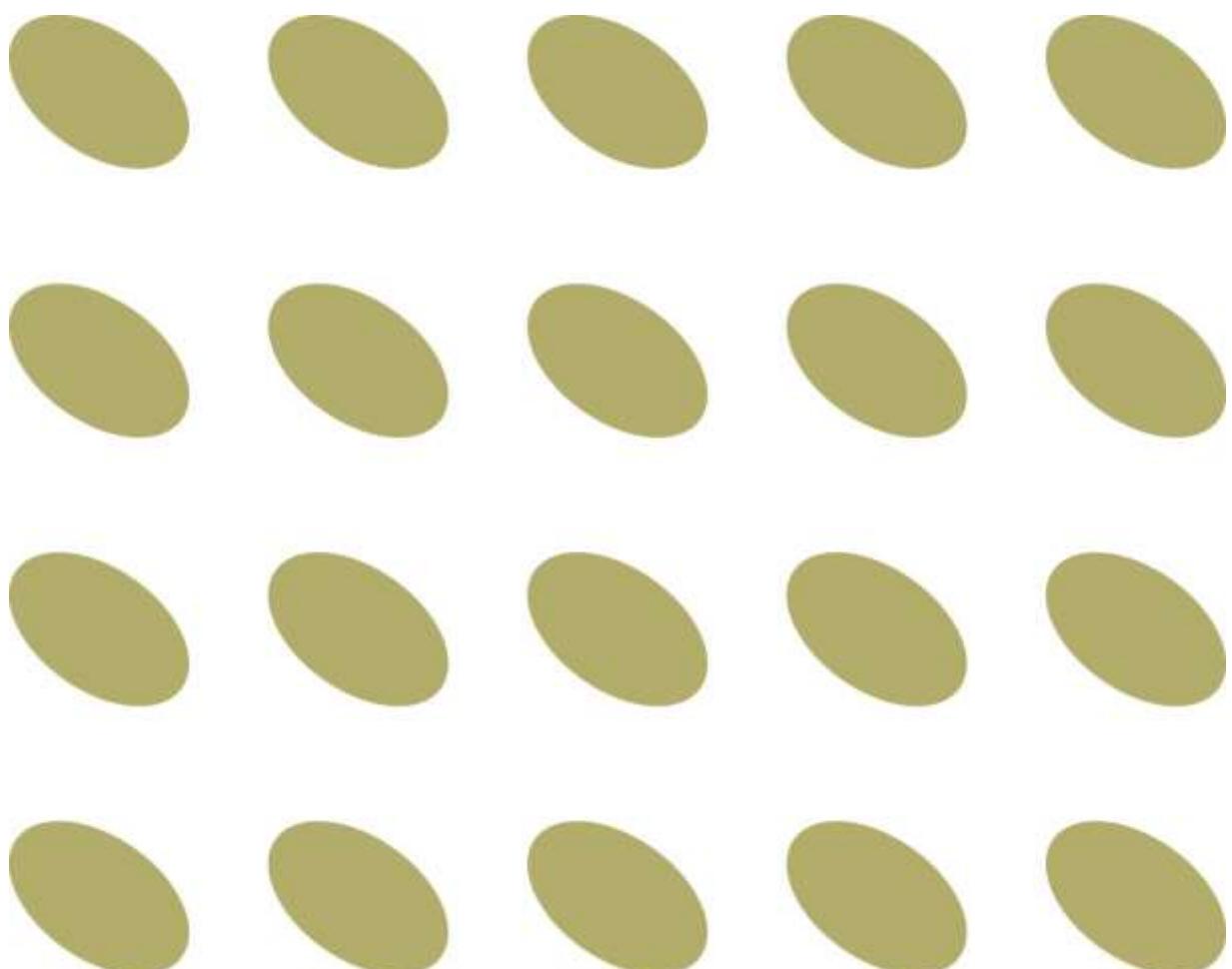




membership resources

## APSE Manifesto



Updated November 2015

# 1. The Ensuring Council: An Alternative vision for the future of local government

APSE will lobby and campaign for the following key messages:

- APSE will advocate an alternative vision for the future of local government, that of the Ensuring Council. This vision privileges an active strategic role for local government in stewardship of place and commits councils to advancing social justice. It recognises the significance of effective local democracy and acknowledges the importance of local government as both a provider of public services and a public employer.
- APSE believes that local authorities have a critical role as 'stewards of place' ensuring the social economic and environmental wellbeing of their local areas. To exercise such responsibilities, local authorities need to retain a strong core of directly provided services so that they have the 'core capacity' to effectively intervene in local communities.
- While it is recognised that partnership with the third and voluntary sector can add value to public service delivery, APSE will continue to advocate that this should take place on a collaborative basis rather than divesting services.
- APSE believes that the stewardship of local areas is best placed with local elected representatives as they have a direct line of accountability to local people. APSE will campaign for the rebalancing of current debates around local democracy to place more focus on the role of local authorities in determining outcomes in the wider interests of local communities.
- APSE believes in the maintenance and strengthening of the link between politics and service delivery. APSE will continue to advocate that decisions about service delivery should be grounded in the political judgements of elected members.
- APSE believes that local government and the wider public sector has a collective benefit for society as a whole, advancing social justice and ensuring social outcomes. In partnership with member authorities, APSE will continue to campaign for action on issues that affect local communities as a whole.
- APSE believes that local authorities should seek to develop a culture of municipal entrepreneurship, becoming more commercial in their approach by seeking innovation and income generation opportunities.

## 2. Democracy and accountability

- APSE considers that the local government sector and the respective Councils are the legitimate democratic institutions for their areas. Consequently local Councils are mandated to provide the necessary political leadership, in turn create the space for democratic dialogue concerning policy priorities which impact on both places and people. In addition, Councils have a pivotal role in providing front line services which increasingly needs to be tailored to the requirements of local people and places.
- APSE believes elected representatives will continue to be the primary route for ensuring democratic accountability and in particular protecting and promoting places and people.
- APSE believes that all Councillors should be effectively engaged in decisions that affect communities and the daily lives of citizens and will support measures aimed at strengthening the role of backbench Councillors in local government in working with partners.
- APSE believes that whilst there is no groundswell of support for the idea of Elected Mayors and Police Commissioners in England, where a local mandate exists there should be strong and co-operative links

built between Elected Mayors, Police Commissioners and local councillors, in order to strengthen the role of local democracy and of local government.

- APSE believes that democratic accountability is central to creating a flourishing model and system of local government in the United Kingdom. It is vitally important that in the move to devolution and combined authorities careful consideration is given to which services are best delivered at a strategic regional level and which are best delivered at an individual authority level.
- APSE considers that the outlook for local government and individual Councils up to 2020 will be both difficult and demanding given fiscal austerity. As a result of the prevailing economic and social circumstances within local authority areas, this is now resulting in significant distress for people and places. In addition demographic changes are increasing the demand for a whole range of public sector services at a time when there are considerably less resources, and this is putting the local government sector under considerable pressure.
- APSE will work to protect democracy and accountability in a period of increasing social, political and economic uncertainty in order to support and sustain local communities.
- APSE will support its member authorities to address the problems arising from fiscal austerity which has the potential to erode the capacity and capability of the local government sector, and individual Councils.
- APSE considers that despite these difficult conditions and circumstances the local government sector remains well placed and is forging ahead, pursuing innovative service solutions, redesigning services and is radically changing the way services are delivered to places and to people.
- APSE believes that Councils are the ‘sovereign organisations’ within their areas and have a unique role to play on working with other sectors, partners and providers operating within their areas to bring transparency, accountability and performance scrutiny to the complex arrangements that exist around the delivery of services.
- APSE increasingly believes that the local government sector and individual Councils, with their partners, need to be focused on the delivery of outcomes. Increasingly this will involve planning for outcomes resourcing outcomes, and being democratically accountable for the delivery of outcomes.

### 3. Financial capacity and income generation

APSE continues to support:

- The reform of local taxation to ensure a fair and transparent system of local funding for local services.
- The relocalisation of business rates to help redress the balance of funding providing that such a system is capable of ensuring fairness in access to funding for the poorest areas whilst encouraging innovation and business start-ups in local areas
- A thorough exploration and debate, as to the viability of a more balanced form of funding between central administrations and local councils.
- The development of bonds and other financial instruments including; redistribution of grant related hypothecated funding **into Council's core revenue budgets**, pension fund investment programmes, alongside existing prudential and supported borrowing schemes, as a means to secure best value on capital finance schemes.
- APSE supports the municipalisation of resource and income generating opportunities in order to support the financial autonomy and self-sufficiency of local government in the future

APSE also:

- Continues to support a permissive framework for local authorities to generate revenue income and income to support capital investment.
- Continues to campaign for greater accountability for public money in cross-service delivery areas. APSE will continue to lobby for greater democratic accountability with all partners for public money spent in the local place
- Continues to support the bedrock of best value as a means to ensure that councils are able to deliver against the common principles of economy, efficiencies and effectiveness and that the financial framework and freedoms to generate additional income streams should facilitate the continuation of the principles of best value.

## 4. Environment and sustainability

APSE will lobby and campaign for the following key messages:

### Transition to a green economy

- Climate change represents the most important challenge to our environment, economy and society and APSE believes that local government has a leading role to play in combating climate change and building a more sustainable future for our communities.
- Local authorities have a central role in the transition to the green economy and this should be recognised by national government; APSE will lobby Government to ensure that this is reflected in UK policy.
- APSE believes that local authorities should play a leading role in the implementation and delivery of the 'Green Deal', and successive programmes for energy efficiency.
- APSE believes that there is clear evidence of the positive community benefits of renewable energy projects in terms of the environmental benefits, tackling fuel poverty, the development of local supply chains and the creation of employment and training opportunities and the generation of new income streams for local government.
- In order to take full advantage of the green economy, local authorities need to retain a strong core of services and the capacity to co-ordinate policy, enshrined in the Ensuring Council.
- To retain full advantage of schemes such as installing solar PV on housing or public buildings, local authorities should primarily consider the option of 'doing it themselves' to recognise the impact on local supply chains, skills and financial returns.
- APSE recognises that there is a clear need to identify a range of financing options to support renewable energy and energy efficiency projects and will continue to advise its membership about the best alternatives that meet local requirements.

### Sustainability

- Sustainability should be central to all local government activities and supports the development of sustainable community strategies by local authorities and their partners.
- Well managed public services have a key role in improving the sustainability of their local area. Such services also help to alleviate the conditions which lead to inequalities in the quality of the environment e.g. air quality, which ultimately impact on the health and well-being of citizens.
- Visible front line services are essential for community engagement and the sustainability of environmental improvement projects.

- Local authorities should have an effective environmental management system in place that integrates environmental management into their daily operations and long-term planning.
- APSE recognises that the issue of water conservation is becoming a priority for local government and will support initiatives that lead to a beneficial reduction in water loss, use or waste as well as the preservation of water quality by the implementation of water conservation or water efficiency measures or improved water management practices.
- Local authorities and their partners should work together to develop and deliver strategies to improve energy efficiency and the use of sustainable forms of energy.
- Local authorities can use their place-shaping role to improve the local environment alongside other partners and in consultation with local people and businesses.
- Local Communities deserve long term sustainable benefit from the vast sums of money invested in public sector infrastructure in their areas. Community benefit clauses should be used to maximise the impact that local authorities have on sustainable communities.
- APSE believes that sustainability criteria should be incorporated within all procurement, reviews, service specifications, tenders and evaluation.

### Waste as a resource

- APSE supports the waste hierarchy designed to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- However, APSE believes that the types of waste collection systems (comingled and source separation); the use of enforcement and education powers to encourage the public should be a local decision.
- National government should continue to encourage industry to minimise the environmental impact of packaging and packaged goods with the overall aim of reducing waste at source.
- Local authorities should be given the flexibility in how they achieve the targets set in terms of waste minimisation, recycling and carbon reduction. Methods used by different councils will vary greatly according to local circumstances and demographics.
- APSE sees the rationale behind setting up Joint Waste Authorities in terms of delivering efficiencies in terms of joint procurement, sharing facilities and joint reporting. However, whilst waste disposal can operate at a more regional level, APSE believes that waste collection and enforcement are local services that should be provided locally at a district or unitary level.
- APSE believes that waste is a valuable resource which local authorities should control for the benefit of their communities.

## 5. Healthy Communities

- APSE welcomes the return of Public health functions in England to their traditional home as an integral part of democratic local government.
- APSE believes that in order for local government to discharge its responsibilities for public health properly this needs to be well resourced and fully funded.
- Where a local authority has commissioning responsibility, local authorities should ensure that an in-house option is considered and the council shielded via the retention of key capacity and knowledge internally.
- APSE will campaign to recognise the contribution of parks, leisure, exercise and diet in reducing future health burdens and highlight and promote those local authority initiatives which aim to increase participation in sports and leisure activity.

- Support initiatives to increase school meal uptake and better nutritional standards, however recognise that activity outside of school is as important in combating obesity.
- APSE will promote the community use of sports facilities within all publicly funded schools and encourage local authority support for increased leisure usage of community venues e.g. dance, aerobics.
- Recognising that parks and leisure services are discretionary services, APSE will promote the wider role of parks, leisure and sports development in the health of the community.
- APSE will look to develop approaches through APSE performance networks and APSE solutions to assist local authorities in assessing local need and the determination of the best approach for future leisure/health projects.
- APSE will emphasise the link between high quality local services including parks, cleansing, street lighting, housing and community health.
- APSE believes that the relaxation of local authority planning controls risks a proliferation of fast food takeaways, pay day loan companies and betting shops in many town centres, which could have a damaging impact on the health and wellbeing of communities and will campaign for local authorities to have a key role in regulating the business and commercial use of town centres in order to promote positive outcomes for communities.

## 6. Housing and Regeneration

- APSE believes that well managed public services are the key to sustainable communities and will continue to be an advocate of appropriate funding for local public services. Adequately funded public services help prevent poor living conditions in homes and neighbourhoods and reduce the need for significant regenerative investment.
- APSE believes that housing need is one of the major public policy issues of our time and that Governments need to commit to providing significant investment to support a major housebuilding programme, with local authorities at the heart of delivering this.
- As the lead body in the locality, local authorities should use their place-shaping role to enable and deliver regeneration projects alongside other partners and help to attract investment in consultation with local people and businesses.
- APSE believes that the value of local authority assets to town centres is often underestimated and that local authorities should seek to maximise the utilisation of such assets as part of any regeneration strategy.
- APSE further believes that the use of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) by local authorities in England and Wales should include maximum community benefit and payback.
- APSE believes that the local management of rental income from housing (resulting from the removal of the HRA national subsidy system in England) and the Localism agenda provide a platform for local authorities to take a greater role in the management and funding of regeneration schemes and the provision of new housing. Government must enable local authorities to access greater funding to allow this to happen.
- APSE believes that the private sector will never have the capacity or desire to meet the entire demand for housing in the UK. Council and social housing must fill the gap and the arguments for doing so are overwhelming. Adequate funding for both local authority and housing association schemes will provide homes of a decent quality for those unable to afford market rents, employment and others in the construction sector, stimulate the supply chain and contribute to economic growth locally and nationally.
- APSE believes that local authority and social housing should be a quality, affordable option for all not a safety net for some.

- APSE believes that the issues of affordability for housing is creating a demographic trend which will be much more towards renting rather than home ownership and local authorities will have an important role in meeting local housing needs and in regulating both social and private landlords.
- APSE is concerned about the problem of lack of supply and believes that greater effort should be made to stimulate the market to invest in infrastructure and unlock designated sites. APSE believes that local authorities have a key role to play by utilising surpluses on the HRA and through strategic housing investment plans in order to ensure that there is a supply of affordable and necessary housing for local people.
- APSE believes that the quality of private sector rented housing is often poor, rents are often unaffordable and regulation of the sector weak. APSE believes that local authorities should be given greater powers, to enforce a national recognition scheme, to regulate private sector landlords particularly in relation to rent controls and providing greater security of tenure for tenants.
- APSE believes that local providers of social housing should not be able to charge market rents that are significantly above those rents available to tenants of council homes.
- APSE supports the use of local business in the supply chain and the inclusion of local labour clauses, apprenticeship schemes and other community benefits.
- APSE further believes that all major contracts awarded by councils should include social clauses requiring contractors to provide maximum community benefit including where permissible such factors as employment, training, local supply chains, environment and sustainability and community chest.
- APSE believes that 100% of the proceeds of Right to buy sales should be made available to fund new house building in the locality and any shortfall between the two should be made up from central government grants.
- APSE will lobby the Government on behalf of English authorities to ensure that sufficient headroom is created within local Housing Revenue Accounts to allow local authorities to build new housing for rent to meet the needs of our communities.
- APSE believes new housing and other buildings must be designed with longer term considerations of renewable and energy saving technology, enabling lifetime occupancy and built with sustainable forms of construction using sustainable products (rather than short term financial considerations) as fundamental principles.
- APSE promotes the value of in-house services as a collective force for the delivery of sustainable communities and regeneration. Democratically responsive services have an invaluable role to play in contributing to social inclusion and the regeneration agenda.
- APSE recognises the contribution made by housing trusts and housing associations to the provision of quality housing services whilst working in partnership with local authorities and direct service providers.
- APSE believes that spending on housing should be treated as investment in infrastructure, regeneration, employment and local economies, rather than being seen purely as public borrowing.
- APSE believes that the reform of welfare and in particular the introduction of universal credit, changes to housing benefit and the bedroom tax (spare room subsidy) will have a serious and damaging impact on many of our communities and citizens, whilst supply of and investment in quality affordable housing is so low. APSE will highlight the problems emerging for local authorities and lobby government for changes to protect the most vulnerable groups and individuals in our society.

## **7. Efficiency, performance and service transformation**

- APSE believes that continuous improvement is the route to excellent, cost effective and efficient public services to local communities.

- APSE believes that effective performance management, which should be a balanced approach of inputs, outputs and outcomes, and the sharing of good practice are crucial to continuous improvement of public services
- **APSE believes in the 'Ensuring Council', retaining a core of local services in-house** in order that councils have the capacity and expertise to innovate and deliver high quality services.
- Service transformation is a more effective mechanism than commissioning and fragmenting services, to secure improvement and achieve efficiency.
- Effective service transformation should be based on a clear diagnosis of the services strengths and weaknesses through the use of evidence, such as performance data, use of lean tools, as applied in public services, and benchmarking.
- Any effective service transformation will involve gathering knowledge on the service and reviewing this, the involvement of peers, stakeholders and elected member challenge, developing a business plan and monitoring progress. Improvement should be seen as a continuous cycle as opposed to a one-off exercise.
- APSE believes that citizen engagement is central to transforming services and that front line services are an important channel in connecting with service users.
- APSE believes that data can be complex and misleading and should be provided **in 'plain English'** to provide a balanced overview of performance.
- In choosing consultation methods, local authorities need to safeguard against limited consultation exercises with self-interested groups. Consideration needs to be given as to how best to promote engagement with a wide cross section of our communities together with hard-to-reach groups, such as young people, minority ethnic communities, and people with disabilities.
- APSE supports the reduction in external audit to a more proportionate, risk-based approach which includes local challenge and scrutiny
- APSE believes that there should be greater support for improvement provided to local authorities where they are under-performing.
- APSE promotes training and development of staff as integral to the delivery of improved public services.
- APSE believes that integrated public services can be used as a route to deliver more efficient and effective services.
- APSE believes that there should be effective engagement with front-line staff and service providers in developing efficient and effective local services.
- APSE believes that where strategic outsourcing of local public services takes place there should be a requirement to evidence strategic outcomes and both local and national impact. The use of high quality and robust performance data available through benchmarking systems like performance networks should be a minimum requirement of outsourced contracts and regularly reviewed and monitored through local performance management systems.

## 8. Commissioning, competition and procurement

- Commissioning can be an effective route to deliver better outcomes for the public sector and citizens. Commissioning should not promote enabling to the exclusion of providing. To be a true commissioner local authorities need capacity to deliver services as well.
- Commissioning is not simply a procurement route but should be seen as an opportunity to plan for and **develop 'fit for purpose' local public services capable of responding to** the needs of current and future populations with effective democratic control and accountability

- Commissioning strategies should allow for the comprehensive involvement of all local public service providers, through localised agreements rather than complex outsourced contractual arrangements, which may fetter future service development and delivery based on local needs
- APSE's **competitiveness continuum provides a comprehensive approach to ensure continuous improvement** is delivered through fully utilising and acknowledging the value of elected members, citizens, service users, staff and trade unions in service planning and delivery.
- Elected members will have a key stewardship role in commissioning and procurement strategies in order to prevent the fragmentation of local public services.
- APSE believes that the Community Right to Challenge under the Localism Act in England has the potential to lead to bad procurement decisions and elected members will have an important role in ensuring that local services are joined up and meet the needs of all of our communities.
- Procurement strategies need to encompass and enhance the local economy supporting the UKs aims to enhance economic competitiveness and productivity in line with its European and global partners. Procurement initiatives should avoid damaging SMEs.
- The public sector should avoid creating private sector monopolies in the public sector supply market which work against the public interest.
- **Public sector suppliers and contractors should be subject to 'open book' accountancy principles and rules of transparency** to avoid any potential conflict of interest.
- Commissioning and procurement strategies should afford for the retention of core capacity within the public sector in order to regulate private service providers and to regulate price.
- Where third sector or SME providers are contracted to provide public services the procurement routes used to select a provider should remain robust, protecting the public purse and minimising risk to the public sector commissioner or procurer.
- Local authorities play an important part in ensuring that the third sector and community sector has the capacity to support the delivery of local public services and this is best achieved through collaboration rather than competition.
- Where procurement decisions lead to the outsourcing of local public services, local authorities should have regard to meeting obligations to staff in protecting as far as practicable their pay, terms and **conditions including pension rights and building in provisions such as local 'living wage' agreements.**
- Commissioning and procurement strategies should incorporate and promote the use of community benefits to achieve social value.

## 9. Service delivery models in local government

APSE will continue to promote the benefits of in-house service provision as a flexible and responsive and cost effective model of delivery in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Association as set out in the constitution.

APSE will assess on a case by case basis the merits of different delivery models but this should include:

- Consideration of financial sustainability including future stability, taxation and capital investment matters.
- A future role for democratic governance and accountability.
- The sustainability of different models to include environmental, social, economic and workforce considerations.

- The impact on the local economy and local communities of any structures for service delivery including the future provision of services to the local community.

APSE will also assess on a case by case basis whether different service delivery models involve greater capacity for innovation, entrepreneurship and the ability to drive transformational change.

## 10. Citizen Engagement and participation

- APSE considers that it is crucial to the health of local democracy and the associated unique accountabilities of local government that every effort is made to make Councils ever more open and responsive.
- APSE believes that local government and individual Councils have a role in ensuring that citizens and service users are given the maximum opportunity to share local services and other place based issues.
- APSE believes many of its members are at the forefront in addressing and progressing approaches to encouraging community engagement and participation in the decision making process.
- APSE considers that given the financial climate facing individual Councils it will be more important than ever to align the needs and aspirations of people and places and the public services provided in a given area, hence the need for well-developed approaches to community engagement and participation.
- APSE believes community engagement and participation should be inclusive and not marginalise nor socially or digitally exclude. Councils will need to react proactively and transparently to feedback from those they serve and reflect this in the decision making processes. APSE views this as being essential to the democratic legitimacy and accountability of local government.
- APSE believes that citizen engagement and participation can be an effective tool in the delivery of continuous improvement in public services.
- APSE believes that the role of elected members in citizen engagement and participation is essential, whether as panel chairs or members of consultation boards, citizen engagement and participation routes should not be the preserve of council officers but an opportunity to enhance the role of elected members.
- Citizen engagement and participation is not a substitute for effective democratic accountability and control of local public services and should aid and encourage participative democracy.
- Local authorities should make effective use of front-line staff in engaging with service users and communities. Those responsible for providing services are close to the concerns and needs of local communities and can act as the 'eyes and ears' of the Council in ensuring responsive and personal services to meet the demands and rising expectations of citizens.
- APSE believes that sustaining community engagement requires capacity building and resources and will promote approaches to community engagement across its member authorities that will ensure long-term participation and effectiveness.

## 11. Co-production and managing demand

- APSE understands that there are a number of different organisations involved in providing local public services. However, we would argue that external organisations delivering services must have proper governance and accountability arrangements in place as well as genuine senior management experience in service delivery.
- APSE does not support the switch of service provider from a council to another provider purely on the basis of cost savings. Quality of service and outcomes for the user are paramount.

- APSE has long supported innovation in terms of service delivery and will continue to do so. However, it must not be at the cost of reductions in accessibility for some of those most in need of services nor quality of service.
- APSE supports the use of multiple platforms in service delivery.
- APSE recognises the benefits of managing demand in a period of scarce resources. Those in need of services **must not be discouraged from using them because they have been ‘managed out’ of the system.**
- APSE believes that all stakeholders have a role to play in developing services and that local authorities should continue their work in this regard.
- APSE understands the stresses and strains put on public services staff. We do not welcome a situation where volunteers, who may not be fully trained or be working without appropriate equipment or knowledge, are expected to provide a quality service.
- APSE is of the opinion that where an organisation is unable to continue provision of a service it has started to deliver, the local authority may be expected to step in. Therefore local authorities need to retain capacity to respond even during a time of budget constraints.

## 12. Employment, training and workforce matters

APSE supports: -

- The sharing of peer group best practice to include local government unions, in order to promote different ways in which local authorities are able to meet the requirements of a modernised local government employment framework based upon fairness and equality.
- A recognition by Government that moves towards regionalised or sub-regionalise pay systems could undermine efficient means to develop pay policy and in any event fails to recognise that pay to points relationships are already determined locally under job evaluation processes.
- APSE believes that there should be a recognition of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) for staff both in the public sector and the private and third sectors where they are providing services to local authorities
- **The development of the local authority’s own workforce as a means to act as a market shaper** in supporting high quality jobs and skills within local authorities and to export these principles to new and existing local employers.
- Local authorities linking up with local colleges and businesses to support the development of young people and to tackle skills shortages across the economy
- Local authorities shaping local economies in tackling youth and long-term unemployment through attracting local investment strategies and jobs including green economy jobs
- APSE is committed to the principle of equality of opportunity in employment and supports measures aimed at bringing this about.

## 13. Personalisation and choice

APSE will seek to ensure that any system to deliver choice provides a consistently good standard of service, remains democratically accountable and recognises the diversity of service users.

- APSE will promote the importance of the local authority role in co-ordinating and commissioning adult social care services and housing allocation.

- APSE will promote the need to retain core capacity within the local authority role to enable informed contract monitoring and the ability to ensure service continuity should contractors fail.
- APSE will highlight the problems encountered in commissioning social care services purely on cost, including reverse auctions
- APSE will collect and publicise evidence of good practice and also market failure
- APSE will promote high standards in training and service delivery of social care services
- APSE will lobby for funding streams for adult social care to be channelled through the local authority to avoid duplication and confusion over benefits paid.
- APSE believes that Health and Wellbeing Boards in England will play a vital role in co-ordinating clinical commissioning groups to meet local needs particularly in relation to adult social care.
- APSE will promote innovation in service delivery e.g. cleaning staff jointly working as home helps thus enhancing full-time career options.
- APSE will highlight examples of increased personalisation through technology.
- APSE is concerned that personalisation could lead to an increase in administration and transaction costs and fraudulent applications or claims and will support measures to ensure that there are equitable arrangements in place to support those in receipt of direct payments and ensure consistency and standards of service.
- APSE believes in equality and dignity for elderly people and that full consideration should be given to their needs and requirements in the provision of services.