: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

15. Best performer for sports and leisure facility management

Sponsored by Walker Morris



Finalists: Ancholme Leisure Centre - North Lincolnshire Council, Bramcote Leisure Centre - Broxtowe Borough Council, Dunes Leisure Centre - Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, Francis Scaife Sports Centre - East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Hucknall Leisure Centre - Ashfield District Council, Northgate Arena - Chester and District Sports and Recreation Trust, Wentworth Leisure Centre - North Country Leisure, Northumberland County Council

Winner: Bramcote Leisure Centre, Broxtowe Borough Council

16 North Country Leisure, Copeland Borough Council

17 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

18 Kettering Borough Council





19 Flintshire County Council



20 Denbighshire County Council

16. Most improved performer for sports and leisure facility management

Sponsored by Walker Morris



Finalists: Aldersley Leisure Village - Wolverhampton City Council, Canolfan Hamdden Arfon - Gwynedd Council, Embassy Swimming Pool- East Lindsey District Council, English Institute of Sport Sheffield - Sheffield City Council, Haslingden Sports Centre - Rossendale Leisure Trust Ltd, Whitehaven Sports Centre - North Country Leisure, Copeland Borough Council, Woodhouse Close Leisure Complex - Durham County Council

Winner: Whitehaven Sports Centre, North Country Leisure, Copeland Borough Council

17. Best performer for street cleansing

Sponsored by Faun Zoeller



Finalists: Denbighshire County Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Kettering Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, Northampton Borough Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Winner: Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

18. Most improved performer for street cleansing

Sponsored by Faun Zoeller



Finalists: Denbighshire County Council, Kettering Borough Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, North East Derbyshire District Council, North East Lincolnshire District Council, Thurrock Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, Wolverhampton City Council

Winner: Kettering Borough Council

19. Best performer for street lighting

Sponsored by DeMontfort University



Finalists: Denbighshire County Council, Durham County Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Flintshire County Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Wolverhampton City Council

Winner: Flintshire County Council

20. Most improved performer for street lighting

Sponsored by De Montfort University



Finalists: Aberdeenshire Council, Clackmannanshire Council, Denbighshire County Council, Dundee City Council, East Ayrshire Council, Flintshire County Council, Orkney Islands Council, South Gloucestershire Council

Winner: Denbighshire County Council

21. Best performer for transport operations and vehicle maintenance

Sponsored by Triscan



Finalists: Bassetlaw District Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Conwy County Borough Council, Durham County Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Erewash Borough Council, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sheffield City Council

Winner: Erewash Borough Council

22. Most improved performer for transport operations and vehicle maintenance

Sponsored by Triscan



Finalists: Bassetlaw District Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Durham County Council, Fife Council, Midlothian Council, Renfrewshire Council, South Gloucestershire Council

Winner: Renfrewshire Council

A big thank you to all our sponsors and finalists for making the awards night such a great success.

Thank you also for the generous donations to the charity draw which raised £800 for the Parkinson's Disease Society.

21 Erewash Borough Council



22 Renfrewshire Council



APSE Award winners launch the Yorkshire & Humber regional campaign: 'Be a Councillor'

As part of Local Democracy Week 2010, Charlotte Eisenhart of Local Government Leadership and Angie Aspinall of Kirklees Council launched the new regional 'Be a Councillor' campaign at the Northern Member Development Conference in York.

The 'Be a councillor' website (<http://www.beacouncillor.org.uk/>) started out as a project led by London Councils. It is now a national project, led by Local Government Leadership and linked to the 21st Century Councillor programme. In Local Democracy Week, a new section of the website was launched to promote the roles of councillors in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

APSE Award winners for Best Elected Member Development Initiative 2010, Kirklees Council led the regional campaign on behalf of Local Government Yorkshire and Humber. The project was funded by the Regional Improvement and Efficiencies Programme Board and it involved the majority of Councils in the Region.

As a result of the project, there are now fifteen new profiles of councillors on the website in the new section, including a profile from the Leader of Kirklees Council, Cllr Mehboob Khan. Cllr Khan was happy to get involved in the project and, to ensure that there were even more opportunities for people to 'engage' in politics, he also supplied links from the profile to both his twitter page and his blog.

Other Councillors also linked to their social media sites and Cllr Gwen Lowe even supplied a link to her Annual Report, which is presented in the form of a video.

In the first week of its launch, the new web pages had received over a thousand hits.

Several councils prominently featured a link to the new web pages on their homepage during (and after) Local Democracy Week, including Selby District, Hambleton and Kirklees Councils. The feature on Scarborough Borough Council's website elicited interest from the local radio station and resulted in a radio interview for the Leader of the Council.

North East Lincolnshire, Craven District, York City and Rotherham Borough Councils were amongst the Councils to add a link to the campaign from their web pages on 'becoming a councillor' and the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service also added a link.

Features on various Communities of Practice pages (hosted on the LG

Improvement and Development website) elicited responses from as far away as Chichester and Dorset.

Long-term partners of Kirklees council and promoters of local democracy, the University of Huddersfield featured the new site on their website and their twitter account; there were also tweets from Kirklees Council's various twitter accounts.

North Yorkshire Council excelled in terms of publicising the site via social media by linking to the site from their website, twitter and Facebook.

At the time of going to press, the total number of hits on the new web pages was just over 1,600; which is impressive for a fledgling campaign.

The 'Life of a Councillor' video page has also been refreshed with new video stories including one from Cllr David Hall, Deputy Leader of the Opposition at Kirklees Council.

The screenshot shows the 'be a councillor' website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home' and 'Login' links. The main header reads 'be a councillor' with a tagline: "Being a Councillor gives you an invaluable opportunity to contribute to improving your local community." Below this is a profile for Mehboob Khan, including a photo, name, and a list of interests: 'Dr Who fan', 'Likes fast cars', 'Dislikes Debris & Cybermen', and 'Local councillor'. There's also a small bio: "Great, Mehboob is a Profile from the Councillors".

Below the profile is a section titled 'Meet the councillors' with a list of names: 'Who are my local councillors?', 'Benky Brankell', 'Shiraz Khan', 'Neil Meehan', 'David Christie', 'Ewan Fooks', and 'Other councillor profiles'. A sub-section 'Yorkshire and Humber councillors' is also visible.

The bottom part of the screenshot shows a grid of 'Yorkshire and Humber councillors' with four profiles:

- Abi Bell**: "I launched a city-wide campaign 'If It's Local Be Local' to galvanise public interest in community issues." Read Abi's profile.
- Calvin Burke**: "I truly believe in putting people first before profits." Read Calvin's profile.
- Ben Chestney**: "There are few jobs where you can make anything decent come to life in such a short period of time." Read Ben's profile.
- Andrew Cooper**: "The great thing about being a Councillor is that you can choose your own approach for the role and succeed (or fail) on your own terms." Read Andrew's profile.

In order to encourage young people to consider becoming councillors, the campaign is also being publicised on U-Explore; a careers website for 11-18 year olds. Over 10,000 young people in the Yorkshire and Humber region have a password to the site which also features public and private sector careers.

Other youth engagement activities which took place in Kirklees in Local Democracy Week included Politics students from the University of Huddersfield and Kirklees Youth Councillors joining together to co-ordinate this year's annual Local Democracy Week event.

Held on Thursday 14th October, the event was organised by the Involving Young Citizens Equally (IYCE) team at Kirklees Council and involved young people from schools and communities across the Kirklees area.

A range of workshops were held at the University including active citizenship; lowering the voting age; and the potential impact of the spending review for young people. There was also 'the count' and declaration of the Youth Council elections, held under the guidance of the Council's Electoral Service Team.

Politics lecturer Dr Andy Mycock also chaired a Question Time style event where Councillors and Youth Councillors were put under the spotlight in front of an audience of young people.

Dr Mycock noted, "This Local Democracy Week event is a credit to Kirklees Council and proves that once again they are at the forefront in promoting youth citizenship. The University of Huddersfield is proud to contribute to the event."

Contact: angie.aspinall@kirklees.gov.uk

Words and pictures by Angie Aspinall, Councillor Development Officer, Kirklees Council and Dr Andy Mycock, University of Huddersfield





Councils new approach to potholes

New repair technology means road maintenance managers in the West Midlands and the South West are winning the war against repairs despite the prospect of another severe winter.

Stoke-on-Trent and Dorset Council, like all parts of the public sector, are operating in a very financially demanding climate and facing a highly challenging public service future with budget cuts increasing pressure to deliver services at reduced costs. For Bob Brock and Andy Martin and their respective highways maintenance teams in Stoke and Dorset, the big questions are does cutting costs mean repairing less potholes? Or can this essential service be transformed to keep the roads in good order with less resources?

And, like their counterparts across the UK, the Stoke council Team Manager for Highways Responsive Maintenance and the Head of Dorset Works Organisation are facing up to a potential surge in pothole problems as winter's icy conditions have begun to bite earlier than expected.

Council repair teams up and down the UK have had an extra tough year maintaining their roads after the cold weather last winter produced tens of thousands of extra potholes. And although councils said they were investing extra millions on road maintenance over the next few years, public sector cuts mean that reduced-sized teams of workers could be faced with the task of carrying out even more repair work

In Stoke and Dorset, however, a quiet revolution in the way potholes are repaired appears to be happening, helping Brock and Martin and their teams to win the war against potholes. Since the turn of the year, thousands of potholes have been repaired using a new environmentally-friendly system which can restore a road surface in under eight minutes.

Nu-Phalt's award winning solution uses a unique heating system, which is incorporated into a single vehicle solution including a hot box. The process delivers a thermal bond to fuse the recycled material from the repair area to the bituminous material adjacent to the repair. Additional material is added during the process from the on-board hot box to replenish missing material. The system forms a permanent repair with the additional benefit of a seamless joint, which is a source of weakness in any conventional repair.

The technology is also being used where road surfaces are deteriorating in a bid to prevent new potholes from forming. It is also considerably quieter than using the traditional jackhammer to repair roads and it less energy intensive, which contributes to carbon reduction targets.

"Initially we bought in the Nuphalt machine for patching repairs for 1 month following a demonstration in November 2009," said Bob Brock, the Stoke council Team Manager for Highways Responsive Maintenance. "Nuphalt trained 2 teams of our own operatives to use the equipment this took place during the first month."

"We were so impressed with the quality of repairs that we then took the unit on for a further 6 months and have since extended the lease to the end on the financial year 2010/11."

Brock says results were at first mixed as some of the first patches, which were carried out, failed within a couple of months. "This we traced back to the training which each of the teams was given, as all the failures could be traced back to the same team," he said. "Nuphalt worked with us on this and did at there own expense carry out repairs to all the failed patches. Since this time we have had no failures."

"We have used the system in a multitude of situations and, by trial and error, found what the unit is good for repairing and when not to use it. Repairs around iron works for example are particularly good and on areas on crazing. The system also works extremely well were surface dressing has been applied."

After a successful trial during the worst of last winters weather, Dorset Works Organisation, the DLO responsible for the county, invested in a long-term partnership with NuPhalt, signing a two year lease to use the new technology.

"We have been delighted with the results," said Andy Martin, Head of Dorset Works Organisation. "We have shown a saving of at least £5/m2 over traditional methods, this can increase depending on the quantities/proximity of defects and the

quality of finish is without doubt the best we have trialled and we have looked at every infrared process on the market."

According to Martin, during the initial trial, a series of patches were repaired in extremely adverse conditions, with a wind chill factor close to freezing. "All of the patches successfully survived a very wet and cold winter," he said, "Proving the viability of using a seamless repair system. During the demo, an average output of 20 square metres a day was obtained. And with reduced noise and increased quality of repairs we can safely use the NuPhalt machine at night in urban areas with reduced disruption to all.

"The NuPhalt process has proved to be a good way forward for carrying out pothole repairs and is cost effective giving a seamless repair that minimises the risk of repeat visits due to failures."

Brock added: 'The system is not a cure all but has its place in highway repairs. It is not very effective in areas where water is running through the repair during heavy rain and is dependant on the quality of the training given to the operatives, but it is very cost effective against traditional repairs, very little waste is produced and gives big wins on Carbon Foot Print. With the system we can recycle existing material and therefore use less new tarmac.

"All in all we believe the Nuphalt system to be of great benefit to our highways section and would seek to extend beyond the time frame we have hired the equipment for should funding permit."

Contact: lmcmillan@apse.org.uk





Getting it Right First Time in Edinburgh

Systems thinking puts customers at the heart of road services in Edinburgh – with award-winning results

Road services at the City of Edinburgh Council have been dramatically improved since 'systems thinking' was introduced.

This approach, branded "Right First Time" (RFT), has been recognised nationally. In November 2009 the council's defects repair and correspondence projects won the Guardian Public Services award and in September 2010 its gully project won APSE's "Best Efficiency" award.

The council's road services team started working with consultants from Vanguard (Scotland) to introduce systems thinking, also known as 'lean management', in early 2007. APSE has promoted the systems thinking approach among members as a means of boosting efficiency by designing services around customers.

Back in 2007, the roads service in Edinburgh had been part of a major council re-structuring and was receiving high volumes of mail, complaints and escalations to senior managers. A small group of frontline staff were pulled together with the head of service to look at this problem and it became clear that there were serious issues with the correspondence process. Vanguard worked with a team of frontline staff to both help improve

service and transfer skills and knowledge, so that future projects could be undertaken without dependency on consultants.

When applying systems thinking, it is essential that everything is viewed from a customer perspective and the system must be considered from end-to-end. It is necessary to identify the value steps and waste in the system. This leads to redesigning the system, eliminating waste and establishing a customer focused service.

Four main areas of concern for customers were identified; defect repairs, gully cleaning, street lighting repairs and requests for road work/occupation permits. There are now RFT projects ongoing in each of these areas in Edinburgh, plus the original correspondence project.

Using correctly selected measures, related to purpose provides a better understanding of how the system is working was found to be more useful than arbitrary 'top down' targets in Edinburgh. Measures for each project are scrutinised at weekly meetings and problems identified at these meetings are taken forward or escalated and remain highlighted until the team are satisfied that they are resolved. This process links directly to the council's strategy for continuous improvement.

One of the biggest challenges for any organisation looking to implement systems thinking is understanding the culture change and challenges it will present. It is essential to have a project sponsor who is senior enough in the organisation, with the necessary authority to help the team break down such barriers. The sponsor must be active and visible and deal directly with the project team.

While there are inevitably barriers to address, with a strong focused team and a positive sponsor, these can be overcome. Under Edinburgh's RFT programme, tangible improvements have been made in a number of areas as a result.

For road defects, the only previous measure for this work was focused on make-safe repairs within a three working day deadline. By analysing customer demand it was clear that while these repairs were done quickly, customers were critical of the quality and longevity of the repair. Permanent repairs are now carried out on the first visit in all but emergency situations. A new audit system was introduced and 96% of repairs pass audit first time. The average time to complete permanent repairs has reduced from 144 days to 38 days.

Multiple logging systems had been problematic due to a hierarchical signing protocol and poor processes. Introducing a modern database, empowering front line staff and introducing a quality system, along with engaging positively with customers, has resulted in vast improvements in this area. Average response time has reduced from 39.8 days to 5.6 days. Volumes of incoming mail reduced by 50% over a 14 month period.

Gully cleaning was previously functionalised, with different "sections" providing parts of the overall service. The whole system has now been overhauled and a single gully team is now managed by one supervisor. Average time taken to respond to reports from the public has reduced from 53 to 11 days. A gully cleaning schedule has now been drawn up. An in-cab IT system has been introduced; reducing administration time by 80%, saving 700 staff hours and 20,000 sheets of paper per annum.

Work to improve street lighting is a more recent project, but initial results are positive. A pro-active night-time find and fix team has been created, the routes altered and the performance measures changed. Between October 2009 and October 2010 calls to report faults have reduced by 28%. The number of faults being found by the night-time squad reduced by 38% between the first and third route cycles. The day shift staff now have time to visit the sites where problems are recurring and investigate in more detail.

Most recently, the RFT team was asked to work with the Roadworks Support Team, which is responsible for coordinating road works in the city. A complete redesign of this team is currently underway. While this is still very much a work in progress, some of the initial changes have already transformed performance. The failure rate for works notified on the SRWR has reduced from 340% in June 2010 to 5% in November 2010. A new electronic system for arranging site meetings has been introduced. Local roads teams are now inputting information directly onto the SRWR. Management overheads have been substantially reduced without compulsory redundancies. The IT system has been changed to eliminate duplication. A suite of new measures has also been introduced to allow better performance management.

Using systems thinking in road services in Edinburgh has been very positive and many more projects are planned for the future. Looking to the next few years when funding for public services is being reduced, organisations need to consider ways to continue to improve service for customers, while reducing the cost of delivering those services. Care will be needed not to see lean management techniques primarily as a cost-cutting measure. The RFT approach in Edinburgh has demonstrated that by focusing on improving customer service delivery, costs are driven out of the system without undermining quality.

Contact: Phil Brennan at pbrennan@apse.org.uk

How APSE's not-for-profit consultancy service helps councils with service transformation

APSE has a long history of belief in and promotion of continual improvement in local government service delivery. The consultancy side of APSE reflects this and has always adopted an evidence based, business case driven approach to its service review projects. This has typically involved the use of robust performance and cost data to help identify opportunities for improvement. Now when Local Government is facing its biggest challenge in a generation this approach is more relevant than ever. Budgets are set to shrink but demand for services will remain. This may mean that councils could be forced into withdrawing from some service areas, but the core direct services that APSE has traditionally supported will be expected to continue to perform to a high standard.

This is where the APSE consultancy can add real value. A typical service focussed review might involve about 20 days work and cost a little over £10,000 but in most cases it will generate potential savings to the base budget many times greater than the consultancy fee. APSE understands the value of public services but, because of its background in direct service delivery, it also understands the need for

operational efficiency. The consultancy draws on the expertise of a large network of former practitioners who can often identify potential for saving that would be simply missed by the typical 'high level' analysis that underpins many so called transformation projects. True transformation needs to build up from an operational level rather than be imposed from above, but those working at that level also need to understand how what they do links to the delivery of high end objectives. Business planning in the public sector must ensure operational competitiveness but can never lose sight of the fact that the main driver behind it is social policy, not the pursuit of profit. This is what marks public service delivery out from the private service sector and why we must continue to measure the effectiveness of the services we provide by the extent to which they make a difference to the lives of the people whose interest we ultimately serve. We must fully appreciate the public value of what we do.

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Report back

A round up of APSE lobbying and events on behalf of our members

The last quarter of 2010 has been a busy time for APSE including the political party conference season with even some international training and visits! Here is a roundup of the latest activities.

England

Community benefits

APSE hosted a fringe event on achieving community benefits in procurement in association with South Warwickshire Conservative Association at the Conservative Party Conference 2010 held in Birmingham. Speakers included Cllr Elizabeth Higgins as Chair, Mark Bramah, APSE Assistant Chief Executive and Neil McInroy of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies.

Liverpool hosts the Liberal

Democrats

Paul O'Brien APSE Chief Executive and Mo Baines, APSE Principal Advisor, attended the Liberal Democrat Conference in Liverpool and attended a number of events to promote APSE's position on climate change and waste to energy schemes as well as the work that APSE has carried out on the local economy.

Manchester labour

October saw APSE attend Labour Party Conference fringe events on the local economy, climate change and the future role of local government services in a recession.

Inquiry response

APSE has provided a detailed response to the House of Commons Local Government Select Committee Inquiry on the future of performance and inspection in local government based on the views of APSE members following a membership consultation exercise.

Leisurely dinner

The ISRM annual seminar and dinner was attended by APSE Principal Advisor Rob Bailey and Chief Executive Paul O'Brien continuing to forge links between the two organisations in the area of sports and leisure management.

CABE continuity

Discussions are ongoing with CABE and APSE looking at the continuity of services following the Governments announcements on the future CABE.

Stoking the environment

The Environmental Services seminar in Stoke saw presentations from DEFRA and the Department for Transport and provided delegates with an opportunity to debate the latest issues to affect environmental services.

Wales

Appetite for life

APSE has produced the Appetite for Life report for 2009-2010 for councils throughout Wales, which was discussed at the APSE Wales soft facilities management advisory group meeting on 8 November 2010. The final report will be sent through to the Welsh Assembly Government. APSE's Principal Advisor for catering spoke at the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA) Wales meeting 8 December in Builth Wells on the appetite for life initiative.

Measuring up in Wales

APSE has submitted a written response to the Welsh Assembly Government on the proposed Local Government (Wales) measure following conducting a survey with the APSE membership.

County surveyors

The County Surveyors Society (CSS) Wales (highways and transportation group) have put ideas forward for moving from the Welsh Audit Office to APSE performance networks to monitor performance from 2010-11. APSE is in the process of finalising arrangements for new authorities to sign up to performance networks and this was agreed at CSS Wales last meeting in August.

Assembly government goes lean

APSE's Principal Consultant attended a Welsh Assembly Government event on Transforming the Business; Lean / Systems Thinking Suppliers' Fair on 24 November 2010.

MacBeth in Llandudno

Andy MacBeth from Flintshire County Council attended the Waste Municipal Sector Plan stakeholder event in Llandudno on behalf of APSE.

Scotland

SNP conference in Perth

The SNP conference in Perth was attended by Cllr Richard Lyle on behalf of Scottish regional council and Andrew

Spowart, Gary Mooney, and Louise McMillan, from the APSE secretariat. A joint fringe event was held with UNISON exploring the impact of the recession on jobs and models for future service delivery.

Labour in Oban

APSE Scottish chair Cllr Jim McGuigan and members of the secretariat attended the Scottish Labour Party conference in Oban and held a repeat of the fringe event once again with UNISON. The event was well attended.

Scotland's local economies

The Scottish Liberal Democrat conference held in Dunfermline saw APSE Scotland attend a series of fringe events on issues ranging from local economies to climate change.

Ingram puts health at the top

Dunkeld played host to the 2010 APSE Scotland Healthy Communities seminar which provided a host of speakers on how local authorities can contribute to the health of communities. The key note address was provided by Adam Ingram the Minister for Children and Early Years.

Northern Ireland

Welcome to.....

The Department of Finance and Personnel have now joined APSE and our performance networks services to expand their awareness of our performance data and look at costs and benchmarking.

Local government reform

APSE will be responding to the Department of Environment consultation document on 'Local Government Reform – Policy Proposals'. The proposals will be circulated to all APSE members in Northern Ireland and responses received from members will be collated to formulate the APSE response to the paper.

North Down signals lean

October saw APSE host an event at North Down's Signal Business Centre. Entitled 'Lean, mean and frontline' the speakers included the President of Local Government Association, Councillor Evelyne Robinson, Brian Moreland from DoE and David McCammick from Antrim Borough Council speaking about the strategic context within which local government services are delivered.

Peter Schofield from the North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and Dave Henrys, an APSE Best value consultancy associate, presented on case studies highlighting operational improvements and efficiency gains. Phil Brennan from APSE gave an overview of APSE performance networks, the performance management and benchmarking tool and how it can be used to drive improvement in council services

APSE goes global

Training in Malaysia

APSE principal consultant Andy Mudd and Jan Kennedy APSE principal trainer helped pull together a training course for Malaysian Government Officials in November looking at service delivery improvements and public service policy. Delivered by Andy in Kuala Lumpur the two day course was a great success with learning on both sides! Malaysian representatives are now keen to visit local authorities in the UK to explore models of UK service delivery.

Bangladeshi officials come to Trafford

Bangladesh Government officials also visited the APSE officers in October this year to discuss efficiencies in public services and how in the UK local councils support local communities. The daylong meeting provided much needed support to the visitors who were keen to take on board the lessons from UK councils and APSE's expertise in frontline service delivery

Below: Bangladeshi local government officials visit APSE's office in Manchester



Dishing up a winner

Catering operations manager, Alistair McIntyre, explains how transforming school catering at Scottish Borders Council, which won an APSE Healthy Communities Accolade, has boosted uptake and improved pupils' nutrition

I am delighted that the APSE Healthy Communities Accolade for Catering Services 2010 recognised the hard work the whole team has put in to transforming the school meal at Scottish Borders Council.

With pupils in Scotland allowed to go outside of school grounds from their first day at senior school, temptation to eat unhealthy lunches from high street shops, cafes and takeaways abounds. It has therefore required a complete rethink of education catering to prompt a 200% increase in uptake of school meals in our biggest school, where staff are now serving 1500 meals a day.

Increasing uptake so dramatically involved redesigning the entire service. We realised we needed to change children's perception of school meals to change their eating habits. We started off this process by talking to pupils, heads teachers and parents to put a service in place that and provided what pupils wanted. This led to our 'Take the kids out of the high street not the high street out of the kids' initiative, which emulated food that was available on the high street in a more nutritious way.

So education caterers in our authority now provide everything youngsters get on the high street in order to entice them to eat in school. But they do so with a healthy slant. For example, while children can now buy bespoke sandwiches of the sort they would get in popular commercial outlets at school, all the ingredients used come from suppliers that meet

health eating requirements and are low in fat, low in salt and low in sugar.

We offer as wide a range of meals as possible – from traditional Scottish favourites to theme days linked with their lessons, when dishes from a certain country or historical period are served. Everything we do is related to healthy eating, which is related the Curriculum for Excellence emphasis on citizenship, health and well-being.

We ensure our prices are competitive with those on the high street and our full meal deal costs £2.47. We realised that to tempt pupils from the high street, it's not just the food on offer that is important, but the environment too. We have coffee bars with televisions for fifth and sixth years. Staff have new uniforms as part of our branding activities. We are always looking at different ways to promote the service and are currently looking to re-brand it to maintain interest. We are hoping for a capital programme to refurbish dining areas, but have to await the

outcome of budget decisions in a time of cuts.

We have set a target at Scottish Borders for 50% of pupils to eating school meals. So far uptake has risen from 20% to 39% in the two years since we invested in transforming the service.

The effort of managers and staff has paid off. The additional revenue from the transformed service has created more jobs in schools and had a knock-on effect on suppliers of equipment and ingredients. We are working with public procurement body Scotland Exel to look at potentially sourcing local produce within procurement regulations as a further boost to the local economy.

Authorities from all over Scotland have been to visit to see what we are doing here. Most importantly, we have had great feedback from pupils, who are responsive to change and happy to be eating tasty food in a nice bright area.

Contact: mbaines@apse.org.uk



APSE people pages...

Congratulations...



Gedling's new Chief Executive

Congratulations to John Robinson APSE's former National Secretary, and member of APSE's National Council, who has been selected to replace Peter Murdock, who is due to retire at the end of December. Mr Robinson has been the deputy chief executive since joining the authority from Nottingham City Council in 2008. John said "I consider it a real privilege to be taking on the role of Gedling's chief executive and I am looking forward to getting stuck into this new challenge". Best wishes John from all the team at APSE and our National Council.



Welcome Andrew

Welcome to Andrew Spowart who has been confirmed into post as the new APSE Principal Advisor for Scotland.

Andrew has worked in councils in both the North East of England and Scotland, mainly in roles associated with C.C.T, Contract Compliance, Best Value, Performance Management and Procurement. Andrew worked at South Lanarkshire Council in the areas of CCT and Best Value for an 11 year period, latterly heading up the central policy unit. His most recent spell in local government was as a Head of Service in a council that had managed to turn itself around following an indifferent Best Value Audit Report in 2005. Andrew has worked at a national level and has been a member of a number of national study groups including Audit Scotland's baseline review of Community Planning. Andrew is delighted to be working with APSE member authorities throughout Scotland and will be based in APSE Scotland's new office in Hamilton.

APSE briefing notes update

Briefing notes and research reports produced since the last issue of Direct News

10-66	APSE briefing on review of public services	December 2010
10-65	Spending plans and draft budget	November 2010
10-64	Street cleansing efficiencies	November 2010
10-63	Final report from winter resilience review	November 2010
10-62	Round table briefing	November 2010
10-61	Parks services state of the market survey	October 2010

For more information on the briefing notes and research reports, contact the APSE office on 0161 772 1810 or visit our website at www.apse.org.uk

More bang from the green buck:

Income generation and efficiency saving opportunities from greening frontline services



Bookings for this event are now being taken!
Contact Steven Keefe on skeefe@apse.org.uk for a booking form or visit the APSE website at www.apse.org.uk for a copy of the full programme and booking information.

A major one day seminar at Manchester City Football Stadium, Eastlands, Manchester

Friday 21 January 2011

apse seminars

Key note address:

Andrew Stunell, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and address by **Philip Monaghan, author of 'Sustainability in Austerity: How Local Government Can Deliver During Times of Crisis'**

Complimentary copy of book to all delegates and book signing opportunity.