

Power to the people

Looking at attitudes to neighbourhood services



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Editorial



Paul O'Brien
Chief Executive, APSE

The value of everything and the price of nothing

'What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing.'
Oscar Wilde

In the post-Carillion world, somewhat cathartic discussions are taking place. 'How did we get to this point?' 'Why were contracts awarded when a profit warning was already in place? How could this company be considered to be experts in so many different fields?' The post-mortem is already well underway, and rightly so, but we have to truly ask if public policy making has been too cynical, relying only upon the seeming price of the contract, and supposed efficiencies from outsourcing, without really understanding the value equation.

Services, and indeed supplies, can often be delivered more cheaply if compromises are made. Such compromises often include the terms and conditions of staff, the quality of materials and squeezing value out of the supply chain – meaning smaller businesses feeding into the big beasts of public sector mega-contractors suffer the most. The pain and fragility of SMEs, being nailed to the lowest possible margins, is translated into

profit for share-holders. Whilst there is nothing inherently wrong with a buoyant private sector we need to rethink the role of these public contract behemoths. Any contracts to deliver public services should be underpinned by public values, not just in the pay and conditions of the workforce, but in safeguarding the public pound. Risk transfer to the private sector is costly; the greater the transfer of risk the more costly the payments – and even then it is often illusory. Some services are just too important to fail so the public sector will always carry the risk of picking up the pieces when things go wrong.

Whilst there has always been reliance on expertise from outside of local government, particularly on major infrastructure schemes, what is clear in the post-Carillion world is the orthodoxy of private sector efficiency over public sector bureaucracy is no longer valid – if ever it was. Council after council has been left to pick up the services that Carillion was unable to deliver. From school meals to libraries it is local government that has proven once again to be the steadying hand.

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APSE direct is published by

Association for Public Service Excellence

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Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M32 0FP

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Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events



Dale Wild of Cityserve addresses delegates at the APSE Facilities, Catering and Cleaning Management Seminar

APSE on the airwaves

West Sussex County Council has recently considered bringing its HR function back in-house. APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien, was interviewed on BBC Radio Sussex to discuss this, as well as the issue of insourcing more broadly. Paul also appeared on BBC Look North to discuss local government property investment following West Lindsey District Council's purchase of a Travelodge in Keighley. You can read more about West Lindsey's purchase on page 30. Both interviews have been uploaded to the APSE YouTube channel for viewing.

Annual Service Awards 2018

APSE is delighted to announce the nominations for the APSE Annual Service Awards 2018 are now open. For information on booking your place at the Seminar and registering your interest in an award, please visit the Awards Hub on our website.

Full Association

Edinburgh played host to APSE's Full Association meeting on the 18 January with presentations from Neil Barnett of Leeds Beckett University, Dr Peter Kenway of New Policy Institute and Sally Loudon of COSLA. Delegates also conducted business at this important event, held between the association's annual general meeting each year.

Trunk road litter

Paul O'Brien attended a meeting with Transport Scotland to discuss trunk road litter issues in January. It was agreed that a representative from Transport Scotland would attend the next APSE Scotland Parks, Grounds and Streets advisory group meeting on 28 February at Hamilton Townhouse to discuss this issue with attendees.

Labour LGA

APSE hosted fringe events at the LGA Labour Group Local Government conference which took place at the East Midlands Conference Centre on 3 February. 'Post Carillion: The case for Insourcing' heard from Heather Wakefield, UNISON's Head of Local Government, with Mo Baines of APSE presenting some initial survey finding on Insourcing, with contributions from Cllr Simon Letts, Leader of Southampton Council and Paul Smith of Survation, and chaired by Cllr Alan Waters of Norwich. A second joint fringe meeting with the TUC heard from Matt Dykes who discussed recent research on 'Great Jobs and Great Places' alongside Cllr Jean Stretton, Leader of Oldham Council explaining their approach to jobs and regeneration.



Unison's Heather Wakefield and the TUC's Matt Dykes at the APSE fringe event at the Labour LGA

Keen to go green

Paul O'Brien represented APSE at the MHCLG Parks Action Group at Lordship Recreation Ground in London. New Minister for Parks and Greenspace Rishi Sunak MP chaired the meeting, and the Government's recently published 25 Year Environment Plan was a hot topic of discussion.

Going the extra meal

APSE continues to support the School Food Plan Alliance with Principal Advisor Vickie Hacking attending an Alliance meeting, as well as the All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food, on 16 January in London. School food was also on the menu at the APSE Facilities, Catering and Cleaning Management Seminar, with Shadow Minister for Public Health, Sharon Hodgson MP, addressing delegates on the

importance of the APPG in championing nutrition in school food. The seminar also showcased local authority innovation in school catering amid growing economic uncertainty.

House in order

The January policy seminar in Birmingham brought together expert speakers from across the UK to discuss the core issues for those authorities who have developed their housing company, and those considering setting up a new housing entity. Speaker Paul Hackett of the Smith Institute provided top tips on how council's can support their housing companies, whilst Richard Auton of Walker Morris Solicitors provided legal advice.

Talking energy in Corby

Head of APSE Energy Phil Brennan was in Corby to discuss the role of local authorities in promoting low emission vehicles, charging and infrastructure. The event was an opportunity for public sector officers to gain insight into new technologies and debate the best approach to achieving a lower carbon footprint.

Welcome back!

We're delighted to welcome back Louise Melville, APSE Principal Advisor for Scotland. Louise has been on maternity leave following the arrival of baby son Zac.

Point of view



Derek McCallan
CEO, NILGA
Northern Ireland Local
Government Association

Councils strengthen democracy and drive the economy in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's Governance and Public Services recipe is a rare mixture in 2018.

A devolved Legislative Assembly is an ingredient we haven't had for well over a year. Add big portions of global fiscal, environmental and political changes, stir in lashings of Brexit and you have arguably a Northern Irish stew that would be hard to serve to anyone in our (by necessity) resilient community.

The antidote is the 11 relatively new councils, formed under the Review of Public Administration, who'll be three years in situ by April 2018.

They're enabling the creation of over 12000 new businesses annually, delivering a new planning regime and are looking ahead in terms of long term community development driven by neighbourhood needs. They are investing in infrastructure like broadband, new parks, innovative affordable housing, new leisure centres, creating natural parkland and developing the social economy, all this while diverting over 50% of waste from landfill. Not bad with 4% of NI's £20 billion per annum public purse!

NILGA and a much wider body of opinion across Northern Ireland know that resources and direct services of councils in Northern Ireland are paltry compared to neighbouring regions, at a time when there are unrealistic expectations on them to deliver much, much more. All this, in the absence of political leadership at devolved Assembly level, just when government departments are forcing austerity cuts down to council and community level.

It's time to get real and face facts. Devolution in Northern Ireland stopped at Stormont, which is

presently over one year in suspension. NILGA, therefore, has put forward several political and policy solutions to strengthen democracy and drive the economy of NI through councils. These include:

- A Programme for Local Government, seeking a proper conversation with strategic partners on bringing key local services like regeneration, local roads, local transport, economic and skills development into a "place shaping" role led by councils;
- Setting up an All-Party Group on local government's development and investment;
- Commissioning a piece by the New Policy Institute looking at practical benefits of devolution to citizens
- Work planning with all tiers of government on cross border, national UK and transnational levels through the UK Local Government Forum, the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, the Committee of the Regions (EU) and the Commonwealth to foster economic sustainability and efficiencies through councils, who are best placed to "lock in" wealth within the communities they are proud to serve.

There's no lack of challenge and no poverty of ambition in NILGA and local government in Northern Ireland.

Local councils are key to a better Northern Ireland; they have the stability, track record and foundation to work from. Is it not time to give them a challenge that is greater than 4% of the public purse?

New APSE Approved Partners: Welcome Nexus Vehicle Rental



Congratulations and a warm welcome to Nexus Vehicle Rental, who have now been confirmed as APSE Approved Partners.

Through this partnership, APSE hopes to ensure local councils are able to take advantage of Nexus's innovative and forward-thinking approach to vehicle rental booking and management. Nexus' unique online platform, IRIS, means business customers can access more than 550,000 vehicles including 100,000 specialist and commercial vehicles and 50,000 HGVs across 2,000 locations. Nexus is also the only rental provider to offer a UK-wide HGV rental solution

alongside cars and vans through a single source platform.

Speaking about our new Approved Partner, APSE Principal Advisor Rob Bailey said that, "As a highly experienced market leader in tech-driven business mobility provision, Nexus will be a huge asset to our local authority members, particularly those who are responsible for road and highway maintenance."

APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said that, "I am thrilled to welcome Nexus to the APSE family. APSE has long recognised the importance of quick, flexible and cost-effective vehicle rental to frontline services. As well as offering a fast and seamless rental service, Nexus has a proven track record of reducing its clients' rental spend. In what are financially difficult times for local councils, this will be of enormous value to our members."

As Approved Partners, Nexus will appear at exhibitor's events, and will be sharing their technological expertise at service area specific advisory groups.

David Brennan, CEO at Nexus, expressed delight at gaining APSE Approved Partner status. David said, "Delivering

frontline services is an increasingly challenging prospect, so we are really excited by the opportunity to help councils across the UK. We look forward to meeting key players within local government and showing them the value we can offer as a rental and business mobility provider."

Nexus are a terrific addition to our community and we look forward to their contribution as they help to drive excellence in local authority frontline services.

Nexus will be presented with their APSE Approved Partner certificate at the APSE Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar in Blackpool on 22 March 2018. Interested in attending the Seminar? Then please contact Rob Bailey, APSE's Highways Advisory Group contact, on rbailey@apse.org.uk

For more on Nexus Vehicle Rental, visit www.nexusrental.co.uk

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Delivering affordable homes in Scotland

Kevin Stewart MSP, Minister for Local Government and Housing, spoke to APSE about the efforts being made by the Scottish Government to tackle the housing crisis.

As a government, we have a clear and defining reason for making housing a priority – providing good quality, warm and affordable homes is vital to create a fairer Scotland, secure economic growth, and support and create jobs. 2017-18 has been a year of significant actions and investment to deliver on that, and we will keep building on our progress.

At the heart of that sits our commitment to deliver at least 50,000 affordable homes over the course of this Parliament, with 35,000 of these for social rent. This presents a huge opportunity to meet the housing needs of communities across Scotland.

While that is ambitious, it is right that we challenge ourselves to deliver the number of affordable homes that communities across Scotland need – and we have shown before that we can deliver.

Nearly 71,000 affordable homes have been delivered since 2007- with 48,813 for social rent, including 8,819 council homes, as well as 4,936 for affordable rent and 17,112 for affordable home ownership. To secure that progress, and continue it, requires the necessary

investment – something we are delivering in record levels.

As announced in our recent draft budget, more than £756 million will be made available in 2018-19 through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme – a 28% increase on this year. Our programme is expected to support between 12,000 and 14,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the construction and related sectors over the lifetime of this Parliament.

Of course, our target will not be met through one policy or programme – a range of measures are needed and we have delivered them. We have ended right to buy and reintroduced council house building. We are providing relief for first-time buyers and investing in shared equity. And we have introduced innovations like our Rental Income Guarantee Scheme, which will boost the build-to-rent sector, along with funding to help bring thousands of empty homes into ownership.

On top of home ownership, we are taking action to improve the private rented sector, which provides a place to call home for 770,000 people. Our new Private Residential Tenancy came into force last month and is the biggest change to the sector in a generation. It provides tenants with improved security and stability, and offers safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors. As part of that, Councils can apply for a cap on rent increases where they are too high and causing undue hardship to tenants.

More than £756 million will be made available in 2018-19 through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme – a 28% increase on this year.

A new Letting Agents Code of Practice will also come into effect on 31 January. Any letting agent must register, meeting a fit and proper person test and have completed relevant training, and it will provide a route of redress for tenants and landlords to resolve

complaints against letting agents for breaches of the Code.

Our mission also extends far beyond simply helping those who are close to the housing ladder to get on it – we want to transform opportunities and outcomes for those who are furthest from it, experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping. In a society as wealthy as ours everyone should have access to a safe and warm place to stay and we should not be prepared to tolerate anything less.

Our current Programme for Government sets out actions to renew and redouble that work, including the creation of a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group, backed by £50 million to drive change.

Since its first meeting towards the end of last year, the action group worked at pace, and closely with local authorities and partners, to identify areas where there is the greatest need and develop actions that can have the most impact – starting with how we tackle rough sleeping this winter.

Those actions have been implemented quickly and ensured more safe and warm places to stay, and extra support, for those who may find themselves at risk of rough sleeping this winter. And work does not stop there and the group will now be looking at how we can eradicate rough sleeping for good, end homelessness, and transform temporary accommodation.

Ultimately, all of our efforts are about more than simply delivering numbers. It is about delivering the right homes, in the right places, and which are left for generations for both individuals and communities. That means continuing to work closely with the housing sector – particularly registered social landlords and local authorities – who I know will rise to the challenge and maximise this opportunity.

Taken together, in meeting our commitments we have a huge opportunity to increase and improve housing for all, starting with the most vulnerable people in our society. It's clear we still have more to do, but we have all the tools in place and I know we can do it.

- For further information, please contact Philip Whyte on philip.whyte@gov.scot

Helping to fuel progress in highways and traffic engineering

We spoke to Richard Hayes, Chief Executive of the Institute of Highways Engineers (IHE), about how the IHE can help council frontline staff with accredited alternatives to academic progression

In 2001, the then Education Secretary David (now Lord) Blunkett, said that the government was poised to bridge the gap between vocational and academic education; in a speech to the Institute of Economic Affairs he described how he wanted to enable young people to develop the necessary skills to work in engineering and other more traditional crafts. Vocational GCSEs were introduced into schools in 2002, and these enabled young people aged 14-16 to pursue work related skills and study simultaneously.

Fast forward to another Education Secretary, Michael Gove, who proposed that traditional academic subjects should be taught with an emphasis on testing by written examination which effectively put an end to vocational training within schools. The current government has sought to reverse the direction Gove intended, by introducing a T level qualification, but the process

is slow and inevitably bureaucratic.

Meanwhile British manufacturing and construction industries have failed over time to invest in sufficient numbers of people to train and develop; they rely on skilled employees from overseas and Britain is being left with a huge skills shortage, regardless of the implications of Brexit.

Despite a huge growth in school leavers continuing into higher education, there is still an insufficient supply of appropriate degree courses that equip students with the necessary skills to enter the traditional industries; this has been compounded by the decline of technical colleges and the lack of appropriate opportunities within the FE sector,

Industry employers have the solution in their own hands but are increasingly failing to see the benefits of recruiting school leavers and developing their skills through on the job training.

The ability for individuals to learn as they work is at the heart of IHE's arrangements

In the particular sector I work in, highways and traffic engineering, which covers a wide range of skill sets from road operative through to Senior Manager, the industry also faces further recruitment issues; failing to attract enough women.

The Institute of Highways Engineers (IHE) is assisting to improve the industry's reputation in a number of ways by providing positive role models and

removing any barriers to progression; it offers the opportunity to all those in the industry, including newcomers at any level, to enhance their career prospects through a detailed framework of training and development which allows all individuals to achieve their potential. As with the vocational GCSE strategy and the models that operated during the 1970s and 80s, the ability for individuals to learn as they work is at the heart of the IHE's arrangements.

The IHE will work with employers and offer the ability to develop the skills of employees within the overall business strategy by combining education and training with work based experience. In addition, whilst training is provided on a practical basis, the evidence gathered during an employee's work can also be matched against qualification standards providing an outcome which is both vocational and academic; these can also be used to assist in professional registration with the Engineering Council.

Commitment is required by both employer and employee to support each other's objectives and ultimately achieve the correct outcomes. IHE's role is to assess the options available and provide any necessary external training and/or monitoring.

If you are an employee, line manager or HR professional, the IHE can help your company to achieve greater rewards at a pace suited to you and as part of your organisation business planning.

- *IHE is currently running the 'Highways Liability' training course with APSE. For details about the course, and other training courses, please contact Jan Kennedy on jkennedy@apse.org.uk.*

2018 Dates for your diary

1st March	Transformation Tools: Appraising and delivering an in-house model of service delivery, London
8th - 9th March	The Big Energy Summit 2018, Kenilworth
15th March	APSE Parks Seminar 2018, Knutsford
22nd - 23rd March	Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar 2018, Blackpool
16th - 18th May	APSE Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar 2018, Aviemore



performance networks seminar 2017

Report back

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

Best and Most Improved Performer Awards

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

Performance Networks Seminar Report Back

Missed out on the 2017 Performance Networks Seminar? Here we give you a round up of this year's speakers and topics.



APSE Head of Performance Networks Debbie Johns

The APSE Performance Networks Seminar 2017 focused on how public services use data to overcome challenges and evidence change.

The two-day event was an excellent opportunity for delegates to examine the way data can help councils manage reduced budgets and generate income. On the first day of the seminar, delegates heard from various high-profile keynote speakers on the importance of benchmarking data. In the afternoon, delegates could attend one of six informative and engaging forums and then one of twelve service-specific workshops. The forums and workshops allowed delegates to discuss issues of local concern and develop solutions with colleagues through problem solving surgeries.

Stats and stripes

The opening speaker of this year's performance network seminar joined us all the way from across the Atlantic. Gerald Young is Senior Research Associate at the International City/County Management Association, an organisation in USA that supports local government in a similar way to APSE in the UK. Gerald discussed the challenges of performance benchmarking in the USA, namely issues surrounding data access and transparency – the so-called 'transparency tug-of-war'.

Gerald also highlighted how more local authorities in USA are attaching their budgets to measurable customer results. For example, the city of New Orleans has created a budget that plans how public dollars will fund services to address community priorities. A strategic framework called "ResultsNOLA" is used by the City leaders and the public to measure the outcomes of those services.

You can learn more about benchmarking in the USA by reading Gerald's article on page 24.

Austerity: too far, too fast?

Next, delegates heard from Chris Hopkins, Senior Project Manager at Survation. Chris was there to share the findings of a recent survey Survation conducted on behalf of APSE. The survey looked at attitudes to neighbourhood services amongst the general public, mapping it against a similar poll Survation conducted with APSE in 2016.

Chris's presentation underlined the ways in which local councils are still viewed as vital to their local area. The survey showed the public continue to trust local authorities more than Government or private companies, with people trusting the council 7.5 times more than the government. Compared to last year's survey, there has actually been a shift in blame for frontline service decline away from councils to Government.

The findings were consistent with other public perception surveys and supports what many have called for, which is the prioritisation of funding for frontline local government neighbourhood services. You can find out more about the survey results by reading Paul Smith's article on page 24.

Maintaining or improving performance?

The Head of APSE's performance networks, Debbie Johns, provided a picture of performance from within the UK from the data sets. This demonstrated that neighbourhood services had been clearly affected by budget reductions with some services experiencing 38% reductions since 2011. Local authorities are clearly trying to offset these reductions by generating income which has increased by over 20% in some areas such as refuse collection, as well as innovation such as the use of LED and dimmable lamps. We are also seeing long term improvements in productivity and managing demand for services.

Debbie highlighted the power of the data in the battle for service funding and demonstrated how data can be used to monitor the impact of interventions such as Universal Infant Free School Meals and shared country-by-country analysis of the impact on free meal uptakes. She highlighted the importance of evidence, rather than opinion on 'making your case' back at your council.

The final part of the speech focused on progress made with new benchmarking modules such as Markets and Trading Standards, venturing into international comparators with USA and Australia and establishing benchmarking events for European cities on street cleansing in the City of London. She described the advances in technology being made to develop the ways that users can report and analyse data through the partnership with CAMMS and the development of an App for APSE's Land Audit Management System for inspecting the quality of street cleanliness, grounds maintenance and cemeteries and crematoria with BBITS/Love Clean Streets.

Debbie described the range of organisations who APSE are working with on benchmarking initiatives including Defra's National Litter Strategy, Zero Waste Scotland on the Litter Strategy in Scotland. DHCLG on the Parks Action Group, WLGA

in rolling out corporate services benchmarking, SCOTS on roads and the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland to meet the new benchmarking duty.

Forums and workshops

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

The forums explored a range of hot topics. In the forum “opportunities from working innovatively”, Andy Mudd of APSE Solutions explored the use of new technologies and new ways of working. Delegates shared their experiences of using new technologies and developing innovative ways of working, including smart technologies for service planning.

In the forum “managing assets in the current financial climate” Mike Hansford, Asset and Performance Manager at Dorset County Council, and Phil Brennan, Head of APSE Energy looked at funding and investment opportunities for council assets. Sharing Dorset’s experiences, Mike explored invest to save approaches, whilst Phil asked if councils were prepared for a future that is likely to be turbulent in the wake of Brexit, ongoing austerity and globalisation.

The “benchmarking with European cities on the street scene” forum looked at what lessons can be learnt from benchmarking with our neighbours on the continent. Facilitators included Vince Dignam and Jim Graham from the Cleansing Service for the City of London, Derek Robertson from Keep Scotland Beautiful and Paul O’Brien, APSE Chief Executive. Vince and Jim looked at what methodologies are available to councils for improving area standards and making efficiencies. The facilitators then looked at what types of litter are an issue for councils, and the various ways councils can effectively enforce their litter policies.



A panel Q&A with Gerald Young, Debbie Johns, Chris Hopkins and Cllr Archie Dryburgh

Other forums looked in detail at key leadership skills, benchmarking in Northern Ireland, as well as developments in performance networks.

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

Commercial breakdown

The second day of the seminar kicked off with a panel discussion, made up of a number of experts. The panel looked at commercial opportunities in frontline services, and whether innovation can help councils overcome the impact of budget cuts.

The panel included Richard Auton, Director for Walker Morris, Pete Johnson, Transport Services Manager for Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, Louise McErlain, Nutritionist for Manchester City Council, Ross Grieve, Building Services Commercial Manager for Fife Council, and Paul O’Brien, APSE Chief Executive.



APSE's Paul O'Brien joins Ross Grieve, Louise McErlain, Pete Johnson and Richard Auton in the panel discussion on commercialisation.

Richard Auton examined the legal issues surrounding local government commercial strategies; providing a concise and highly informative overview of the statutory charging powers available to local authorities. Pete Johnson of Wakefield provided some excellent examples of where his Council has been able to achieve commercial and social value from core services. One particularly inspiring scheme involved Wakefield’s troubled families apprentice programme.

Like Pete, Ross Grieve of Fife Council stressed that revenue streams are not the only way to think commercially; drawing attention to alternative delivery models, the procurement process and full cost recovery. Ross added that in order to successfully reinforce a commercial environment, councils have to set a clear strategy and ambition.

Louise McErlain was up next and echoed Ross’s point that councils have to be ambitious if they are to add social value to service delivery. Louise emphasised the business opportunities that can arise from adopting a social value approach. Referring to the education catering sector, Louise noted that by educating pupils and parents as to ‘what is a healthy packed lunch’, councils can demonstrate it is cheaper and easier to have a school meal.

Finally, Paul O’Brien spoke of how future commercialisation strategies have to focus on helping close funding gaps and rebalancing budgets. Paul gave examples of where local authorities had adopted a more sophisticated approach to trading and charging for services, but was keen to stress that good governance, scrutiny and transparency remain of fundamental importance to any local council’s commercial strategy. •

Best and most improved performer Awards 2017

Announcing the winners of the APSE Performance Networks Awards

Once again, this year's finalists demonstrated an exceptional commitment to frontline service provision and are brilliant examples of how measuring and comparing services can lead to real change. The APSE Performance Networks Awards 2017 recognised 'Best Performers' and 'Most Improved Performers' across frontline local government services on a range of cost and quality performance indicators, promoting excellence and continuous improvement.

Debbie Johns, Head of Performance Networks said, "Performance information is critical now more than ever. As local government faces ongoing austerity, using Performance Networks data helps to demonstrate the strides frontline services are taking, helping

them to continue to deliver vital neighbourhood services. I am delighted to see local councils celebrating their achievements."

APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, "The winners and finalists of these awards are stunning examples of what local government is capable of achieving. It is no secret that austerity is hitting councils hard. However, these winners and finalists are proof that in spite of financial constraints, local authorities continue to deliver superb local services by innovating and becoming more efficient.

The winners of the awards were presented by radio presenter Lorna Bancroft on Thursday 7 December at the APSE performance networks seminar 2017 in Blackpool.

Congratulations to all finalists and winners!

Building Cleaning

Best Performer



WINNER: EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Caerphilly County Borough Council
 Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
 East Renfrewshire Council
 Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
 Hartlepool Borough Council
 Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
 North Lanarkshire Council
 North Lincolnshire Council
 South Lanarkshire Council

Most Improved



WINNER: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Birmingham City Council
 Caerphilly County Borough Council
 East Renfrewshire Council
 Orkney Islands Council
 Renfrewshire Council
 Scottish Borders Council
 Tayside Contracts

Building Maintenance

Best Performer



WINNER: FALKIRK COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Falkirk Council
Oxford City Council
South Ayrshire Council
Swansea City & County
Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council
West Lothian Council

Most Improved



WINNER: DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Dundee City Council
Durham County Council
East Ayrshire Council
East Lothian Council
Falkirk Council
Fife Council
Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, Kirklees Council
North Ayrshire Council
Oxford City Council
South Ayrshire Council
Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council

Cemeteries and Crematorium Services

Best Performer



WINNER: CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Conwy County Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
Leicester City Council
North Lincolnshire Council
Oxford City Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Stafford Borough Council
Wyre Borough Council



WINNER: FIFE COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Birmingham City Council
Cardiff Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Fife Council
Leicester City Council
Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council
Oxford City Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Education Catering

Best Performer



WINNER: GATESHEAD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Aberdeen City Council
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Hartlepool Borough Council
Manchester City Council
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Sunderland City Council
Telford & Wrekin Council

Most Improved



WINNER: STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Aberdeen City Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
East Ayrshire Council
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
North Ayrshire Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Wolverhampton City Council

Environmental Health

Best Performer



WINNER: DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Dumfries & Galloway Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Orkney Islands Council
Preston City Council
South Ayrshire Council
Stroud District Council
West Lothian Council
Western Isles Council

Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural Services

Best Performer



WINNER: CONWY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Aberdeenshire Council
Broxtowe Borough Council
Cardiff Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Ipswich Borough Council
Oxford City Council
Stafford Borough Council
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council



WINNER: OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Dumfries & Galloway Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Hackney London Borough
Oxford City Council
Perth & Kinross Council
South Lanarkshire Council

Refuse Collection

Best Performer



WINNER: KETTERING BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

East Lothian Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Kettering Borough Council
North Lincolnshire Council
South Gloucestershire Council
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Warrington Borough Council
West Lindsey District Council

Most Improved



WINNER: EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Belfast City Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Kettering Borough Council
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Oxford City Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Warrington Borough Council
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Sports and Leisure Facility Management

Best Performer



WINNER: EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL
EAST RIDING LEISURE BEVERLEY

FINALISTS

Ashfield District Council
Lammas Leisure Centre

Broxtowe Borough Council
Bramcote Leisure Centre

Chelmsford City Council
Riverside Ice and Leisure

East of Riding of Yorkshire Council
East Riding Leisure Beverley

Hackney London Borough
Clissold Leisure Centre

North West Leicestershire District Council
Hermitage Leisure Centre

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Rotherham Leisure Complex

South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Haven Point

Most Improved



WINNER: TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL
NEWPORT POOL

FINALISTS

Ashfield District Council
Edgewood Drive Leisure Centre

Broxtowe Borough Council
Chilwell Olympia Sports Centre

Chelmsford City Council
Riverside Ice and Leisure

East of Riding of Yorkshire Council
East Riding Leisure Beverley

Hackney London Borough
Hackney Marshes Centre

Harrogate Borough Council
Knaresborough Pool

Nottingham City Council
Ken Martin Swimming Centre

Telford & Wrekin Council
Newport Pool

Vision Redbridge Culture & Leisure
Fullwell Cross Leisure Centre

Roads, Highways and Winter Maintenance

Best Performer



WINNER: HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

East Dunbartonshire Council
Hartlepool Borough Council
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Midlothian Council
Shetlands Islands Council
South Ayrshire Council
Telford & Wrekin Council
Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council
West Lothian Council
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Most Improved



WINNER: SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Aberdeen City Council
East Lothian Council
Inverclyde Council
Northumberland County Council
South Ayrshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Swansea City & County

Street Cleansing

Best Performer



WINNER: EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Conwy County Borough Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Gedling Borough Council
Kettering Borough Council
Stafford Borough Council
Stroud District Council
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Most Improved



WINNER: WAKEFIELD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Conwy County Borough Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Dumfries & Galloway Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Gedling Borough Council
Kettering Borough Council

North East Derbyshire District Council
North East Lincolnshire Council
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Stafford Borough Council
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Street Lighting

Best Performer



WINNER: WIGAN METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Angus Council
Denbighshire County Council
Dumfries & Galloway Council
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
West Dunbartonshire Council
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Most Improved



WINNER: INVERCLYDE COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Angus Council
Conwy County Borough Council
Durham County Council
Inverclyde Council
Isle of Anglesey County Council
Midlothian Council
Perth & Kinross Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
West Dunbartonshire Council

Transport Operations and Vehicle Maintenance

Best Performer



WINNER: NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

FINALISTS

East Renfrewshire Council
North East Lincolnshire Council
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Oxford City Council
Renfrewshire Council
Tayside Contracts
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Most Improved

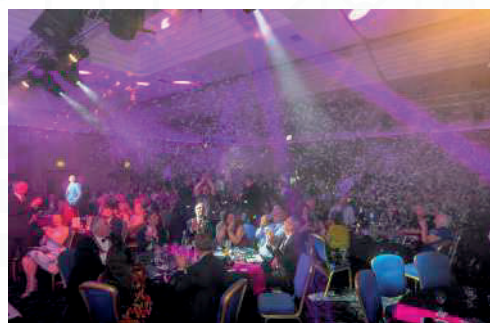


WINNER: NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINALISTS

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
North East Derbyshire District Council
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Oxford City Council
Shetland Islands Council
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

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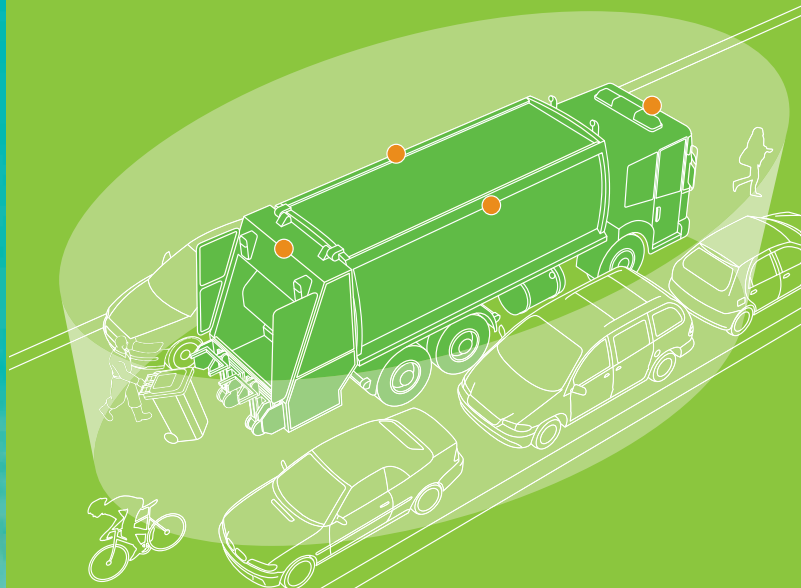
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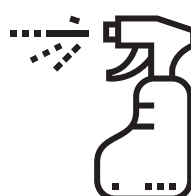
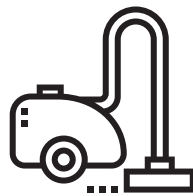
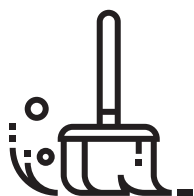
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Discover how your service can achieve a clean bill of health

Head of service at Bolton Council, Elaine Bridge, talks about how APSE's new training course – Cleaning in local authority environments – has helped her team adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

As Local Authorities' Traded Services wrestle with difficult decisions on service delivery such as meeting savings options and remaining sustainable and competitive, prioritising work on business growth can seem like one challenge too many.

Sound commercialism does not ignore opportunities of new income streams; diversifying the service offer and adapting to changing demand. However, focusing on core work and consolidating during times of austerity is often top of the To Do list. When Bolton Council considered the trading performance of its Building Cleaning Service, the lower risk strategy to focus on core specialisms was a priority. This was because of challenges such as the introduction of the Living Wage and increasing materials inflation. Having just merged the Cleaning Service with its Catering Services, the consolidation approach of joining two large services - and the change process itself - was demanding enough.

But as councils sell off their assets, and multi occupancy is a feature of many community and social care buildings, services such as cleaning can increasingly be called upon to provide more diverse services for a wider range of clients all occupying a single building. Corporate landlord responsibilities may change and more complex internal sub-letting can be an outcome of shared premises.

When Bolton Cleaning managers were first approached to consider a care cleaning service for multiple care

environments in Bolton, the instinct was to reject the work and recommend clinical and care cleaning specialists. However, upon reflection and persuasion by adult social care colleagues, managers considered adapting current methods; providing specific training and ensuring improved mutual contracting arrangements to reflect the change. The possibility of a "care cleaning" service was tabled.

There appeared to be a clear divide between clinical cleaning, such as hospital holistic cleaning systems, with those standard tasks associated with offices, schools, council and community buildings. Traditionally, toilets and kitchens require specific and deeper cleaning tasks on a standard cleaning specification. Nevertheless, consideration of blood, sharps, bodily fluids and soiled waste disposal suggested a new focus on infection control was needed.

Research indicated that though there are many spill kits and specialist equipment on the market, it became apparent that in a micro way the service was using many off-the-shelf solutions in an ad hoc manner. This ensured it was demand-led on an individual customer basis. Current methods didn't recognise the need to collectively identify best practice as specialised care cleaners. For example, dementia-friendly training was in place to understand better the needs of vulnerable adults. However, the new and combined knowledge wasn't being used to harness a way to market to new customers as a business growth opportunity.

Staff needed refresher and focused training to really consider the nuances of care settings, the resources available and more in-depth infection control principles. Our Training Coordinator researched clinical cleaning and professional development routes but found an absence of care rather than clinical modules. We approached APSE for suggestions and, with a combined effort, we managed to design a suitable training course with an industry expert who could provide an appropriate and more in-depth overview of care cleaning needs.

In November, APSE held a pilot training session with the service's mobile cleaning team and managers. Through Jan Kennedy and APSE'S contacts with The British Cleaning Council, Delia Cannings,

a guru of the industry, was asked to present and share her huge wealth of knowledge in care cleaning.

Delia approached what could have been a very dry and tedious subject in a fascinating, highly practical and 'down to earth' manner. Delia began by confirming that cleaners were 'hygiene technicians' in reality and that their role was often undervalued as scientists in the industry. All attendees were delighted with the course content and felt many aspects of the training session would be replicated in new tasks and practices in the cleaning operation. Much of the agenda was a reinforcement of hygiene and compliance knowledge and it is recognised that many cleaning services have limited means to provide refresher training for all. This course proved an effective tool in supporting lead or mobile cleaning staff who influence, coach or supervise other direct personnel.

We focused on decontamination, standard operating procedures, common contaminants, selecting appropriate cleaning products and typical infections. The course content was peppered with fascinating anecdotes and vivid examples. These are excellent aide memoirs for staff and we will never regard limescale in the same way again.

Our staff were uplifted by the positive tone of the course delivery. Thanks to Delia's training course, a much more motivated and invigorated team went back to work that afternoon, with a renewed focus on the importance of care cleaning. •

Since delivering our pilot event, APSE is pleased to offer councils an opportunity to take advantage of our new course - Cleaning in local authority environments. Upcoming dates include:

20 March 2018, Manchester

23 April 2018, Glasgow

10 May 2018, Central London

17 May 2018, Belfast

The event is £159.00 + vat per delegate.

We can also deliver a bespoke event for you, please contact Jan Kennedy jkennedy@apse.org.uk for more information.

Riding high in the English recycling league

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has topped the country's recycling league for the first time despite the challenges of budget pressures and rising waste disposal costs. Discover the reasons behind their success.

The council recycles, reuses or composts 65.4% of all household rubbish - more than any other local authority in England

To achieve the highest recycling rate in the country is a massive accomplishment for any local authority.

East Riding of Yorkshire Council climbed to the top of the annual council recycling league for the very first time when figures were announced by DEFRA in December 2017. It has been a real journey for the council which, 10 years ago, was ranked as number 214 in England, with a recycling rate of 24.9%. Now the council recycles, reuses or composts 65.4% of all household rubbish – more than any other local authority in England.

The council credits its high recycling rate to a number of factors. But one major reason is the close teamwork that has developed between its waste and recycling service and the residents of the East Riding.

Paul Tripp, group manager of environmental services at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, said: "We see recycling as very much a team effort between us and our residents. As a council we put the waste schemes in place and try to make recycling as easy as possible. But, at the end of the day, if residents don't get behind our schemes then nothing gets

recycled. So we are very lucky that East Riding residents have supported our projects from day one. We wouldn't have achieved this without their amazing support."

The unitary authority, which covers a large, mainly rural area, operates its own in-house refuse collection service. The bins of 153,000 households are emptied every week by a team of 220 rubbish collectors.

The East Riding introduced its first recycling scheme back in 2003, providing a second bin for newspapers and magazines. Now its fortnightly collections are comprised of three wheelie bins: a blue bin for recyclable waste, green for non-recyclable waste, and brown for garden and food waste.

The easy-to-use system has played a large part in winning the support of residents and encouraging them to sort their rubbish into the correct bins.

Thanks to the council's recycling contracts – with Biffa Waste Ltd, J & B Bio Ltd and FCC Environment – most of the area's waste can now be recycled. The small amount that can't is sent to be processed into Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF). All of the plastic waste collected in the East Riding is recycled in the UK. None is shipped to China.

The past few years have not been without its challenges for the waste and recycling team.

"At the end of the day, if residents don't get behind our schemes then nothing gets recycled. So we are very lucky that East Riding residents have supported our projects from day one."

It faces having to make huge savings over the next few years due to Government funding cuts, and there is an increasing demand for the service as the population of the East Riding continues to grow. So maintaining and improving its service for the public isn't an easy task.

Without making major changes to recycling systems that are proven to work well, the team has needed to find creative ways to reduce the rising costs of waste disposal and reduce costly bin contamination.

Last year, the team's big initiative was to encourage residents to recycle more food waste in their brown bins so it could be recycled into compost. Bin collection figures showed residents were still putting a lot of food waste in their green bin. Food made up almost a third of green bin waste, and none



of that could be recycled. So the team devised a scheme to send a clear, but polite, message to residents in the most direct way possible.

Over the space of eight months, orange tags were placed on the green bins of all 153,000 households in the East Riding asking residents 'please put food waste in your brown bin'. The massive undertaking involved every member of the team. Managers and officers joined the refuse collection crews on their rounds to help tag the wheelie bins in every town and village. The results of the scheme were immediate. The tags led to a reduction of 2,000 tonnes of waste from green bins – and an increase of 2,300 tonnes in the brown bins.

Paul said: "So far the diversion has saved the council around £80,000 in disposal costs, and projections suggest the overall impact may save us as much as £250,000 per year. So a simple orange tag has produced some really impressive results. We've also had many more requests for bins and kitchen caddies which shows even greater engagement from our residents."

One of the team's biggest strengths is its

refuse crews – which really do go above and beyond the call of duty to serve the community.

Last year three of the council's bin men were hailed heroes after they tackled an armed gunman who tried to steal a car right in front of their bin lorry. They were presented with three community awards for their actions.

“Projections suggest the overall impact may save us as much as £250,000 per year. So a simple orange tag has produced some really impressive results.”

In the past, crew members have also rescued people from road accidents and alerted emergency services to residents in trouble on their rounds.

Paul said: "Our refuse crews are the face of the council out in the community. They are our frontline ambassadors. They will go out of their way to help anyone and residents do tell us how much they appreciate them."

East Riding's waste and recycling team isn't resting on its laurels and has much more work to do to tackle other recycling issues. Food waste recycling remains a priority, and attention will also be focused on improving textile recycling, which has also proved a problem in the green bins.

But the team knows that, when council staff and residents work well together, great things can be achieved.



• For more information please contact Paul Tripp at Paul.Tripp@eastriding.gov.uk

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The state of Benchmarking

After delivering his presentation at the Performance Networks Seminar in Blackpool, we spoke to Gerald Young, Senior Management Associate at the International City/County Management Association, about the challenges of benchmarking stateside.

For those involved in benchmarking, there's a natural curiosity about how such initiatives are pursued elsewhere and what the data show. In the case of the United States, there's also much more than a single answer.

Although organised benchmarking programs have been around for decades, there has been limited agreement on how to coordinate those efforts. The most ambitious of those programs was the ICMA Centre for Performance Management, which began in 1994 and collected data on as many as 5,000 metrics – ranging from efficiency, timeliness, quality, and satisfaction to descriptive information about how services were being delivered or what policies might affect their administration.

While that effort peaked at participation from about 230 jurisdictions, it was hampered in part by the attempted comprehensiveness of its scope. Even where two jurisdictions might commit to responding to as many of the measures as they could, they might find that there was very little alignment on which measures those were, and as a result, very spotty results with which to compare.

To rectify that situation, a national Insights program followed, paring the list of metrics to 950, while adding big data visualisations and predictive analytics to facilitate better understanding and forecasting. Even that number, however, proved too daunting for the majority of cities and counties, 59% of which were still not doing any internal measurement, let alone benchmarking with others.

In an attempt to lower the barriers to entry, ICMA has shifted to a new Open Access Benchmarking programme that is limited to 80 metrics. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather provide at least a sampling of comparison data across a range of key services. One of the other benefits of this approach is that it takes into account the proliferation of new

f the States: king in America



their peers. In benchmarking, the metrics are being shared online, the structures are being replicated around the country, and, in the case of the Valley Benchmark Cities, actually being adapted from the Ontario Benchmarking Program that's since become the Canadian standard.

At ICMA's 2017 conference in San Antonio, Texas, Annalisa Haskell, the New South Wales Executive Director for Local Government Professionals Australia, spoke about an effort to expand that information sharing to involve Australia, New Zealand, the US, and the UK. Debbie Johns of APSE is also an active partner in that effort as our respective organizations look for ways to find common ground on key metrics.

State and local governments are often called the laboratories of democracy, and they act as such not only in experimenting with new approaches, but also in sharing their findings with their peers

In this time of heightened awareness of workplace diversity issues, among the metrics that's part of the list for international comparison is the proportion of chief executives by gender. Among ICMA members, the percentage of female CEOs in 2016 had risen to 15%, just slightly ahead of where that figure stood in 1981. The data to come from comparing such statistics can help inform recruitment and retention policies in all participating countries.

Having attended the APSE performance networks seminar in Blackpool, I was able to join a discussion on succession planning, during which one of the attendees mentioned, in no uncertain terms, how poor their succession planning is. Aside from being a frank admission of the challenge we all face, it brought to mind for me a recent succession planning study completed by the Centre for State and Local Government Excellence.

Whether it's by exchanging such case studies, encouraging US managers to learn more about the performance network award winners, or passing along links to ICMA award winners, there's plenty we can all learn by greater networking, and I look forward to continuing the discussions.

- You can access the ICMA's planning study following the link: <https://slge.org/publications/succession-planning>.
- For more information about how your authority can use benchmarking data to improve service delivery, contact performance networks at performance.networks@apse.org.uk.

software solutions that have become available. Rather than prescribing a single data entry and analytics package, this program is software neutral and allows full access to data in a basic Excel format.

This open approach is also helpful to participants in the regional benchmarking initiatives being undertaken around the country. Some of these have attempted broad participation statewide, such as the Florida Benchmarking Consortium and university-based efforts in North Carolina and Tennessee. Others have focused on a single metropolitan area, such as the Valley Benchmark Cities program around Phoenix, Arizona, or a new effort in the Chicago suburbs. While each of these efforts had access to its own pool of data, they had little ability to compare outside those borders. The open access model is based on a nationwide set of agreed-upon definitions that can be used to expand the list of potential comparisons.

State and local governments are often called the laboratories of democracy, and they act as such not only in experimenting with new approaches, but also in sharing their findings with

The people are always right!



APSE has recently worked with Suration on a survey looking at attitudes to neighbourhood services amongst the general public.

Paul Smith, Director of Government & Public Sector at Suration, examines the results of the survey, and what they mean for local councils.

Figure 1

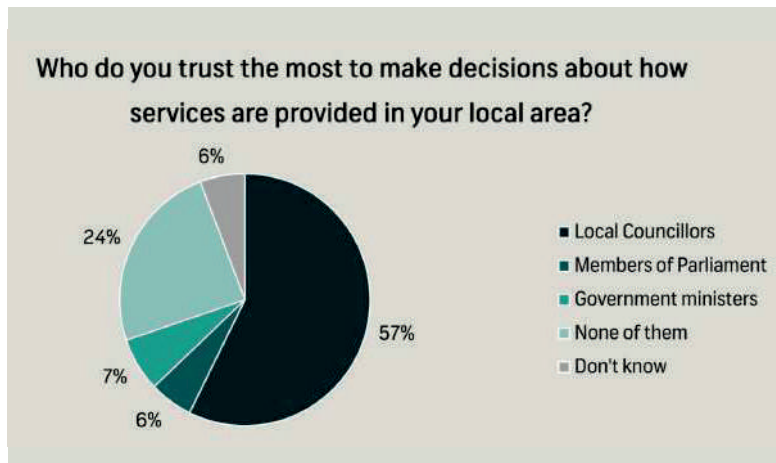
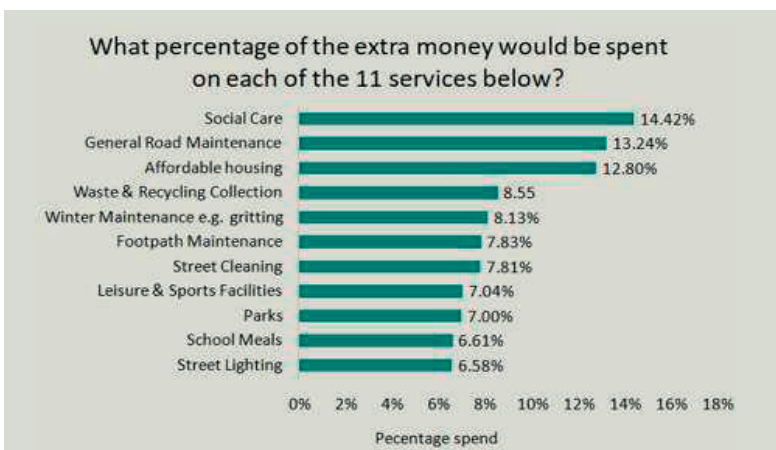


Figure 2



Public opinion is clear. It is common sense that local public services must be provided directly by the local council and they should provide the services people want in their local area.

The results of research conducted over two years by Suration on behalf of APSE consistently show,

- People trust Councils and Councillors more;
- Want more of their taxes allocated to Councils to spend locally;
- A net positive rating for Council services despite cuts.

This article sets out the extent of public support for the provision of local public services by the Council.

Public ownership is back!

While media and political commentators have only just caught up with the public, Suration's polling has consistently shown for many years that the public see privatised services as costing more and providing less.

When it comes to essential public services that are vital to people's everyday lives, the public don't trust private companies and feel that have lost control of privatised services that should serve them.

It is all about who do you trust

Suration in 2016 and 2017 conducted two national surveys of opinion for APSE using representative national samples of the population of over 1500 which yielded astonishingly similar results in both surveys.

On the key issue of trust in the 2017 survey:

- Five times as many people trust the local Council over the Government to make decisions about how services are delivered in their local area.

- Eight times as many trust local councillors over government ministers to make decision about their local area.
- Five and half times as many trusted councils to provide services in their local area over a private company with people trusting the council 7.5 times more than the government.

These results don't indicate people unconditionally love their local Councillor or Council, they just show people trust Councils and Councillors relatively more than anyone else because they feel that they can more easily hold Councils and Councillors to account.

The public want more money for their neighbourhood services

79% of the public would like the government to give more money to local councils to spend at the local level for services that are in their neighbourhood.

This support for increased funds is across all voters for all political parties. Councils are in a strong position to advocate for local services because of the high level of trust in Councils to provide these services compared to any of the alternatives.

People's priorities for more spending

We asked the public how they wanted the any additional money spent (see Figure 2). The public given a notional spend of an additional 100 points among the nine choices made almost the same choices in 2016 and 2017.

When offered additional options of housing and social care in 2017 the public adjusted their allocations placing Social Care first and Housing third.

Measuring performance based on public satisfaction

Government will eventually have to respond to public demand that money is spent on their priorities. Any increased Westminster funding will likely have strings attached including an insistence on a way of making Councils accountable.

Central government used to require Councils to undertake a place survey that collected information about what Whitehall thought was important. Now is the opportune time to develop a performance measure based on public satisfaction.

Working with APSE, Suration have developed resident satisfaction benchmarks that have a clear public facing role. They show a clear pattern of positive satisfaction from local road maintenance being lowest to high levels of satisfaction for parks. The summary does not detail the wealth of information about how some services have highly different ranges of scores from the public and variations within each of the six APSE regions.

- *Suration presented the detailed result of a survey of 1,634 at the APSE performance networks conference. Suration was the only pollster to forecast a hung parliament in the 2017 General election*

- *If you are interested in finding out more about surveying your local voters contact me at paul.smith@suration.com*

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The future's looking bright thanks to Smartlight

We spoke to Andy Rutherford, Head of Streetscene and Highways Operations at Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, about their highly innovative and successful street lighting project – Smartlight

Doncaster Council's Smartlight project was born from the need to reduce our street lighting energy, carbon emissions and upgrade all street lighting to Light Emitting Diodes (LED's).

In 2015, the burden of financial pressures, carbon taxation and street lighting manufacturers moving away from old technology lead to the development of a financial model which showed the advantage of upgrading all Doncaster's streetlights to LED's and managed through a Central Management System (CMS). Doncaster's Mayor Ros Jones, her Cabinet and senior managers fully supported the project.

To deliver Smartlight, the council secured £14.4m of Salix and internal funding to change over 44,000 street lights to LED. Through vigorous procurement and tender evaluation, the council procured suppliers that could bring added value and substantial experience in delivering the project.

A robust communication plan was developed to promote the benefits and minimise any negative impact. The council issued press releases and promoted the plans using local radio, email, the council's website, Chamber of Commerce, Business Doncaster and through social media channels. This ensured residents and businesses were informed of the plans.

A major challenge for the project was what to do with 44,000 redundant lanterns and 211 miles of internal column cable. Redundant lanterns contain valuable materials.

National companies exist that offer a recycling service. However, the council wanted to challenge convention and look at the bigger environmental, social and economic picture. The way the council recycled the redundant street



lighting lanterns is innovative and the first one of its kind in the UK.

Through detailed meetings with the National Offender Management Services, the Council secured Doncaster's HMP Lindholme as a recycling partner. The Council also used the services of a local company that had the capacity to transport the redundant lanterns, dispose of the recycled materials, comply with Lindholme prison's strict security arrangements and offer direction about the most economically advantageous time to sell the recycled materials.

Security measures at HMP Lindholme result in detailed accounting of material and show that 97% of materials have been recycled. The project has also delivered a surplus of £1.98 per lantern. Furthermore, income generation from the recycling element of the project will lead to a reduction in project borrowing.

Additionally, the council wanted to align with the Governments strategy of "purposeful activity to better prepare offenders following release into their communities." Recycling offers meaningful work and qualifications that can break the cycle of crime and the subsequent financial pressures that an offender places on society (keeping a prisoner costs £65,000 a year). Approximately 32 prisoners have been employed throughout the project and many have enrolled on the City and Guilds NVQ.

As well as being delivered successfully and on budget, the council has enjoyed considerable financial and corporate benefits as a result of the project. Street lighting energy spend has reduced by over 50% and there has been a reduction in carbon taxation.

Condition surveys of the street light were also carried out at the time of the LED lantern installation, that allowed the council to risk rate columns and develop a long term column replacement plan that is now being delivered.

The CMS has been developed and now enables the council to manage its lighting stock more effectively and minimise any future energy increases. In terms of other environmental benefits, the project has resulted in a year on year reduction of 9,400 tonnes of carbon. The project also retained the recycling of the redundant lanterns within the geographical boundaries of Doncaster; reducing the number of road miles.

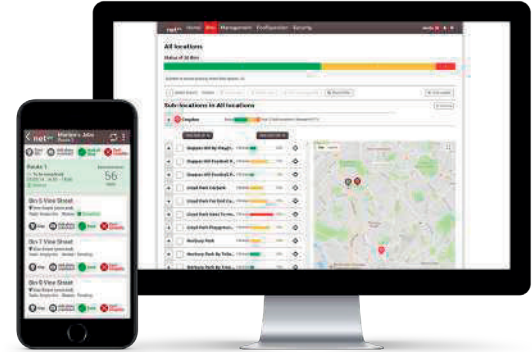
Doncaster Council has met with and provided information to other local authorities and contractors who will be delivering similar projects. Additionally, the council has provided contact details for the prison service; actively encouraging them to make contact to discuss this innovative recycling route.

The street lighting manufacturing industry will eventually stop making old technology street lighting. As such, an excellent country wide opportunity exists for the prison service to replicate the recycling element of Smartlight. The prison service has subsequently secured further recycling projects with a mixture of private companies and local authorities utilising six English prisons to carry out lantern recycling.

In a difficult economic climate where other authorities are turning off street lights at night or removing some lighting, councils should seriously consider running their own Smartlight scheme; a resourceful approach that will maintain lighting while providing savings.

• *To learn more about the Smartlight scheme, please contact Andy Rutherford at Andy.Rutherford@Doncaster.gov.uk*

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Gaining financial independence with property investments

With local councils braced for a significant reduction in money from central government, West Lindsey District Council has turned to property investments in its effort to generate income and become fully independent of national grant funding.

West Lindsey District Council has sparked a public debate with a recent investment of public money outside of its district.

The local authority, situated in Lincolnshire, purchased a 224 year lease of a Travelodge hotel in Keighley, which was likened by certain sections of the media to councils playing 'monopoly' with tax payers money.

But the council stands by its decision as property investment is a means of securing additional and sustainable sources of income to support services for local people.

Cllr Jeff Summers, Leader of West Lindsey District Council said, "The acquisition of the Hotel in Keighley was the first property purchased by the council as part of our Investment Strategy."

"It is just one way in which we are looking to increase our revenue income to sustain services. Our grant funding from Central Government has reduced by £4m since 2012 so investments like this is about survival."

"This investment along with a continued drive for efficiencies will ensure the council has a sound financial position over the next five years and beyond."

The hotel cost £2.35m and is currently funded from internal borrowing which means it is supported by the council's own cash. It will provide a net income once borrowing is in place of around £90,000 per annum to the council for the period the asset is held by the council.

As part of the acquisition process, the council follows a 14 point scoring criteria that ensures it considers all issues of the asset from remaining length of tenancy and a minimum yield through to proximity to the district.

Cllr Summers added, "We have held commercial properties for some time but this is the first outside our district boundaries."

"Due diligence is taken very seriously

from securing the best yield on the acquisition and recognising all responsibilities as a landlord through to understanding the financial stability of the tenant."

"As with all our assets we will continually review them each year - but this is a new step for the council and we are confident this decision will be in the interests of our communities across West Lindsey."

The council purchased the freehold with a sitting tenant who has a long term agreement and it has no other costs after collecting the rent.

Investing beyond a local authority's boundary allows the council to take advantage of active and buoyant markets where returns can be sufficient to generate resources for its own area.

Investments inside and outside the district will generate income which will be used to support the investment of more than £30m within West Lindsey with an expected economic impact assessed at being in excess of that.

Cllr Summers explained the council will continue to invest in the district in a variety of ways. He added, "Quite simply we are casting our net quite wide because opportunities in our district are limited and we must search out the best return possible."

"We have looked at several opportunities from Lincoln to Nottingham, Mansfield, Doncaster, Sheffield and others. If they do not meet a strict fourteen point list of criteria we have set, in a process which identifies which opportunities are safe and profitable, they do not go forward."

Director of Resources at West Lindsey District Council, Ian Knowles said, "Investing beyond a local authority's

boundary allows the council to take advantage of active and buoyant markets where returns can be sufficient to generate resources for its own area. In this way a local authority can generate income to support its own residents and services."

The council also plans to purchase 6,000sq ft of workspace on the Riverside Enterprise Park, Saxilby, which is near Lincoln and within the district boundary.

This will enable Stirlin Developments, Castle Square Developments and Lambert Smith Hampton to begin Phase 3 of the development.

"We are delighted to be able to invest in this exciting, high quality development in West Lindsey," said Cllr Summers.

He added, "As well as creating another revenue stream for the council we will be increasing the work opportunities for residents and providing essential work space for budding entrepreneurs to flourish and supporting other businesses to relocate."

"Small businesses cannot always afford to build/purchase their own premises and the principle of developing small workspace units to accommodate new and expanding SMEs (Small Medium Enterprises) in order to generate jobs and wealth in our district is supported."

"This is all part of our investment strategy. Economic Growth is our new mantra for 2018. Breaking ground and creating opportunities for 2019."



- APSE's Local Authorities Commercialisation, Income and Trading Network is free to attend. For further information contact Mo Baines at mbaines@apse.org.uk

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