



APSE Performance Networks; Local Government Frontline Data Roundup



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Foreword

This publication is based on analysis of data from APSE performance networks. It is the largest voluntary public sector benchmarking service across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Used by over 170 local authorities it leads the way in local government benchmarking. The size of its membership gives added benefits to members by being able to offer a wide variety of comparator groups.

What services does it cover?

Environmental services

1. Waste and recycling
2. Parks, open spaces and horticultural services
3. Street cleansing
4. Cemetery and crematorium services
5. Environmental health
6. Climate change

Technical services

1. Roads, highways and winter maintenance
2. Core highways
3. Street lighting
4. Transport operations and vehicle maintenance
5. Trading standards

Facility management

1. Sports and leisure facility management
2. Building cleaning
3. Building maintenance
4. Catering services

The service also includes the following Inspection Apps:

- LAMS (Land Audit Management System)
- PIMS (Play Inspection Management System)
- MIST (Memorial Inspection Safety Tool)
- CLAMS (Cleaning Audit Management System)

APSE performance networks is recognised as a trusted and robust source of performance data within local government. The model meets all industry standard criteria in terms of data consistency, reliability and comparability. Performance networks' data undergoes a rigorous error checking and three stage validation procedure to ensure that its data is robust. Uniquely it has over two decades of legacy data providing valuable trend data for local government frontline services covering cost, quality and productivity indicators as anchors across all data sets.

The following reports are produced as part of the service:

- **Performance reports;** display graphically performance indicator results for all organisations within a family group
- **Performance indicator standings tables;** a tabular report detailing positioning information of each PI within a family group and across the whole service area
- **Performance at a glance reports;** dashboard of key performance indicators showing individual performance compared to current averages and previous performance
- **Direction of travel reports;** showing performance over the past 5 years compared to the average for key performance indicators
- **Summary reports;** detailing trend analysis across the whole service area and highest, lowest and average figures
- **Best practice case studies;** from the best performing and most improved authorities on how they have achieved that level of performance
- **Bespoke analysis** - on request - reports by special comparator group, trend analysis for example
- **Customer satisfaction reports;** through participation in customer satisfaction surveys included as part of the service saving costs on separate surveys

In addition to the reports, the service also includes:

- Free support to guide local authorities through the process - including on-line data completion training sessions and one to one training, as well as data usage sessions.
- Real opportunities to share best practice - facilitated through the network meetings and the Performance networks annual seminar
- Performance awards - held annually for most improved performer and best performers on cost, quality and productivity criteria in frontline services

For further information on the services that are available, please contact:

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Introduction

This publication includes the key findings for the data collected at the close of financial year 2024-25, allowing for a full and detailed assessment to inform direction of travel in frontline services for 2025-2026 from APSE performance networks. The figures quoted are averages across all participating authorities. The reporting cycle for performance networks allows financial data to be closed off and verified along with performance data though ongoing data information is available across the year in many services including the various apps. where data is collected at frequencies essentially set by the user local authority.

Information and data provide intelligence on the impact of service changes, to establish a starting point and to identify future targets. Performance measurement is also a mechanism to learn how other local authorities are meeting the challenges and the impact that their service changes are making in terms of cost, quality, productivity and customer satisfaction levels.

This data and analysis supports member councils to assess their performance comparative with others, within their specific service sector. Individual comparator reports have also been produced for councils participating in the benchmarking.

Local Government Reorganisation

With many English councils now facing the prospect of reorganisation the ability to share frontline service data, providing a legacy baseline from which to continually improve services under a new authority, should represent a best practice approach to the integration of service delivery. APSE encourages all its performance networks members to complete their data submissions to provide this legacy data in advance of reorganisation. APSE is currently developing a lighter-touch data collection exercise for relevant authorities pre, during and post transition, to aid transformation to the new authorities. For more information on this, please email:

performance.networks@apse.org.uk

1 Expenditure

		Since 22-23
Building maintenance	Total annual expenditure	13%
Street cleansing	Investment in street cleansing service per household	13%
Building cleaning	Cost per scheduled input hour	11%
Refuse collection	Investment in refuse collection service per household	7%
Catering	Food only cost per lunchtime meal (primary and special schools)	7%
Parks	Maintenance investment per hectare of maintained land	-4%
Street lighting	Cost per streetlight	-6%

This data shows that costs have increased for most services, partly due to inflation. Inflationary costs have arisen from increased food costs in areas such as education catering, and supplies and equipment price rises across all services. For labour intensive services wage increases have played a significant role in service cost pressures due to pay settlements that redress a historic pay lag in the public sector. Whilst welcome in redressing the balance on pay rates it nevertheless creates pressure on labour costs in frontline services. Labour cost pressures are likely to continue to be a factor in 2025-2026 data when employer National Insurance rises feed through into the data, which will be more pronounced in the costs of outsourced service providers and suppliers, given the NI cost compensation measures in the budget settlement in 2025 only extend to direct council costs.

Investment in parks has reduced, which may be partly because of reducing the maintenance regime due to rewilding and biodiversity practices. Street lighting is showing savings in expenditure which is due to improvements to equipment, LED rollout and an increase in dimming, which has all contributed to a subsequent 12% reduction in energy usage since 2022-23. The savings on energy usage in Street Lighting are not fully reflected in reductions in costs to the service due to increases over time in other costs associated with the service such as staffing costs. It is also noted that the ability to restore lamps quickly has been impacted by this new technology and it is now taking an average of 9 days.

	22-23	23-24	24-25	% change
% street lamps that are LED	82%	88%	90%	10%
Annual electricity consumption per street light (KWH)	182	170	161	-12%
% street lamps with registered dimming regime	61	62	66	9%
Average time in days to restore lamps (authority only)	6	7	9	

Baseline unit costs – carriageways

	Surface dressing only	Surface dressing (including base patching / prep works)	Thin / micro surface (up to 25mm)	Thin in-lay (less than 60mm)	Moderate in-lay (60mm to 100mm)	Structural in-lay (>100mm)	Thin over-lay (>25mm and less than 60mm)	Moderate over-lay (60mm to 100mm)	Structural over-lay (>100mm)	Planned patching	Reconstruction
2022-23	£5.39	£15.32	£11.46	£31.71	£39.65	£60.13	£27.54	£37.84	£53.63	£47.37	£120.62
2023-24	£5.65	£16.81	£12.10	£34.10	£40.25	£69.19	£27.55	£45.06	£69.60	£48.56	£142.44
2024-25	£5.12	£15.08	£11.66	£34.57	£43.03	£70.64	£27.35	£31.59	£57.52	£45.90	£134.71
% change	-5%	-2%	2%	9%	9%	17%	-1%	-17%	7%	-3%	12%

The performance networks data enables local authorities to drill down further into the cost of supplies. The table above shows baseline unit costs for carriageways per square metre and demonstrates which supplies have been increasing over the years and those which have shown a reduction on average.

2 Income

Building cleaning	% expenditure recovered through commercial income	5.97%
Parks	% operational expenditure covered by discountable income and external funding	9.80%
Street cleansing	% operational expenditure covered by discountable income	3.94%

Discountable income is income received by the council from external sources, which offsets the service costs, often by reducing reliance on core budgets, and / or flattening overhead costs.

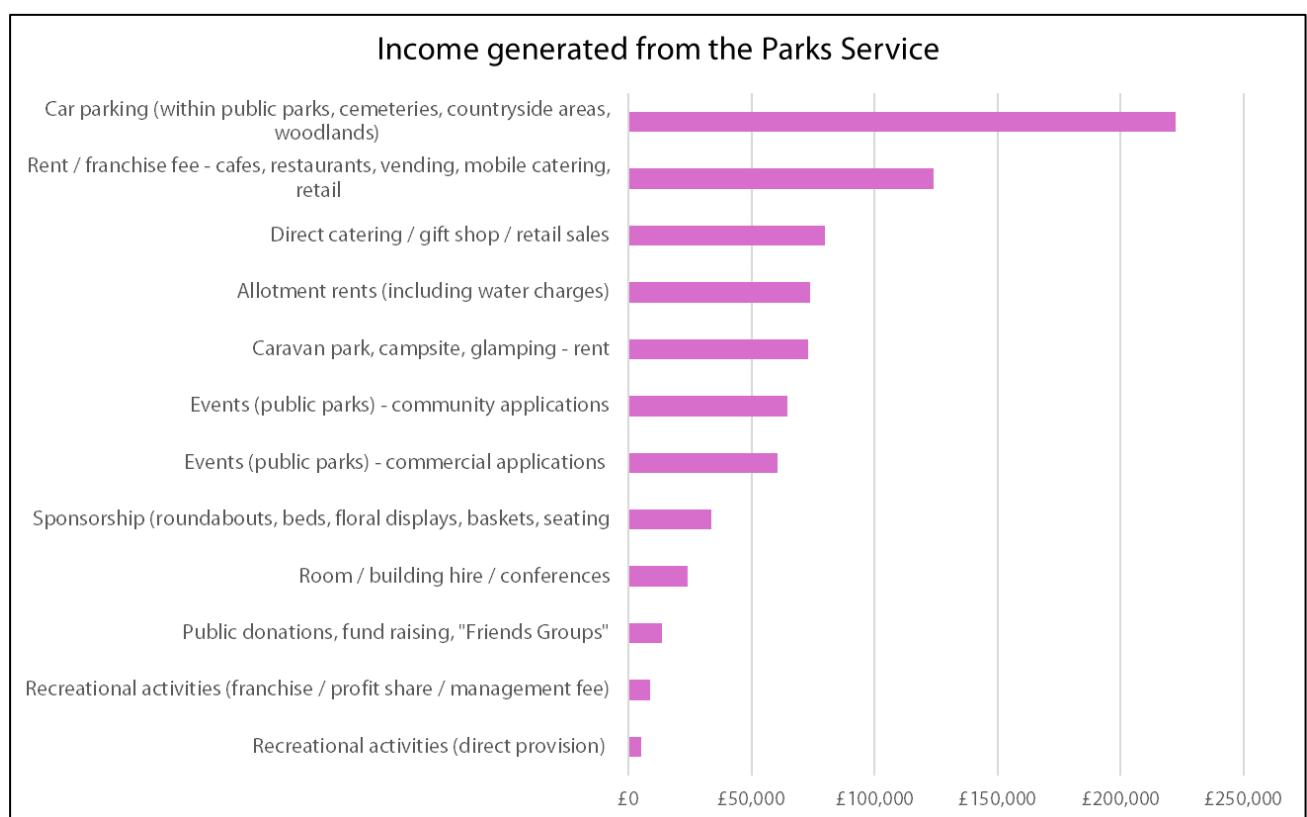
Typically, this is referred to as commercial income. The impact of this income stream also reduces

costs to council taxpayers. Building cleaning, parks and street cleansing all generate income to offset expenditure, with the average percentage of expenditure which is covered by this income for parks being nearly 10%. However, in some areas there is less use of commercial income generation, and it is perhaps worthwhile these services exploring how further income could be generated. Examples would include building cleaning services being provided to other parts of the public sector or private sector facilities and street cleansing services being provided, for example to retail parks, alongside cultural and events opportunities in parks and greenspace.

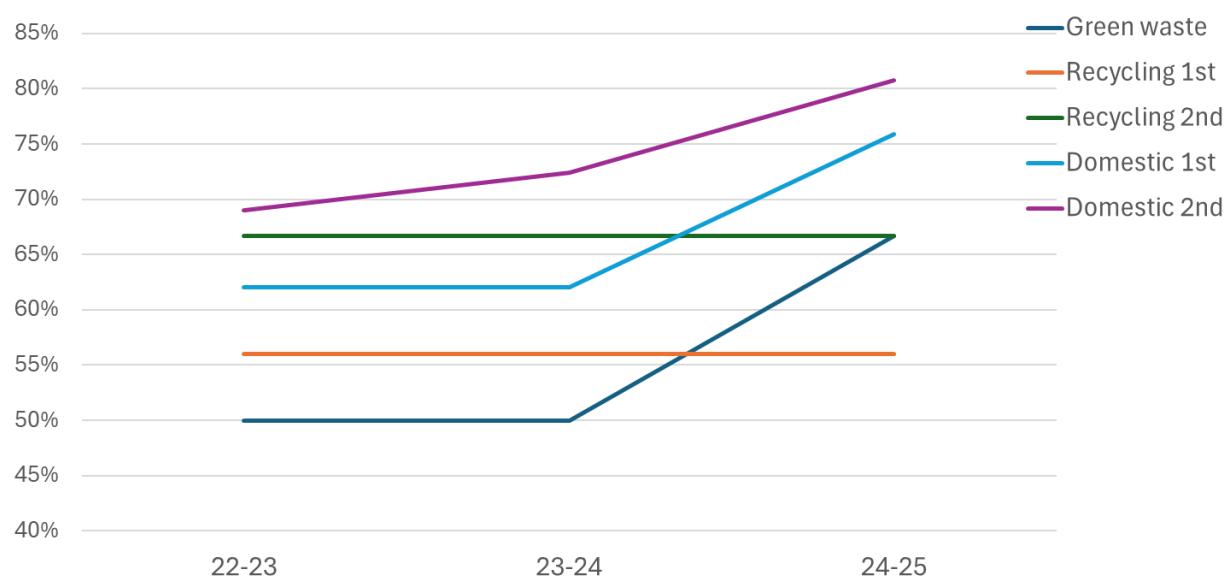
The actual amount of discountable income has also shown an increase since 2022/23 for the services below, with refuse collection showing an average increase per council of 21% increase during this period. Total income for education catering has increased by 14% over this period too, although some of this will be due to free meal income.

Since 22-23		
Parks	Discountable / non-contract income	4%
Refuse collection	Discountable / non-contract income	21%
Education catering	Total income (cash / actual / free meal income)	14%

Income generated from the parks service is shown below with nearly a quarter of a million pounds on average generated through car parking and over £50k on average being received for catering, allotments, camping and events.



Percentage who charge for the following services within refuse collection



The above shows the percentage of councils who charge for green waste or replacement bins. Councils are reluctant to charge for refuse and recycling services, but more than two thirds now charge for green waste and there are now far more authorities charging for replacement domestic bins than two years ago.

3 Productivity

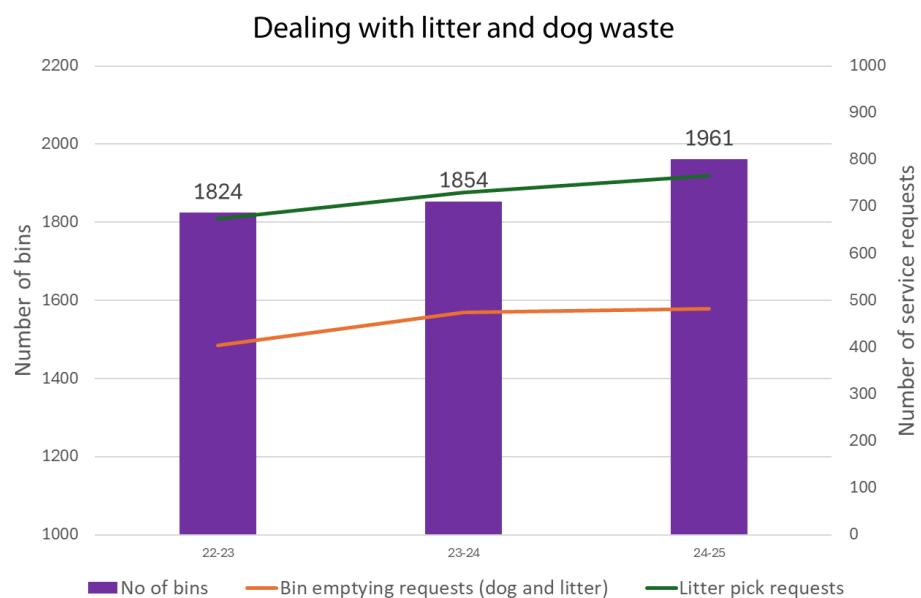
APSE performance networks data demonstrates productivity trends across the services listed below over the past 3 years.

		22-23	23-24	24-25
Building cleaning	Total square metres cleaned per FTE employee	1566	1603	1605
Building maintenance	All jobs completed per full time operational employee	285	305	286
Catering	Primary and special school lunchtime meals served per staff hour	9.4	10.2	10.8
Roads/highways	Number of cat 1 defects (carriageways and footpaths)	24,292	33,078	32,280
	% dealt with in target time	90%	88%	90%
Street lighting	Percentage of lamps restored to working condition within 7 days	83	78	81
Sports and leisure	Usage per staff hour	7.3	8.5	9.0

Building cleaning and catering have seen sustained increases in productivity over this period. For catering, the number of primary school meals served has levelled off, but the meals served per staff hour continues to increase, which demonstrates productivity improvements. In sports and leisure, the data shows a consistent improvement in the usage of leisure centres per staff hour on average over the past three years suggesting a recovery from the post-pandemic slumps experienced by many providers.

Any improvements in productivity need to be measured in the context of quality, which is where inspection data such as that available from the APSE apps can be useful. For more information on APSE's apps, please [click here](#).

4 Street cleansing continuing demands on service



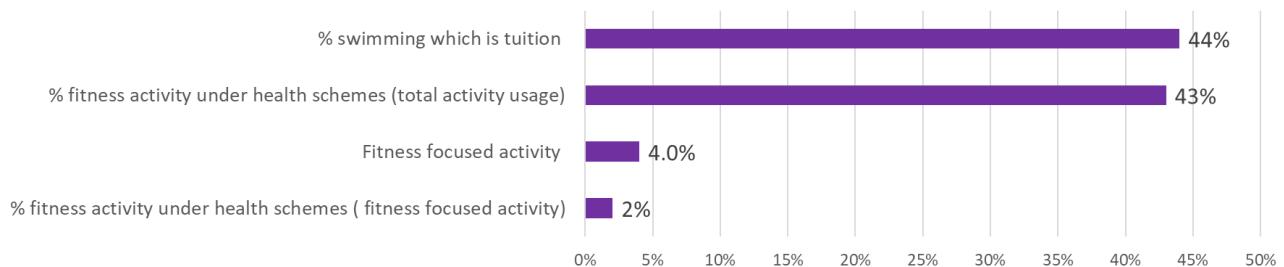
The chart above shows an increase in demands on the street cleansing service. The provision of bins has increased, as have the number of requests from members of the public for bin emptying and litter picks. The sector would clearly wish to see these trends declining and will look with interest at the long-term impact of new policies such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Deposit Return Schemes, once fully measurable.

5 The changing face of leisure

	22-23	23-24	24-25
Expenditure increase			4.39%
Energy cost	£246,411	£242,964	£184,596
Usage	315,833	346,993	347,931
Income	£1,109,479	£1,297,409	£1,364,336
Opening hours	4,745	4,773	4,747
Staffing hours	40,304	40,020	37,744

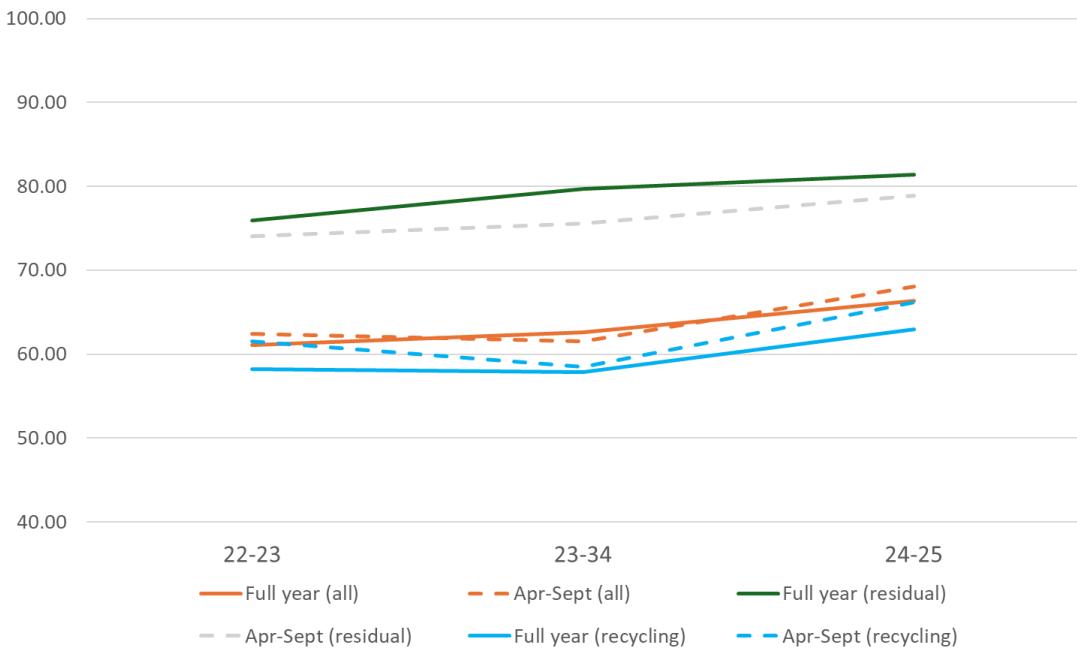
This chart shows the average figures per leisure centre for 24-25 and the previous 2 years. It demonstrates financial challenges, with expenditure increasing by 4.39% since last year. However, this year shows significant energy savings compared to previous years, and this is a result of reduced energy usage. The data shows continued improvements in the usage of leisure centres and consequently, income has substantially increased. Opening hours and staffing hours have been consistent over this period.

APSE has started to focus more attention on collecting data in leisure on areas such as swimming tuition, fitness focused activity as a percentage of total activity usage and uptake of health referral and health inequality schemes. Some of the averages for these measures are shown below.



6 Missed bin collections

Missed bin collections are an important indicator of service quality and also provide a gauge towards improving customer satisfaction. Missed bin collection numbers after previous reductions has shown a slight incline this year. The April to September figures, the dashed lines, show the missed collections without the disruptions caused by the winter months. This is highly useful for officers in refuse collection services to share with cabinet members for the environment to demonstrate the seasonality of collection issues within the service.



Through comparisons of the use of in-cab technology, the data shows that those authorities with in-cab technology tend to have lower rates of missed bins than those who haven't invested in this.

7 Land Audit Management System (LAMS)

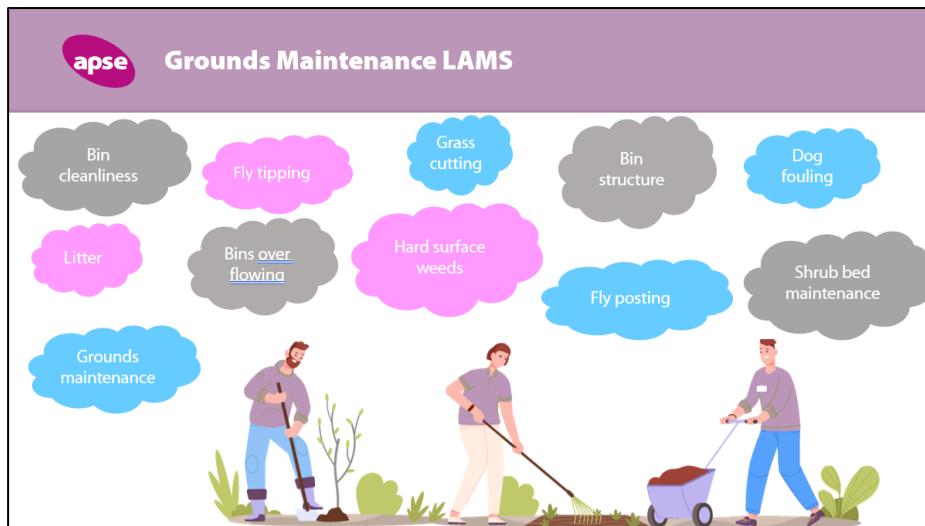


The [LAMS \(Land Audit Management System\)](#) is a quality inspection system to monitor grounds maintenance and/or street cleansing. APSE's performance networks members use LAMS to measure the quality of their own localities, and at the same time benchmark these against other local authorities. Members can choose between using the system to monitor grounds maintenance, street cleansing and/or cemeteries/crematorium land maintenance.

The above infographic shows changes in performance from the previous year for each environmental issue through a colour scheme. This is taken from the findings of the LAMS

inspections on street cleansing. Those which have improved are shown as lilac clouds, those which have stayed the same are displayed as blue clouds and those which have declined are shown as grey clouds.

For street cleansing this year, the overall picture is positive. Last year's data showed a deterioration in detritus and hard surface weeds but this year these are showing an improvement. The improvement on hard surface weeds will have had an impact on the detritus scores. Flytipping has improved and the only deterioration has been with bin-related scores.

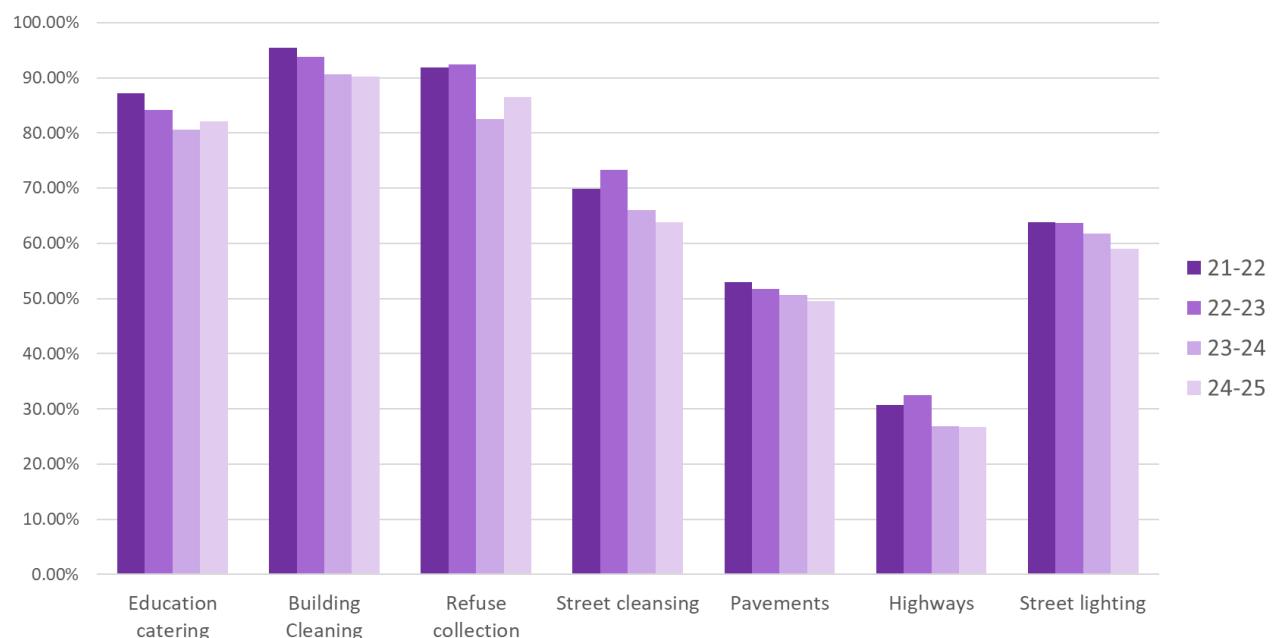


The above infographic shows changes in performance from the previous year for each environmental issue through a colour scheme. This is taken from the findings of the LAMS inspections on grounds maintenance. Those which have improved are shown as lilac clouds, those which have stayed the same are displayed as blue clouds and those which have declined are shown as grey clouds.

A similar picture emerges with LAMS in green spaces. There has been an improvement in hard surface weeds and flytipping. Last year's data showed a deterioration in the litter score but this year this is showing an improvement. Shrub bed maintenance has shown a deterioration which may be linked to resources.

8 Customer satisfaction, complaints and enquiries

Customer satisfaction



The above chart shows that average satisfaction overall for 2024-25 financial year is on a downward trend for most services, except for catering and refuse collection, which have shown an increase in average scores for satisfaction this year. The decline in satisfaction levels for some of the services may indicate that reductions in budgets are now being seen and felt by the public, although it is more likely that this trend will be explicable by changes in participant data given it is relatively marginal.

Overall, the public remain highly satisfied with Council services, as evidenced by APSE public opinion poll conducted through respected pollsters Survation. The latest Survation poll released in December 2025 shows that the public still recognise the long-term pressures facing councils and satisfaction scores have increased across multiple services this year. Some of the key messages from the poll were that the public are more apt to attribute past decline to national funding decisions, not council mismanagement and there is a strong appetite for more local control and investment, reinforcing APSE's commitment to capable, resilient service delivery.

Customer complaints and enquiries

Dealing with complaints score	% improvement
Building cleaning	+1.3%
Refuse collection	+1.2%

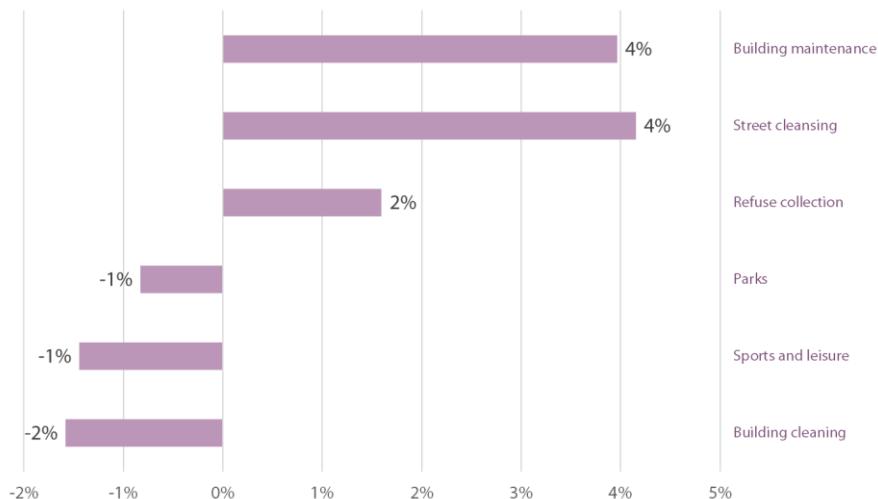
Complaints dealt with in target time	22-23	24-25	% change
Street cleansing	95.89%	97.70%	+1.8%

Enquiries dealt with in target time

Roads	78.78%	80.52%	+1.7%
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Managing complaints is showing a positive picture this year compared to the 2022-23 year. In the roads/highways service, enquiries dealt with in target time has improved despite an increase in the number of enquiries by 13%. This could reflect the use of new technologies in reporting and dealing with issues expediently.

9 Front line staff numbers



The above chart shows changes in the number of front-line staff in the past 2 years. Some of the services which showed previous increases in the number of staff due to the pandemic have since shown reductions. From all the services above, building cleaning has shown the greatest reduction in staff numbers over recent periods. Last year the data showed a 20% reduction since 21-22 and that trend has continued this year. Previously there was a reduction in the refuse collection operatives but now the data is showing that to have reversed which could suggest better handling of recruitment and retention issues and this is demonstrated in section 10 below.

10 Recruitment and retention

Parks	% vacancies	% filled	% stayed beyond probation, induction and training	% stayed at least 12 weeks	% leavers
Refuse drivers	9%	79%			7%
Refuse loaders	9%	87%			
Street cleansing	7%	70%	96%		9%
Cemetery and crematorium	7%	71%	83%		6%
Leisure recreation assistants	29%	82%	83%		
Building cleaning	9%			82%	15%
Building maintenance	8%	61%	43%		

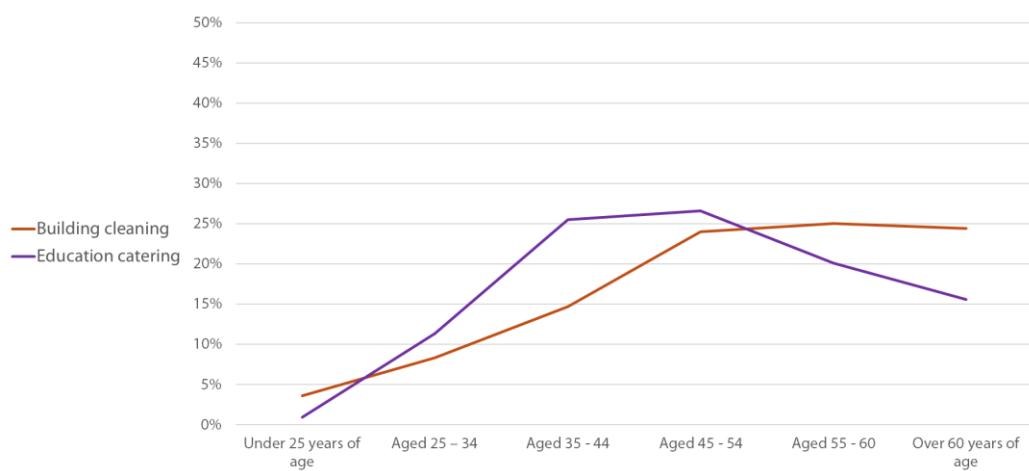
*from those advertised

The table above shows recruitment and retention problems across the services. The highest levels of vacancies are with leisure recreation assistants and parks services. Last year's data for refuse loaders reported 12% vacancies and only 63% of those being filled and this picture has improved this year to 9% and 87% respectively, which shows better handling of recruitment.

The table also shows the difficulties being experienced in retaining staff. In building maintenance, only 43% of new staff were retained beyond probation, induction and training. Building cleaning services has a relatively high number of leavers at 15%, compared to the other services above.

11 Age profile of the workforce

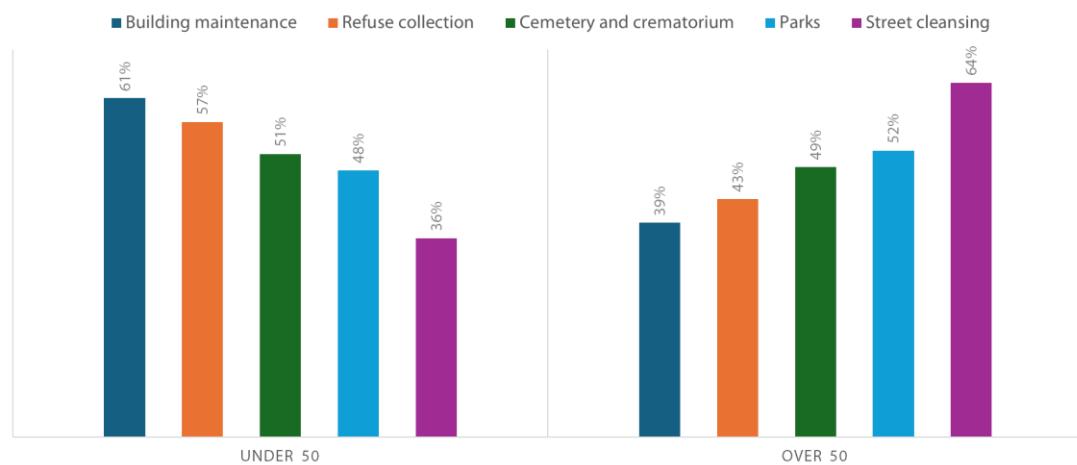
Catering and cleaning services



APSE performance networks collect a range of data on the age profile of the workforce. This shows a higher number of staff for cleaning and catering between 45 and 54 than the other categories

and a relatively high number above 60 for building cleaning. APSE soft facilities management networks in both building cleaning and education catering are constantly working with APSE member councils on these specific sector issues.

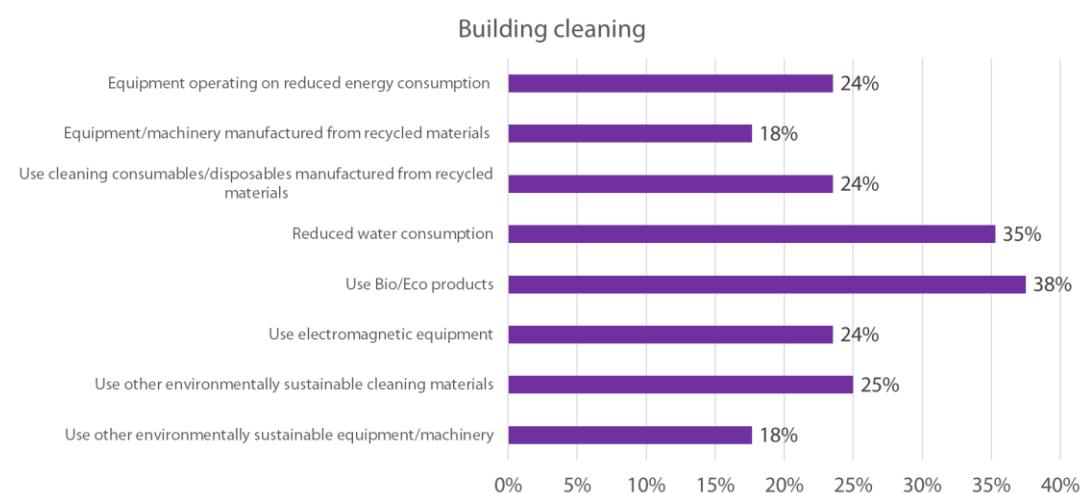
Building maintenance, refuse collection, parks, cemetery and crematorium services and street cleansing services



This chart shows the age profile of workforce and the balance between under 50's compared to over 50s across these 5 services. It clearly shows the heavier reliance on a younger workforce in building maintenance and refuse collection and potentially staff migrating internally to parks and street cleansing with age. For parks and street cleansing, over 50% of the workforce are over 50 years old and a large proportion of these staff will be near retirement age, which is a further challenge to the service.

12 Environmental sustainability

APSE has been developing environmental sustainability measures in all the service areas. It shows good progress being made, however there are potential areas to improve on in the future.





Trees

16% is the average current canopy

96% of 225,000 new trees planted were new schemes



Parks

32% have a pollinator strategy

62% of green waste is recycled



Street cleansing

12% sweepers (vehicles) are neither petrol or diesel

44% of motorised pedestrian sweepers are electric or battery



Refuse collection

8% of refuse fleet is on alternative fuels

30% using alternative fuels



Cemetery and crematorium services

31% have any forms of renewable energy sources

74% re-use energy generated by the cremation process

80% manage grounds in a manner which promotes biodiversity

26% have 'locally sourced / ecofriendly' memorials available

51% offer a natural / green / woodland burial

49% have dedicated green / woodland sites



Roads and highways

30% use thermal mapping data

Control of weeds

The average who....	Parks	Street cleansing	Roads/ highways
Have a weed control policy	63%	57%	50%
Use glyphosate	90%	83%	100%
Reduced the amount of glyphosate used from 5 years ago	71%	51%	
What has this on average reduced by?	34%	24%	

For the 3 service areas above, the control of weeds is showing a similar picture although less parks and street cleansing services are using glyphosate than highways departments now. This may be due to the viability of different option on highway surfaces. For parks and street cleansing, it is showing a reduction in the amount of glyphosate used from 5 years ago.



Building maintenance

53% have target for moving to Electric Vehicles or other non-petrol/diesel vehicles
18% vehicles are currently Electric Vehicles or other non-petrol/diesel vehicles



Education catering

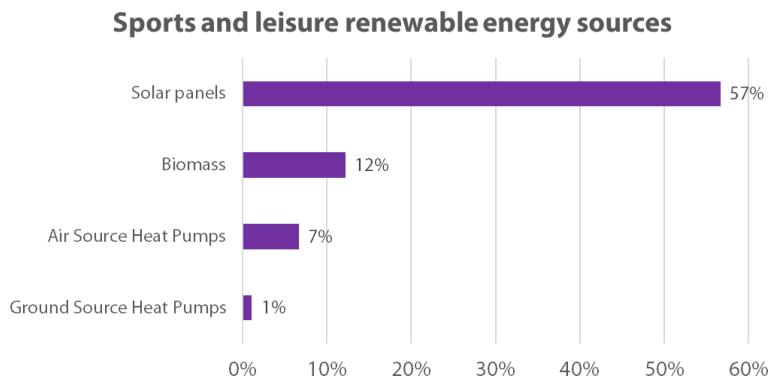
32% of provisions purchased / sourced from local suppliers
59% have a policy for recycling food waste in schools
77% use no disposable cutlery or crockery
Of those who do, 91% are now using environmentally friendly alternatives



Sports and leisure

68% use renewable energy sources

54% cover swimming pools at night
25% use 'Heat recycling pump' technology



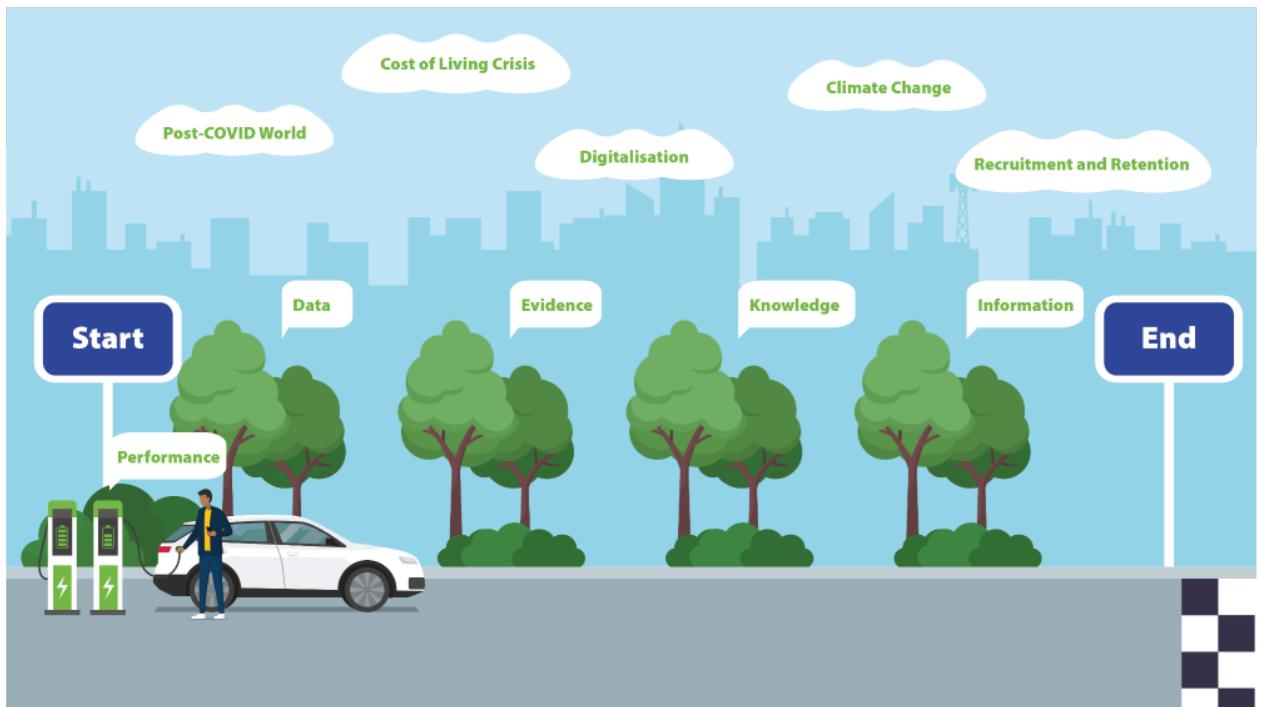
APSE performance networks is introducing a scored environmental sustainability Performance Indicator in most service areas over the next couple of years. This will enable member councils to further track progress and highlight areas of good practice through the reports that they receive from performance networks.

APSE performance networks has also successfully launched a corporate Climate Change benchmarking module, which was successfully developed by a peer group of local council members.

13 Conclusion

Data for this last year of collection has shown both improvements in some aspects of performance and a deterioration in others. Whilst changes to financial settlements to councils have been welcome, the data for this data collection period firstly includes lag so it is not yet fully reflected in increased budgets, and secondly in many frontline areas fundings is deprioritised over necessary increased spend in the pressure areas of adult and children's social care, SEND, and housing and homelessness. This is a position stretching back many decades. With increasing demand for services, together with cost pressures from energy, overall inflation and labour and supply cost increases, funding continues to present a challenge for local authorities seeking to provide a high level of frontline service delivery. The ability to recruit and retain staff has been problematic across a range of different service areas.

Another major challenge for local authorities is local plans to address the global threats of climate change and energy price increases. However, investment in service changes tends to lag behind corporate ambitions, though ultimately the payback period for that investment is encouraging, particularly in areas such as energy efficiency in leisure centres, with work there supported by [APSE Energy](#), and the reduced maintenance costs and fuel associated with alternative fleet.



To get from start to finish and deliver services effectively, councils need to know where they are, where they are going and how to get there – they need evidence and decisions need to be grounded in good data not opinions. Data is crucial in our ever-changing world for first class information on how to deliver first class public services. The need for access to effective data will be invaluable, most especially for those authorities in England who are facing re-organisation.

Information and data provides intelligence on how effective any service change is, to establish a starting point and to identify future targets. Performance measurement is also a mechanism to learn how other local authorities are meeting the challenges and the impact that their service delivery model and any operational changes is making to outcomes in terms of cost, quality, productivity and customer satisfaction levels, enabling members of APSE Performance Networks to review processes and operating platforms on an evidence basis.

APSE performance networks can assist local councils by:

- Demonstrating progression on energy efficiency and ecological actions
- Helping to set a clear baseline on which competitiveness, efficiency and value for money can be measured in a systematic manner.
- Identifying the impact of service changes and interventions for your own local council frontline services and for peers in other local councils
- Assessing the impact of re-organisation through monitoring performance pre, during and post transition.
- Assessing the quality, cost and competitiveness of the services that councils provide on a regular basis.
- Helping to report data in meaningful ways to both councillors and the public.

- Identifying direction of travel and pace of change with regard to service delivery.
- Identifying inefficiencies such as poor productivity and high cost.
- Supporting service improvement through process benchmarking and sharing best practice examples.

APSE would like to thank all the authorities that participated in the working groups and the data collection exercise for 2024-25, and worked throughout 2025 to secure validations to that data and provide through the networking groups their contribution to this reflective analysis.

APSE has a range of services that are designed to support member authorities.

[APSE Online Training](#) – APSE Training is designed to help local authorities invest in their greatest asset – their staff. APSE Training can assist staff with developing new skills to help maximise opportunities.

[APSE Performance Networks](#) – The Performance Network teams have developed a variety of ways to support councils with data collection. APSE strongly recommends ensuring the collection of data is ongoing, so changes in service performance are explicable during budget setting processes or when revising business plans.

[APSE Solutions](#) – Providing in-house consultancy and interim management services, available to both APSE members and non-member authorities and organisations. Provided through APSE Synergy our wholly owned company.

[APSE Energy](#) – Working on greening frontline council services, including renewable energy and energy efficiency issues, with consultancy support provided through APSE Synergy, our wholly owned company.

[APSE membership resources](#) remain committed to supporting our member local councils with the ongoing briefings service, network queries, access to Principal Advisor advice and online meetings, network meetings and sector events. There are opportunities for councils to share best practice and learning through virtual networks and thematic sessions. Details of these sessions are communicated to APSE members as the sessions are arranged.

For further information on the services that are available, please contact:

Debbie Johns

Head of APSE Performance Networks

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