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Association for Public Service Excellence

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Service Awards Special Edition

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A message from APSE National Chair 2026/2027

Cllr John Clarke, MBE

It is my great honour to accept the role of APSE National Chair for 2026-2027.

It would of course be remiss of me not to thank my dear colleague Cllr Shelley Powell for her leadership over the past few months having taken the reins from Cllr Tracey Dixon in May of this year. They are two remarkable women who will be a hard act for me to follow. Of course, both Tracey and Shelley were supported throughout the year by Anita Brown as our National Secretary who it is fair to say has been just incredible in her role and I do not know what APSE would have done without her.

I would also like to thank Mike Hill, who is my Chief Executive in Gedling for so kindly agreeing to act as my National Secretary for the coming year.

With growing uncertainty surrounding local government reorganisation, I would like to reassure our members that APSE will continue to press for clarity on the issue and support our members through the LGR network, including our member local councils across Scotland who now face uncertainty.

Local government is already grappling with uncertainties on finance and the added distraction now of reorganisation is unwelcome. I know that this is a view shared by my colleagues across all political parties and none., regardless of current structural complexities surely it would make sense to stabilise council finances first!

We will continue to provide you with an opportunity for further discussion and debate on this issue.

I would also like to further commit to APSE's campaigning work on economic growth with councils at the heart of that agenda.

Whilst I firmly believe that devolving further powers, and functions, to a regional or sub-regional level, will support growth, we must recognise that devolution will not deliver unless three conditions are met.

Firstly, we must not promise devolution and growth if our local councils remain financially feeble. We must address the big-ticket items of social care, housing and SEND spending.

However, this is not just an issue for England. Devolution and fair funding must be a UK wide solution. I am pleased that the new Prime Minister has offered to engage with Scotland and Wales on this issue. We must include Northern Ireland as well.

Secondly, for local growth to succeed it must recognise the value of neighbourhood level services. Businesses are not attracted to run-down areas and families will not want to settle there. To genuinely support our local economies, we have to reinvest in neighbourhood level services and reflect the value of our green spaces and parks, our leisure and cultural offering and cleaner, greener and safer streets.

Thirdly, growth has to be good growth. We should not tolerate short-cuts which damage the local environment or the social wellbeing of our communities. Good growth must protect the local environment, be fuelled by green renewable energy and protect communities from the extremities of climate change including flooding and as we have seen this summer the impact of extreme heat.

My final priority for the coming year is that of resilience. We face geo-political issues which will impact on our security across the UK. This has already manifested in higher fuel costs and energy prices impacting on local authority budgets as well as our residents' pockets.

We also face cyber security threats which will undoubtedly draw upon our already limited resources, and we must be ready to face the very real risk of further disruptions in public systems and ensure we have the ability to still function effectively as public bodies and to continue to provide services.

I am also concerned that whilst digital and AI advances can improve our public services they are developing at a pace unseen before, Agentic AI has the capacity to outpace the changes we are able to make as local authorities. There are already spikes in demand that are unable to be met.

AI is effectively enabling rapid access in areas such as Freedom of Information Requests, Parking Appeals and access to Benefits claims. Whilst these things may be seen as positive – in terms of transparency, fairness and access to welfare – equally we may not have the resources internally to cope with spikes in demand or indeed the financial resources which may be drawn upon.

We have also witnessed extreme weather events. As the oceans heat we can expect extreme weather to become commonplace – drawing upon council resilience and emergency planning as we tackle wildfires and flooding as well as ill-health from extreme heat and very real risks to the fabric of our local assets and buildings.

I would therefore like to pledge that I will make my term of office a year where we really start to focus on these issues of threats and resilience to support our member councils. I am pleased to report that this will come into focus in November this year with our first ever APSE resilience and risk seminar which will be held in Bolton.

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From School Meals to Sustainable Futures: A Roadmap Driven by Pupil Voice

Louise Gillam, Dietitian at APSE Council of the Year 2026 winner Torfaen County Borough Council, shares how they have transformed their school meals service through pupil voice, sustainable choices and transparent communication.

In Torfaen, sustainability is not something that is done to our pupils, it is something we do with them. Our Sustainable Schools Roadmap was developed to ensure that the School Meals Service remains accountable to the children and young people we serve, while delivering against wider environmental, social and economic objectives. Rather than setting targets in isolation, the roadmap provides a framework for continuous improvement that is shaped by evidence, measured through outcomes and informed by pupil feedback.

The roadmap was created in response to Torfaen Council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and our belief that school meals can contribute to much more than nutrition alone.

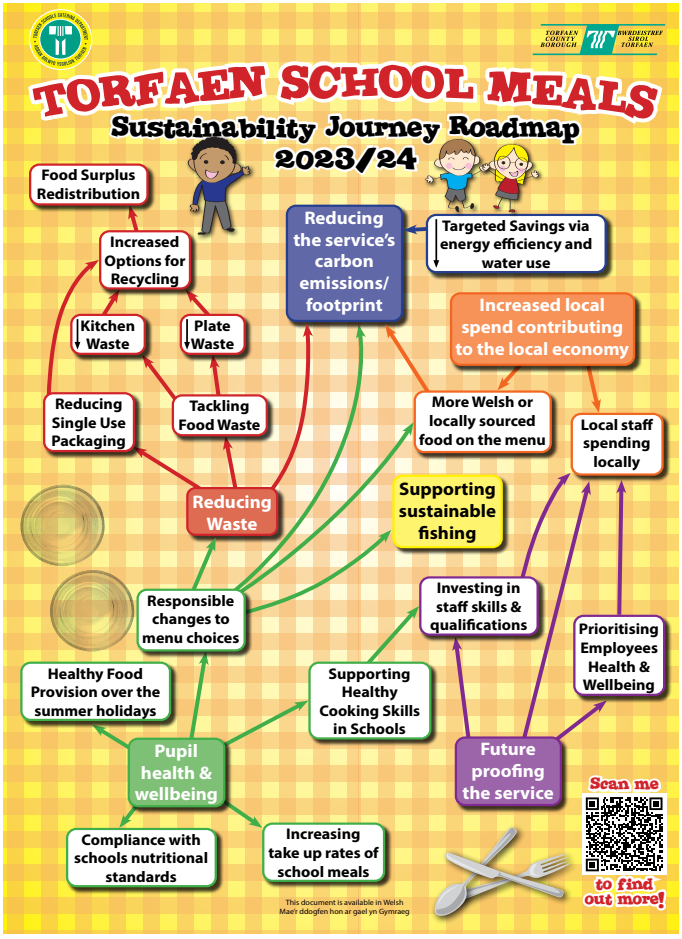
Through the roadmap, we have brought together a series of practical commitments covering climate action, waste reduction, local procurement, workforce development and pupil wellbeing. Most importantly, it provides transparency about what we have set out to achieve, the progress we have made and where further improvement is needed.

What makes the roadmap distinctive is the central role of pupil voice. Throughout its development and delivery, pupils have challenged us, questioned our decisions and helped shape our priorities.

School Councils, Eco Committees and pupil-led initiatives have provided valuable insights into what works, what does not and where we should focus our efforts next. In this way, the roadmap acts as a living document that keeps us accountable to the very people our service exists to support.

This principle of accountability can be seen throughout the programme. When pupils told us they wanted more flexibility to choose plant-based meals without committing to a fully vegetarian menu, we redesigned our menus so that at least half of the main meal choices are vegetarian options. When Eco Committees encouraged us to explore Fairtrade sourcing, we reviewed our supply chains, confirmed that all sugar used within the service is Fairtrade-certified and introduced a pilot of Fairtrade bananas.

When pupils wanted greater information about sustainability, we worked with academic researchers to calculate the carbon footprint of every meal and introduced a logo, chosen by pupils themselves, to identify lower-carbon menu options.



Nowhere has pupil involvement had a greater impact than through the Waste Warriors Competition, which has now been running successfully for four years. Rather than simply telling pupils that food waste is a problem, we handed ownership of the issue to them.

Pupils measure plate waste, analyse the results, develop campaigns and challenge their peers to waste less food. As an added incentive, the two winning schools receive a highly sought-after prize: a full-day healthy cooking experience delivered by an external provider.



The competition has achieved impressive results, with participating schools reducing plate waste by an average of 19% in 2023 and 32% in 2024. These achievements demonstrate the power of empowering young people to lead change, while combining sustainability, practical food education and pupil voice to deliver lasting environmental improvements

The roadmap also enables us to hold ourselves publicly accountable for the environmental impact of the service. Working with leading academics, we established clear baseline measurements for our carbon footprint and identified the areas where action would have the greatest effect.

As a result, despite serving 35% more food following the rollout of Universal Primary Free School Meals, we achieved an overall reduction in carbon emissions of 8%, equivalent to a 32% reduction per kilogram of food served. These are measurable outcomes that demonstrate real progress, not simply good intentions.

External recognition has reinforced the success of our approach. The pupil-led Waste Warriors programme won the LACA Wales Innovation Award and was shortlisted for the Waste2Zero Awards. The Sustainable Schools Roadmap also received the LACA Nan Berger Memorial Award and later the APSE Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation Initiative Award, recognising its innovative, evidence-based approach to sustainability and climate action within school catering.

These awards are important, but they are not the destination. Instead, they provide independent validation that the roadmap is delivering meaningful outcomes and offer encouragement to continue improving. They also demonstrate the value of empowering pupils and staff to become active participants in shaping a more sustainable future.

The roadmap extends beyond environmental sustainability. It commits us to supporting pupil health and wellbeing, providing healthy food during school holidays, investing in local staff, increasing the use of Welsh produce and strengthening local supply chains. It also captures our commitment to workforce development through training, qualifications and wellbeing initiatives, ensuring we have the skilled and motivated teams required to deliver a high-quality service into the future.

Ultimately, the Sustainable Schools Roadmap is much more than a sustainability plan. It is a mechanism for accountability, evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement.

It ensures that the voices of Torfaen's pupils remain at the heart of the School Meals Service, helping us to measure progress, celebrate success and identify new opportunities for change.

By continuing to listen, learn and adapt, we aim to demonstrate how school catering can deliver healthier children, stronger communities and a more sustainable future for generations to come.











How one local authority cut vibration exposure by 95% - and repaired more roads in the process

HSE Health & Safety Executive

Chris Steel, Principal Specialist Inspector (Noise and Vibration) at the Health and Safety Executive, highlights the innovative way one local authority transformed their road repairs.

For highway maintenance teams across the UK, the challenge is familiar: repair more defects, protect workers from hand-arm vibration (HAVS), and deliver better value from limited budgets.

A recent local authority case study demonstrates that these objectives do not have to compete. By replacing traditional handheld road repair tools with an excavator-mounted repair system, the authority dramatically reduced vibration exposure while increasing the efficiency of minor road repairs.

Traditionally, pothole and carriageway repairs relied on cut-off saws, handheld breakers, and plate compactors. While effective, this approach exposed operatives to significant levels of vibration, noise, manual handling demands and dust. The authority found that repairing just a small number of potholes per day could push workers above the vibration Action Value defined by the Control of Vibration at Work Regulations.

The first step was to improve management controls. Better tool selection, job rotation, worker training, and closer supervision reduced exposure levels considerably. However, these measures also constrained productivity because the number of repairs completed in a day had to be limited.

The breakthrough came when the authority adopted an excavator-mounted road repair system equipped with specialist attachments including a road planer and breaker. This eliminated the routine need for handheld cut-off saws and breakers, leaving only low-vibration compaction equipment to complete the repair process.

The result was a step change in both health and productivity. Workers experienced lower exposure to vibration, noise, and manual handling risks, while repairs were completed more quickly with fewer operatives required on the carriageway.

The authority also reported improved staff morale and greater flexibility, as the excavator could be used for a range of maintenance activities throughout the year.

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Member Spotlight: Seb Frost, Operations Manager for Waste and Street Scene Services at Slough Borough Council

Seb Frost, Operations Manager for Waste and Street Scene Services at Slough Borough Council, shares his experience in local government.



Who are you and what is your role?

I'm Seb Frost, Operations Manager for Waste & Street Scene Services at Slough Borough Council. I oversee frontline services including waste collection, street cleansing, the household waste recycling centre, and wider service transformation projects aimed at improving performance, efficiency, and resident satisfaction.

What attracted you to work in local government?

The ability to make a tangible difference to people's daily lives. Local government services are highly visible, and the impact - whether it's cleaner streets or improved recycling - is immediate and meaningful.

What challenges do you face in local government?

Balancing rising service expectations with financial pressures, while driving behavioural change around waste and environmental responsibility. Delivering transformation at pace without disrupting essential frontline services is also a key challenge.

What do you value most about APSE membership/ events/services?

The opportunity to share best practice, benchmark performance, and connect with peers facing similar challenges. APSE provide practical insight that supports continuous improvement and innovation across services.

Share something you like about living/working in your local council area.

Slough is incredibly diverse and fast-paced, which makes the role both challenging and rewarding (similar to a London borough in many respects). There's a real opportunity to deliver visible improvements, strengthen partnerships, and plenty of opportunity to increase recycling rates across the borough.

Slough Borough Council

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Antrim and Newtownabbey's Award-Winning Leisure Team

Antrim and Newtownabbey's Leisure team were awarded Best Service Team of the Year: Sports and Leisure Services at the APSE Service Awards in Liverpool, recognising their commitment to creating healthier, happier and more active communities.

Serving a diverse population of more than 145,000 residents, the team has worked to ensure its leisure offer is accessible and inclusive for all. Through the introduction of innovative technologies and facility improvements, including new accessible golf buggies at Allen Park and automated tee systems at Ballyearl Driving Range, the service has reduced barriers to participation and enabled more residents to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits of leisure activities.

In addition to its sports and leisure provision, the council has engaged almost 29,000 residents through their high-impact, prevention-focused health programme. The positive impact of this work is far-reaching, with 2,104 residents supported through targeted mental health initiatives, 1,275 participants in cardiac rehabilitation programmes, and more than 23,000 residents taking part in Age-Friendly programmes.

The service is not only helping individuals to live healthier lives but is also making a significant contribution to the wider community through major events, sports development and community engagement initiatives. Through the delivery of the PEACEPLUS programme, the service is actively supporting community cohesion across the borough. This includes the creation of a new skatepark in Antrim and a programme of engagement with 30 local schools over the next 12 months.

The breadth of the council's offer is reflected in the success of the service's membership uptake, with a record-breaking 14,000 residents now benefitting from membership. Participation has also continued to grow across the borough, with leisure centres welcoming more than 2.5 million visits in 2025 alone. The service has also achieved significant financial success with Allen Park, Valley Leisure Centre and Ballyearl Leisure Centre all operating at a surplus.

The council has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to delivering high-quality sports and leisure services for residents, investing £6 million over a five-year period to enhance facilities, expand energy projects and improve customer experiences. This has included the installation of controlled LED pitch floodlights, the replacement of internal doors to improve heat retention, the upgrade of swimming pool pumps to improve efficiency, and the installation of new generators to strengthen operational resilience.

As the service looks to the future, it aims to build on its success by increasing participation, reducing energy consumption and continuing to innovate to provide exceptional value to residents.

APSE members have access to our dedicated Sports and Leisure Management Network, offering webinars, events, briefings and research to support your service.

More than 40 new Wild Spaces for butterflies and moths to be created across Glasgow

Glasgow City Council is working alongside wildlife charity, The Butterfly Conservation, to create dedicated spaces for butterflies and moths in Glasgow

The Butterfly Conservation charity is working alongside Glasgow City Council to tackle the decline in common butterflies and moths.

The two-year project aims to engage more than 1,000 residents and recruit at least 40 volunteers to maintain the new Wild spaces at parks, schools and community hubs.

Over the next two years, the initiative hopes to create 15 Wild Spaces at public green spaces, establish 13 more Wild Spaces for schools and help 20 community hubs to create their own Wild Spaces.

Start-up packs containing wildflower seeds will also be distributed to encourage residents to create their own Wild Spaces in their local area.

The Wild Spaces initiative has already proven successful in Perth and Stirling, where over 1,000 people created 20 new butterfly and moth habitats.

All APSE members have access to our dedicated Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network, offering webinars, events, briefings and research to support your service.

Swindon Borough Council partners with the Probation Service to support The Big Town Centre Clean-Up

People serving community sentences are helping to improve Swindon town centre as part of The Big Town Centre Clean-Up.

Throughout August, people serving community sentences took part in The Big Town Centre Clean-Up, helping to improve Swindon town centre.

Delivered in partnership with the Probation Service, the initiative saw three Community Payback sessions take place in the town centre.

The Community Payback scheme enables people convicted of offences to complete unpaid work that benefits local communities as part of their sentence.

During the full-day sessions, groups of up to 10 participants, supervised by the Probation Service, carried out environmental improvement tasks, including the removal of graffiti from council-owned property in the town centre.

The Probation Service operates robust procedures to ensure Community Payback activities are carefully planned, managed and supervised, with the safety of participants and the public remaining a priority at all times.

The town centre sessions build on the Council's existing partnership with the Probation Service, through which Community Payback participants help maintain Whitworth Road Cemetery.

Following the completion of the clean-up activities, the Council and Probation Service will explore opportunities to expand the use of Community Payback projects across Swindon, enabling more people serving community sentences to make a positive contribution to the Borough while helping tackle issues such as graffiti and litter.

apse energy

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Powering Change, Building Resilience: From Strategy to Delivery

APSE Energy Summit

Wednesday 21 - Thursday 22 October 2026

Glasgow Marriott Hotel

More than £1.6 million secured for children through Free School Meals programme

Nottingham City Council has secured more than £1.6 million in additional funding for children and schools after introducing an innovative Free School Meals (FSM) auto-enrolment programme.

The programme will help ensure hundreds of local families receive the support they are entitled to.

By securely matching existing benefits data with school records, the new process automatically identified 1,219 children who were eligible for Free School Meals but had not been registered.

As a result, children will be able to access a healthy, nutritious meal during the school day, while schools benefit from vital additional funding through the Government's Pupil Premium.

The initiative has been introduced at a significant time for Free School Meals nationally.

From September 2026, the Department for Education is expanding eligibility to all children in households receiving Universal Credit. At the same time, transitional protections introduced during the rollout of Universal Credit are ending, meaning entitlement will increasingly be based on current eligibility.

As more families become eligible and entitlement changes over time, Nottingham's auto-enrolment approach will help ensure children do not miss out on support simply because an application has not been submitted.

Increasing Free School Meals registration plays an important role in tackling food insecurity and improving children's health and wellbeing. It also helps schools access additional Pupil Premium funding, which can be used to provide targeted educational support, learning resources, school trips, enrichment opportunities and pastoral care.

These interventions help improve educational outcomes and life chances for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Councillor Linda Woodings, Executive Member for Children's and Young People at Nottingham City Council, said:

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life, and no family should miss out on support they are entitled to because of an administrative barrier.

"By introducing Free School Meals auto-enrolment, we have been able to identify more than 1,200 eligible children, helping ensure they receive a healthy meal at school while bringing additional funding into our schools.

"This funding will make a real difference, supporting schools to provide extra resources, extra-curricular and cultural opportunities and targeted support that help children thrive both in and out of the classroom. We are proud to be leading the way with an approach that puts families first, reduces inequalities and maximises investment in Nottingham's children and young people."

The initiative demonstrates Nottingham City Council's commitment to ensuring every child receives the support available to them, removing barriers for families, maximising Government funding for local schools and improving outcomes for children across the city.

All APSE members have access to our dedicated Education Catering Network, offering webinars, briefings, research and knowledge sharing to support your service.





Annual Seminar 2026 Report Back

Missed this year's annual seminar? We've put together a summary that captures the two-day programme of presentations, workshops and discussions on delivering safer, cleaner and greener communities for residents to thrive.

On Wednesday 16 and Thursday 17 September, APSE welcomed local government colleagues and elected members from across the UK to the APSE Annual Seminar 2026 in Liverpool.

Held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel overlooking the Princes Dock, the seminar brought together over 300 delegates, exhibitors and speakers in the historic and vibrant city of Liverpool to discuss the biggest challenges and opportunities facing local government.

This year's event, Local Government on the Frontline, Meeting Challenges and Supporting Communities, focused on creating strategies for safer, cleaner and healthier places for residents to thrive.

The seminar was opened by Councillor Liam Robinson, Leader of Liverpool City Council and Cabinet Member for Public Service Innovation at Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Challenge Panel

The first session of the seminar was opened by Councillor Shelley Powell, APSE National Chair and Deputy Cabinet Member: Employment, Education & Skills at Knowsley Council, alongside Councillor Liam Robinson, Leader of Liverpool City Council and Cabinet Member at the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive, chaired the Chief Executive and Senior Leaders Challenge Panel, which brought together leaders from across the UK to discuss the most pressing issues facing local government.



Councillor Liam Robinson, Leader of Liverpool City Council and Cabinet Member for Public Service Innovation at Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Alison Allen, Chief Executive of NILGA, shared her experience of leading local government through an uncertain political climate and how other local authorities could learn from Northern Ireland's approach. Adrian Phillips, Chief Executive of Preston City Council, discussed how Preston are leading the way in community wealth building and highlighted the power of local procurement to boost social value in the area.

Alison McKenzie-Folan, Chief Executive of Wigan Council, explored the importance of place-based leadership in delivering health and care integration, including the role of communities as a starting point for health.

Councillor Lynne Short, Convenor of Climate, Net Zero and Evironment at Dundee City Council, discussed the role of local leaders in building stronger communities for residents.

Mark Davies, Chief Executive at Lancaster City Council, shared the council's experience of reigniting the North's Green Industrial Revolution in Morecambe and beyond.



René Power, Marketing and Communications Consultant and APSE Associate

Frontline forums

Following a thought-provoking panel discussion, delegates joined sector-specific frontline roundtables to unpack the challenges and opportunities facing local authorities.

The roundtables covered key issues from economic growth strategies and fly-tipping enforcement to future-proofing homes, improving access to greenspaces and maintaining local roads.

They provided a valuable opportunity to discuss sector-specific issues, exchange best practice and collaborate on innovative solutions to shared challenges.

Communicating Change

The first day of the seminar concluded with an insightful keynote address from APSE Associate Rene Power, focusing on how local government leaders can communicate change with confidence, clarity and impact.

Rene highlighted the importance of engaging residents through clear, transparent communication and ensuring communities feel informed and involved in decision-making processes.

The session was both engaging and timely, offering valuable insights as local authorities navigate uncertainty surrounding local government reorganisation and wider transformation across the sector.



Professor Steve Grigss, Professor of Public Policy at University of Staffordshire and Ryan Fox, Research Coordinator at University of Staffordshire

Delivering for Communities

The second day of the seminar began with an academic research panel led by Professor Steve Griggs and Ryan Fox from the University of Staffordshire.

Ryan's presentation, 'Growth: what is it good for?', unpacked the concept of 'good growth in every postcode' and explored how this ambition could be achieved in practice. He highlighted the importance of taking a nuanced approach to each geographical context and developing a genuine understanding of place and local identity to inform policy.

Professor Steve Griggs' presentation, 'Sustainable Island Futures', explored how sustainable development can be achieved in island economies through flexible models of local governance.

Steve examined the concept of 'islandness' and island identity, as well as the specific challenges which are often amplified within island communities. He also explored how the research could be applied within the wider context of rural communities throughout the UK.

Following the academic research panel, delegates were joined by Sarah McQueen, Head of Housing at South Kesteven Council, who shared how South Kesteven had transformed their housing service to achieve a C2 grade. Sarah outlined the journey her team had been on from culture change and goal setting to tenant engagement and inspection preparation.

Luke Colaluca, Streetwise Manager at Rushcliffe Borough Council, shared Rushcliffe's experience of insourcing its streetwise environmental services. Luke outlined the transformation of the service, including the creation of Streetwise Environmental Ltd, the decarbonisation of their fleet, the introduction of a digital toolkit and the role of external funding.



Sarah McQueen, Head of Housing at South Kesteven Council

Luke highlighted the success of this transformation, with the team proudly receiving the Best Council Service Team of the Year award at the MJ Awards, alongside positive feedback and reviews from residents.

Innovation Showcase: Changing Climate and Sustainable Services

Elaine Smith, Senior Quality, Energy and Sustainability Manager at the Northern Ireland Education Authority and Maria Diffley, Co-founder of SustainIQ, opened Session Five with an insightful presentation on their collaborative work to harness data and technology to improve environmental conditions across school estates.

They shared the success of EcoSense, SustainIQ's digital reporting platform, which has helped reduce energy waste, cost savings and improve comfort for pupils in school estates.



Chloe Jenkins, Project Manager at Coed Caerdydd at Cardiff Council

Chloe Jenkins, Project Manager at Coed Caerdydd at Cardiff Council, shared Cardiff's experience of creating urban forests across the city with the help of a team of dedicated and passionate volunteers. The project included a range of community activities from planting and identification to nurseries and monitoring, supporting the city's biodiversity and resulting in 155,000 trees planted in 500 sites.

To conclude the session, Louise Gilliam, Dietitian at Torfaen County Borough Council, presented the council's Sustainable School Meals Roadmap, highlighting how it has cut carbon emissions, introduced healthier meal options, reduced food waste and invested in the workforce.

Louise demonstrated how a pupil-first approach, including the popular Waste Warriors Competition, has delivered positive outcomes across schools, with the initiative receiving national recognition from industry bodies such as APSE, The School Food People and Waste2Zero.

Innovation Showcase: Service Transformation

Session Six began with an exploration of Sherbourne Recycling's Materials Recovery Facility, led by Layla Shannon, Business Development Director. Layla highlighted Sherbourne's innovative partnership model, which works closely with eight local authorities across the Midlands to deliver their recycling commitments.

She outlined the facility's journey from the initial feasibility study to its current position as a leader in the circular economy. The presentation also explored the facility's role in supporting local councils to respond to the new Simpler Recycling Legislation.

Delegates were then joined by Deaglan O'Hagan, Head of Leisure Operations at Antrim and Newtownabbey Council, who shared the council's success of operating an in-house leisure service. Deaglan highlighted how an enhanced programme offer, increased investment and a strengthened brand had driven significant growth in both membership and facility usage, demonstrating the positive impact of the service transformation.

Julie Nisbet, Transformation Manager and Rob Papworth, Service Manager, Commissioning at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, concluded Session Six with an insightful presentation on the positive impact of the council's Activity Champion Network, which works alongside care home staff to create meaningful and engaging opportunities for vulnerable residents. Julie highlighted the strong partnership approach that underpins the network, bringing together organisations including Tees Network, Tees Valley Museums and Stockton Globe.

Networking and collaboration

After another day packed with presentations and fascinating insights, colleagues enjoyed a networking session led by Neil Barnett, Research Fellow at Leeds Beckett University. Neil shared an overview of his book, Local Government and Democracy in Britain, with a wide range of thought-provoking questions from the audience.

Delegates enjoyed a tour of Liverpool's iconic Royal Liver Building, providing a unique opportunity to network alongside spectacular views of the city's skyline. The tour explored the building's fascinating history, from its construction to its status as one of Liverpool's most iconic landmarks.



Mo Baines, APSE Chief Executive

Celebrating success at the Annual Service Awards and Charity Dinner

To conclude two days of knowledge sharing, networking and collaboration with local government colleagues, delegates attended the 2026 Annual Service Awards and Charity Dinner, in aid of Parkinson's UK. We are proud to have raised £2,000 for Parkinson's UK and thank our delegates for their generosity and continued support.

The awards recognised the local council teams working hard to make a positive impact on their communities, with categories celebrating innovation, transformation, collaboration and commercialisation across a wide range of frontline services.

The evening also featured the prestigious APSE Council of the Year Award, which was presented to Torfaen County Borough Council in recognition of its outstanding achievements and commitment to delivering high-quality services for residents.

The awards evening was a wonderful end to this year's Annual Seminar and provided an opportunity for delegates to come together and celebrate the dedication, innovation and hard work of local authority teams delivering vital services to communities across the UK.



Announcing the winners of the
APSE Annual Service Awards 2026!

Best Workforce Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Unison



Finalists

Carmarthenshire County Council
East Ayrshire Council
Erewash Borough Council
Flintshire County Council
South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership
South Tyneside Council
Wealden District Council
Wigan Council

Winner: South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership: 'SELCP Academy'

The South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership has established the SELCP Academy to attract, retain and develop talent across all stages of an officer's career. Through structured development programmes – including Early Careers, Future Leaders and IMPACT Managers – the Academy builds capability, confidence and leadership capacity while breaking down organisational silos. Grounded in shared organisational values, the Academy supports a resilient, engaged workforce prepared to meet community needs and the significant organisational change ahead.

Best Building and Housing Initiative

Kindly sponsored by BTG Eddisons



Finalists

Fife Council (A Blueprint for the Future: Transforming Occupied High-Rise Homes)
Fife Council (Hill Street, Cowdenbeath (Valley House) – Regeneration of a brownfield site)
ODS
Sefton Council
Watford Borough Council
Wealden District Council

Winner: Fife Council: A Blue Print for the Future

Fife Council: 'A Blueprint for the Future: Transforming Occupied High- Rise Homes'

The project delivered one of the first large-scale removals of bonded and mechanically fixed EWI, replacing it with a fully compliant modern system alongside a full roof upgrade. Internally, new evacuation measures, fire stopping and sprinklers throughout properties and communal areas, creating a single, whole-building programme addressing safety, energy, structure and community. A new reception/ office were delivered, with all works completed with 158 tenants in residence, setting a model for intrusive fire-safety upgrades in occupied high-rise buildings.

Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Bellrock



Finalists

Cumberland Council
East and North Herts Councils
East Ayrshire Council
Hounslow Highways
Outcomes Matter Consulting with the London Borough of Ealing
South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership
Watford Borough Council

Winner: Watford Borough Council

Redefining the art of the possible: Watford Borough Council's story of continuous evolution in an everchanging environment

Ranked among the UK's best towns to live, work and play, Watford's story is one of transformation and bold leadership. Guided by a forward-thinking Mayor and Chief Executive, the council has empowered an innovative culture. Our bold, collaborative and transformative approach points to a resilient, inclusive and sustainable future, leadership that shapes change.

Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative (incl. Social Care)

Kindly sponsored by Unison



Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Durham County Council
East Ayrshire Council
Inverclyde council
Local Government East
Nottingham City Council
Watford Borough Council
Winchester City Council

Winner: Winchester City Council

Winchester District Live Long Better Programme

Winchester City Council's Live Longer Better programme is a locally delivered healthy ageing initiative funded by Hampshire County Council and supported by Active Partnership, Energise Me. It focuses on helping adults aged 65+ stay active, independent, and socially connected through low-cost exercise sessions, including strength, balance, and dance classes. Delivered in community venues, sheltered housing, and care settings. The programme aims to prevent frailty, reduce falls risk, and improve wellbeing through movement and social engagement.

Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Blanchards



Finalists

Cornwall Council
Derry and Strabane District Council
Kent County Council
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Outcomes Matter Consulting with the London Borough of Ealing
Sheffield City Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Winner: Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Poverty Proofing Prom – "A Second Dance"

In 2025, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Wellington Square launched 'A Second Dance' to tackle the growing cost barrier of school proms. Co-designed with young people and residents, the initiative has created a stigma-free, retail-style experience offering donated promwear. In its first year, it supported 95 young people, saved families £23,750 plus, and attracted donations of over 300 garments. This innovative public-private partnership reduces inequality while promoting sustainability and an alternative community-led solution for families and young people.

Best Collaborative Working Initiative

Kindly sponsored by University of Staffordshire



Finalists

Fife Council (One Team, One Vision: Safely Transforming Occupied High-Rise Homes)
Fife Council (Climate Action Fife: Transforming Climate Action Through Public–Third Sector Collaboration)
Inverclyde Council
Kent County Council
North Tyneside Council
ODS
Outcomes Matter consulting with the London Borough of Ealing
South Ayrshire Council
YES Energy Solutions CIC Company

Winner: Outcomes Matter Consulting with the London Borough of Ealing

CHC+ Innovations — How Ealing Council used structured AI support to transform Continuing Healthcare checklist quality, consistency and outcomes

Ealing Council, working with Outcomes Matter Consulting and HGS UK, co-developed CHC+, a sector-first AI supported improvement model for NHS Continuing Healthcare checklists. The initiative reduced checklist drafting time by over 80%, achieved zero ICB rejections, exceeded annual CHC targets, and recovered over £130,000 in correctly placed NHS funding within two months. Social workers remain in full control of every decision, and are feeling empowered in the process. CHC+ is now being adopted by councils across England,

Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative

Kindly sponsored by APSE Synergy



Finalists

Derby City Council
Haringey Council
Lancashire County Council
Liverpool City Council
London Borough of Islington
Nottingham City Council
Outcomes Matter Consulting with the London Borough of Ealing

Winner: Derby City Council

The Virtuous Cycle: Commercialising Enforcement to Fund Social Value and Climate Action

Derby City Council's Digital Enforcement Hub exemplifies public sector entrepreneurship. By transforming internal road safety capabilities into a commercialised Public-to-Public shared service, they eliminated capital barriers for partner councils. The Hub generates over £500,000 annually. Crucially, this income drives a "Virtuous Cycle" of social value, wholly funding 17 School Crossing Patrols and active travel initiatives. This commercial agility delivers 88% sustained behavioural change and a 48.8% NO2 reduction, proving commercialisation can actively fuel community resilience and decarbonisation.

Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (incl. Community Safety)

Kindly sponsored by Helping Hand



Finalists

Kent County Council
Lancashire County Council
Liverpool City Council
ODS
South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership
South Ayrshire Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough council
Torfaen County Borough Council
Wirral Council

Winner: South Ayrshire Council

Town Centre Environmental Programme

South Ayrshire Council's Thriving Communities Environmental Town Centre Programme was established in partnership with SAC's Waste Management. The Environmental Squad gives trainees, engaging with Thriving Communities, the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills by carrying out tasks to support the general upkeep of Town Centre's in Ayr and Girvan. Trainees are able to establish routine and embed structure and positive choices into their day, as well as gaining valuable work experience and developing workplace skills.

Best Innovation or Demand Management Initiative

Kindly sponsored by SOCITM



Finalists

Hounslow Highways
Kent County Council
Lancashire County Council
Liverpool City Council
Outcomes Matter Consulting with the London Borough of Ealing
Torfaen County Borough Council
Watford Borough Council

Winner: Torfaen County Borough Council

Ty Blaen Depot whole energy system approach

Ty Blaen Depot has undergone a transformative decarbonisation programme, eliminating fossil-fuel heating through heat pumps, installing 300 kW of solar PV, 21 smart EV chargers and 225 kWh of battery storage. A new 1 MW substation, an upgraded Building Management System and adaptive LED lighting have optimised energy use and flexibility. The site now supports 25 EVs and is positioned for further fleet transition. Work to date has delivered an 88–92% annual CO_2 reduction and 67% energy cost saving.

Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Gul-e by ODS



Finalists

Amey Ltd
East Lothian Council
Hackney Council
Inverclyde Council
South Kesteven District Council
Tayside Contracts
Torfaen County Borough Council
Winchester City Council

Winner: South Kesteven District Council

Leading the leisure sector to net zero: the Grantham Meres path to reduction

Grantham Meres Leisure Centre is South Kesteven's largest leisure facility, with nearly half a million users annually. Through a blend of council and grant funding, £4.68m has been invested into the centre to reduce energy consumption and eliminate fossil fuel heating. The bespoke design of the new air source heat pump packaged plant room – known as the Net Zero Pod – will slash carbon emissions, making the centre net zero carbon ready while reducing annual operating costs by over £200k.

Best Service Team: Soft Facilities Management

Kindly sponsored by Assist



Finalists

Carmarthenshire County Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Juniper Ventures
Lancashire County Council
North Yorkshire Council
Vinci Facilities

Winner: North Yorkshire Council

Building a brighter future

North Yorkshire is investing in a brighter future by continually enhancing its cleaning and catering services to improve efficiency, quality, and sustainability. The teams have focused on cost effectiveness, strong partnerships, enhanced training, and long-term sustainability. Innovations in technology, local sourcing, food waste reduction, and accreditations such as ISO9001 and Food for Life highlight this commitment. Looking ahead, the service will expand work experience opportunities, nurture future talent, embrace further innovation, and continue driving improvement across both services.

Best Service Team: Technical Services

Kindly sponsored by Enterprise Mobility



Finalists

East Lothian Council
Hackney Council
Hounslow Highways
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Midlothian Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Wigan Council

Progress in delivery. Unity in approach. Green in outcome.

Aligned to the Council's Progress with Unity strategy, the Highways Service has embedded a data-led, collaborative approach to asset management, assurance and performance. By strengthening partnership working, integrating AI-enabled insight, and applying place-based intelligence, the team has delivered consistent, outcome-focused improvements across a range of highway disciplines. This unified direction of travel culminated in a Green rating in the latest DfT annual ratings, an outcome achieved by only 16 local authorities nationally.

Best Service Team: Waste, Recycling and Circular Economy

Kindly sponsored by CIWM



Finalists

Flintshire County Council
Lancashire County Council
East and North Herts Councils
North Kesteven District council
Sherbourne Recycling – via Coventry City Council
South Lanarkshire Council

Winner: Lancashire County Council

The Reuse Hub Team

The Reuse Hub is more than a reuse initiative: it is a people centred service underpinned by teamwork, compassion and innovation. By responding to real need, adapting to challenges, and working collaboratively across LCC services and the voluntary sector, the Reuse Hub team have created a sustainable model that improves lives, reduces waste, and delivers support with dignity at its heart.

Best Service Team: Streetscene

Kindly sponsored by Vizzia



Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Cumberland Council
Ipswich Borough Council
Luton Council
Newport City Council
Sefton Council
Westminster City Council

Winner: Newport City Council

Intelligence led enforcement: Newport City Council's Targeted Approach to Reducing Fly-Tipping and Deterring Waste Crime

Over the last two years Newport City Council waste enforcement has transformed reactive clearances to a proactive, intelligence led approach. Daily hotspot monitoring, visible officer patrols, faster evidence capture and digital case management. Reported fly-tipping is down 37% since 2023/24, high-impact enforcement has risen by 90%. Targeted CCTV surveillance, drone capability, direct resident engagement and strong partnership working have delivered cleaner neighbourhoods, behaviour change demonstrated through increased recycling rates, greater public confidence in services and reduced repeat offending.

Best Service Team: Parks and Green Spaces

Kindly sponsored by JCB



Finalists

Cardiff Council
Gravesham Borough Council
Nottingham City Council
Torfaen County Borough Council
Watford Borough Council (Active, Inclusive, Award-Winning: The Watford Parks and Open Spaces Story)
Watford Borough Council (The transformation of Watford's parks through the 'Green Spaces Strategy')

Winner: Nottingham City Council

Greener, Healthier, Happier Nottingham

Greenspace and Natural Environment delivers high-quality, accessible and sustainable parks and open spaces across Nottingham, supporting the wellbeing of residents, enhancing biodiversity and strengthening community pride. Over the past year, the service has combined significant external investment with strong operational delivery, innovative commercial activity and deep community engagement. Through major capital improvements, award-winning horticulture, an expanding volunteer network and ambitious environmental programmes, the service continues to improve the city's green infrastructure while demonstrating resilience, creativity and leadership. This submission highlights a year of transformation, partnership and measurable impact across Nottingham's natural environment.

Best Service Team: Cemetery and Crematorium Services

Kindly sponsored by PlotBox



Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
East Lothian Council
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Wirral Council

Winner: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Bereavement and Cemetery Services Antrim and Newtownabbey

Our Bereavement and Cemetery Service is delivered by a dedicated team of 19 staff who collectively manage approximately 1,000 burials and over 1400 cremations each year. Council is responsible for the management of 16 cemetery sites and has recently developed crematorium, providing modern, high quality facilities. Over the last number of years, the team has consistently delivered compassionate support with dignity and care. Staff continue to collaborate effectively with colleagues, partners, and external agencies

Best Service Team: Sports, Leisure and Cultural Services

Kindly sponsored by Space and Place



Finalists

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Carmarthenshire County Council
Gravesham Borough Council
South Ayrshire Council
Warwick District Council
Wealden District Council

Winner: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

Antrim and Newtownabbey Leisure Team

The Leisure Team at Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (ANBC) delivers exceptional services, positively impacting residents. With 150 staff and six state-of-the-art centres, ANBC is an industry leader, recognised regionally and nationally. The service holds the APSE Best Large Service Team Award 2025 alongside Health Officer Arlene McMinn winning UK Active Physical Activity Hero, boasts a 91.3% customer satisfaction rating, and recently achieved Quest Plus score of 'Very Good' for all six centres. Our dedicated team continues to deliver world-class services, embracing innovation to combat rising costs and inspire positive change.





Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery

Kindly sponsored by Siemens



Winner:
Torfaen County Borough Council

Finalists:

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
Carmarthenshire County Council
Fife Council
Lancashire County Council
Liverpool City Council
Outcomes Matter Consulting with London Borough of Ealing
South Ayrshire Council
Torfaen County Borough Council
Watford Borough Council

APSE would like to thank all sponsors of the Service Awards 2026 for their support



apse seminars

Scan the QR code to join us in Bolton!

From Risk to Readiness: Building Local Resilience

APSE Policy Seminar

Thursday 12 November 2026, 10:00 - 16:00

Toughsheet Community Stadium (Bolton Wanderers FC Stadium)



Rain gardens installed in Swansea communities

Cyngor Abertawe Swansea Council

A series of improvements aimed at increasing green infrastructure, creating better walking and cycle links and increasing protection against flooding are being installed in a Swansea community.

Plants, shrubs and improved pedestrian areas are part of a number of measures, better known as 'rain gardens' and are currently being created at key locations within the Sandfields/St Helen's area.

Rain gardens capture water runoff from the road and pavements. Its trees, shrubs and flowers help reduce the risk of flooding and help decrease pollution getting into waterways and harming ecosystems.

They also offer food and shelter to pollinators all year round and provides a splash of colour through the seasons.

The improvements are also part of Swansea Council's efforts to introduce better walking and cycling infrastructure across the city, following a successful grant bid to the Welsh Government's Active Travel programme.

Further funding for the scheme has been provided via the Welsh Government - Local Places for Nature fund and Natural Resources Wales.

Sites currently being improved include Phillips Parade and Rodney Street.The improvements follow on from previous consultation with residents and businesses in the area and was supported by community regeneration experts - Urban Foundry, who helped develop the innovative plans.

The latest works follow on from similar measures which have been completed directly outside St Helen's Primary School.

Improved paving was also installed, along with dropped kerbs, providing better access for those travelling to and from the school, whether on foot or using bikes and scooters.

Stuart Davies, Head of Service for Transport and Highways in Swansea Council, said: "These innovative measures are providing local communities with a range of benefits where links between streets for walkers and cyclists are improved.

"The introduction of rain gardens also provides a green and sustainable solution for spots within communities where standing water can occur during heavy rainfall.

A further 'rain garden' has been installed at the end of Burrows Road, adjacent to Oystermouth Road.

The rain garden projects are all part of the council's vision to help develop greener spaces, cleaner air and lower carbon emissions in communities across the city.

All APSE members have access to our dedicated Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network, offering webinars, events, briefings and research to support your service.

Member Spotlight: Stephen Gabriel, Chief Executive and Returning Officer at Tamworth Borough

We sat down with APSE member, Stephen Gabriel, Chief Executive and Returning Officer at Tamworth Borough Council to hear about his experience as an APSE member.



Who are you and what is your role?

I'm Stephen Gabriel, Chief Executive and Returning Officer at Tamworth Borough Council. I've worked in local government since June 1989, serving communities through roles in Birmingham, Sandwell, Oxford, Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Tamworth. My role is to provide strategic leadership for the council, support elected members and help shape a thriving future for the borough.

What attracted you to work in local government?

What attracted me was the opportunity to make a visible difference in people's lives. Local government is where policy becomes reality, and throughout my career I've been motivated by the chance to improve places, support communities and see the direct impact of public service.

What challenges do you face in local government?

Having worked in local government since 1989, I believe we are at one of the most pivotal points in history. Councils are managing financial pressures, rising demand and major reforms through devolution and local government reorganisation. The challenge is leading through change while continuing to deliver excellent services for residents.

What do you value most about APSE membership/ events/services?

APSE provides invaluable opportunities to learn from peers, shape ideas and access practical insight from across local government. I particularly value the way it brings together expertise and innovation to help councils improve services and outcomes for residents.

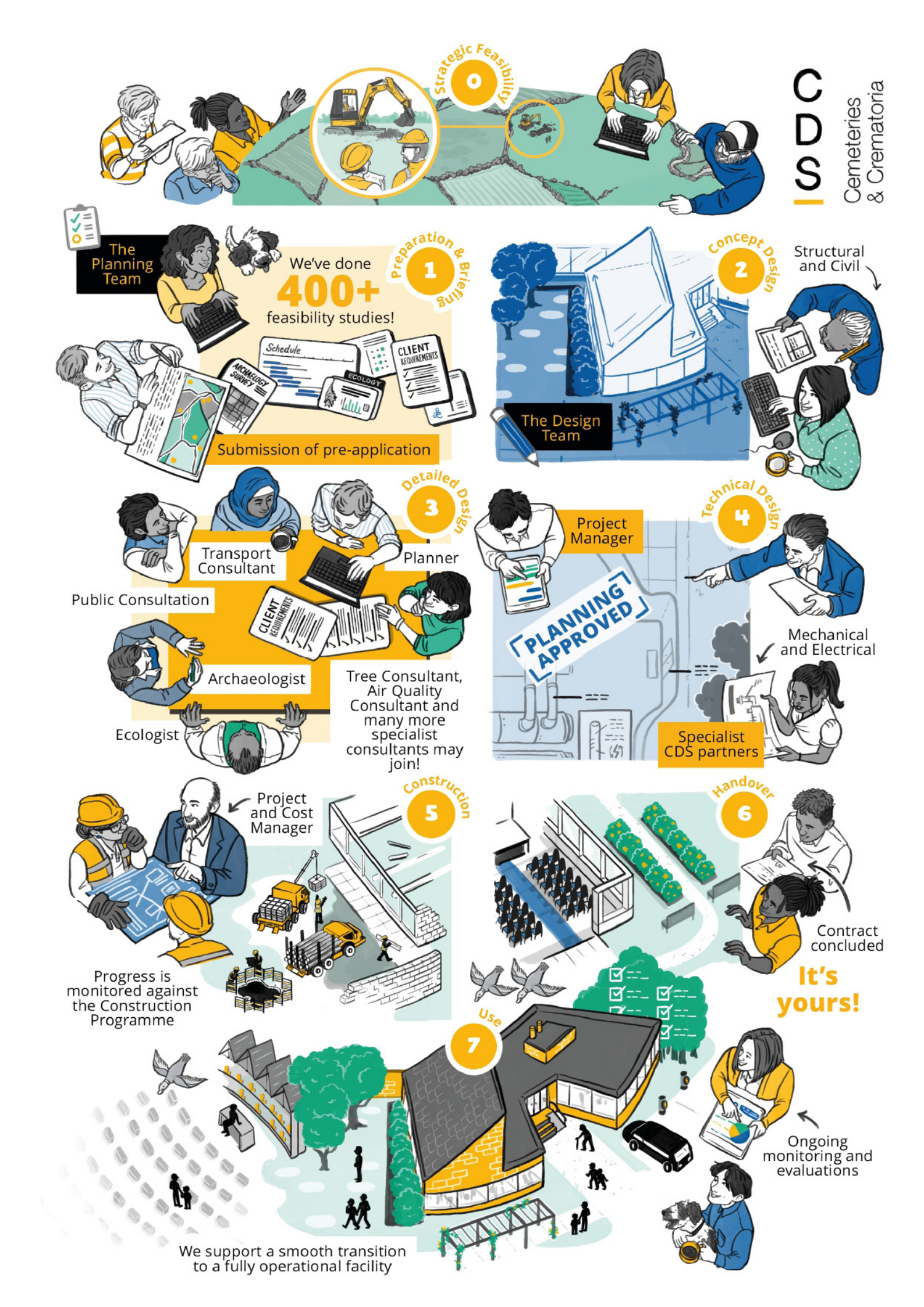
Share something you like about living/working in your local council area.

Tamworth combines a proud heritage with a strong sense of community and ambition for the future. What I enjoy most is the pride people have in their town and the willingness of residents businesses, partners and community groups to work together to make Tamworth an even better place.

Tamworth Borough Council

Do you want to share your experience as an APSE member?
Get in touch with our Communications Team!
Email Hannah Cocker at hcocker@apse.org.uk




Strategic Feasibility
0
CDS
Cemeteries & Crematoria
The Planning Team
We've done
400+
feasibility studies!
Preparation & Briefing
1
Schedule
CLIENT REQUIREMENTS
ARCHAEOLOGY SURVEY
ECOLOGY
Submission of pre-application
Concept Design
2
Structural and Civil
The Design Team
Detailed Design
3
Transport Consultant
Planner
Public Consultation
CLIENT REQUIREMENTS
Archaeologist
Ecologist
Tree Consultant, Air Quality Consultant and many more specialist consultants may join!
Technical Design
4
Project Manager
PLANNING APPROVED
Mechanical and Electrical
Specialist CDS partners
Construction
5
Project and Cost Manager
Progress is monitored against the Construction Programme
Handover
6
Contract concluded
It's yours!
Use
7
Ongoing monitoring and evaluations
We support a smooth transition to a fully operational facility

The CDS Group offers unrivalled expertise in designing, planning and developing projects related to bereavement.

Over the last two decades, we've honed a comprehensive development process, enlisting best-in-class specialists at every stage. The process comprises eight distinct phases:

0 Strategic Feasibility

From first contact, we listen to your requirements and ideas with an open mind so we can advise on the best approach to meet your needs.

1 Preparation & Briefing

We record your aspirations in a brief and complete feasibility studies, ensuring the site can meet your needs.

2 Concept Design

With a positive feasibility outcome, we develop concept design ideas to meet the Client Design Brief and budget. We find ways to minimise energy use, saving money and promoting sustainability.

3 Detailed Design

At this Stage, we coordinate all architectural, engineering and specialist consultant information to formulate the planning application submission.

4 Technical Design

The technical intricacies are worked into your beautiful architectural and engineering designs to finalise the tender pack. CDS will manage a specialist consultancy team to produce this pack and guide you through the tender process to find the right contractor.

5 Construction

This is when you see your plans materialise with construction on site. CDS will oversee the building works to ensure the delivery of the scheme to the highest standard, as per the brief, and minimise environmental impact as we go.

6 Handover

The contract is concluded and CDS can support you through to formal opening of the site.

7 Use

After handover, we continue to ensure the development operates as intended and is efficiently maintained.

Choose CDS for a seamless project from inception right through to completion.

With expert management of regulations, cost, and risk every step of the way, you can rest assured that every element will be covered.

CDS

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Ready to get started?

So, what proposal are you considering?

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Lancashire County Council's Award-Winning Reuse Hub

Lancashire County Council was awarded the Best Service Team of the Year: Recycling, Waste and Circular Economy at the APSE Service Awards in Liverpool, recognising the positive social and environmental impact of their Reuse Hub initiative.

The Reuse Hub was created to respond to two growing challenges in the region: the increasing numbers of local families struggling to access essential household goods and the volume of good-quality items being discarded at recycling centres.

A central element of the Hub is collaboration and partnership working across the council and beyond. Initially, the council's waste services team and children and family wellbeing service team recognised the potential for discarded coats to benefit local children who were regularly attending school without adequate warm clothing. The Reuse Hub team was able to rescue reusable items from recycling centres and redistribute them free of charge to those in need. Since then, the Reuse Hub has supported many council services by keeping valuable items in use for longer. Reusable items are sourced from recycling centres and redistributed free of charge, helping to provide practical support to people in need.

The Reuse Hub's collaboration with the Child and Youth Justice Service further highlights its commitment to supporting the local community. Online orders are delivered by a youth worker accompanied by young people undertaking court-ordered reparation work who gain meaningful and practical work experience.

The service has also partnered with the local prison service, which professionally launders all reused textiles, ensuring they are clean and ready for use. The Reuse Hub supports a broad range of council services to make cost savings and to promote better outcomes. The team worked with the Refugee Integration Service to coordinate a collection of suitcases from recycling centres, helping to provide refugees with suitable luggage, as well as storage and kitchen equipment for young people leaving care.

Choice and autonomy are also at the heart of the initiative. The scheme initially began as a Facebook Marketplace page, where professionals could view the available items alongside the people they were supporting, enabling individuals to choose the items that best meet their needs.

Following a rapid increase in demand, the council developed a bespoke website to help manage stock, monitor outcomes and provide users with a more accessible and intuitive experience. Now, eight years on from its launch, the Reuse Hub has evolved into a successful online shopping style platform with a wide variety of free items for service users to choose from. Simple to access and easy to use, the Reuse Hub connects council and local voluntary services with reusable items that can make a real difference to people in need. Alongside its wide-reaching social benefits, the Reuse Hub has significantly reduced waste and contributed towards the organisation's goal to advance the circular economy.

Between January to December 2024, the Reuse Hub kept 18.8 tonnes of items in circulation, rising significantly to 22.7 tonnes in 2025, and generated 98.5 tonnes of carbon savings.

Staff members in recycling centres are now specifically trained to identify suitable reusable items, understand their value and ensure a supply of good quality items are available to service users.

Demand for the Reuse Hub has grown rapidly, with 2,730 people supported through the service in 2024 and a further 2,822 people supported in 2025. Looking to the future, the council hopes to broaden its reach, enhance its capacity and build on its strong network of partnerships, maximising both its environmental impact and the support available to local communities.

England's first cycling street opens in Cambridge

Cambridge is now home to England's first cycling street, following the success of a scheme led by the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership.

England's first cycle street has now opened on Adams Road in Cambridge. The scheme was delivered by Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and other partner organisations through the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Cycle streets are designed to give greater priority to cyclists while still allowing motor vehicle access. Drivers are required to travel at the speed of cyclists and give way to them, creating a safer and more comfortable environment for cycling.

Construction began in October and included a range of improvements for pedestrian safety. These include widened footways on both sides of the road to create more space for pedestrians, an upgraded junction with greater pedestrian priority and additional crossing points along the road.

Other improvements include changes to existing junctions, resurfacing of the carriageway and footways, and the installation of rainwater gardens along the road's edge to help absorb surface water runoff.

The development at Adams Road forms part of the wider plans in the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Comberton Greenway, one of 12 greenway routes which seek to improve walking, wheeling and cycling journeys. When complete, the greenways will cover more than 150km to make it safer and easier for people to travel sustainably across Greater Cambridge.

Bradford City Council aims to end homelessness in the region by 2027

Bradford City Council has announced new seven-year partnership with national charity, Waythrough, in a bid to end homelessness in the district by 2027.

The charity Waythrough, which specialises in mental health, drug and alcohol, and housing support services will deliver an enhanced 'No Second Night Out' service for people who are sleeping rough or at risk of doing so. The contract will deliver the service for the next five years, with the option to extend for a further two years.

No Second Night Out is designed to provide rapid intervention for people facing homelessness, ensuring they can access safe accommodation, specialist support, and pathways towards longer-term housing solutions.

As part of the new partnership, an additional five dedicated bedspaces will be available for rough sleepers across the district, bringing the total number of beds to 37.

The partnership with Waythrough aligns with Bradford Council's ongoing commitment to bring homelessness as close to zero as possible by 2027 and supports the ambitions set out in the recently launched National Plan to End Homelessness, which calls for coordinated action between local authorities, housing providers, charities, and communities.

Bradford Council's Executive Member for Healthy People Councillor Jayne Morgan said: "This partnership with Waythrough represents our ongoing efforts to prevent rough sleeping and support some of the most vulnerable people in our communities.

"By securing this service for the next five years with the option to extend it for a further two years, we are demonstrating our commitment to reducing homelessness and ensuring that people receive the help they need at the earliest opportunity."

Tom Mann, from Waythrough added: "We have extensive experience in delivering housing, homelessness, and support services across the UK, and here in Bradford. We will work closely with Bradford Council and local partners to provide emergency accommodation, tailored support, and opportunities for people to rebuild their lives."

All APSE members have access to our dedicated Housing and Building Maintenance Network, offering webinars, events, briefings and research to support your service.



Council transitioning vehicle fleet from diesel to address climate change

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is taking an important step towards significantly reducing its carbon footprint by powering its vehicle fleet with an environmentally friendly biofuel mix.

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) is produced from renewable sources such as vegetable oil and animal fats and can be blended with regular diesel. Introducing the fuel mix across the Council's current fleet would reduce carbon emissions by almost 2,500 tonnes annually.

Viewed as an effective alternative to diesel, HVO can significantly reduce greenhouse gases and other harmful emissions, including nitrogen oxide, with the fuel approved for use by vehicle manufacturers who provide engines for Council vehicles.

With all new vehicles required to produce zero emissions by 2035, in line with the Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (VETS), Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is planning for the future and driving change across its fleet. Introducing HVO requires no vehicle or infrastructure modification and can be mixed with the Council's existing diesel stock.

Agreement to begin transitioning the fleet's main fuel source was taken at a meeting of the Council's Sustainability and Environment Committee on February 18, 2026. The Committee's recommendation has to be formally approved by the full Council next month.

Currently, there is only one electric battery powered vehicle across the Council's 195 vehicle fleet which emits zero emissions. But that is set to change.

By the end of June this year, the Council is aiming to have 17 zero emission light fleet vehicles on the road and is currently drafting proposals for all its small vehicles under 3.5 tonnes to be carbon neutral by 2035.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Philip Campbell said, "Introducing biofuel and zero emission vehicles across the Council fleet is part of our vision for a low-carbon, climate resilient future, protecting the area's fragile environment.

"The scale of the significant reduction in the Council's carbon footprint by introducing the biofuel mix cannot be underestimated. We are committed to integrating climate action and sustainability in all aspects of our operations and decision-making and policies. Introducing HVO is a critically important step on this journey."

The Council Chairperson said HVO offers significant advantages over conventional diesel, with greenhouse gas reductions leading to better air quality and a reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

"The fact HVO can be blended with regular diesel and used in many of the Council fleet's engines with little or no modification is positive and offers significant environmental benefits," Cllr Campbell added.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is currently consulting on its draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy which commits the organisation to be net zero by 2050 when it aims to have its entire vehicle fleet, including heavy lorries, fully decarbonised.

A feasibility study on the Adoption of Alternative Fuel Vehicles by Local Authorities (2022) for a number of Council authorities in the East Border Region identified HVO as a crucial transition arrangement on the path to net zero.

HVO is derived from sources that can be replenished, unlike fossil fuels, reducing greenhouse gases by up to 90%, compared to fossil diesel. In addition, the biofuel helps reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by between 28% and 69%, depending on the vehicle's operating cycle.

Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne
and Down
District Council

All APSE members have access to our dedicated Fleet, Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Network, offering webinars, events, briefings and research to support your service.



Scan the QR code to submit your entry before the deadline on ***Friday 30 October***

APSE ENERGY AWARDS

2027

Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

Wednesday 10 February 2027

Birmingham Conference and Events Centre

apse energy

Digital Futures Forum: Innovation across Welsh councils

Matt Ellis, Policy Lead and Communications Manager, reflects on APSE's recent event in Llandudno, Wales.

Against the stunning backdrop of the Irish Sea at Venue Cymru in Llandudno, council officers, elected members and digital leaders from across Wales gathered for the APSE and Socitm Digital Futures Forum Wales. The event provided an opportunity to share ideas, explore emerging technologies and learn from councils already delivering innovative digital projects. Throughout the day, delegates heard practical examples of how local authorities are using technology to improve services, strengthen resilience and deliver better outcomes for communities.

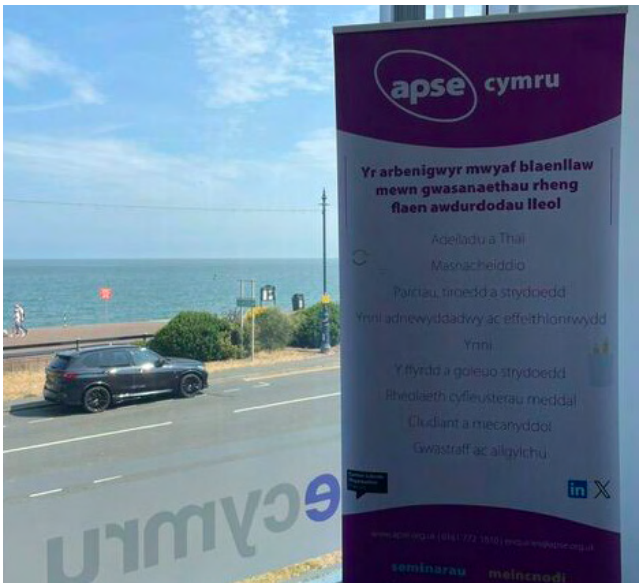
The forum opened with a strong message that digital transformation is about much more than introducing new technology. Instead, it is about finding better ways to deliver services, improve outcomes and make organisations more resilient in an increasingly digital world. Throughout the day, speakers shared real-life examples of how councils are tackling challenges and making the most of new opportunities.



The first presentation was delivered by Mathew Henshaw, Chief Digital Officer at Isle of Anglesey County Council, who spoke about the growing cyber threats facing local government. As more services are delivered online and councils become increasingly reliant on digital systems, cyber security has become a critical issue. His presentation explored the changing threat landscape and highlighted the importance of building resilience across council services to protect vital infrastructure and ensure services remain available to residents.

Delegates then heard from Dave Sanderson, Director of Member Services at Socitm, who focused on the role of digital transformation in delivering social value. His presentation explored how councils can move beyond policy discussions and use technology to create genuine benefits for people and places. By embedding social value into digital projects from the outset, local authorities can ensure that innovation supports wider community outcomes as well as service efficiency

Following a networking break, attention turned to the growing role of artificial intelligence within local government.



Markeus Woodworth, Chief Digital Officer at Denbighshire County Council, shared the authority's experience of developing an AI policy. As councils increasingly explore the use of AI tools, he stressed the importance of having clear governance arrangements in place. His presentation looked at how Denbighshire has approached issues such as ethics, risk management and responsible use, offering valuable lessons for other authorities beginning their own AI journey.

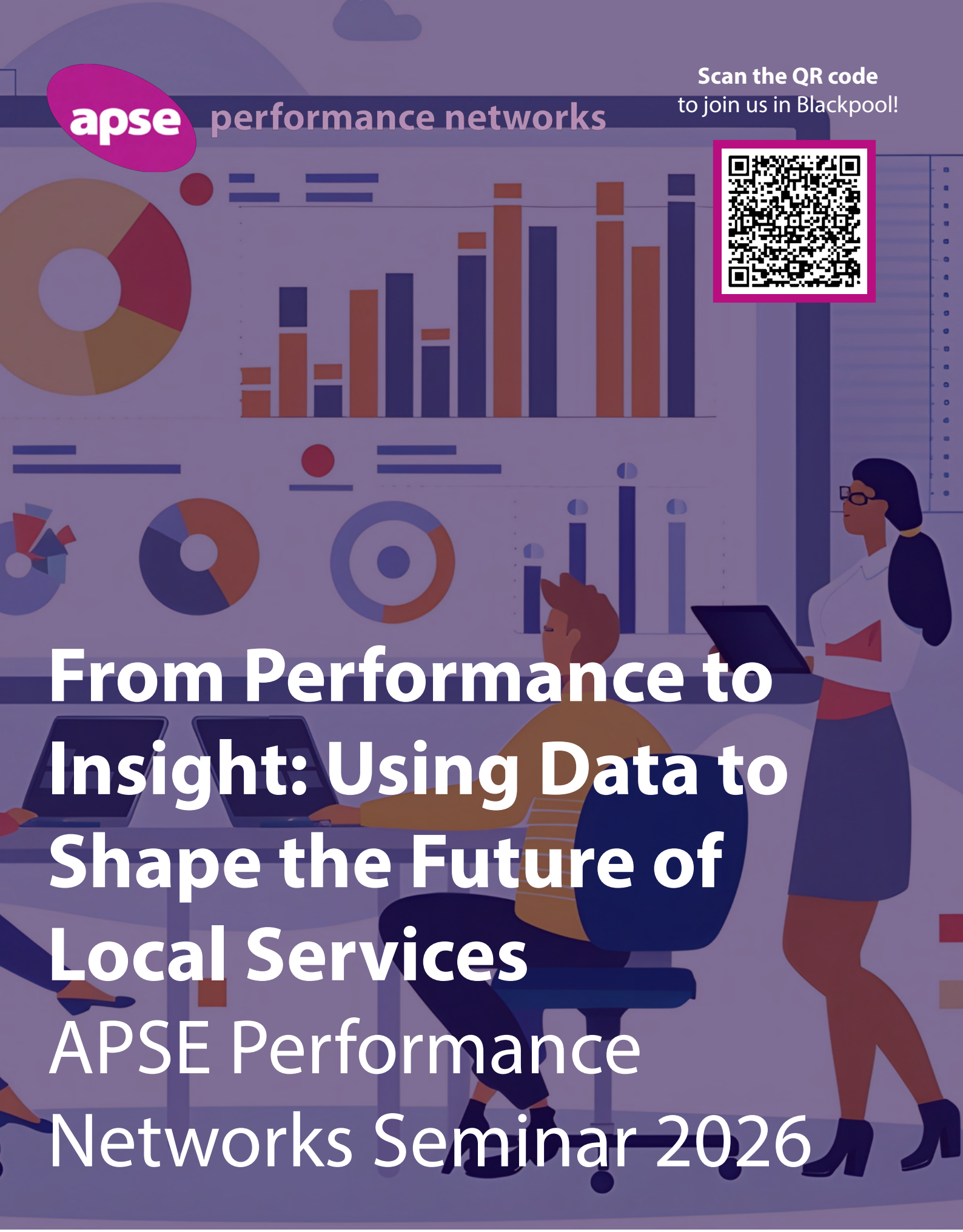
One of the day's most interesting case studies came from Powys County Council. Councillor Raiff Devlin and Ellen Sullivan presented the council's innovative Reading Age Assistant, an AI-powered tool designed to support learners with Additional Learning Needs. The project demonstrated how technology can be used in a practical and meaningful way to improve outcomes for young people. It also highlighted the value of partnership working in developing innovative solutions to local challenges.

The final presentation was delivered by Mike Jones, Head of Innovation and Transformation at Conwy County Borough Council. Looking at digital and AI transformation from an organisational perspective, he explored what councils need to do to prepare for successful change. His session focused on overcoming barriers, developing the right culture and ensuring staff have the confidence and skills needed to embrace new ways of working.

While each presentation approached digital transformation from a different angle, several common themes emerged throughout the day. The importance of strong leadership, effective governance, cyber resilience and responsible innovation featured heavily, alongside a recognition that technology should always be used to improve outcomes for residents.

The forum provided a valuable opportunity for Welsh councils to learn from one another and share practical experiences. It also reinforced the importance of collaboration across the sector as local authorities continue to navigate rapid technological change.

Get in touch with Matt Ellis, Principal Policy Lead for Wales, to learn more about how APSE can support your council.



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Member Spotlight: Ross Cook, Director of Place at Telford and Wrekin Council

We sat down with APSE member, Ross Cook, Director of Place at Telford and Wrekin Council to hear about his experience as an APSE member.



Who are you and what is your role?

I am Ross Cook, Executive Director for Place at Telford and Wrekin Council.

What attracted you to work in local government?

After I left college, I was offered a choice of Youth Training Scheme (now an apprenticeship) placements. One in retail working for Debenhams, the other working for the local council where I had grown up. From that moment, I felt proud to be working within my local community. 39 years later, and having worked for a number of different Councils, that feeling hasn't changed.

What challenges do you face in local government?

We are currently seeing service reform across every sector, LGR will bring new challenges and opportunities, and Devolution will bring new freedoms and funding. All of this sits alongside the fantastic things our staff and teams continue to deliver every day.

So there are many challenges, but at the same time, we continue to show the importance local councils play and the positive impact we can have on people who live, work, study or visit our boroughs and districts.

What do you value most about APSE membership/ events/services?

For me it's the networking opportunities and a safe place to ask a question or for advice. The Network Queries are a great way of reaching out to a wide range of experienced colleagues who will understand the issue you are facing and are always happy to share their advice.

The APSE regions then provide a great way of meeting colleagues, more often in person, and to hear about some of the amazing things being delivered, and to develop a network of people you know you can reach out to for advice or support.

Share something you like about living/working in your local council area.

We are really proud that Ironbridge Gorge, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, is located within Telford and Wrekin, and earlier this year the National Trust took over stewardship of the various museums and visitor attractions.

Having an internationally recognised name operating in the Borough has showcased what we have to offer to a much wider audience. I was proud of the work a wide range of council teams did, in a short timescale, to ensure the transfer was completed in time for the official opening.

We are already seeing an increase in visitor numbers, new training and employment opportunities, more volunteers, and wide range of community events and engagement activities. All things that go back to my reason for joining local government – to be proud of the things we can deliver for the local community.

Telford & Wrekin COUNCIL

Do you want to share your experience as an APSE member?
Get in touch with our Communications Team!
Email Hannah Cocker at hcocker@apse.org.uk