

Top marks in Oxford

Reporting back from the APSE Annual Seminar and Service Awards 2017



Service Awards Winners

See the winners and finalists of the APSE Service Awards 2017

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Accountability and Scrutiny

The latest research by APSE and CfPS

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Trading Standards

Dudley Council shows how their service helps vulnerable people

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performance networks seminar

7 and 8 December 2017, Hilton Hotel, Blackpool

Fact not fiction

How public services use data to overcome challenges and evidence change



Featuring:
Gerald Young from USA - Benchmarking in America
Paul Smith from Survation - Latest public opinion polls
Benchmarking with European Cities on the Street Scene

Editorial



Paul O'Brien
Chief Executive, APSE

Party season

September marks the start of the conference season, and the policy setting discussions taking shape in the plenary sessions and fringe events across the political parties. With Brexit overshadowing the political horizon, it would be easy for local government to allow itself to be crowded out of the debate. But for local government to allow the policies and the issues that matter to our communities to be an 'also-ran' in shaping the future direction of UK administrations would be a travesty.

In recent weeks, APSE has used the party events to advocate for local government; taking our research on housing, local government finance, accountability and scrutiny, and devolution and frontline services to the heart of politics. It is an interesting observation that APSE as a body independent of party political groups manages to witness such a cohesive position between the parties on the wicked policy issues impacting on local government. There

is an emerging consensus on the role of local government in addressing the housing issues that affect local communities; there is rarely a debate on the need for effective resources for local councils; everyone acknowledges we have taken more than our fair share of austerity.

The issues that divide are less party political and more administrative. Central administrations consistently fail to recognise the depth of experience, knowledge and capacity for innovation, and solutions-led responses in local government. However, the biggest gap in understanding is that of compassion - because local councils care with compassion about their local communities. That is not something that can be bottled or packaged or replaced. The heart of local government is the beat of our communities. So, regardless of political party affiliations, or none, let's not let local council issues be overshadowed by Brexit.

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Association for Public Service Excellence

2nd Floor Washbrook House, Lancastrian Office Centre
Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M32 0FP

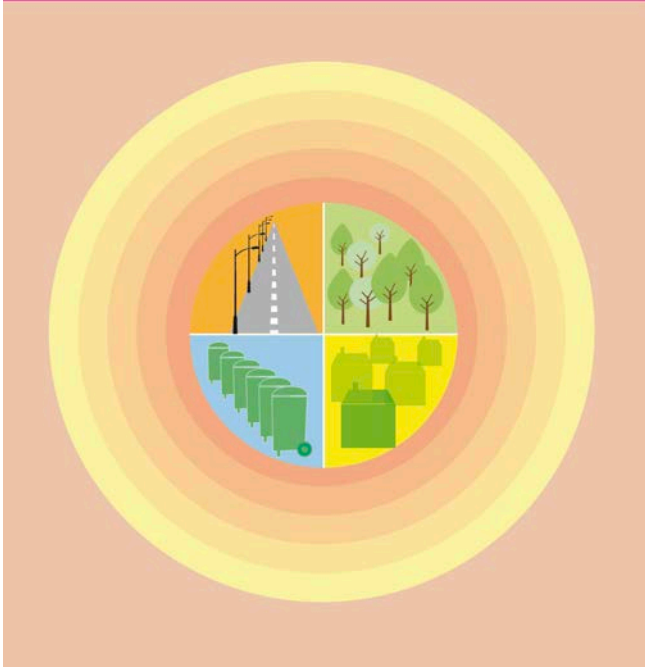
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Report back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events



Devo and the frontline

'The impact of devolution on frontline services' is APSE's latest research project with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). Launching the report on the 25 September, Victoria Bettany, Senior Researcher for CLES, outlined the report findings which suggest that a much deeper conversation needs to take place between devolution strategists and those delivering frontline services. The report argues that frontline service providers should be regarded as valid contributors to the outcomes that devolution seeks to address. Cllr Lewis Herbert of Cambridge City Council also responded to the report, arguing that the potential gains from devolution should be served by better coordination of outcomes at a local level.

Accountability and scrutiny

A collaborative report with the Centre for Public Scrutiny, 'Accountability and scrutiny: The issues for local government in a changing political environment', was launched at the APSE Annual General Meeting by report lead author Jacqui McKinlay. You can read more about the research on pages 8-9 of this edition of APSE direct.

Party pieces

As we enter into conference season, APSE has been taking the opportunity to promote our research findings on the conference fringes.

Conservatively commercial

Cllr Giles McNeill hosted a strategic forum during the course of the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester to debate the role of income generation and commercialisation, for social purpose, in the future of local government services. The event was addressed by APSE's Mo Baines who explored the links between local government finance and councils generating new sources of income to support local services, including the many developments in local housing companies.

Building communities

At the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, APSE and the TCPA hosted a fringe event on Housing, which considered the role of local authorities in delivering new homes for communities. Speakers included Paul Smith of respected polling company Survation, Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the TCPA, and Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive, APSE.



Paul Smith of Survation, Cllr Mark Pengally, Kate Henderson TCPA and Paul O'Brien, APSE at the housing fringe discussing public trust in building inspectors

Neighbourhoods beyond austerity

A second APSE fringe covered the recent APSE and NPI research on Local Government Finance, 'Redefining neighbourhoods: A future beyond austerity?'. Mike Amesbury MP, member of the local government and communities' select committee, joined Mo Baines, APSE Head of Communication and Coordination, to deliberate on the issues of how we fund frontline neighbourhood services, which have lost £3.1 billion since 2010/11.

Congratulations

Congratulations to our new National Chair, Councillor Archie Dryburgh, and new National Secretary Ronnie

Dempster, both from Dumfries and Galloway Council, on their election to National Council 2017/18. They were officially elected at the National AGM which took place in Oxford during the APSE Annual Seminar. You can read more about Archie's vision on page 15.



Cllr Mark Pengally, APSE Central Region Chair, with Mike Amesbury MP, Local Government and Communities Select Committee, and Mo Baines, APSE Head of Communication and Coordination, at the APSE Fringe event on Local Government Finance: Looking beyond austerity.

Taking out the trash

APSE Performance Networks and DEFRA have been looking at new ways to focus on the National Litter Strategy. The work being undertaken by the Litter Strategy Data Working Group is still ongoing to establish a baseline for performance. This is expected to deliver a dashboard of useful information to help local authorities in the very near future.

England

Green shoots of recovery for parks?

A new Parks Action Group to help England's public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future has been announced by Parks and Green Spaces Minister Marcus Jones. The new group will include experts from the world of horticulture, leisure, heritage and tourism, and will be tasked with bringing forward proposals to address some of the issues faced by public parks and other green spaces across England. To support them, Government is providing £500,000 funding to kick start their work. APSE has been invited to sit on the group to represent the views of its local authority members. APSE's Paul O'Brien and Wayne Priestley will be reporting back regularly to members on the work of this group.

Top of the table

APSE continues to support the School Food Plan Alliance and at the last meeting, held on the 18

September 2017, the Alliance met to consider the options for the position of Chair and it was agreed that the current arrangement of Co-Chairs should be continued. Jeanette Orrey MBE is to remain in the role and Stephanie Wood (School Food Matters) was elected as the Co-Chair.

On the road

Wayne Duerden, Head of Traffic Engineering Policy, Department for Transport, will be speaking at the next APSE Southern Highways and Street Lighting advisory group. In what promises to be a highly informative event, Wayne will discuss traffic sign regulations and general directions, and answer delegate questions on the latest regulations. Contact APSE Principal Advisor Lorna Box on lbox@apse.org.uk for more details.

Wales

Show me the data

APSE's Rob Bailey, Principal Advisor for Wales, and Debbie Johns, Head of Performance Networks recently held a development meeting with the WLGA; The meeting explored the potential to develop a suite of indicators for corporate services in Wales.

Scotland

Scottish resources

Andy Mudd, Head of APSE Solutions, addressed the Scottish Resources meeting in Edinburgh sharing ideas on waste innovations such as underground bins and options to reduce waste contamination and recycling. APSE Solutions has a wealth of ideas on waste service delivery models, and Andy or his team can be contacted on amudd@apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810.

Don't forget your trunks

Issues of litter management on trunk roads and motorways has been raised by APSE on behalf of member councils in Scotland. In a letter to the Scottish Minister for Transport and the Islands, Hamza Yousef, the issue of the costs and complexities of managing litter on trunk roads and motorways that are maintained by contractors or other agencies has been raised as a major concern. The Minister's civil servants will shortly be meeting APSE to look at ways to resolve this long-standing issue.

Scotland (continued)

Milking it

Acting Principal Advisor for Scotland, Garry Lee, has been working on the Scottish Government’s short-term nursery milk working group. APSE has appointed Anne Hanlon from North Lanarkshire Council and Janice Fanning from Stirling Council to the meetings as our representatives. For more information, contact Garry on glee@apse.org.uk.

Working together

The interviews for APSE Scotland’s latest research on the means and mechanisms of communication and coordination between local and national levels of Scottish representative government are currently underway. Research Assistant Susan Lassen, University of Edinburgh, has already conducted interviews with Mairi Gougeon MSP (SNP) and Graham Simpson MSP (Conservative) and has other interviews with Councillors planned for next month.

Northern Ireland

Come say hello!

APSE will be showcasing its research and services at the NILGA annual conference on the 12 October as well as presenting an award to the best service team in the Local Government Awards Northern Ireland 2017 – the first awards to take place since local government reorganisation. Come and say hello to APSE at our stand at the NILGA conference.

Pilot board

A new pilot board to develop APSE services in Northern Ireland has been established as a forum for APSE main contacts. The inaugural meeting will take place in the Autumn. To nominate representatives or for more information contact Mo Baines on 0161 772 1810 or email mbaines@apse.org.uk.

Point of view



Aileen Murphie
Director, DCLG & Local Government Value For Money

Local government: where are we? An NAO perspective

In these febrile post referendum and post snap general election days, it is easy to forget that government must go on and that there is much more in the government’s in box than negotiating Brexit.

So from the perspective of the NAO, where are we now? Looking at local government finance first, we are another year towards sector financial self sufficiency with the introduction of 100% business rate retention in 2020 and another year into the 4 year financial settlement announced in 2016. However, the Local Government Finance Bill was not in the Queen’s Speech, so little prospect of legislation in this session, although DCLG has said it would like to do as much as possible via existing legislation.

So this suggests that the future for local government finance remains uncertain. And where next for devolution? Nine combined authorities are now set up and 6 mayoral elections successfully concluded. About a third of England’s population now lives in a combined authority areas. But the new combined authorities – some very new – face challenges both in coherence & complexity with little extra money. Complex geographies have created

challenges and tensions which will need to be managed. For example, multiple Local Enterprise Partnerships within a combined authority area make collaborative working more challenging. And there are inconsistent approaches to devolution across central government.

So what are the challenges for the future? There is greater uncertainty over 100% business rate retention & devolution against a backdrop of further spending reductions until 2019-2020. But the variability of impact across local government continues and is increasingly baked into the system. Perhaps the Fair Funding Review will offer a solution. The delivery landscape is increasingly complex and of course the sheer weight and complexity of Brexit is going to dominate the body politic to 2019 and beyond.

Lastly though, with central government’s eye elsewhere, herein lies a great opportunity for local government now that ‘place’ as a concept is reappearing however haltingly and partially. Local authorities have their own democratic mandate, a general power of competence and borrowing powers and have within their gift the ability to make a real and lasting impact in their localities to the benefit of their citizens.

Bridging the funding gap

We spoke to Debra Adams, from financial and commercial skills training company – and APSE Approved Partners – arena4finance, on how local authorities can attain the skills for success and successfully bridge the funding gap.

arena4|finance

It has been widely reported that, following central government cuts, local authorities are increasingly operating entrepreneurially. Many local authorities are working collaboratively to cut costs, making partnerships or alliances with both the public and the private sector, and investing in property or various enterprises, all to raise more revenue and fill the funding gap. However, whilst the decentralisation of power is resulting in great innovation and empowerment within local councils, there are concerns that a lack of commercial skills could put finances at risk.

At the end of November 2016, the Public Accounts Committee voiced fears that council tax bills and other services could be affected by poor investment decisions. Committee Chair Meg Hillier stated, "Our committee has previously highlighted gaps in the commercial skills of the civil service as a factor in the failure of some projects and we have similar concerns about local government."

As local authorities undertake increased commercial activity and invest in property in order to become self-sufficient, naturally they take on greater responsibility and subsequently more risk. If such schemes are to be successful, it is vital that the key personnel involved are equipped with the necessary skills. Local councils need the skillset not only to invest and manage wisely, but to grow these initiatives to make a surplus to reinvest in their services and maintain the quality of the user experience. As summarised by Sean Nolan, the Director of Local Government at CIPFA, "Today, council finance teams must possess the ability to undertake a range of roles, depending upon the context and demands of each situation. Whilst understanding all the associated risks, they must be fully instrumental in delivering growth."

arena4finance is proud to renew our ongoing strategic partnership agreement with APSE, which includes offering a one-day skills development workshop for all those within the public sector who are looking to offer services to private companies and the local community in order to generate profitable revenue. The team at arena4finance are specialists in financial training for the service sector. Debra Adams, Head of Professional Development, comments, "We offer training, coaching and mentoring to help business managers understand and interpret financial information and we are delighted to be able to offer this support to the public sector in these challenging but also exciting times".

APSE is a not-for-profit local government body working with over 300 councils throughout the UK. In a recent study, published by APSE in conjunction with CIPFA, entitled 'Bricks-Mortar-Money' focusing on the trend for increased commercialisation of the local government property estate as a means of securing additional income streams, it was concluded that there are three key drivers impacting on the recent trend. Firstly, the impact of austerity with cuts in funding and increasing cost pressures has intensified the need for alternative income sources. Secondly, local authorities are being encouraged to become more self-sufficient with less reliance on funding from central government and finally, the requirement for local leaders to take responsibility for shaping how their communities are managed in the future.

The workshop offered by arena4finance and APSE entitled 'How to make a profit from selling your local authority services' will benefit those with responsibility for creating new revenue sources requiring them to create pricing policies, develop business plans and monitor results. Using a variety of case studies and scenarios during the sessions, participants will consider the key variables for their success including; identifying opportunities for profitable income generation; understanding the true costs; developing expertise and entrepreneurship; managing the risk; and considering the systems and processes for monitoring performance.

"Austerity measures continue to affect local councils, so we have worked to create an accessible course that covers everything your organisation needs to know about effectively making a profit from your existing services."

Speaking about the course, Jan Kennedy, Head of APSE Training, said, "This excellent workshop has been specifically designed by arena4finance and APSE to support local authorities as they try new ways to find a sustainable form of income that can support their frontline services. Austerity measures continue to affect local councils, so we have worked to create an accessible course that covers everything your organisation needs to know about effectively making a profit from your existing services."

By the end of the course attendees will be able to; cost activities, products and services accurately; develop standard costs; apply overhead capture and cost allocation; set selling prices and produce quotations; calculate the breakeven point and plan for profit; use and interpret key performance indicators; and perform post activity monitoring and variance analysis.

- To learn more about arena4finance, please visit www.arena4finance.co.uk/ or email hello@arena4finance.co.uk for more information.

Alternatively, book directly with APSE at www.apse.org.uk or email Jan Kennedy on jkennedy@apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810.

Scrutiny: The cornerstone of democracy

The issues for local government in a changing political environment

New research by APSE and the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) says that it is time for local government to take scrutiny seriously. We explore the key findings of this timely research.

As the shape of public services and institutions evolve, and in times of economic uncertainty and major changes like Brexit, the responsiveness of local public services will be critical. The public have a right to know how major decisions are made, what might be expected in terms of outcomes, and how public services can work to improve lives and places.

Within this context, the role of good governance and scrutiny is critical to public trust and confidence in decision-making. In times of uncertainty and significant change, it is important that decisions are made in a way that is transparent, involves others and holds to account those responsible for implementation. However, our new research carried out on behalf of APSE, by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), suggests that scrutiny processes are perceived as weak and fail to have impact.

New models of service delivery, often leading to fragmented forms of governance and control, can lead to gaps in accountability. The recent tragic events in Grenfell highlighted that tenants had warned of their concerns over the safety of the building, and felt their concerns were not being adequately

addressed by the Tenant Management Organisation. Whilst we must caution against pre-emptive judgements, given the newly announced public inquiry into Grenfell, this seeming disconnect between the concerns of the tenants and the Management organisation is not a unique finding. Increasingly, we see forms of delivery that remove that direct accountability to local councillors and their communities. This was also a finding in a recent Ombudsman report on bin complaints from residents, which criticised the management of complaints in outsourced contracts because councils were too trusting of their contractors, who then failed to properly follow up residents' concerns. In a direct service, as many Directors of Environment will attest, the phone call from a councillor asking why a resident's bin has been missed will receive a near immediate response. It is simply not necessary to to place processes through to third parties but simply for the Director to phone the crew and get the bin collected. This is a simplistic explanation, of course, of a very complex situation in governing local services but it is nevertheless a valid prism to show that the more complex delivery models require us to pay more attention to governance and scrutiny.

Multi-agency arrangements are often held as a panacea in the delivery of solutions to complex or wicked problems, but this too adds a layer of further complexity. Who is ultimately responsible for delivering on outcomes? Who will monitor situations to ensure interventions when things start to go wrong? And who, in any case, will set the framework for what is to be delivered?

If we take areas like the newly formed Combined Authorities, it is not beyond the realms of anyone's imagination to see public confusion over who is responsible for new housing developments, transport, and in the case of areas like Greater Manchester, Health and Social Care. Devolution itself brings its own further layers. In Liverpool, for example, there is the newly created Elected Mayor, the City Mayor and a ceremonial Lord Mayor. Indeed, the City now has more Mayors than its famous Liver Birds!

APSE believes that, to ensure public trust in our public services, scrutiny has to be part and parcel of the service delivery equation. Whatever form of public service delivery model is shaped locally,

To order a copy of the research, please contact Wai Lee: wlee@apse.org.uk



governance and scrutiny should not be an afterthought but part of the initial and ongoing development of delivery models. Effective scrutiny needs to be a conduit for the voice of the community. When residents are silenced or communities ignored, things go wrong.

It is essential that public services are open to engagement as a two-way street. Equally, we should ensure transparency and openness. If public services are to be truly accountable, then we should not be shy of sharing the information that will enable genuine assessments of how they are performing.

It is essential that public services are open to engagement as a two-way street.

Finally, we must address skills. Superstar councillors have arguably become the norm in executive models of governance. Increasingly, many backbench councillors - without their former roles in committees - felt alienated from decision making, instead becoming a stamp of approval on decisions taken elsewhere. Whilst APSE would always argue that how decisions are ultimately taken is a matter for local determination, the more detailed discussions and challenges presented through longer committee deliberations was not always unhelpful. Many may dispute the structure of an unelected second chamber in the House of Lords, but few dispute the quality of debates that have often transcended party politics to hold governments of all parties to account on critical issues. Allowing the space for detailed debates at a council level should not therefore be regarded as inconvenient.

Scrutiny now needs to be an agile force in local government; adapting

to the new models of governance, the challenges of service delivery and increased demand on our public services, and developing an open dialogue with residents and businesses. It should not be seen as a bolt-on to democracy, but rather a crucial function within local areas.

The report, titled 'Accountability and scrutiny: The issues for local government in a changing political environment', can be downloaded on the APSE website.

- For more details email Mo Baines, APSE Head of Communication and Coordination, on mbaines@apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810.



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annual seminar 2017

Report back

A quick look at this year's excellent and innovative speakers

Service Awards

Check out the winners and finalists of this year's prestigious APSE Service Awards, which celebrate excellence in local government

Overall Council of the Year Winner

Highlighting the winning council of this prestigious award

Message from APSE's National Chair

A welcome message for members from the incoming National Chair, Councillor Archie Dryburgh

Annual Seminar report back

Didn't manage to make it to this year's annual seminar? We've put together a quick look at all our brilliant and inspiring speakers, and their views on how local government can continue to develop and grow beyond austerity



Lord Gary Porter, Local Government Association chair, warned delegates that councils may have to fight to keep their responsibilities for children's services if large numbers of services continue to be judged as failing. He revealed that the LGA would be stepping up its campaigning around children's services, which he described as a bigger pressure than adult social care on council budgets. More positively, Lord Porter said the government recognises it has to take action on adult social care, predicting this would be one of the few issues not related to Brexit to be given ministers full attention.

Speaking to delegates on the final day of the seminar, Lord Porter went on to say that he believes devolution is no longer dead in the water, explaining that he thinks plans may not be as ambitious as once thought, but that this will help councils to decide whether working together is, in fact, their best course of action.

Further, commenting on the tragic Grenfell Tower fire, Lord Porter said the government had laid a disproportionate amount of blame at local government's door, and addressing the issue of flammable cladding on public and private sector buildings would not be straightforward.

In a final impassioned plea to delegates, Lord Porter said, "I think there is a number of people in central government that still believe we can squeeze more out of what we do... members, you're going to have to bend the ear of your MP considerably harder and more painfully so they know that when your council says it can't take anymore, they mean it."

This year's Annual Seminar played host to two high-profile keynote speakers, six informative and engaging sessions, and six service-specific innovation forums, alongside the much-anticipated Service Awards 2017. With all of this happening over two days, delegates were kept busy with innovative ways to transform their services, and best practice to ensure that they can continue to offer excellent services to their local communities.

The hot topics this year were predictably the biggest issues of this year; delegates heard speakers discussing the potential issues and changes that Brexit will bring, as well as much discussion on austerity and how councils can manage to run their frontline services despite the severe funding cuts that many authorities have now seen first-hand.

Here, we give you a round-up of this year's speakers and topics.

Brexit, funding and the future: A picture from across the UK local government sector

The first panel of the seminar focused on how Brexit has been affecting local government, and how it may continue to impact on the public sector in the future. APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien was the first to speak to delegates, giving the picture from across the UK local government sector. His presentation looked at some of the good work that local councils has done so far, and made the case for utilising income generation and commercialisation going forward.

Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Environment, Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), spoke to delegates about future funding issues for Wales. Tim gave a Welsh viewpoint of the current situation in local government, explaining that although councils in Wales are currently relatively protected, preventative services have been hit the hardest and it's likely that funding will soon decrease as a result of Brexit.

The final speaker for this panel was Derek McCallan, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), who discussed the current challenges in Northern Ireland, including the many changes that have occurred over the past year and the issue of further devolution of powers to Northern Ireland councils.

Neighbourhood services: Why do they matter and how do we pay for them?

The second session focused closely on local authority frontline services, giving viewpoints from people working in councils as well as experts who have been monitoring local government's progress. First up was Dr Peter Kenway, Economist and Director of the New Policy Institute (NPI) speaking about NPI's new research with APSE. The report, 'Redefining neighbourhoods: A future beyond austerity?' shows that since 2010/11, neighbourhood services have been the hardest hit of all local government services, taking a shrinking share of a shrinking budget, with the worst hit neighbourhood services in England seeing their spending cut by half.

We also heard from Zena Cooke, Corporate Director of Resources for London Borough of Tower Hamlets, who shared her insights into making neighbourhood service sustainable and suitable for the community they serve. Zena also made the case for evidencing the impact of services properly.

Heather Wakefield, National Secretary for Local Government, UNISON, explored the future of the public servant and how local government can equip their workforce so that they have a strong staff base for the future, and the skills to ensure that neighbourhood services can be run knowledgeably and continuously.

The final speaker in this panel was Justin Thompson, Assistant Executive Director for Neighbourhoods, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. Justin took delegates on Knowsley's journey through austerity, and showed how the borough is working to recover from the effects of underfunding. As one of the hardest hit areas in the country, the council has worked hard to ensure that citizens still have access to their much-needed neighbourhood services.

Commercialisation and income generation

Opening the second day of the seminar, David Bentley, Head of Asset Management for CIPFA, spoke about local authority powers to invest in property and assets. David focused on how property could become a good, sustainable source of income for councils, although he advised authorities to take a balanced approach and carefully weigh the positives of any venture against the risks.

Southampton City Council's Head of Capital Assets, Mark Bradbury, used the city as an excellent example of how investing properly in the community can help to develop economic growth and improve the area for local residents. The key, he says, is to identify appropriate opportunities both within and outside of the local area.



Key Note Speaker Aileen Murphie, Director of DCLG and Local Government Value for Money, gave delegates an overview of the NAO's perspective on where local government is now. You can read more about this on page 6.

Beyond austerity: Housing, people and places

Referencing APSE's new research with the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), called **'Building homes: Creating communities'**, Dr Hugh Ellis, Head of Policy for the TCPA, kicked off the third session of the seminar. He spoke passionately about the need for planning to be at the heart of local authority regeneration and housing, in order to ensure quality in terms of space and local aesthetics.

Dr William Bird, CEO of Intelligent Health, also spoke about how the local environment can impact upon the community. William told delegates about how his game, Beat the Streets, was helping to tackle a wide array of illnesses by encouraging green exercise and getting people walking more. This innovative way to tackle obesity and inactivity-related illnesses offers huge potential savings to local authorities for very little work in return.

The next speaker was Tim Sadler, Executive Director, Oxford City Council. Giving the details about their strategy to provide suitable housing for the citizens in Oxford, Tim showed how their council-owned housing company has allowed them to explore more options and develop new, affordable homes with a mix of tenures.

The final speaker of the panel was Karen Knight, Managing Director of Norse Care Ltd, who gave a social care case study, which highlighted ways in which councils can develop specialist residential care in a highly efficient and responsive way, whilst reducing operational costs. Norse Care Ltd is a subsidiary of Norfolk County Council and part of the Norse Group, and has proved to be an extremely successful venture for the Council.

Getting your services operational, efficient and effective

Our first speaker of this session was Brian Cape, Business and Service Development Manager at Birmingham City Council, who spoke about City Serve, a financially stable school meals service. Putting the children at the forefront of their vision, City Serve not only makes school meals, but also teaches the children about good nutrition. They are also opening a development kitchen to teach and train members of the public more about cooking and food.

Tara King, Assistant Director Environment, Waste, Sustainability, Energy, Resources and Contract Management at Cardiff County Council, showed how councils can develop a commercial edge to their frontline services. Focusing on refuse, recycling, parks, and public realm, Tara talked about the recent service review the council undertook, and highlighted how they improved their services.

The final speaker in this session of case studies was Iain Waddell, Managing Director, Tayside Contracts, who discussed how they made their highways services more resilient. Describing them as the 'fourth emergency services', Iain highlighted how vital highways services are, and how they must be prepared for when highways damage, flooding, or winter weather affects their communities.

Resilient futures

Ray Noble, APSE Energy, spoke to delegates about challenges that local authorities face when trying to become greener, and also the opportunities that are currently available. Focusing on fleet, Ray looked at innovation in electric vehicles, and he also showed delegates how councils could become more self-sufficient by investing in renewable energy.

Delegates also heard from David Kilduff, Partner at Walker Morris, who offered an insight on Brexit and its impact on councils, as things currently stand. David outlined some of the potential issues that Brexit could throw up for local authorities, but he also offered ways that councils can demonstrate their resilience and prepare for the future.

Sean Hanson, of Local Partnerships, continued on the theme of innovation, encouraging councils to be bold in taking forward collaborative initiatives.



Lessons from Europe: Surviving austerity

The final session heard from Jonathan Davies, Professor of Critical Policy Studies in the Faculty of Business and Law, De Montfort University, and Dr Marc Parés from the Institute for Government and Public Policies (IGOP), Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain. Giving an international insight into austerity, Jonathan and Marc explored the experiences of other European cities, like Barcelona, who have recently dealt with austerity. Their research not only shows the impact of Brexit, but also various ways of managing the short-term and long-term effects. This alternative perspective on austerity was highly valuable for delegates whose councils are currently facing a similar situation themselves.

- You can now download the presentations from the seminar on the APSE website. Go to Events, Previous events, and click on the Annual Seminar hub.

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Cllr Archie Dryburgh
*Dumfries and
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**Rather
than the
problem, local
authorities
can be the
solution**

New national chair, Cllr Archie Dryburgh, sets out his APSE vision for the next year

Being elected as the new APSE National Chair for 2017-2018 was a very proud moment for me and taking over from Cllr Simon Letts of Southampton Council is both a privilege and a daunting prospect. Simon has offered such strong leadership and guidance during his term of office. As we move forward I wanted to set out to you our members my own thoughts for the coming year.

As we are all acutely aware, whether in Scotland, Wales, England or Northern Ireland, local government is facing a set of challenges; reduced budgets and increased demand for its services. We are often at the back of the queue when it comes to drawing down resources from central administrations. So, for my year in office, I want to support the APSE Members in any way I can using APSE's unique knowledge to develop a programme of work that will place our members in the best possible position to continue to deliver excellence in the frontline. So, what are my priorities?

First of all, I am intent on continuing with APSE's research programme supporting our Ensuring Council model; to invest heavily in the research programme around the Ensuring Council, be it finance; neighbourhoods; environmental change; digitalisation; the workforce; or, indeed, the on-going pressures as Brexit becomes a reality. Our research will continue to match the practical with the policy.

Secondly, APSE's strength lies in our core services of membership resources, performance networks, solutions, training and energy, and I want to ensure that the business plan is formed around, and delivering, the very best these services can offer.

Thirdly, Commercialisation and Municipal Entrepreneurship already make up a sizeable

work stream for APSE, leading as we have on the development of responses, I firmly believe that local government can take the lead in making change happen and in doing things differently. Local government is efficient and lean, and the evidence shows it. But we are also innovative, ingenious and entrepreneurial. I see my role as helping to make that case on behalf of APSE's membership. My own council are fully engaged in an agenda that is about acting more commercially and enterprising, for municipal purposes and for the good of our community. I know that many authorities around the country are doing similar work and I aim to champion this.

I firmly believe the voice of local government is much stronger collectively so with that aim, I will work closely with my colleagues, both fellow councillors and officers, on our National Council and I have been told that I will always be able to rely on them for good advice, I have no doubt about this. A strong rapport and camaraderie, across the political spectrum and across the nations, exists in APSE, based on shared aims, values and respect for each other. I aim to continue this, I also aim to convince those not in the membership that APSE should be their first point of contact for all of those issues I have raised before, to get their organisations involved and to become part of the APSE Family.

We face many challenges, but I'd like to underline that APSE is your association – owned by member councils – and focused on addressing the challenges local government faces. So, my plea to you is to use APSE and all of its services; its publications, its events, participate in all of the highly valuable networks it offers.

I look forward to welcoming you to our 2018 annual seminar in Scotland, next September.



Service Awards 2017

“It is only fitting that tonight we remember and celebrate the late and great Cllr. Van Coulter, who inspired so many of us during his time as both a councillor here in his beloved Oxford and as a member of APSE’s National Council. Van would be so proud to see you all here celebrating the services that our communities rely upon and promoting excellence. Van was a true believer in the good that public services can do.”

Cllr. Simon Letts, APSE National Chair, 2016-2017



Best Workforce Initiative

Kindly sponsored by UNISON

- Active Tameside
- City and County of Swansea
- Manchester City Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Nottingham County Council
- Salford City Council
- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Winner:

Sandwell Metropolitan
Borough Council

*See Something Do Something -
Safeguarding is Everyone's Business*

In June 2015, the highly successful "See Something Do Something" campaign was launched within our Neighbourhoods directorate. This ambitious project aimed to train every member of staff to recognise and report any safeguarding concerns, develop an internal process for reporting and encourage more joined up working with our partners in Children's Services and Adult Services.

Since going live in September 2015, 655 safeguarding concerns have been reported which has resulted in our most vulnerable citizens being protected or supported.

Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative

Kindly sponsored by CAMMS

- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Derry City & Strabane District Council
- Fife Council
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Tower Hamlets Council/ Swan Housing and GLA
- YES Energy Solutions/ North Lincolnshire Council

Winner:

YES Energy Solutions/ North
Lincolnshire Council

*North Lincolnshire Park Home
Insulation Scheme*

North Lincolnshire Council and YES Energy Solutions are improving the thermal efficiency of Park Homes – some of the UK's most inefficient housing stock.

Historically Park Homes have not benefited from mainstream support. To address this, a targeted scheme was implemented using blended funding sources to help fuel poor and low income residents improve the look and feel of their properties. To date over 60 (now cosy) Park Homes have been transformed through insulation improvements, helping householders slash their energy bills.

Best Efficiency & Transformation Initiative

Kindly Sponsored by Alliance Leisure

- Bolton Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Conwy County Borough Council
- Fife Council
- Kingstown Works Ltd
- North Ayrshire Council
- Selby District Council
- Tower Hamlets Council
- Waveney District Council

Winner:

North Ayrshire Council

*Transformation & Continuous
Improvement Programme*

It's good to be part of something great! The Corporate Transformation and Continuous Improvement Programme at North Ayrshire Council, led by the Change Team, fosters an environment of change and innovation. Through team working and staff empowerment. This is underpinned by our staff values of 'Focus, Passion and Inspiration'. Over the last four years, by harnessing the power of our people and lean methodology, North Ayrshire has embarked on a lean transformation expedition delivering efficiencies and improvements to our services.



Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative (incl. Social Care)

Kindly sponsored by UNISON

- Blaby District Council
- Bournemouth Borough Council
- Gateshead Council
- Manchester City Council and Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- Powys County Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Stockport Homes

Winner:
Stockport Homes

'H4' Helping the homeless into housing

Since 2015, 'H4 Hospital' has culturally and practically transformed the way people with complex medical, social and housing needs are supported in the community.

As well as supporting customers from hospital to home and reducing re-admittances, the service has embedded cross-sector working through effective housing/health information sharing and training for hospital staff and medical students.

This innovative work has helped save £1.2 million to public services, as well as transforming the lives of over 280 people it has helped.



Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative

Kindly sponsored by GS Plus

- Aberdeen City Council
- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Calderdale Council
- Cordia (Services) LLP
- Hull City Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Veolia Watford
- Wyre Council

Winner:
Hull City Council

Hull Fruit Market - Hull's vibrant & unique cultural quarter

Partnership working drives the transformation of Hull's Fruit Market. Local developers Wykeland Limited and Beal Homes, working with Hull City Council, are phase by phase delivering a new digital and creative arts quarter from stalled and abandoned development sites and dilapidated warehouses. Challenge after challenge is being overcome; flood defence mitigation, negative appraisals, abnormal construction and conservation area restrictions, all by working together through an innovative, joint venture LLP. The result is Hull's modern, vibrant and unique Fruit Market.



Best Collaborative Working Initiative

Kindly Sponsored by CORMAC

- Aberdeen City Council
- Argyll and Bute Council
- Blaby District Council
- Bolton Council
- Cordia (Services) LLP
- Derbyshire County Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Peterborough City Council
- South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner
- Stroud District Council

Winner:
Blaby District Council

The Lightbulb Programme

The Lightbulb Programme is a collaboration between the County and District Councils in Leicestershire. Together we are transforming practical housing support; moving away from a historically fragmented set of services towards a new, integrated and wider housing offer which will fully embed housing support in health and care pathways.



Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Public Power Solutions

- Aberdeen City Council
- Birmingham City Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- Guildford Borough Council
- Kingstown Works Ltd
- Oxford City Council
- West Lindsey District Council

Winner:

Guildford Borough Council

Asset Investment Strategy

To address cuts in funding that local government is facing, Guildford Borough Council embarked on a strategy to invest in new suitable properties within the borough for two major reasons. Firstly, to increase the income generated and, secondly, to stimulate and encourage business growth and development by investing in key sites for generation purposes. The Council's target was to increase annual income by £2 million from March 2012 to March 2018. By April 2017, we achieved and exceeded this target.

Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (inc. Community Safety)

Kindly sponsored by Secured by Design

- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Harrogate Borough Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Stafford Borough Council
- Swale Borough Council
- Waltham Forest Council
- West Sussex County Council

Winner:

Swale Borough Council

Making Swale a better place

Swale Borough Council is very proud to have been in the vanguard by being the first UK local authority to implement the TiksPac scheme. We have responded to the concerns of our residents in an innovative and cost-free way and we are very proud to work alongside TiksPac and local businesses to keep Swale's paths and public spaces free of dog litter.

Best Innovation or Demand Management Initiative

Kindly Sponsored by Toltec

- Aberdeen City Council
- Blaby District Council
- Bolton Council
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Dundee City Council / Tayside Contracts
- Luton Borough Council
- Powys County Council
- Rochdale Borough Council

Winner:

Bolton Council

The Introduction of Slim Bins

Bolton Council introduced a borough wide (123,000 households) engagement programme to exchange the 240 litre domestic waste bins for slimmer 140 litre bins. The aim of the project was to change residents' behaviour and divert waste from the residual waste stream and into recycling saving £1.25m in disposal costs per year. By the end of March 2017, Bolton Council has avoided waste disposal costs of over £2.2 million which have been used to protect the school crossing patrols.



Best Renewable Energy or Energy Efficiency Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Walker Morris LLP

- Fife Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Swindon Borough Council and Public Power Solutions
- YES Energy Solutions and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Winner:

Swindon Borough Council and Public Power Solutions

Public Power Solutions' Chapel Farm Solar Park, for Swindon Borough Council

A new and innovative use for an ex-landfill site: Chapel Farm Solar Park near Swindon, developed and built by Public Power Solutions for Swindon Borough Council, is helping create a cleaner, greener Swindon while supporting local community initiatives; it has enabled local people to invest and earn a tax-free return through the UK's first green energy Innovative Finance ISA; and it is providing a stable income for the Council, at a time when budgets have never been tighter.



Best Service Team of the Year – Construction and Building Service

Kindly sponsored by bfpeople

- Bournemouth Borough Council
- City and County of Swansea
- East Midlands Building Consultancy
- Kingstown Works Ltd
- North Ayrshire Council
- West Lothian Council

Winner:

Bournemouth Borough Council

Constructing Resilience

Bournemouth Building and Maintenance is an innovative award winning service providing high quality design, construction and building maintenance to local people. We maintain the Council's 200 buildings, 5,000 homes and specialist facilities such as the seafront, parks, crematorium and schools. We provide services to the private sector through our commercial brand Seascape South Limited. Our ethos is building a better town through innovation, investment in training and apprenticeships, and striving to provide a world class customer experience for local people.



Best Service Team of the Year – Catering Service

Kindly Sponsored by Elegant Cuisine

- Birmingham City Council
- GS Plus
- Gateshead Council
- Manchester City Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner:

Birmingham City Council

Building on the Past – Shaping the Future

From the brink of being decommissioned the Social Commercialisation of the service has led to consistent seven-figure annual returns to BCC during austere times, whilst providing excellent value for money for the schools and citizens of Birmingham.

We've cleaned-up inefficient practices, developed unique products and services via our class-leading Development Kitchen and focused on developing trust through our USP as the only social caterer in town: 'Stakeholders NOT Shareholders' whilst maximising quality in delivery, income growth and penetration.



Best Service Team of the Year – Facilities Management and Building Cleaning Service

Kindly sponsored by Kingdom

- Aberdeen City Council
- Durham County Council
- Rochdale Borough Council
- Stockport Homes
- Telford and Wrekin Council

Winner:

Telford and Wrekin Council

Challenges of being a local Authority Service - Implementing Savings and Rebranding Cleaning Services

Telford and Wrekin Cleaning Services (Let's Clean) and Help at Hand (a service to support the elderly to live independently in their own homes) are proactive services that are adaptable to managing change. The services have always seen opportunities to grow and develop, whilst supporting the council's priorities and budget pressures.

During the last year the services have embraced new challenges following restructures, delivering savings, rebranding and marketing to compete with the private sector and introducing new services to customers.



Best Service Team of the Year – Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting Service

Kindly sponsored by WJ Group

- Blackburn with Darwen Council
- Bournemouth Borough Council
- City and County of Swansea
- Kingstown Works Ltd
- North Ayrshire Council

Winner:

City and County of Swansea

Swansea's 48 hour Pot Hole Initiative

Official statistics demonstrated City and County of Swansea had one of the best kept road networks in Wales, but the reputation on potholes amongst residents had been in a rut for years.

The Highways team's solution was an easy to use reporting mechanism that would guarantee a repair within 48hrs. Investment in this innovative, customer driven project has reaped mighty rewards both in terms of customer satisfaction and improved road conditions. The initiative has put the customer first.



Best Service Team of the Year – Transport and Fleet Maintenance Service

Kindly Sponsored by Brigade Electronics

- Fife Council
- GS Plus
- North Ayrshire Council
- Oxford City Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner:

GS Plus

GS Plus Passenger Services

GS Plus Transport Services have been transporting children, older persons and vulnerable adults for over 25 years. The team have recently celebrated their diamond anniversary in providing meal services, in addition to providing coach hire services to over 5000 people annually and SEN transport to 200 children every day.

In December 2015, they tendered for and were awarded the Bromley Council Passenger Services contract taking over 18 additional transport routes, transporting a further 196 people every day.



Best Service Team of the Year: Waste Management and Recycling Service

Kindly sponsored by Enevo

- Brighton and Hove City Council
- City and County of Swansea
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Guildford Borough Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Stirling Council
- Wakefield Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- Wyre Council

Winner:

City and County of Swansea

Behavioural Change - Making it hard not to Recycle

Kerbside residual restrictions had been very successful, but needed to be complemented by residual restrictions at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and an expansion of the reuse of goods. The solution was to seek community engagement and recycling behavioural change in the home to prevent residual waste being created in the first place.

We achieved this through converting three HWRCs to Recycling Centres Only, prohibiting recyclables from residual skips in our remaining two HWRCs, and expanding our Reuse Shop.



Best Service Team of the Year – Street Cleansing and Streetscene Service (Public Realm)

Kindly sponsored by De Montfort University

- Dorset Waste Partnership
- Gedling Borough Council
- Guildford Borough Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- North Lincolnshire Council
- Oxford City Council
- South Tyneside Homes

Winner:

Oxford City Council

A Clean Green Street Cleansing Team delivering a World Class Cleaner Greener City

Oxford City Council Streetscene has succeeded in their commitment to maintaining and even improving statutory standards despite external market forces, reductions in funding and a growing population putting a strain on existing service provision.

Through smart budgetary control, complimented by an aggressive income generation programme and overall service development the service has made another step closer to becoming a World Class service to deliver a World Class City, which is a key corporate priority.



Best Service Team of the Year – Parks, Grounds and Horticultural Service

Kindly Sponsored by Amazone Ltd

- Aberdeen City Council
- Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- Burnley Borough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Oxford City Council
- Tower Hamlets Council
- West Lothian Council

Winner:

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Local Gem to National Treasure

The team at Antrim Castle Gardens (ACG) have achieved transformational change through their passion, enthusiasm, talent and effective partnership working and turned Antrim Castle Gardens (ACG), a local gem, into a national treasure, achieving the prestigious accolade of Best Park in Northern Ireland and shortlisted for the UK Best Park.

Through pride and a commitment to excellence, the team have ensured that ACG flourishes as a visitor attraction of regional significance.



Best Service Team of the Year: Cemetery and Crematorium Service

Kindly sponsored by Anglia Research Services

- Bournemouth Borough Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- Kettering Borough Council
- London Borough of Bexley
- North East Lincolnshire Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner:

Kettering Borough Council

Modernising a Cremation and Burial Service to meet 21st Century needs

The Bereavement Services Team at Kettering Borough Council are a small but innovative and ambitious team working to continually improve the service provided to the bereaved and visitors. The team have continued to pursue their vision of a caring, community focused service through modern working techniques and innovative approaches while minimising costs through efficient working. Pioneering initiatives such as the introduction of pre-paid cremation, infrastructure improvements and service enhancements have all helped in tackling funeral poverty.



Best Service Team of the Year – Sports, Leisure and Cultural Service

Kindly sponsored by i2o Ltd

- Aberdeen City Council
- Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust)
- North Norfolk District Council
- Oxford City Council
- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner:

Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Fantastic folks and where to find them – Unlocking potential through sport

Imagine a model of service delivery that is progressive, increases social inclusion and saves tens of thousands of pounds annually for the LA. This is a reality in Stockton-on-Tees! Sporting-STEPS (SS) enables adults with learning disabilities, sensory loss and/or mental health conditions to access a community based five-day sports and physical activity offer instead of costly day services. The new offer demonstrates significant increases in physical, mental and social well-being whilst delivering significant savings. SS really delivers more from less.



Best Service Team of the Year: Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Regulatory Service

Kindly Sponsored by StarTraq

- East Lothian Council
- Kettering Borough Council
- Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council
- Peterborough City Council Sevenoaks District Council
- Shared Regulatory Services (Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan)

Winner:

Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council

Trading Standards making a difference locally, regionally, and nationally

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards seized the opportunity to build upon successful collaborative working, formally merging their Services to create added resilience and efficiency in a time of austerity and significant population growth.

Together the Services are a driving force within the regional Trading Standards partnership, EETSA, transforming the way the profession manages Intelligence; securing substantial investment for the partnership; initiating ground breaking initiatives and undertaking key roles within regional and national Trading Standards partnerships.

OVERALL COUNCIL OF THE YEAR IN SERVICE DELIVERY



Winner:

North Ayrshire Council

Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery Finalists
Kindly Sponsored by YOTTA

- Aberdeen City Council
- Bolton Council
- City and County of Swansea
- Fife Council
- Hull City Council/Kingstow Works Ltd
- North Ayrshire Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Oxford City Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council

*APSE would like to thank all sponsors of the
Service Awards 2017 for their support*



Redefining neighbourhoods: Beyond austerity

APSE and ITN Productions have launched a news and current affairs-style programme 'Redefining neighbourhoods: Beyond austerity', exploring the current challenges local authorities face in providing infrastructures and services in a harsh funding climate.

Hosted by Natasha Kaplinsky, APSE's new collaborative programme with ITN Productions, 'Redefining neighbourhoods: Beyond austerity' brings to life how changes in processes are needed and how it is vital that spending and investment decisions deliver greater resilience and sustainability to local authorities. The programme also looks at how six years of austerity has driven a change of emphasis in some councils, towards self-sustaining investment and into challenging and sometimes exciting, new territory.

Our neighbourhoods are special places to all of us and a part of our identity and security. At a time when neighbourhood services have seen the hardest hit of all local government spending, the programme looks at what our neighbourhoods need, and how new partnerships are helping redefine and reinforce the future. 'Redefining neighbourhoods: Beyond austerity' explores a future where the local authority becomes

the 'engine room' for generating income, and providing the frontline services and social care, which ensure the amenity and health of neighbourhood communities.

The programme premiered at the APSE Service Awards on 7th September at Oxford Town Hall and will form part of an extensive communications campaign featuring APSE members, government partners, as well as relevant journalists, writers and bloggers.

- You can now view the full programme on the APSE website. Alongside the programme, the Seminar Highlights video, filmed at the APSE Annual Seminar 2017, is available to watch and includes exclusive interviews with some of the main speakers.



A FULL SIZE SWEEPER - IN A COMPACT PACKAGE

The Scarab Minor M25H asserts itself as the most versatile sweeper in its class. The M25H can hold more waste than its predecessor thanks to its 2.5m³ hopper capacity and can operate for longer due to the 450 ltr water tank.

With an improved turning circle, ride stability, modern and quiet cab interior, you can sweep for longer and in more comfort than ever before; all this whilst still holding true to the original Minor concept of a full-size sweeper in a compact package.

Our products are all designed and built to a high standard at our manufacturing headquarters in Kent, England.

Challenging perceptions of Trading Standards' remit

The case of a dementia sufferer who was groomed by a bogus carer for money has brought to light the work of Dudley Council's Trading Standards team, who have challenged the context of 'positions of trust' and tested the Fraud Act. Christopher King, Principal Trading Standards Office explains.

It is difficult enough to bring a safeguarding matter – where the victim has been groomed into thinking the perpetrator is a friend – to a successful conclusion in court. Success becomes even more elusive when the mainstream view is that only a 'registered carer' can occupy a position of trust under the Fraud Act 2006.

However, in a case that would traditionally be investigated by the police, it was Dudley Trading Standards that pursued Veronica Sue Robinson for her financial abuse of 'Mr A', a vulnerable dementia sufferer, who was unwittingly defrauded of hundreds of thousands of pounds while under 'her care'.

The case, which attracted national publicity last month, has set a legal precedent, challenging who can occupy this position of trust and how section 4 of the Fraud Act can be applied.

Spiral of abuse

The investigation into Mr A – a vulnerable former World War II veteran who is registered blind and suffers from late-onset dementia – was led by Dudley Trading Standards, with close collaboration from the council's adult safeguarding and legal services teams.

Dudley Trading Standards first became aware of the case in April 2014. During a 'No Rogue Trader Zone' inspection, a neighbour of the victim raised concerns to officers that a cleaner appeared to have control of the victim and had taken large sums of money from him.

A safeguarding referral was made and a social worker went to visit Mr A. He was reluctant to engage at first, but was beginning to talk to her when Robinson rang. Mr A had the phone on loudspeaker so the social worker heard Robinson say: 'I'm your carer now, be careful what you say.' After this Mr A politely, but firmly, told the social worker to leave.

This pattern of polite refusal to engage with friends, family and services increased and emphasised the difficulties faced by authorities in gaining access to a vulnerable person who is under coercive control.

By late 2014, Mr A was completely reliant on Robinson and almost totally isolated from his previous social circle. In the past, Mr A had always been gregarious and friendly. He went for dinner at a neighbour's house three times a week, and holidayed with them. However, this stopped, and he would no longer attend social events unless allowed, or accompanied, by Robinson. Mr A also cancelled GP appointments and blocked attempts by social workers and medical practitioners to assess his mental condition; Robinson changed the locks of his house so friends and family could not gain access.

Mr A became distrustful of everyone apart from her, and believed that only she had his best interests at heart. Despite fears about his deteriorating mental health and the amount of money he may have been spending, the fact that Mr A had no diagnosis of a lack of capacity, and no power of attorney in place, meant there was no evidence or basis on which to take stronger action.

However, in February 2015, Mr A confided to a friend that he had given Robinson the money to buy a house. A fraud investigation began into Robinson's action – led initially by West Midlands Police – which found that, in November 2014, Robinson had written a cheque to herself from Mr A's chequebook, which he had signed. The cheque was for £188,000 and had been used to fund the cash purchase of a house in Robinson's name.

At the same time, Robinson took Mr A to a solicitor on the pretext that he wanted to stop his sons interfering in his life. She failed to disclose that she had received any money or property from Mr A. Letters were sent to Mr A's sons, telling them that their father's finances and his dealings with Robinson were none of their business. The solicitor in question said Robinson had led all the discussions.

Robinson was arrested on 27 March 2015. This had two key effects. First, Robinson was given conditional bail, preventing her from approaching Mr A. This meant that care services, friends and family could re-engage

For more information, contact Chris King at Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Trading Standards on christopher.king@dudley.gov.uk



with him. Second, evidence was seized that showed that Robinson had acquired full details of her victim's finances. A capacity assessment found Mr A was suffering from dementia and lacked capacity to manage his money. This meant that his bank was now prepared to restrict his access to his accounts.

During the month that followed, Mr A was reacquainted with his friends and family, and a care regime put in place. However, after one month, the police transferred the investigation to trading standards and cancelled Robinson's bail. In less than an hour, Robinson had returned to Mr A's house and, within a day, the new care plan had been cancelled and Mr A was again being fully controlled by Robinson.

As one witness put it, Robinson was 'a cleaner who didn't clean and a carer who didn't care'

We were left with no alternative but to commence proceedings through the Court of Protection to remove Robinson permanently from Mr A's life. A temporary injunction was granted in September 2015, and Mr A began to engage with friends, family and services. Robinson submitted papers to the Court of Protection – purportedly on Mr A's behalf – to challenge the proceedings and the diagnosis of dementia. Prior to the injunction, she had taken Mr A to see a clinical psychologist, but gave limited facts and omitted to mention that she had made any financial gain from her involvement with him. As a result, the psychologist did not address the issues of financial abuse and concluded that there

was insufficient evidence to determine that Mr A lacked capacity.

Robinson also served on the court a copy of an Agreement of Trust – purporting to be made by her and Mr A – and signed by a solicitor in December 2014. This stated that she would care for Mr A for the rest of his life in return for the house he had purchased for her. However, investigations revealed that the solicitor had not been engaged until months after the agreement had purportedly been made and after Robinson's arrest.

In December 2015, there was a full hearing before the Court of Protection. It appointed its own psychologist to assess Mr A, who concluded that he had been suffering from dementia for at least two years and had been 'groomed' by Robinson. This was a turning point for the investigation and the temporary injunction preventing her from having any contact with Mr A was made permanent. The psychologist then became a prosecution witness.

Prosecution proceedings

We decided that the matter was such that criminal proceedings should be instituted. Robinson was prosecuted under section 4 of the Fraud Act, and for perverting the course of justice for serving false documents on the Court of Protection.

At the beginning of proceedings, Robinson said she did not occupy a position of trust because she was not a formal or registered carer, and hence did not fall within section 4 of the Fraud Act. However, Judge Barry Berlin dismissed her claim. He said that if Robinson carried out the role of a carer, then it was irrelevant whether it was a formal arrangement

or whether she was a registered carer – she still occupied a position of trust. He pointed to the Agreement of Trust Robinson had served on the Court of Protection as evidence of this.

The matter proceeded to trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court and, over four weeks, the court heard evidence from more than 50 witnesses. Mr A was unfit to give evidence, which necessitated a hearsay application by the prosecution under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act. This allowed the jury to hear evidence from friends and neighbours of Mr A as to what he had told them about his dealings with Robinson. A clear picture of Mr A's confusion and reliance on Robinson was demonstrated to the court. As one witness put it, Robinson was 'a cleaner who didn't clean and a carer who didn't care'. The jury unanimously found her guilty of both counts.

Robinson was sentenced on 25 April 2017. The judge said that the fraud was high culpability – an abuse of trust deliberately targeting the victim's vulnerability – and there was a high impact on the victim. He added that Robinson had shown herself to be 'an unprincipled offender, motivated by greed'. She had prevailed upon him as his cleaner and generally flattered her way into his affections and become his carer, but it was not for love on her part, but love of his money. His house was dirtier than his friends had ever remembered and his level of care poor. She had underplayed her role of carer at the trial, but it was clear she only really cared for his substantial wealth and only had contempt for him.

The judge sentenced Robinson to five years for fraud and a further six months for attempting to pervert the course of justice. •



Searching for an alternative energy provider? Meet Robin Hood Energy

Robin Hood Energy is a not for profit energy company which was established in September 2015, and is actively working to provide lower energy tariffs and directly tackle fuel poverty, primarily in the East Midlands. They are wholly owned by Nottingham City Council and the tariffs offered by Robin Hood Energy are available across the UK – the organisation is aiming to provide an alternative to the Big Six energy providers by offering cheaper gas and electricity for all.

Establishing and making a success of a fully licensed energy supplier is a brave and radical step for a local authority. To date, Robin Hood Energy have been extremely successful in getting themselves up and running, introducing a series of different tariffs and products, signing up a large number of customers, and meeting the targets that make them a sustainable organisation thus far. Of course, they face all the usual commercial pressures faced by a business, as well as the added pressure of being a relatively young company. So, there is still a long way to go moving forward.

APSE Energy has teamed up with Robin Hood Energy to help spread their message and support the excellent work that they are doing. The model that Robin Hood Energy has pioneered has grabbed the imagination of many local authorities across the UK, and there is massive interest from other councils who are looking to follow a similar approach. It is not surprising that this is the case but a quick look at the work undertaken by Nottingham City Council and Robin Hood Energy will highlight how difficult it has been for them to get as far as they have. Having shown initial interest in copying the model, other local authorities have yet to make significant progress and some have decided against the idea, presumably because of the level of investment needed and the risk involved. Only Bristol City Council has also established an energy supply company. Significant backing from councillors, capacity to manage risk, and substantial investment funds are needed if others are to follow suit. It is clear that all three of these factors in combination are hard to come by.

This is the organisational perspective. Although it is vital to get it right, we know most of the customers are interested in price and quality rather than models, structure and management. So, we had a quick chat with Glyn Symonds, a Robin Hood Energy customer, about his personal experience with Robin Hood Energy and how it compares with his previous energy provider.

How was your experience with your previous energy provider?

Initially fine, but after several tariff changes and increases, it became too expensive to sustain.

How did you hear about Robin Hood?

Local Radio

What made you switch?

The thought of joining a locally based, not for profit business, which would be employing local people. Inevitably, I also hoped that it would prove a cost-effective move.

How do you find Robin Hood to deal with?

Really easy. The staff are obviously locally based, they were friendly, informative, polite and very clear in explaining the details.

Was switching easy?

The switch was effortless. The team took control of the process,

guided me through setting up my online account and it has proved straightforward ever since.

Do you know many other people who have switched to Robin Hood?

Yes. Quite a few of my friends also signed up around the same time as I did.

Would you recommend Robin Hood to friends and family?

Yes, I regularly do!

How much have you saved since switching?

It is very difficult to say, but after a recent tariff change due to an increase in your variable tariff, I am paying £90.00 (DD) per month for dual fuel, but with my previous supply I was paying £105.00 per month.

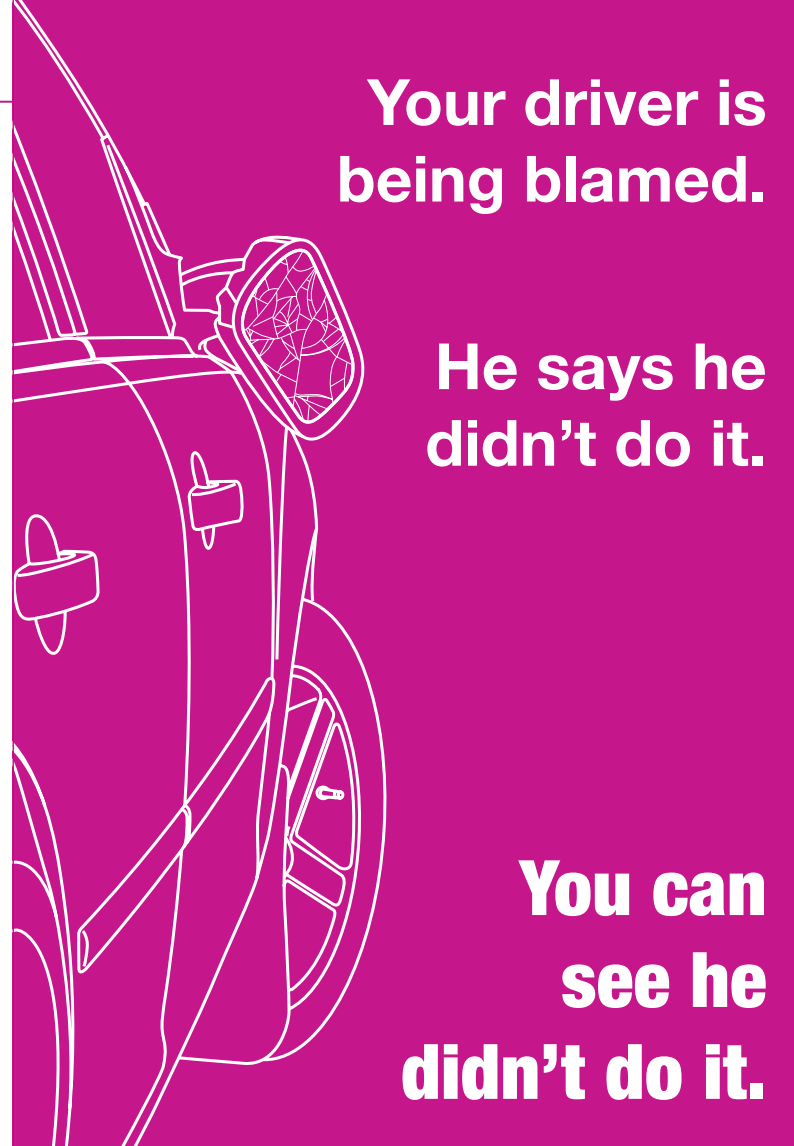
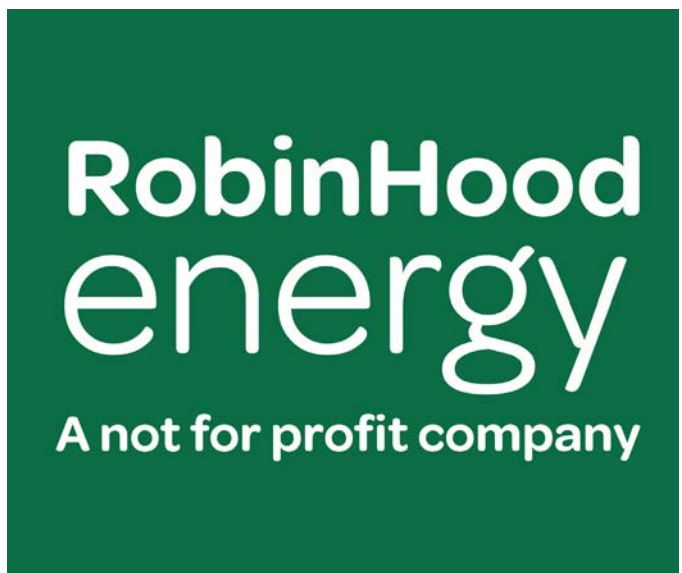
How would you describe Robin Hood overall?

At the moment, everything is satisfactory. Their online account system is very clear and straightforward, the guys on the telephone are perhaps the best I have dealt with and prices are competitive. However, the competitive cost of fuel is important, so I will be monitoring this over the months to come. Nevertheless, their company ethos is attractive, especially as it's based within the local community.

In the future, I would like to see Robin Hood Energy taking a lead in sustainable energy production throughout its growing network of related companies.

Robin Hood Energy are APSE Approved Partners, and work closely with APSE Energy to develop new ways that local authorities can get involved in the energy sector.

There are many ways in which your council can work with or learn from Robin Hood Energy for the benefit of your local community. If you are interested in doing so, please contact Phil Brennan, Head of APSE Energy, on 0161 772 1810 or email pbrennan@apse.org.uk.



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7-8 December	Performance Networks Seminar, Blackpool
19 October	Southern Region Housing, Construction & Building Maintenance Advisory Group, Oxford
20 October	Catering Advisory Group, Manchester
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31 October	Southern Region Highways Street Lighting Advisory Group, Oxford
2 November	Building Cleaning Advisory Group, Manchester
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