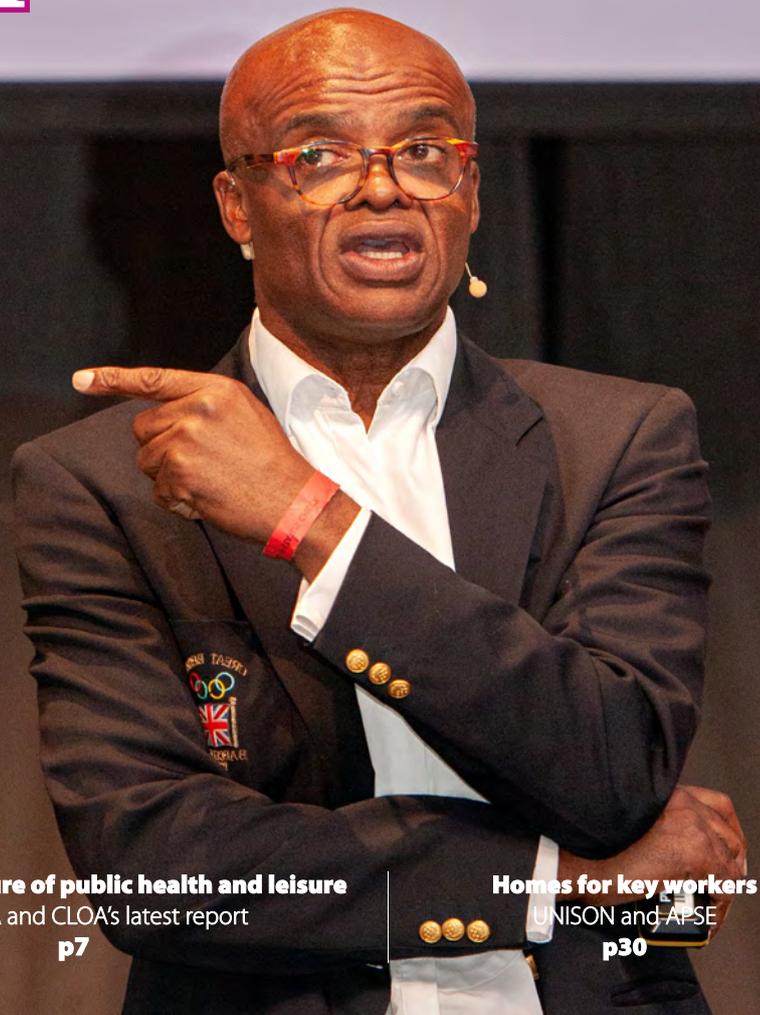
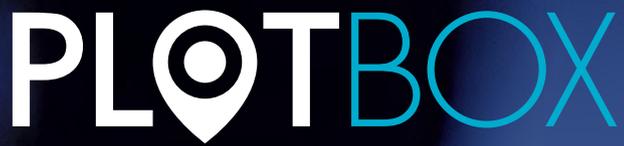


Keeping local government on track

Reporting
back from the
APSE Annual
Seminar 2021
in Birmingham





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Editorial



Paul O'Brien
Chief Executive, APSE

Time to grow our own to tackle skills shortages

The UK is facing some stark skills shortages, exacerbated by Brexit, and as a result of the pandemic, many of the foreign nationals we have relied upon over the past decades to fill important roles that keep the economy moving have returned home. We are struggling to replace them with homegrown labour that either doesn't have the skills, or the interest, in some of the more mundane but very necessary jobs in a functioning society.

For local government this means that many of the services it provides are struggling to recruit and retain workers to provide care, feed people or ensure the cleanliness of facilities and areas. For these services they are in a real battle with supermarkets and retail distributors, who are prepared to pay more for often simpler job roles. This is an increasingly uphill struggle.

In construction and building maintenance it is not only tradespeople where there are growing shortages but increasingly councils struggle to recruit architects, surveyors and planners. Local authorities are forced to pay hefty premiums to others to supply these services or to agencies.

From HGV drivers to social workers, we are facing up to the fact that there simply aren't enough qualified people to go around. Combine this with some of the seismic challenges society faces in a covid recovery, particularly within the care economy, and the need to crack on with climate change mitigation and

adaptation, then it becomes clear that the only way forward as a nation is to once again 'grow our own'. But this of course will require enormous investment through the right mechanisms.

For generations local government played a key role in labour supply; providing apprenticeships, skills and training, not only for its own benefit but also for the wider local economy. Once qualified many moved into local businesses and the local supply chain. Over recent decades this role has contracted, as the role and resources of local authorities has diminished, or been substituted for other 'cheaper' alternatives with no long-term interest in skilling local people.

There is also strong evidence to suggest that when it comes to work programmes, that deliver employment and skills, local government has a much better record than national providers at matching people into roles and ensuring they stay there.

If Government want to maximise the bang for their buck in levelling up the country, then start investing in local councils. Allow them to skill up local people from all backgrounds, and ensure sustainable outcomes for all within local economies.

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Chester Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M32 0RS
t: 0161 772 1810
e: enquiries@apse.org.uk w: www.apse.org.uk

Report back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events

Treasure public sports and leisure

At a special parliamentary launch on 14 September, APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien joined Debbie Kaye, Chief Executive of CLOA, James Jaimeson, Chair of the LGA and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, new LGA President, to discuss the findings of the report 'Securing the future'. You can learn more about this report, a collaboration between the three organisations, on page 7.

APSE brightens up Brighton for the Labour Conference 2021

At the Labour Party Conference in Brighton, APSE hosted a fringe event on the findings of the APSE Local Government Commission 2030. Chaired by new National Chair Cllr Arwyn Woolcock, delegates heard from Paul O'Brien about how greater autonomy and sustainable finance for local councils can help to deliver on climate and ecological action.

At a second fringe event, Fiona Howie, Chair of the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), joined Mo Baines, APSE Head of Communication and Coordination, to deliberate on the issues of the findings of recent APSE/TCPA and APSE/UNISON research on the importance of place-making and key worker housing.

What's the story? APSE in Manchester for the Conservative Party Conference

APSE Strategic Forum Chair, Cllr Kelham Cooke, hosted an APSE event during the course of the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester to debate the findings of the APSE Local Government Commission 2030. Attended by Conservative Council leaders and elected members, the event provided a highly informative evening to explore the findings and recommendations outlined in 'Local by Default' the final report of the Commission. Paul O'Brien followed Cllr Cooke in speaking at the event to share his thoughts and views on the report.

Greening the Local Authority Fleet

APSE Principal Advisor Rob Bailey wrote for the magazine LAPV (Local Authority Plant and Vehicles) on the impact new green legislation is having on local council transport and fleet services. You can read the article online by visiting www.lapv.co.uk

Clamour for CLAMS

APSE Performance Networks has launched its new Cleaning Land Audit Management System APP. You can learn more about CLAMS by visiting our website or, for a more hands-on understanding of the APP, join us for the APSE Performance Networks Seminar on 2 December, where delegates can attend a tutorial workshop. Details about the Seminar can be found online at www.apse.org.uk.

MJ Awards: Congratulations Lancashire County Council

APSE was proud to once again sponsor the "Best Council Services Team" at The MJ Awards. At a glittering ceremony in London on 17



Paul O'Brien and APSE National Chair Cllr Arwyn Woolcock present a copy of 'local by default' to Paul O'Kane MSP, Deputy Convener of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton.



Cllr Kelham Cooke speaks at the APSE fringe event at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester.

September, APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien, presented the award to Lancashire County Council. Congratulations Lancashire - you are a credit to your communities.

Parks now hear the APSE sing

APSE, working in partnership with Community First Partnership, a parks, green space and heritage consultancy, has gathered information from local authorities parks professionals across the UK to prepare a report to highlight how the UK's urban parks are faring in these times of austerity. The report, which will be the third in a series of similar reports produced by The Heritage Lottery Fund, (previous ones in 2013 and the second in 2016), will look at how parks budgets have been affected and how parks managers are raising income to plug budget gaps, the increasing pressures being placed upon parks by visitors and environmental interests, the need to increase the skills base of parks professionals, the growing role of volunteers and how COVID has impacted upon these spaces.

It is hoped that the report will be available before the end of the year.

Wales

Cymru as you are

Congratulations to our new National Chair, Councillor Arwyn Woolcock of Neath Port Talbot, and new National Secretary Chris Cutforth, from Swansea Council, on their election to National Council 2021/22. They were officially elected at the National AGM which took place in Birmingham during the APSE Annual Seminar. You can read more about Arwyn's vision for APSE on page 15.

Northern Ireland

We're only making plans for NILGA

Belfast Castle provided a glorious backdrop to the launch of APSE's report entitled 'EU Exit: Impacts, Implications, Opportunities and Threats for Local Councils in Northern Ireland' which was developed in close collaboration with NILGA. It was therefore fitting that the



Paul O'Brien and the new NILGA President, Cllr Robert Burgess, at Belfast Castle on 13 August.

report was launched at the NILGA AGM with both APSE and NILGA members there for the occasion. The new report is available to download on the APSE website and, following the response to the report, APSE Northern Ireland will be working with lead author, Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson, to roll out a series of Northern Ireland events to promote better understanding and adoption of social value and local economic growth issues with its member councils. You can read about the report in more detail on page 27.

Scotland

Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

On Tuesday 21 September, APSE's Chief Executive Paul O'Brien gave evidence at the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. The Committee had invited APSE to provide evidence to inform its thinking on what their key priorities should be during this Parliament session, with a particular focus on local government and communities. The evidence session also provided the opportunity for those giving evidence to raise issues in order to inform the committee's pre-budget scrutiny. A link to the record of the meeting can be found at www.parliament.scot.

APSE upcoming Fringe at the SNP Conference

APSE Scotland is pleased to announce that they will once again be hosting a fringe event at the SNP online Annual National Conference at lunchtime on Friday 26 November. This fringe will focus on APSE's recent Local Government 2030 Commission report "Local By Default" and we hope colleagues will join our panel discussion on the Commission Report which calls for a system reset in local government, from sustainable finance for local councils to a reinvigoration of local democracy. We are delighted to confirm that speakers at this important fringe event will include Elena Whitham MSP, Deputy Convener of Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee and elected member for East Ayrshire Council; Cllr Lynne Short, Dundee City Council as well as APSE Chief Executive and Chair of the Local Government Commission 2030, Paul O'Brien. This fringe will be chaired by APSE Scotland's Vice Chair, Cllr Les Sharp of Clackmannanshire Council.

The Case for Good Food

An updated statement was issued on 20 September regarding the Case for Good Food discussion paper. APSE, along with 12 other organisations, argues public food must reflect the best of public values and, with COP26 in Glasgow just around the corner, the provision of healthy, nutritious and sustainably and locally sourced school meals has never been more important.

Point of view



Housing to 2040

Elena Whitham MSP, Deputy Convener of the Local Government, Housing & Planning Committee, Scottish Parliament

Over the past 14 years, the Scottish Government has transformed how we view affordable housing, investing in social and affordable homes right across the country. Coming out of the pandemic means now is the time to take stock and consider the vision for housing over a longer time frame.

This vision contained in our long term Housing to 2040 strategy puts housing firmly at the centre of our other objectives for people in Scotland such as tackling poverty and inequality, creating and supporting jobs, ensuring we meet our energy efficiency and fuel poverty targets and tackle the climate emergency, and making sure we have connected, cohesive communities to live in.

In my new role as the Deputy Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee, I want to ensure that we realise the aims and cross portfolio strategic vision of Housing to 2040, which breaks away from the false five-year parliamentary term providing more clarity and certainty about the future of affordable housing and gives the time and space needed for those homes to be planned and delivered in the right places and to the highest possible quality. This was supported cross party and by both local and national governments and it will take clear leadership and concerted collective effort to bring the vision to reality.

In my previous role as Cosla's Community Wellbeing Spokesperson, I was at the heart of local government housing policy and worked solidly to ensure funding followed these joint endeavours. With five year resource planning assumptions now given to Scottish local authorities to deliver on the next 50,000 affordable homes, the certainty of resources is now overshadowed by the scarcity of materials and the huge increases in costs due to the perfect storm of Brexit and the pandemic. This is adding millions to the cost of housing developments and risks our collective aims.

Add to this the pressing climate emergency and the need to ensure our new and existing homes are energy efficient and we have mounting resourcing pressures. Our proposed National Planning Framework 4 will be key to delivery on so many of these policy areas that cross portfolios and local government silos and the LGHP Committee is very much alive to the resourcing issues facing Planning departments across the land.

Central and key to this work is ensuring that communities and place plans are resourced effectively with money and capacity building to help shape and create sustainable vibrant communities where many of us will be able to access services and leisure within a twenty minute walk. We have the vision and we have the will and now we need the determination to deliver.

- Elena was previously Chair of the APSE Scotland Soft FM Advisory Group., For more information about how this group or our national group can help improve your service, please contact us at enquiries@apse.org.uk

Time to take action

Local authorities are leading the charge in responding to the world's 'code red' on climate change, says James Foley, commercial director at leisure development specialist Alliance Leisure.

We all have to do our bit to tackle the climate catastrophe. Public sector providers are playing a key role in helping the UK to meet its net zero targets by committing to strategic projects to decarbonise their activities.

The UN's recent landmark report on climate change - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report - shows that human activity is "unequivocally" the cause of rapid changes to the climate resulting in extreme heatwaves, droughts and flooding.

Many of the UK's sports and leisure centres were built in the 1970s and are extremely energy inefficient generating high carbon emissions. Any improvements made to these sites, both in infrastructure and equipment, will have a significant impact on local sustainability targets.

We are helping many local authorities across the country to slash their emissions and become more sustainable. As an example, we are working with Hambleton District Council to cut carbon emissions across four leisure centres at Northallerton, Stokesley, Bedale and Thirsk. We helped the Council to secure a £4.7m Public Sector Decarbonisation

Scheme grant to fund the installation of new heat pumps, solar panels and LED light fittings. Projections indicate these collective efficiencies will result in 57 per cent per annum reduction in the carbon output for each centre, with the added bonus of a £38,985 projected cost saving per year.

The Government scheme is designed to help councils improve efficiencies and cut carbons from public sector buildings. Both rounds of the fund proved a huge success with phase two closing after just one week after receiving applications worth more than £150m for the £75m fund.

Next month will see the UK host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), for the first time. Held in Glasgow, the climate talks will be the biggest international summit the UK has ever hosted, bringing together heads of state, climate experts, young people, civil society, trade unions, faith groups and Indigenous Peoples to agree coordinated action to tackle climate change.

Climate change is affecting every part of our planet. It's up to everyone, not just the global leaders at COP26, to take action if we are to avert a climate catastrophe.

For more information: www.allianceleisure.co.uk



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Securing the future of public sport and leisure

A new report from three partner organisations - LGA, CLOA and APSE - makes the case for a new approach to secure their future of local sports and leisure services, including a call for longer-term investment.

We are at a critical moment for public sports and leisure services. The long term fundamental systemic issues, particularly around funding, have been exacerbated by covid. If we do nothing, there is a danger that services could implode and we could lose the many benefits they bring.

Looking at the positive case for public sport and leisure services

Public leisure and sport facilities are a unique and important part of the social infrastructure of the nation, and are integral to COVID-19 recovery and helping relieve pressure on the NHS and social care services. They are relied on by everyone, from those wanting to be more active, to grassroots sports teams and elite athletes, and particularly those from deprived communities.

The range and depth of provision at all stages of life is what makes public leisure unique: pre-natal swim classes, creche facilities, national curriculum swimming lessons for primary school children, school holiday clubs, teenage activities, multi-sports clubs, fitness and wellbeing classes for older people and support for pre and post rehabilitation cancer treatment patients.

Without the support of councils these sports and wider activities could not survive in a purely commercial sport and leisure marketplace

Councils are currently the biggest national public spender on sport, leisure, parks and green spaces. They are currently spending £1.1B per year on these activities. They are responsible for:

- 27,000 parks and green spaces
- 2,727 leisure centres
- 33% of all swimming pools
- 31% of grass pitches
- 20% of all health and fitness facilities
- 13% of sports halls
- 66% of cancer pre and post rehabilitation services

The systemic problems that exist and how covid has exposed this

Public sports and leisure delivery has fragmented over time and over the last few decades has had to become increasingly more commercially focused. Since 2010, local authority sports and leisure services have had to concentrate ever more on income generation to reduce subsidy. Looking also at infrastructure, 63% of main sports halls and 60% of swimming pools are already past their expected lifespans or overdue refurbishment.

Then along came covid, with lengthy periods of closure of facilities, combined with high monthly maintenance costs and this has further destabilised a sector which was already under significant pressures. Despite support from councils and the Government providers suffered a revenue loss of around £500 million in 2020. Although memberships and visits are recovering, they are still way short of pre-pandemic.

Due to these financial pressures, as many as one in four councils are considering closing some leisure facilities in the next financial year. Swimming pools are the facility most at risk of closure, alongside cuts to social prescribing activities, targeted outreach at less active groups, and discounts for community or grassroots clubs – as services focus on income generating activities.

And yet the cost to the NHS for treating obesity-related ill health is forecast to rise to £9.7 billion per year by 2050, 376,000 people are reported to be impacted by long-COVID, and a further 5.3 million people are suffering from deteriorating health conditions as a result of the expansion of NHS waiting lists. The findings also demonstrate how physical activity plays an important role in preventing a number of serious physical and mental health conditions, with the research showing this had a value of £9.5bn.

The research key findings

- There are fundamental systemic problems with the funding of public sector sports and leisure provision hugely exacerbated as a result of COVID-19.
- That councils play a central leadership role in creating active places in many ways.
- Public sport and leisure services are unique for their reach and support for communities, especially in some of the most deprived communities.
- They are integral to COVID-19 recovery supporting communities to recover, relieving pressures on NHS and social care services.
- That community sport and physical activity development is essential to addressing health inequalities.
- That they are under immediate risk of operational failure and face critical long-term damage without immediate further support.
- That the public provision of swimming facilities and the need to reach the levels of swimming attainment in the national curriculum cannot be fulfilled by private operators.
- That ageing leisure assets make a significant contribution to carbon emissions, and investment in decarbonising assets can help to meet net-zero targets and reduce running costs in the longer term.
- That the voice of the public sport and leisure sector is fragmented.
- Finally, that investment in leadership and skills development is required across leisure and health partners.

The report's 2 key asks of Government

Firstly, that the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities should take responsibility for integrating public leisure facilities into health systems and pathways, coordinating with DCMS, MHCLG and local government within England. All nations should consider how best to coordinate public sport and leisure provision across differing departments of government.

Secondly, that a £1B capital investment into the leisure estate based on established design plans would help to create hundreds of construction jobs, improve efficiency, reduce climate emissions and boost usage. Longer term, it would create new job opportunities and apprenticeships in areas of the sport and leisure industry typically taken by young people.

Whilst English council's sporting infrastructure is extensive, community based, and popular, it is ageing. As a result, the public leisure estate is not energy efficient and currently accounts for between 10 to 40 percent of a council's direct carbon emissions, and must be addressed to deliver on net zero targets.

Wider recommendations in the report

1. DCMS should establish a programme for public sport and leisure services which aids the articulation of the value of public sport and leisure services locally and nationally in line with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) Green Book.
2. DCMS and MHCLG should work in partnership with local government to build a robust case for sustainable investment in public sport and leisure services, for the CSR.
3. The DfE should work with Government departments and councils to map the provision of swimming facilities and levels of curriculum attainment, investing to address gaps and making targeted support available to enable schools to invest in learn to swim and swim safety where the system is currently failing.
4. Councils should consider what social value outcomes they want to achieve through public sport and leisure services, design services accordingly and embed objectives into procurement activity and contract management.
5. Sport England and its equivalents across the UK, UK Active and CIMSPA should work together, with other key partners, such as APSE and CLOA, to provide professional development opportunities that meet the future skills needs.
6. Investment should be made available to enable relevant bodies across the UK such as Sport England, the LGA, CLOA and APSE to provide leadership development for portfolio holders and officers at a strategic and democratic governance level.
7. The Local Government Physical Activity Partnership should enhance its capacity, increase its visibility and engagement with the Government, and accelerate its work.

By continuing investment in public sport and leisure services we can reduce the burden on key public services with social returns providing an estimated value of £9.5 billion from improvements in our nation's health and £42 billion achieved through improved mental wellbeing.

Looking at the opportunity

Our research shows that councils are unanimous in their desire to continue providing leisure services. There is a strong view from councils and leisure providers that these services could be commissioned to do even more by achieving greater alignment with wider stakeholders.

The pandemic has highlighted that many new opportunities exist to engage with communities, community leaders and underrepresented groups, capitalising on the new audience attracted during periods of lockdown when parks became lifelines for local communities. Online fitness classes also present a chance to reach new audiences.

Respondents to our research were clear that with the right leadership and investment, public sport and leisure services can deliver significantly more social, economic and environmental benefits for the whole of society and support long term recovery from the pandemic.

- The report is free to download from www.apse.org.uk



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Securing the future of public sport and leisure services



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Annual Seminar

2021

Report back

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Message from APSE's National Chair

A welcome message for members from the incoming National Chair, Councillor Arwyn Woolcock

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

Overall Council of the Year Winner

Highlighting the winning council of this prestigious award

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Annual Seminar 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 for local people and local economies.

It was a long time coming but, without a doubt, it was well worth the wait. In the home of the Joseph Chamberlain, the key providers of local services gathered for two days of workshops, networking and expert insight into the latest technological and legislative developments in the sector.

We provide an overview of this very special (and COVID-secure) event...

A symposium of ideas

By order of the outgoing National Chair Cllr Mark Pengelly, the Seminar - our first face-to-face seminar since the onset of the pandemic - opened with a symposium of ideas and, in particular, a focus on 'Local by Default', the recently launched 116-page final report of the APSE Local Government Commission 2030 (ALGC2030). APSE was delighted to be joined by Cllr Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, who invoked the memory of the great municipalist and native Brummie Joseph Chamberlain when she spoke of harnessing the dynamism within the sector to build back better. Having highly commended the Commission report, Cllr Jones then wished the hundreds of delegates, exhibitors and speakers in attendance a productive seminar within her wonderful city.

The small issue of the long-term future of local government was the topic of our next speaker, Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive and Chair of the ALGC2030. Offering a brief summary of each chapter of 'Local by Default', Paul was especially keen to highlight the growing public policy crises impacting the UK, the dysfunctional relationship that exists between central government and councils, and the need to enshrine local governments role constitutionally to ensure that the many challenges faced by local communities can be met effectively. Paul called for current and future governments to endorse a principle of local by default. "At present, the boundaries between the roles and responsibilities of the different spheres of government are blurred and lack clarity. Adopting a principle of local by default reverses this dynamic, building forward from the local and embedding collaboration across different parts of government."

The next commissioner to take to the podium was Lord Gary Porter CBE, Leader of South Holland District Council and now non-executive director to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Gary talked through the report's recommendations



Dreaming big with Kris: Lessons on how local government can overcome its hurdles.

on how we revitalise local government, and how we protect and empower local councils. "Councils do not need centrally-prescribed managerial models, and that flexibility and innovation will be better facilitated if prescriptions are put to one side and councils left to determine their organisational structure and locally appropriate mixes of delivery models."

Our final Commissioner to speak in Session 1 – Elma Murray OBE, Interim Chair of the Accounts Commission for Audit Scotland 2020-2023 and former Chief Executive of North Ayrshire Council – spoke of the importance of the 5 P's that have to be front-of-mind if we are to ensure a diverse, inclusive and representative local government: People, Partnership, Prevention, Performance, and Place. "Local authorities as stewards of place can work to address the inequalities that risk fracturing our diverse communities. Strategic interventions in the foundational and caring economy will be essential as we move towards post-Covid recovery."

Reinvigorating organisational leadership post COVID: Special Guest Speaker Kris Akabusi MBE

"We see you". Those three words, directed towards the various officers and councillors from across the UK that made up the audience, formed the motif of our next session. Three-time Olympic medallist and European, Commonwealth and World Champion, Kris Akabusi MBE, delivered an inspirational talk weaving his incredible achievements on the track with the phenomenal achievements of local government throughout the pandemic in keeping the country on track. Kris reminded everyone in local government of the tremendous legacy they were leaving, and why they should be immensely proud of the maintained parks, collected bins and meals delivered during this time of national crisis.

Sustainable and Greener Local Neighbourhood Services

The focus of session two was the key role being played by local authority frontline services in mitigating the impact of climate



Cllr Brigid Jones opens the APSE Annual Seminar in Birmingham.



Cllr Andrea Lewis, Deputy Leader of Swansea Council, introduces the panel.

change and driving the green agenda forward. First up was Paul Bellotti, Director of Communities and Environment at APSE Overall Council of the Year 2020 East Riding of Yorkshire Council. From room optimisation to dedicated town, beach and village task force teams, Paul spoke of the many ways service providers can get it right at a neighbourhood level and win the trust of local residents.

Rosa Tanfield, Neighbourhood Council Group Services Manager at Colchester Council, was up next to talk climate action. Amongst a whole range of exciting green initiatives being implemented by Rosa and her team, one particularly eye-catching scheme is the Colchester Woodland and Biodiversity Project: A unique opportunity for everyone to work together and develop a legacy of a greener Borough.

Our final speaker of the session was Glynn Humphries, Corporate Director Communities, Environment and Climate Change at Wakefield Council. In the wake of climate emergency declarations and continuing green policy announcements by central government, Glynn spoke about the difficulties this can present for frontline services. Glynn spoke about the practical action his council taken thus far and rounded off by talking about the importance of the APSE network in helping to turn climate proposals into meaningful action.

Variations on a theme: Ensuring excellence in service delivery

Day one was capped off with thematic forums in which delegates could opt for one of three highly interactive sessions. Forum 1 looked at climate change and the ecological emergency, and featured Patrick Allcorn, Head of Local Energy at BEIS, discussing progress on the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution and the various funding available to local authorities. Patrick was joined by Head of APSE Training, Fiona Sutton-Wilson, who spoke of the necessity of a carbon literate workforce if the sector is to address the climate crisis effectively.



Patrick Allcorn, Head of Local Energy at BEIS, facilitates the discussion in Forum 1.

Forum 2 shone a spotlight on place-making, neighbourhoods, high streets, and housing. Alongside the APSE's Mo Baines, we were delighted to be joined by Samantha Dennis, Director of Public Protection and Streetpride at Derby City Council. Following Derby's bid to become UK City of Culture 2025, Samantha helped facilitate discussion on how councils can act as stewards of place and engender a sense of civic pride; something that will be incredibly important as we move into the recovery phase of the pandemic.

Over in Forum 3, Charlotte Paine, Head of Environmental and Operational Services at South Holland District Council, discussed lessons from COVID, particularly the impact of the pandemic on operational delivery of waste management services. Charlotte was joined by Head of APSE Performance Networks Debbie Johns, who made the point that it's never been more crucial to collect data to understand fully the impact and consequences of COVID-19, and how this has impacted on resources and performance across council services.

Finance, commercialisation and investing in housing

Chaired by outgoing National Secretary Karen Bradford, the first panel of day two considered the thorny issue of local government funding (or lack thereof). First up to the podium was Jon Collins, ALGC2030 Commissioner and former leader of Nottingham City Council, making the case for establishing a sustainable financial settlement for local government. "Using a percentage of GDP as a proxy measure for the minimal threshold below which local government funding cannot fall is an imperfect mechanism. However, local government cannot bear again its unfair share of the brunt of austerity."

What lessons can councils we learn from a LATCo? Thankfully Steve Wilson, Director of Collaboration and Development at Seminar sponsor Commercial Services Group, was in Birmingham to talk delegates through the many ways his team have helped councils across the UK, expand their thinking, improve their performance and deliver long-lasting benefits to their local communities.

Our final speaker of the session – Fiona Howie, Chief Executive of the Town and Country Planning Association – asked what the future holds for councils following changes to planning. Fiona also went on to discuss the findings of APSE and the TCPA's latest research: Bystanders or innovators? How local authorities can use place making to drive the green recovery. "Councils can either accept the status quo, which means being part of an increasingly passive local public sector, reliant on limited private investment and focused on using the limited regulatory powers at its disposal or they can seize the initiative by being more directly involved in shaping the future of their places."



Fiona Howie of the TCPA talks place-making in the opening session of day two.



Professor Steve Griggs discusses the findings of the APSE Local Government Commission 2030.

A workforce fit for the future

Moving onto Session 5 – chaired by the newly elected APSE National Chair Cllr Arwyn Woolcock - delegates were treated to an hour of ideas on how to futureproof local government services. Getting us underway, we were delighted to be joined by APSE Local Government Commissioner and former Head of Local Government, Police and Justice at UNISON, Heather Wakefield. Heather drew attention to the importance of establishing new skills and capability career pathways into local government, training and career development for existing employees, with particular urgency for pathways in climate change mitigation, digitalisation and the care economy. "Policy agendas and decisions that truly reflect the diverse needs of communities are more likely to stem from having the presence of people of all backgrounds and genders in top posts and frontline service delivery."

Derek McCallan, Chief Executive of NILGA, was next to take to the podium to discuss the UK's exit from the EU and the implications for local government in Northern Ireland. Derek provided the example of the industrial estate Flurrybridge, which sits on the border, and presents a number of logistical and servicing challenges that local councils and local government networks - like APSE and NILGA - will have to think smart to overcome.

It was a professor amongst the professionals with our final speaker of the Session, as Steve Griggs of De Montfort University joined us for a lively discussion on the changing role of chief officers and senior leadership teams. Drawing on the findings of the APSE Local Government Commission, Professor Griggs asked how are we going to react, regulate, resource and develop a workforce of tomorrow once we take into account the broader responsibility of chief officers and the declining numbers of staff employed by local councils.

Leadership Networks

Our penultimate session of the day was a workshop session which involved five specially operationally focused hubs. These networks looked at innovation, the latest industry developments and technologies; with a strong focus on how others are improving their operational frontline services.

Public attitudes and the pandemic

The two -day Seminar rounded off with an audience with renowned psephologist and leading authority on British polling and elections, Professor John Curtice. A mainstay on our television screens on any election night, Professor Curtice delivered a presentation on the latest research on public attitudes to welfare and public services in the midst of the pandemic. APSE Communications Officer Matt Ellis gives an overview of the research findings on page 24.

• *Presentations from the event as well as highlights reels of both days are available from www.apse.org.uk*



Our new National Chair Cllr Arwyn Woolcock

Firstly, I am to delighted to be the new APSE National Chair and enormously grateful for the trust placed in me by APSE Wales. I will try and ensure, during my term of office, that I visit all of APSE's areas to listen and engage with as many of you as possible.

It's often said that APSE is very much like a big family and that's a culture I want to continue to encourage. What I know about APSE as an organisation is that it thrives on people, and the relationships that exist between them, and that is why our networks are second to none in delivering for our member local councils. I want that to continue under my leadership and accordingly set out my vision for the next twelve months, a vision which I hope to deliver supported by my able National Secretary, Chris Cutforth, from City of Swansea Council, with the APSE Wales term of office being ultimately concluded by Cllr Andrea Lewis, also of Swansea, who stands ready to take over as National Chair next spring.

I remain committed to APSE's ground-breaking research programme; we will continue to deliver our programme focusing on the key public policy themes of housing, finance, neighbourhoods, environmental issues, tackling inequality, skills shortages, digitalisation, the workforce and indeed the ongoing pressures with COVID recovery. It would be remiss of me not to also mention that we intend to continue to support the findings of the APSE Local Government Commission 2030. The rollout of the final report, 'Local by Default' in informing and delivering APSE's advocacy work for our member councils, will be critical in the coming months.

Of course, APSE would not exist without its strong core of member local councils. I will ensure that they continue to be supported by our membership resources providing the essential services of briefings, network queries, advisory groups and support across all services. APSE's not for profit services also provide an excellent range of other services to members including our highly regarded APSE Solutions service, APSE Performance Networks, the UK's largest voluntary data benchmarking club, APSE Energy and APSE Training. Each service contributes to the vision and delivery of innovation and best practice and I hope under my leadership they will continue to go from strength to strength.

Finally, as our member councils emerge from the pandemic, they will refocus on moving to recovery from the emergency response phase. This recovery will not just be on catching up on the 'day job' but looking at the longer-term recovery of our communities in health and well-being terms, as well as a focus on local economies and jobs. However, the recovery will, by necessity, be aligned to climate and ecological issues. The focus of our members will not just be on 'build back better' but on 'build back greener'; there are opportunities for a green recovery but councils will be key in delivering on this and I want to support them every step of the way with APSE work on climate change and the ecological emergency.

As my vision sets out, we in local government face many challenges, but I'd like to underline that APSE is your association – owned by our member councils – and focused on addressing the challenges local government faces. My plea to you is a simple one; use APSE and all of its services; its publications, its events, participate in all of the highly valuable networks it offers. I look forward to working with you all in the coming months and thank you once again for giving me the honour to serve as your National Secretary. •



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Annual Service Awards 2021

Celebrating outstanding achievement and innovation within local government service

We are delighted to announce the winners of the APSE Service Awards 2021!

Speaking about the Awards, Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive, said, "The purpose of our celebration is to recognise the best in public services and to share that best practice with all. We received an overwhelming 320 submissions for the Awards this year, with each one demonstrating a clear commitment to the goals of continuous improvement and the delivery of excellence in public services. On behalf of everyone at APSE I would like to say a massive thank you to all of our finalists – you are a credit to the communities you serve."

The APSE Awards are specific to frontline services provided by UK local authorities. The Awards are agreed by a panel of expert judges. This year, the Awards included 22 categories, covering the vast majority of local services, as well as the prestigious Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery Award.

Hosted by award-winning television presenter, journalist and newsreader Sameena Ali-Khan, the winners were announced at the APSE Annual Charity Awards Dinner, in aid of Parkinson's UK, which raised over £2000 for the charity on Thursday 9 September 2021 in Birmingham.

For finalist photographs, please complete our Photograph Request Form at www.apse.org.uk



Best Workforce Initiative

Kindly sponsored by: UNISON



Transforming Wigan's Repairs Service through technology and enabling self-reliance

Wigan Council provides repairs services to 21,575 council homes, undertaking around 70,000 responsive repairs each year. In Wigan, we introduced The Deal, an informal agreement between the council and residents which aims to 'make Wigan Borough the best place it can be

Finalists

Cheshire East Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Lancaster City Council
South Ayrshire Council
South Staffordshire Council
Telford & Wrekin Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Wigan Council

over the coming decade' to protect the most vulnerable and keep the front-line services that resident's value. This provided a solid foundation in Wigan's response to supporting its residents and delivering services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative

Kindly sponsored by: De Montfort University



Swansea Council Building Better Homes – Colliers Way

Eighteen new homes, consisting of apartments, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom family homes includes innovative technologies to help keep energy bills as low as possible. The Council has developed its own Swansea Standard for new build, which can be combined with these technologies to

Finalists

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
East Ayrshire Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Swansea Council
Telford & Wrekin Council
Unitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd
Warrington Borough Council

Winner: Swansea Council

create Homes as Power Stations. These homes all have Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHPs), PV solar roofs, battery storage and Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery (MVHR) Systems, and will be able store and use their own energy.

Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by: Rhino Products



COVID-19 Community Response Hub

East Riding of Yorkshire Council is a rural authority covering 900sqm with an aging demographic. When the COVID-19 lockdown began local authorities were charged with ensuring that vulnerable people were not left isolated and allowed to fall into crisis, this presented a

Finalists

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Ashfield District Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Glasgow City Council
Lancaster City Council
South Kesteven District Council
South Staffordshire Council
Southampton City Council

Winner: East Riding of Yorkshire Council

significant challenge. In order to achieve this the council established a Community Response Hub. Two days after the initial lockdown the council had redeployed staff to set up a dedicated call taking team and nine geographical hubs.

Best Health and Well-being Initiative (incl. Social Care)

Kindly sponsored by: UNISON



Lancashire Care Capacity Tracker

The Lancashire Care Capacity Tracker (LCCT) – the first ‘localised’ tracker of Adult Social Care data that can collate, store and share pertinent operational information across partner organisations in real time. The LCCT enables statutory health and care services to work jointly with

Finalists

- Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
- Cormac Solutions Ltd
- East Suffolk Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Leeds City Council
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Wakefield Council

Winner: Lancashire County Council

providers, through shared information, to build relationships with providers and respond effectively to support the care sector in providing care to our most vulnerable residents.

Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative

Kindly sponsored by: Leafield Environmental



NPTBuyLocal initiative

Neath Port Talbot Council set up its ‘NPTBuyLocal’ service at the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The concept was simple and answered the immediate needs of vulnerable residents and local businesses as they sought solutions to survive and get through the first hard lockdown. ‘NPTBuyLocal’ connects

Finalists

- Exeter City Council
- Glasgow City Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Unitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd

Winner: Neath Port Talbot Council

residents with local shops and businesses. As lockdown measures ease, the authority plans to develop the service as part of its strategy to support the local economy.

Best Collaborative Working Initiative (with other public sector or third sector)

Kindly sponsored by: Commercial Services Group



A Collaborative Countywide Regulatory response to COVID-19

A highly successful collaborative approach between Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Police and Public Health in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in Warwickshire. For the first time these regulatory partners across the two-tier authority, combined their resources and skills to ensure that the regulations were consistently applied and businesses

Finalists

- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Southampton City Council
- Wakefield Council
- Walsall Council
- Warwickshire County Council

Winner: Warwickshire County Council

where supported. Multiple guides and scenarios were adopted as the regulatory framework changed and partners worked together to deliver webinars, Best Practice Guides and information for staff, operators and senior managers.

Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative

Kindly sponsored by: c-trace



Taking Woodthorpe Park Plant Shop and Nursery to the High Street

Woodthorpe Plant Shop is built upon a tradition of horticultural excellence. NCC has managed a Nursery at Woodthorpe since the 1920s. In 2015 we decided to invest in a retail unit to sell our surplus plants to the general public. Five years on we have grown into a garden shop

Finalists

Ashford Borough Council
Durham County Council
Nottingham City Council
South Staffordshire Council
Swansea Council
Waltham Forest Council
Wakefield Council

Winner: Nottingham City Council

with online commerce turning over £350,000. Our mission is to share our knowledge and passion for plants with our customers and sell high quality locally grown plants at affordable prices.

Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (incl. Community Safety)

Kindly sponsored by: Plotbox



iTrust Sandwell (Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Project)

iTrust (Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Project) was commissioned following a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Troubled Families Funding. The project commenced in April 2019. Working with children

Finalists

Cheshire East Council
Colchester Borough Council
East Suffolk Council
Newham Council
Renfrewshire Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Telford & Wrekin Council

Winner: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

in Years 6 and 7 in two of our police impact areas, Smethwick and West Bromwich. This proactive, preventative project aims to engage at this key transition period in school life, with the aim of having a long-term impact on youth crime.

Best Innovation or Demand Management Initiative

Kindly sponsored by: OurPeople



The North Glasgow Integrated Water Management System – Glasgow's Smart Canal

The North Glasgow Integrated Water Management System – Glasgow's Smart Canal – has combined 18th century infrastructure with 21st century technology to dynamically manage surface water and flood

Finalists

City of Wolverhampton Council
Dumfries & Galloway Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Falkirk Council
Glasgow City Council
Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Glasgow City Council

risk in a carbon efficient manner, and enable sustainable, resilient, regeneration of a large area of North Glasgow, delivering up to 3,000 new homes with a blue-green, placemaking approach.

Best Climate Action Initiative

Kindly sponsored by: Egbert Taylor



Energy, Education and Efficiency. A total support service for schools

Environmental Education is the heart of NYCC Energy and Sustainability team, reducing carbon and costs as well as providing future generations with the knowledge, skills and understanding to tackle the challenges facing our planet. Providing technical help alongside education creates

Finalists

- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Lancaster City Council
- North Northamptonshire Council
- North Yorkshire County Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- South Tyneside Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council
- Wigan Council

Winner: North Yorkshire County Council

a wrap-around experience to schools. Pupils drive changes, so with this in mind, the team developed a 'planet saving' super hero alter ego to work with them. Schools taking all our services use 8% energy than those who do not.

Best Service Team of the Year: Housing, Construction and Building Service

Kindly sponsored by: The TCPA



Excellence in rent arrears prevention and tenant support

In 2016, the effects of Welfare Reform (and Universal Credit) began to present a significant challenge to both the financial circumstances and ability of tenants to sustain tenancies, and Lancaster City Council's income stream. In response, the Income Management Team began an ambitious

Finalists

- 3C Shared Services
- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Fife Council
- Lancaster City Council
- Swansea Council
- Unitas Stoke-on-Trent Ltd

Winner: Lancaster City Council

transformation: to prevent rent arrears, support tenants with challenging financial circumstances, and tackle wider issues of financial exclusion and tenancy sustainability, whilst simultaneously reducing legal action against tenants in favour of support and relationship building.

Best Service Team of the Year: Catering Service

Kindly sponsored by: Peopletoo



Free School Meal Home Delivery Service

In March 2020, the Welsh Government announced that all schools would close with immediate effect due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Caerphilly County Borough Council was faced with the challenge of how they would provide a service to over 6243 Free School Meals (FSM)

Finalists

- Caerphilly County Borough Council
- City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Kirklees Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Shropshire Council

Winner: Caerphilly County Borough Council

pupils. The local authority catering team showed true entrepreneurship, creativity and strong leadership skills by implementing a FSM home delivery service that involved partnership working with local suppliers and over 20 service areas within the authority.

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

Kindly sponsored by: Numatic



East Ayrshire Council's 'Property Pledge'

East Ayrshire Council's, building users sign the Property Pledge to work together to keep buildings, and its fixtures and fittings, in the best standard possible. Aiming to achieve positive change and outcomes, promoting a sense of pride and co-ownership in, and shared interest for,

Finalists

Birmingham City Council
East Ayrshire Council
Hartlepool Borough Council
Neath Port Talbot Council
Shropshire Council
Telford & Wrekin Council

Winner: East Ayrshire Council

the benefit of the physical assets to develop, modernise and rejuvenate premise services to, sustain them for the future, irrespective of their age or design.

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

Kindly sponsored by: Multevo



What a difference £9m can make?

In October 2019, the Highway Maintenance Team at Derby City Council were awarded an additional £9m investment over two years from Council Cabinet. This was in recognition of our work completed on effective highway asset management. During unprecedented times, not

Finalists

Derby City Council
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Glasgow City Council
Kent County Council/Bouygues
Renfrewshire Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Derby City Council

only did the frontline service provide a resilient and flexible workforce to deal with a pandemic, flooding and snow events, but a six-man team took full advantage of the quiet roads and available funding and demonstrated something quite remarkable.

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

Kindly sponsored by: GPSV



Statutory Compliance in the Digital Age

As a founding member (2017) of the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) Earned Recognition Scheme; a strong platform for resilience has been developed within Wakefield's Transport Services. Our challenge going forward was how to drive further efficiencies and cost / carbon

Finalists

City of Wolverhampton Council
City of York Council
Fife Council
Renfrewshire Council
Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council
Wakefield Council

Winner: Wakefield Council

savings through the delivery of a truly digital platform for statutory fleet maintenance and driver hour's management. Continuing to position Wakefield as a leader in the UK market for Local Authority development in fleet management compliance accreditation and best practice.

Best Service Team of the Year: Cemetery and Crematorium Service

Kindly sponsored by: The CDS Group



Stockton-On-Tees Bereavement Services "Cream of the Crop"

The past year has been a challenging time for all Bereavement Services but no more than the team at Stockton Borough Council. A brand-new Crematorium and a global pandemic haven't stopped this team from delivering an exceptional service. As well as supporting COVID testing,

Finalists

- Cardiff Council
- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Neath Port Talbot Council
- Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council
- West Lindsey District Council
- Wirral Council

Winner: Stockton-On-Tees Borough Council

the team advanced their training and introduced many improvements to the Crematorium. When we built an outstanding facility, our teams hard work, dedication and positive attitude built an outstanding reputation to match it.

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

Kindly sponsored by: Go Plant Fleet Services



How Ansa Environmental Services sustained collections of all three waste streams during a global pandemic

In March 2020, Ansa Environmental Services – Cheshire East's waste and recycling service provider – faced one of its most significant challenges in its short six-year history: the outbreak of COVID-19. Just three months

Finalists

- Cheshire East Council
- Colchester Borough Council
- Dumfries & Galloway Council
- Kirklees Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- West Lindsey District Council

Winner: Cheshire East Council

prior, the company had launched one of its most ambitious projects to date; a complete overhaul of its route and rota systems – over a year in the making – as well as the introduction and roll out of a new food waste collection service to over 300,000 households.

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

Kindly sponsored by: Bucher Municipal



Area Care

Middlesbrough Council, Area Care, a service proud to serve the residents of Middlesbrough and improve Environmental standards. The effective management of the Public Realm services during the COVID pandemic, Through this difficult year we have experienced, the team's

Finalists

- Huntingdonshire District Council
- Middlesbrough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Wirral Council

Winner: Middlesbrough Council

passion in working towards ensuring Middlesbrough is clean and well maintained. Introducing mobile Working, allows management to measure performance better, improves data collection, and work more efficiently. Area Care works collaboratively with the new Flying Squad who enforce and collect fly tips.

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

Kindly sponsored by: Wybone



Gosford Forest Park

Since transferring to Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council in 2019, Gosford Forest Park has been transformed from a local amenity to a regional destination. Significant investment by the council, and the work of a very focused and committed team, has made the park

Finalists

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Ashfield District Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Derby City Council
Rugby Borough Council
Wirral Council

Winner: Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages. By fostering a culture of continuous improvement the Council has ensured that it will grow into one of the foremost facilities of its kind in the province.

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

Kindly sponsored by: CLOA



Active Leeds

Active Leeds are a creative and dynamic service who have positively responded to the challenge of COVID-19 by successfully implementing a range of physical activity innovative interventions, which have enabled the residents of Leeds to maintain their physical activity levels during

Finalists

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Leeds City Council
Manchester City Council
St Helens Borough Council
Wirral Council

Winner: Leeds City Council

the unprecedented times. By adopting a collaborative approach with partners Active Leeds have been able to make systemic changes to the way we approach physical activity and will continue to adopt this approach going forward.

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

Kindly sponsored by: Fraser and Fraser



COVID Confidence Scheme

As Christmas 2020 approached, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council's Environmental Health Team rapidly developed a business confidence award scheme, featuring user-friendly literature and 1-2-1 officer support. Presenting a complimentary scheme to run alongside its health protection enforcement role, the team displayed ambition,

Finalists

Caerphilly County Borough Council
City of Wolverhampton Council
Kirklees Council
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
Warwickshire County Council
Wigan Council

Winner: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

agility and sensitivity, despite service pressures. With businesses and public confidently embracing the scheme, the team were able to raise consumer confidence and footfall at one of the most critical trading periods of the year.

Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery

Kindly sponsored by: Greenbridge Designs



Winner:

Telford & Wrekin Council

Finalists:

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council
East Ayrshire Council
Lancaster City Council
Neath Port Talbot Council
Swansea Council
Telford & Wrekin Council
Wigan Council

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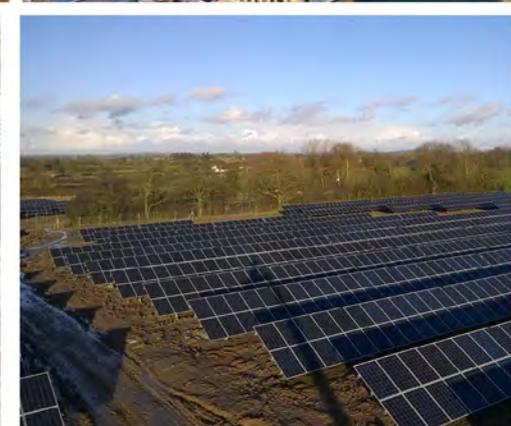
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Telford & Wrekin: Outstanding!



Fighting off stiff competition, Telford & Wrekin Council scooped APSE Overall Council of the Year at the APSE Service Awards 2021. The Council spoke to APSE Direct and revealed the secrets to their success.

Telford & Wrekin Council is a local authority that just won't stand still. It has a growing reputation for excellence coupled with ambitious plans for the future. It doesn't just talk about creating a better borough, it's actually making it happen.

A unitary authority in the West Midlands, serving just over 181,000 residents it packs a powerful punch. So, no surprise it was crowned overall Council of the Year in the 2021 APSE awards.

Like all local authorities the past year has provided many challenges. At Telford & Wrekin throw into the mix major flooding as well as a serious fire on a disused recycling plant, you'll find not only a resilient Council but one that shows leadership and enterprise. Politicians and officers work together with a 'one team' philosophy to deliver intelligence led, community focused services to residents and businesses day in, day out.

This summer an LGA peer review praised the Council's drive and determination. It recognised its recent success in OFSTED moving children's services from 'requires improvement' to 'outstanding', as well as ADASS rating adult social care as 'exceptional'. It also commended the Council's success in drawing in funding and tapping into regional and national initiatives to help shape the borough and drive it forward.

Councillor Shaun Davies, Leader of Telford & Wrekin Council said, "Winning APSE Council of the Year is the culmination of years of sheer hard work, grit and determination.

"Government budget cuts and the pandemic have led to some of the toughest times we've ever experienced but we have a clear vision to 'protect, care and invest to create a better borough'. This steers everything we do.

"It's the combination of our can do attitude and in-depth knowledge of the communities we serve, coupled with sound financial management and some shrewd investments that have seen us recognised for some of the best council services in the country."

Central to the Council's approach is a commitment to invest to create jobs and bring prosperity. It has a 'business supporting, business winning' ethos.

Telford Land Deal, a unique 10 year venture with Homes England, has so far seen the creation of 24 commercial sites attracting big international players such as Magna Castings and 1,400 jobs as well as 14 residential sites and 753 homes.

The deal has also generated £3.8 million profit for the Council, a proportion of which is being reinvested into 15 new incubation units and grow-on space for small companies, future-proofing employment and growth.

Councillor Davies continued, "Investing in this way creates a virtuous circle. By attracting and supporting business, we create growth, jobs and bring people to live and work in the borough. As a result, we see increased business rates and council tax that we can reinvest."

It's a model that not only works on employment sites but in the borough's high streets too.

The Council has invested £3.6 million to date in their Pride in Our High Streets programme and committed a further £4.8 million over the next two years to support physical regeneration and a series of community events to drive footfall and boost business.

Telford Land Deal, a unique 10 year venture with Homes England, has so far seen the creation of 24 commercial sites attracting big international players such as Magna Castings and 1,400 jobs as well as 14 residential sites and 753 homes.

Southwater has revitalised the town centre, creating a vibrant destination designed to deliver a thriving night time economy. Now the Council is moving on to deliver a game changing £100m Station Quarter development, that's been awarded £22.3m from the government's Towns Fund and will bring a new gateway into the town.

Telford & Wrekin's has had to navigate budget cuts like other authorities but the challenge has given them the opportunity to innovate.

Chief Executive, David Sidaway said, "We've worked hard to deliver savings of £120 million but we've also created new income streams to protect our front line services and continue to care for the most vulnerable. Because of this, our annual outturn has been within 1% of budget."

One of the Council's flagship companies, NuPlace, is a wholly council-owned company providing 4000 homes for private rent whilst driving up local housing standards. It generated £1.2 million in revenue for the authority in 2020/21 and has raised an additional £2.3 million in council tax and new homes bonus.

The authority was also one of the first in the country to establish a solar farm, not only contributing to tackling climate change but also generating £200,000 in revenue every year.

Mr Sidaway added, "It's the culture at Telford & Wrekin Council which is vital to our success. We're small enough as an organisation to work as a family and as a co-operative council we work hard to maintain positive relationships with our partners and communities. So when we need to dig deep and act quickly, we're in a great place. Never has this been more apparent than in our COVID response and I'm incredibly proud of what we were able to achieve together".

When the pandemic hit, the Council rallied to support its communities. As part of the response the Council provided direct support to one in five households. Over 52,000 meals were delivered to low-income families (ahead of government providing support), 726 laptops delivered to children in need and 262 kindles to those in residential homes. The Council's community support team mobilised over 1,300 volunteers who provided assistance such as shopping and fetching prescriptions to over 20,000 shielding households

Telford & Wrekin Council has a reputation for business but is an organisation with heart. And that's a winning combination. •

Images below [Top to bottom] Pride in Our Highstreet Nettie of the Gorge, Leader Shaun Davies, and Chief Executive David Sidaway.



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Exit from the EU: Opportunities and threats for local councils in Northern Ireland

A new APSE Actions Paper, written in close collaboration with NILGA, sets out the challenges and opportunities for Northern Ireland councils in the wake of the UK's exit from the EU.

The research has sought to identify the direct impacts, implications, opportunities and threats of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union upon local government policies and resources in Northern Ireland, with a specific emphasis on the areas of local council business most affected.

Speaking of the Paper, APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, "As the political upheaval of the last five years will attest, tensions run remarkably high when it comes to the merits of the UK's withdrawal from the EU. It was for this reason APSE and NILGA were keen to look at EU exit in terms of strategic impact and outcomes. The result is this comprehensive Actions Paper.

"The Paper identifies that although serious challenges to the prosperity of Northern Ireland councils exist – amongst them the removal of EU structural Funds from 2022 and the risk of multinational companies relocating – there may also exist greater opportunities for councils to enhance social value once outside of EU procurement rules. As well as holding many lessons for our member councils in Northern Ireland, this Paper also provides a rich source of information for councils in England, Scotland and Wales."

The Actions Paper is designed to be practical in its nature through identifying the broad array of areas of council business, whereby EU Exit is having/likely to have an impact; before exploring a smaller number of these in more depth and their implications, opportunities and threats, and identifying actions which local councils will need to take in response in the medium to long term. It does not seek to provide an opinion one way or the other on the merits of the EU Exit but is intended to inform local councils about emerging issues.

Derek McCallan, Chief Executive of NILGA, said, "Whilst there is clearly the potential for variations in cross-border working, and a need to re-think both economic and tourism development, it is clear from this action Paper that local councils in Northern Ireland are already identifying alternative funding sources for growing their economy; including those which support both tourism and trade. This Paper acknowledges that there is a real opportunity for local councils to develop and enhance their unique place-based offering. However, our research finds that the speed of decision making, and current macro planning processes, may hinder progress.

"This report is the start of a conversation, requiring evidence-based advocacy, and not an end itself. Nevertheless, we hope that it provides a practical toolkit to start those conversations within, and between, local councils and their partners; ensuring local councils can maximise social value, shaping how business is done, and what outcomes can be nurtured to the benefit of local people."

This Actions Paper presents the core findings of several roundtable discussions with officers and members from Northern Ireland's 11 local councils between January and June 2021. Conversations were also held with representatives of Manufacturing NI, the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Invest NI.

Download our report for free from www.apse.org.uk

- This Actions Paper presents the core findings of research work undertaken by Matthew Baqueriza-Jackson between January and June 2021, in collaboration with APSE and NILGA.



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Discover what's beneath.

A decent place to live: Homes fit for key workers

This new report from APSE and Unison examines how to respond to the ongoing crisis in housing and explores in depth the role of local councils and their workforce in addressing housing need.

A new report, by the UK's largest public sector union UNISON, has called for councils to be placed at the heart of a new homes revolution to address the deepening UK housing crisis.

Speaking about the report Christina McAnea, UNISON's General Secretary said, "The health pandemic has further exposed the inequalities in access to decent affordable homes. Is it too much to ask that the workers who carried our economy through the past year should be able to afford a decent place to live?"

The report 'A decent place to live: Homes fit for Key Workers' finds that the decline in funding for council housing is matched by a decline in the numbers of new homes being built. Estimates suggests that developer led markets will not meet the 340,000 new homes needed in each of the next ten years, in England, to address the housing crisis. To get anywhere near achieving this target at least 100,000 new homes, for social renters, would need to be built to contribute to that figure. However, the report finds, that the role of local councils in directly providing new homes has been systematically undermined for decades, leaving housing supply to a failing market system. The lack of supply and the interface with land values has a direct impact on the numbers of affordable homes available for workers to rent or buy. At the same time planning regulations have weakened the ability to enforce both housing standards, and the volume of affordable homes, on new developments. This has exacerbated the crisis not only in housing supply but in housing quality.

Ms McAnea added, "The developer-led market is failing generations of workers unable to access a decent home. What's more, the longer this housing crisis is allowed to continue the bigger the gap in meeting the needs for homes to rent or buy at affordable levels.

"This leaves governments across the UK with a stark choice. Either allow the worsening of the housing crisis or giving local councils a central role in building new affordable homes. We need to grasp the opportunity for councils to develop new green homes, leveraging desperately needed jobs, skills and opportunities to shape local places as part our green recovery. The time for action is now."

The report is critical of previous interventions by governments over a number of decades for using small scale 'sticking plaster' interventions in addressing housing affordability or novel schemes to discount key worker housing. Such schemes, it argues, has systematically failed to bring about the new homes needed or to address the crisis in affordability. The report finds that, only by drastic and direct financial investment in building new homes through councils and other non-profit providers will need be met, allowing workers to access affordable home.



"Let's kickstart our post-COVID recovery with a commitment to building new green council homes and developing green construction skills. Let's be ambitious in our vision for council housing that provides high quality homes for generations to come."

**Christina McAnea,
UNISON General Secretary**

Report recommendations

1. Investment in a new generation of council housing, at scale, has to be at the heart of solving the crisis in affordable homes to rent.

This will mean leveraging capital investment levels last seen in the post-war years alongside a delivery strategy that pulls together the materials, supplies, land and skills needed to get homes built at the scale needed across the UK. The barriers and bureaucracy associated with Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA), and the lack of an HRA in around a third of English councils must be addressed to remove any barriers to delivering new council homes. Government subsidy for new build council housing in Scotland must be raised to match that for Registered Social Landlords (RSL) new build.

2. The new generation of council housing must maximise the opportunities for green growth and green construction skills.

Responding to the housing crisis must also address the climate crisis. The new generation of council homes should therefore maximise the opportunities for local councils to develop and grow their local workforce; developing green apprenticeships, recruiting local workers into new fields of green construction, and skilling the workers of the future to meet the challenges of climate change. From new skills in green home-energy to securing green skills in local environmental services this approach secures the jobs and skills needed now and in a low-carbon future. This approach must be centred upon local councils as anchor institutions, nurturing sustainable growth and the wellbeing of residents at a community level, as opposed to extractive market-based economic models.

3. New homes must be 'Healthy Homes' and for this reason adoption of the Healthy Homes Act should be a priority.

The Healthy Homes Act advocated by the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) offers a powerful way for national governments and local councils to promote and secure good place-making. Enshrined in law, healthy homes principles would protect communities from poor quality housing, securing such simple but often ignored design principles of access to light, public realm, and quality and space standards.

Whilst in Scotland emerging legislation will support improvements within housing standards, such an Act in other UK administrations, would place a new duty on the Secretary of State or relevant Minister in a devolved administration to secure 'the health, safety, wellbeing and convenience of people in or around new buildings, and on local authorities to plan for the long-term delivery of affordable housing'.

4. Re-empower councils with meaningful control of planning and place-making outcomes.

Deregulation of planning and austerity has left councils feeling powerless to act in creating safe and strong, healthy and wealthy sustainable local communities – this must be reversed. The ongoing use of Permitted Development Rights runs the risk of creating the slums of tomorrow. Poor quality housing developments, including changes of use which undermine the very concepts of communities, should have no place in modern housing development. Meaningful re-empowerment of councils, in planning controls and rebuilding council planning departments, must be at the heart of any plans to 'build back better'

5. A wider exploration, and expansion of Living Rents pilots should be considered, giving immediate support to those living in housing poverty.

Whilst Living Rents are not the only solution to housing affordability, better linking earnings and rent paid would lift thousands out of rent poverty. This concept should be explored, tested and expanded. It

will not substitute for building a new generation of council housing but would be a pragmatic support to those living now in poverty as a result of the cost of housing.

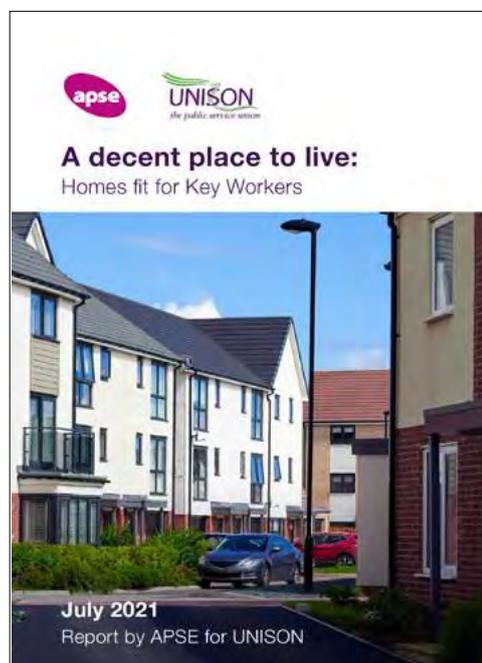
6. Welfare reforms have fundamentally damaged the link between household income and housing affordability. The link between Local Housing Allowance, housing benefit and rents should be restored to provide immediate relief to those facing an acute crisis of housing affordability.

Whilst Government injected some emergency cash into Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and Universal Credit payments during the health pandemic, the LHA is not fit for purpose as it does not meet the true costs of rent. This places renters in a poverty trap, forced to either top up rents from meagre benefits or low pay or stopping people from finding a home to rent altogether.

A long-term restoration of the link between LHA, housing benefit and rents would provide relief to those facing hardship, beyond the current health crisis. This will also support local councils who face avoidable demands on homelessness services, and other services, because of the inadequacies of the current levels of LHA, housing benefits and unaffordable rents.

7. Right to Buy in England should be subject to local moratoriums.

Abolition of Right to Buy in Scotland and Wales enabled public authorities to better meet local housing need. English councils should be able to apply their own moratorium on Right to Buy sales, with full flexibility and autonomy to make decisions in the interests of their communities. The existing cycle of investment and enforced sales is ultimately harmful to the delivery of new homes. Local councils have the expertise and local knowledge to know best what delivers for their communities. They should be trusted to decide.



- The report was written and researched by Mo Baines of APSE on behalf of UNISON.

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Public attitudes to welfare and public services in the midst of the pandemic: British Social Attitudes Survey

A mainstay on our television screens on any election night, Professor John Curtice - Senior Research Fellow at NatCen Social Research and Professor of Politics at the University of Strathclyde - delivered a presentation on whether the pandemic has 'reset' attitudes to public services at the APSE Annual Seminar in Birmingham. APSE Communications Officer, Matt Ellis, gives an overview of the research findings and what they could mean for local authorities.

Each year NatCen's British Social Attitudes survey asks around 3,000 people what it's like to live in Britain and what they think about how Britain is run. Regarded as the 'gold standard' of surveys, Professor Curtice joined the APSE Annual Seminar via video link to look at the extent to which attitudes might have shifted on account of the pandemic and perhaps creating a different climate of opinion for policy makers than the one that existed pre-march 2020.

The survey posed two very broad questions:

1. Are the public ready to embrace a larger state – or do they want things to return to 'normal'?
2. Has the unveiling of inequalities and the exposure to economic uncertainty during the pandemic resulted in increased support for welfare provision – or do people still interpret the world through a pre-pandemic lens?

In relation to question one, Professor Curtice was keen to point out that because the survey was looking at the long-term, it wasn't looking at particular policies, namely because the debate about particular policies moves on from one year to the other. The power of the state has grown considerably during the pandemic and it has also spent a significant amount of money. Do we want, therefore, a larger state in the longer term?

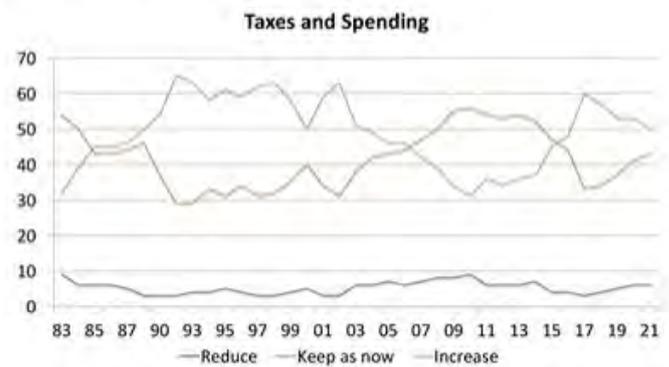
In relation to question two, Professor Curtice noted that the pandemic has led to a lot of discussion about the degree of inequality in British society. This has arisen largely due to the highest morbidity from the virus occurring in areas of higher deprivation, but also because those who thought they had secure middle-class jobs are now feeling a great deal more vulnerable. Question two therefore asks whether that exposure to economic uncertainty, together with this greater heightened awareness of inequality has meant we now think the welfare state should be doing more.

Taxes and spending: A classic thermostat?

When it came to taxes and spending, the public were asked three questions:

1. Reduce taxes and spend less on health, education and social benefits
2. Keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now
3. Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits

A Classic Thermostat?



Source: British Social Attitudes except 2020/1: NatCen Panel

As the graph above shows, the public tend to react thermostatically to changes in level of public spending. In other words, and contrary to what many politicians think, people do not have fixed views on the size of the state. In the words of Professor Curtice, "It's an issue on which it is impossible for a politician to win." That said, though there has been no real dramatic change in light of the pandemic, it is still noticeable that, as of 2021, that a plurality of the public wish to see increased taxes and a boost in public spending.

When breaking down the most recent readings, Professor Curtice noted that these could be interpreted in two ways. One is that people have reset their thermostat and we are therefore living in a different public mood. Alternatively, it may be that the public have not adjusted their set and thus not really taken on board what has happened during the pandemic.

Do we think Government should help industry to grow?

When asked whether the Central Government should definitely help industry grow, Professor Curtice noted that the percentage of those who answered yes was a bit higher now than in 80s and 90s, but not by much, and not as much than at the height of the Recession. However, this has grown 17% points since the question was posed in 2016, and with the exception of 2012 (in the wake of the financial crash), is the highest since 1985. Likewise, when asked whether the government should provide jobs for all, the percentage of those that responded yes was higher than in 2016, and the highest it has been for most of the twenty-first century.

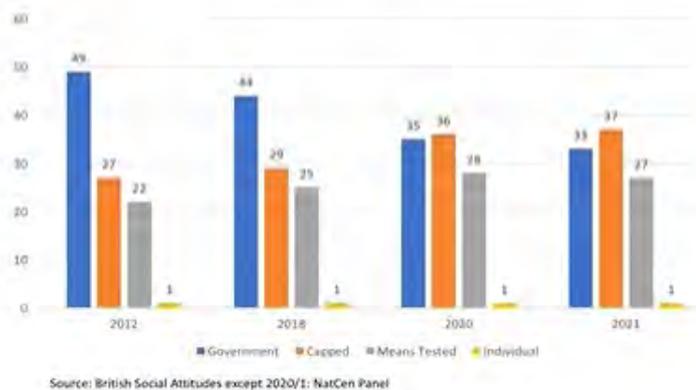
Who should pay for social care?

When looking at the size of the state – this area seemed a particularly salient one. Debate on the extent to which social care should be funded by government or should be funded by the individual has been going on for some time. This is an area where public policy in England has diverged from that of Scotland as well as, in some respects, the other devolved administrations.

The BSA Survey posed the question: Who do you think should pay for social care for people who cannot look after themselves because of illness, disability or old age?

1. The Government (In Wales the answer referred to Welsh Govt and in Scotland etc.)
2. The individual
3. The individual should pay what they can and the govt should pay the rest (roughly in line with current policy position in England – means tested until assets whittled away)
4. The individual should pay what they can up to a capped amount and the govt should pay the rest (The position England is moving to to some degree - proposal outlined in Dilnot Report).

Pay for Social Care?



Now you might have thought that one of the reactions to the experience of the social care sector during the pandemic and, particularly in the first wave, the high level of morbidity that it suffered is that support for the government taking over would have grown. Indeed, in Scotland, at public policy level, that is the reaction; moving towards a National Care Service where it looks as though the provision is going to be much more from the state and not just simply the funding; which is already greater north of the border.

However, this is not how the public have reacted. In both the of the surveys conducted during the pandemic (2020 and 2021), support for government funding all of the cost of social care is now lower than it was in the relatively recent past. What has become more popular is capping. It's not that the current system of means testing is particularly popular – it is only around one in four, and it's clear from the survey very few think it is just something wholly for individual responsibility, but it's interesting to know that capping – where England is moving – is relatively popular.

Perhaps the interesting thing about capping is that it hits the sweet spot of the tension between two instincts - on the one hand protecting the ability of people to be able to pass on some of their inheritance if they've worked hard back to their family but on the other hand ensuring the state (and by extension the taxpayer) aren't liable for too much of the cost.

Summary

Professor Curtice maintained there are 3 main takeaways from this survey:

1. Public have not reacted against the increase in public spending but it's not certain yet whether they have reset their desired level of government intervention or not.
2. A capped social care funding regime is now popular than a wholly government funded one (and especially among older voters).
3. We have become more liberal in our attitudes towards those of working age – but this trend predated the pandemic.

Study Design

2,413 people interviewed (mostly) online in July 2020 and 2,217 again in June 2021. All has previously responded to 2018 and 2019 British social Attitude surveys. •

This article is based on the briefing 21-44. To read the full briefing visit www.apse.org.uk. Alternatively, you can watch the full recording of Professor Curtice's presentation at www.apse.org.uk.

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APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien, said, "From first responder services in areas like flood management to monitoring the local environment and assets, evermore local councils are looking to integrate an urban air mobility plan into their strategic planning at a corporate and service level. APSE is therefore delighted to welcome Professional Drone Training into the APSE family. Liam and Jonathan will bring much needed insight and technical knowledge to the local government sector; ensuring it remains well-equipped to manage this revolutionary technology." •

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