

# #APSE22

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# A message from APSE National Chair 2022/2023

**Alderman Tommy Nicholl MBE**  
**Mid and East Antrim Borough Council**

Firstly, I must say how grateful I am to APSE's National Council, APSE Northern Ireland and, of course, its delegates for choosing me to be your National Chair for this year. To take up my year of office in the lovely Welsh City of Swansea was a real honour for me.

During my time as National Chair I will try to ensure that I visit every area where APSE's membership resides and listen to and engage with as many of you as I can. I want to say upfront that I am a team player and I want to chair the organisation on that basis.

I know that APSE thrives on people and the relationships that exist between, helping to deliver solutions for its members across the UK.

I hope that I bring to APSE my many years of experience in local government having now entered into my 42nd year in the sector, but equally I hope to bring my life experiences. I am from a working-class background, starting out as a mechanical engineer and I have seen how organisations work at every level. I hope this will allow me to place myself in your shoes when thinking about some of the difficult challenges you face in local government.

Of course, one of my first tasks as National Chair is to pay tribute to my predecessors Andrea Lewis and Arwyn Woolcock – who performed the role of APSE National Chair over the past year with distinction. I think Andrea and Arwyn have done a terrific job as Chair(s), and I look forward to working closely with Andrea in the coming year. And, our thanks must also go to Chris Cutforth, as the outgoing National Secretary. Chris provided both Andrea and Arwyn with sound advice and knowledge across a wide breadth of issues affecting local government.

Moving to the coming 12 months – helping me through the year ahead is our new National Secretary, Ellen Cavanagh, from Derry City and Strabane Council. I am confident that we will form a great team for APSE in the coming year and bring to the table Ellen's own tremendous experience in local government.

In advance of taking on this role I have been examining the huge pressures, challenges and opportunities facing local government. I therefore think it's important that I give you a flavour of the things that I aim to focus on during my year of office.

Firstly, I think it's crucial that APSE continues to invest heavily in our research programme in order to aid local authorities and push the notion that existing

systems of governance across our nations needs to be reset to one of 'Local by Default'.

The research programme will continue to focus on the key public policy themes set by APSE's National Council: housing; finance; neighbourhoods; environmental issues; tackling inequality; skills shortages; digitalisation; the workforce and indeed the ongoing pressures with tackling the cost of living issues that our communities face.

Secondly, I want to ensure that we sustain APSE's core services of membership resources, performance networks, solutions, training and energy, supported by an effective business plan.

Thirdly, APSE has led the way over the past couple of decades on ideas around how local authorities can be innovative and entrepreneurial, whilst also providing excellent services for their residents in an efficient and effective way. I aim to ensure that APSE's secretariat continues to help the membership to explore new opportunities to hold services together for our communities.

Finally I believe that the next decade will be increasingly dominated by how we respond to climate change. I, along with colleagues on National Council, have already directed the APSE Secretariat to ensure that this important agenda is built in to everything we do as an organisation moving forward.

I give you my assurances that I will continue to work closely with colleagues, both fellow councillors and officers on our National Council. APSE operates across the political spectrum and across the nations, a strong rapport and camaraderie exists, based on shared aims, values and respect for each other. This will continue under my governance.

Whilst we face many challenges, I want to underline that APSE is your association – owned by member councils – and focused on addressing the challenges local government faces. My plea to you is this: Please use APSE and all of its services; its publications, its events, participate in all of the highly valuable networks it offers so that you as member councils can draw down from our network of excellence. So thank you for being members of APSE and thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

I look forward to welcoming you to our 2023 annual seminar in Northern Ireland, next September. •

**“It's crucial that APSE continues to push the notion that existing system of governance across our nations needs to be reset to one of 'Local by Default'”**



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# Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events

## A Special Announcement: Paul O'Brien to retire as APSE's Chief Executive in Spring 2023

Delegates at the Annual General Meeting received a very special announcement from Cllr Andrea Lewis, APSE's National Chair for 2021-2022. This is a transcript of Cllr Lewis' announcement:

"Delegates it is with very mixed feelings that I would like to make a special announcement to the Annual General Meeting.

As many of you know, Paul, our remarkable Chief Executive, has been with APSE since 1993, starting off in APSE Scotland and quite literally riding to APSE's rescue in May 1999 when he was asked to temporarily step in to steady the ship in the Manchester Headquarters of then ADLO.

Well, of course, 23 years later that rescue mission he undertook back then can hardly be considered 'temporary' by any stretch of the imagination! But Paul's achievements during this period have been nothing short of remarkable. From a turnover of just short of £600,000 and dwindling membership APSE is now a strong and vibrant Association with world class services for its near to 300 members. And a turnover that now exceeds £5.6 Million; much of this as a result of Paul's approach to creating APSE from ADLO and developing the Millennium Charter which provided the bedrock for growth and the development of new services such as benchmarking, training and consultancy. And, as we have just heard during the finance report, reserves of £2.8 M from the £200,000 which existed when Paul took over.

Paul has also chaired the APSE Local Government Commission adding to the remarkable lexicon of research papers from everything from local government finance to climate change, and from parks to planning and housing, which has been used as powerful advocacy tools across government departments and ministries.

However – and this is the sad bit – Paul has decided that after many years at the helm he wishes to retire. Whilst I am personally deeply disappointed to lose Paul – as are his very many friends and colleagues on APSE National Council and within the APSE Secretariat – we do support his decision and wish him well for the future.

Paul will not be abandoning us just yet as he will of course be helping National Council to ensure we are in safe hands before his departure in Spring 2023. However, it is only right and proper that we make this announcement to the AGM as our governing body.

I am sure that you will all join me in thanking Paul for his years in service to us all and to our local government family and there will of course be ample opportunity I hope for the next few months to say a proper goodbye."

The recruitment of APSE's new Chief Executive will be supported by Penna and details will be announced shortly on the APSE website.



[L-R] Alderman Tommy Nicholl MBE, Incoming APSE National Chair; Cllr Andrea Lewis, Outgoing APSE National Chair, Paul O'Brien APSE Chief Executive, Chris Cutforth, Outgoing APSE National Secretary; and Ellen Cavanagh, Incoming APSE National Secretary.

## Alderman Tommy Nicholl Elected as APSE National Chair 2022-2023

Alderman Tommy Nicholl MBE of Mid and East Antrim Council has been elected as APSE's National Chair for 2022-2023. APSE's constitution rotates its National Chairs between APSE Regions and Administrative Areas and this year this falls to APSE Northern Ireland. Alderman Nicholl takes over the Chair's role from Cllr Andrea Lewis, who is Deputy Leader of Swansea Council. Alderman Nicholl said "I am delighted to have been elected as APSE's National Chair and as a team player I want to thank the APSE members for putting their trust in me for my year in office".

Alderman Nicholl also thanked Cllr Lewis for her dedicated term of office. Alderman Nicholl will be supported in his year of office by Ellen Cavanagh of Derry City and Strabane Council who was elected as APSE's National Secretary for 2022-2023.

## Around the Party Conferences

APSE spoke on the impact of Inflation and the Cost of Living Issues for Council Service Delivery at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, in addition to hosting a forum discussion on how councils can tackle Climate Change. The events took place on Monday 26 September and Tuesday 27 September.

On Monday 3 October, APSE hosted a strategic forum discussion at the Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham chaired by Cllr Kelham Cooke who is an APSE Strategic Forum Chair and leader of South Kesteven Council.

Mike Amesbury MP, discussed the cost of living crisis and how councils are supporting residents, as well as the cost of providing council services, at an APSE roundtable during the course of the Labour Party Conference.





Former National Chair, Arwyn Woolcock, pictured receiving his Van Coulter Lifetime Achievement Award in Swansea.

## Van Coulter Award

At the Annual Service Awards, APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien and outgoing National Chair Cllr Andrea Lewis, presented former APSE National Chair Arwyn Woolcock with the Van Coulter Lifetime Achievement Award.

Having served his third term as APSE National Chair this year, Cllr Arwyn Woolcock retired as a councillor following the May Local Elections. A councillor for over 20 years and former Deputy Leader of Neath Port Talbot Council, Arwyn has also been the Chair of APSE Wales for over 10 years. Well done and thank you for your many years of public service Arwyn!

## APSE in Westminster for the APPG on School Food Meeting

On Thursday 8 September, APSE Principal Advisor Vickie Hacking was invited to the House of Commons to discuss the findings of the APPG on School Food Report: Impact of food cost on school meals. APSE was honoured to be asked by the All-Party Parliamentary Group to conduct the survey on their behalf.

The report, which surveyed over 180 school meal providers, is available to download online. For more information on the report's findings, please go to page 9.

## Scotland

### Roses are red... Judging the Glasgow Rose Trials

APSE was once again kindly asked to judge the 34th Annual Rose Trials in Glasgow on 22 August. The event was extremely well organised but, more than this, it gave a local authority, in this case Glasgow City Council, the opportunity to highlight its ability to



APSE Principal Advisor Vickie Hacking in the House of Commons presents the findings of the APPG on School Food Report: Impact of food cost on school meals.

stage international events. APSE would like to thank Derek Wells, Natural Environment Officer (Horticulture) at Glasgow City Council for inviting APSE to be one of the judges at the trials.

The Rose scoring the most points was Green Connection Sweet 16 roses by Martin Visser. The winner of the prestigious People's Choice Rose was R14823 by Rosen Tantau.

## Former Queen's Highlander Pays Remarkable Tribute to Queen Elizabeth II

Cllr Archie Dryburgh was invited by APSE's National Council to address the Annual General Meeting to provide a military tribute to the Queen. This is a transcript of his address:



"As many members will be aware, as a former serving soldier and as an armed forces champion, Queen Elizabeth II meant a lot to all of our forces, not just in the UK but across the Commonwealth. I therefore wanted to thank APSE for the dignified and distinguished way in which this seminar has been conducted, respecting her memory and her own public service like so many of our members here this evening.

Members, Queen Elizabeth, as a Monarch, showed great presence, dignity and on some occasions great restraint, over the seven decades of her reign. She was the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and affectionately and simply known as 'The Boss'. Whilst Her Majesty will be sadly missed we shall and we must celebrate her life.

The regiment in which I served – the Gordon's Highlanders – was amalgamated in 1994 with the Queen's Own Highlanders, which had a motto on its badge which literally translated to 'God Save the King'. This is of course now so true with the passing of our Queen. However, as cited this week by so many, I say this in her memory: 'Do not weep my children. Be brave and dry those tears. Now it is my time to rest having reigned for 70 years.'

May you rest in peace Ma'am and God Save the King."



Cllr Archie Dryburgh, former Gordon's Highlander and APSE Scotland Chair

## Meet our new member of staff!



**James Jefferson, Energy Research and Project Officer**

*What is your professional background?*

Before joining APSE, I worked for an international development charity in a climate action role. My role involved conducting research into the attitudes of young people towards climate action, being an active member of the EDI Committee and engaging with volunteers to assist them in their preparation

for their placements in different countries around the world. Prior to that I obtained an undergraduate degree in French and Hispanic studies, followed by an MA in International Development & Intercultural Communication.

*What is your role at APSE?*

My role at APSE is Energy Research & Project Officer for APSE Energy. I will be working as part of the team to assist in the production of APSE Energy publications and research documents, I will be offering support to local authorities to move forward with the climate agenda.

*What is your favourite thing about the role?*

My favourite part of the job so far has been learning about the wide range of initiatives that are being conducted by APSE Energy members. I enjoy seeing how APSE Energy have assisted local councils through the four main strands of knowledge, learning, consultancy and advocacy. I'm excited to learn more about APSE Energy and APSE as an organisation and getting stuck in to working on a wide range of projects.

*Where can APSE members meet you?*

I will be based at the Manchester office; you can contact me by emailing [jjefferson@apse.org.uk](mailto:jjefferson@apse.org.uk) or by calling me on 0161 772 1810. I will also be attending APSE Energy events, so I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible there •



## Point of View

Sarah Longlands, Chief Executive,  
CLES - Centre for Local Economic  
Strategies

### Wishful thinking in a winter of discontent

As the Government made their first major economic announcement in September, many questions have been asked about the extent to which Liz Truss' government is committed to addressing the deep challenges facing communities this winter. Whereas Boris Johnson's slogan was 'levelling up'. Liz Truss' mantra will be growth. At any cost and with any means possible.

The Government have already set an annual target of 2.5% aggregate growth for the UK economy and are betting on a raft of national deregulation and tax cuts help them deliver on that target. Pundits predicted this will mean cuts in income tax, corporation tax, a U turn on national insurance hikes, removing the cap on banker bonuses, a return to fracking, tearing up the energy strategy, obesity strategy and so on.

However, this isn't about growth as synonymous with progress on jobs and small business growth, its about ideology. A particular set of assumptions about economics along with a large dollop of wishful thinking. The first assumption, as articulated in the levelling up white paper, is that if you just grow the pie more people will get a slice. However, the evidence over the last fifty years shows that after a certain point, the story of growth is one of diminishing returns and environmental crisis.

There is no automaticity that increases in aggregate national growth (as measured by GDP) will result in improvements in peoples lives locally, and especially when that growth agenda is based on another assumption, namely that the state is an impediment to a good economy. Arguably this can actually do more harm than good because it underestimates the importance of public services – education, health and social security in providing the foundations of an effective economy and a decent society for people to live in. And these assumptions often go hand in hand with the idea that deregulation is the enemy of business and economic activity. Despite evidence to the contrary, for example, the fact that without sound local plans, housing markets falter.

We've been here before. When George Osborne published the 'plan for growth' back in 2010, the mantra was the same. Reduce the state, deregulate and this will usher in a new era of private sector led growth. But what it actually produced was an era of austerity from which there has been little respite. Billions has been taken out of local economies with little sign of private sector investment crowding in to pick up the slack. The push for deregulation has led us to Grenfell and a private rented sector which places the power in the hands of landlords rather than tenants.

Similarly, living standards have stagnated. Wage levels in the UK haven't recovered since before 2007 and are falling faster at the moment than at any time since records began. The metrics on social and economic inclusion are also going in the wrong direction with record levels of child poverty, health inequality and educational attainment across many areas of the UK.

An assumption that the market (as opposed to the state) will provide has left the most vulnerable people in our communities at the mercy of profit driven providers. Children in care, young adults with disabilities, the elderly become little more than commodities in a bid to squeeze unit prices down in the interests of shareholder profit.

The devaluing of local councils has left organisations increasingly reliant upon bidding rounds for special funds from Westminster

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ranging from town centre regeneration to public toilets. In an era of recurring crises, whether its Covid-19, cost of living or climate change, Local government lacks the long term stable funding which would enable it to plan for the needs of local communities particularly when it comes to social care, children’s services and net zero.

But there is an alternative. Local councils working with their partners to understand what might be possible if they were brave. If they were willing to dispense with the well worn cliches of growth and boosterism and focus instead on a different mantra; inclusion. A local economy which not only generates economic activity but enables wealth to flow more readily into local communities through jobs, ownership and generative businesses.

Many areas are using the collaborative structures established during the pandemic which often brought together anchor institutions from within the public sector including hospitals, colleges, universities and councils to work together to explore what could they could do to deliver economic inclusion at scale through effective use of procurement, commissioning, recruitment and land and assets. As in the last recession and the pandemic, it is up to local government not only to shape place but to shield communities from the harsh winter that is coming.

If Westminster isn’t interested in local government, then why should we put any faith in the tired old assumptions of growth that have failed communities repeatedly. This is what real levelling up looks like, not waiting for the slow machinery of Whitehall but the public sector, taking a place-based approach to change and rewriting its own economic future from within. •



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# Over half of school meal providers have identified more children arriving at school without eating breakfast

A new survey of school meal providers finds that 53.11% report more children arriving at school without eating breakfast.

The survey, conducted by APSE on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for School Food, found that, of those surveyed, 49.72% report that they have seen a decrease in the number of paid meals being served and 36.16% reported a decrease in the quality of packed lunches.

The survey also found that, in just three months, close to 50% of school meal providers surveyed had experienced an increase in food costs of at least 20%.

## Other key findings:

- Almost **60%** of respondents reported that dinner money debt had either increased or significantly increased.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents (**97.25%**) stated they anticipated food costs will continue to rise.
- **57.14%** of those surveyed report that utility costs have increased, with one respondent noting a five-fold increase in utility costs.
- A comfortable majority of respondents (**70.33%**) believed that extending UIFSM to all primary aged children would assist in alleviating the impact of rising food costs.



**Almost 60%** of respondents reported that dinner money debt had either increased or significantly increased

Speaking about the findings, Vickie Hacking, APSE Principal Advisor and lead researcher, said:

“The comments paint a picture of caterers and schools putting in significant time and effort to source produce, redesign menus and look at different ways to mitigate and reduce the impact of rising food costs on school food quality and the cost to parents.

“Interventions that could be taken to mitigate the impact of rising food costs have been outlined in the report with 70.33% of respondents to the survey believing that extending UIFSMs to all primary school aged children would help alleviate the impact.

“The delivery of school meals in England is complex and has a range of interdependencies, including funding, uptakes, eligibility, quality, and competitive tendering. Short-term interventions such as increasing the funding for a free school meal would be effective and a welcome intervention. The pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis has highlighted the importance of a hot, nutritious school meal to all children and especially those from low-income families or of those on squeezed benefits. Therefore, a long-term strategy needs to be put in place to ensure that there is a sustainable school meals service for future generations to come.”



The full survey analysis can be viewed online. Visit [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) for more details

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# Annual Seminar 2022

## Report back

*A quick look at this year's excellent speakers*

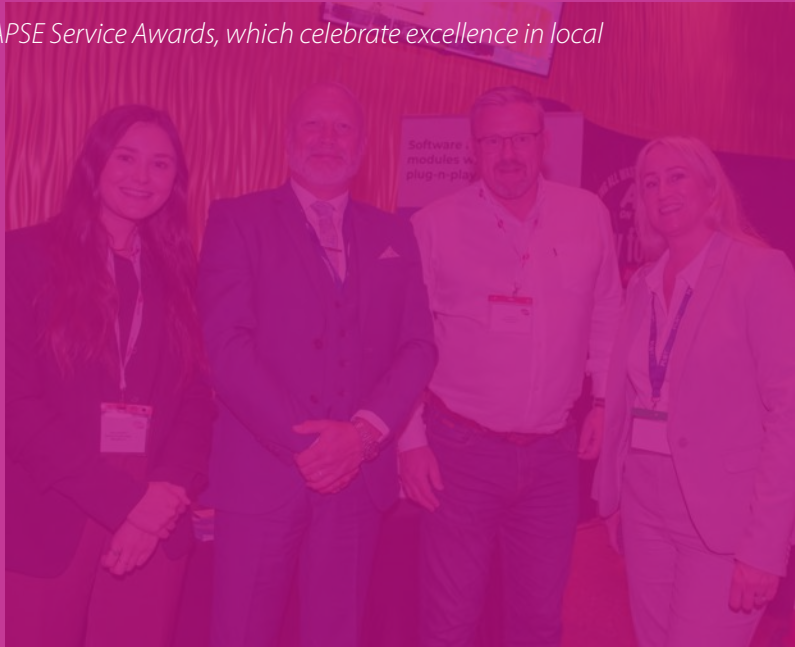
## Message from APSE's National Chair

*A welcome message for members from the incoming National Chair, Alderman Tommy Nicholl MBE*

## Service Awards

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

A big thank you to our overall sponsor:



# 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 greener, cleaner, healthier and wealthier local places.



*Delegates take their seats for the opening session of the APSE Annual Seminar.*

The charming and dynamic city of Swansea - famous for its location beside the jaw-dropping Gower Bay coastline – provided a superb backdrop to this year's APSE Annual Seminar.

Hosted in the brand new, state-of-the-art Swansea Arena, over 500 delegates, exhibitors and speakers from across the UK made the journey to the south coast of Wales for over two days of workshops, networking, an awards event as well as expert insight into the latest legislative and technological developments in the sector.

We provide an overview of an event that was nothing short of "rhagorol!" (excellent!)

## Opening Symposium: Delivering for People and Places

Day One of the Seminar opened with a very warm Welsh welcome from outgoing APSE National Chair and Deputy Leader of Swansea Council, Cllr. Andrea Lewis. First, delegates were invited to pay their respects to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with a moment's silence; a show of remembrance to Her Majesty for her unstinting public service to the UK.

Following this tribute, Cllr Lewis moved on to explain the theme of this year's seminar. Cllr Lewis was eager to stress the key role councils play in supporting growth for local people and local economies, but was quick to emphasise that such...

**"... growth should be fair and green, hence the focus of this year's event: Local Government: The Green Machine at the Frontline." Cllr Andrea Lewis, Deputy Leader, Swansea Council**

Session One opened with a panel discussion exploring the financial and policy dynamics at local government level. First up was Alison Allen, Chief Executive of NILGA, to talk the future role of local government in Northern Ireland. For Alison, if the pandemic ought to have taught Stormont and Westminster one thing, it was that more local decision-making and local policy development doesn't just make sense; it's necessary to create a more sustainable Northern Ireland.

Up next we heard from Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development at the WLGA, who emphasised the importance of supporting a wellbeing and prevention approach within communities, especially in light of the serious hardships endured by people throughout the pandemic and ongoing cost of living crisis.

After Tim, we were joined virtually by Cllr Gail Macgregor, COSLA, Environment and Economy Spokesperson, for a focus on how councils in Scotland are assisting the transition to a net zero economy. Cllr Archie Dryburgh, APSE Scotland Chair, also joined Cllr Macgregor to provide examples of how his authority, Dumfries and Galloway Council, has been putting words into action on decarbonisation.

Finally, representing the LGA, Cllr Liz Green, Vice-Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board, asked: "Where to now for English local government?" With levelling Up being somewhat peripheral to debates during the Conservative Party leadership election, Liz explored the ways councils can use pre-existing powers to help bridge inequalities within local areas.

## Future Communities

Future-proofing frontline services formed the basis of Session Two as speakers explored the critical factors for developing the councils of tomorrow. Kindly chaired by Ellen Cavanagh, APSE Northern Ireland Secretary, delegates heard from Swansea Council's Cllr Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Service Transformation and Deputy Leader, and Martin Nicholls, Chief Executive, who outlined the Council's journey of developing the Swansea Standard for low carbon homes in addition to the Homes as Power Stations Initiative (HAPS). The Swansea Standard is a Fabric First approach which uses key principles of passivhaus design. The HAPS initiative is designed to help the authority achieve its ambition of becoming net zero by the end of the decade.

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



*[L-R] Session One of the Annual Seminar: Tim Peppin, Director of Regeneration and Sustainable Development, WLGA; Cllr Liz Green, Vice-Chair of the Improvement and Innovation Board, LGA; Alison Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA; and Cllr Archie Dryburgh, APSE Scotland Chair.*

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.”** *Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive*

## Transforming and Transformative Neighbourhood Services

Creating sustainable neighbourhoods was the theme of Session Three, with the panel discussion kindly chaired by outgoing APSE National Secretary, Chris Cutforth. Sam Dennis, Director of Public Protection and Streetpride at Derby City Council, joined us virtually to highlight how her authority is reimagining neighbourhoods and working with the city in a locality approach. Sam spoke of the importance of capturing data and information to help identify place-based demand; enabling the authority to see that different localities have different issues, demands and skill sets.

Paul Bellotti, Executive Director of Communities and Environment, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, was up next to the podium to stress the value of aligning neighbourhood services to residents needs, The winner of Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery back in 2020, Paul acknowledged one of the big secrets to East Riding's success at a neighbourhood level was effective performance management.

Our final speaker for Session Three joined us from the other side of the Pennines, as Mark Davies, Chief Executive of Lancaster City Council, spoke of bringing climate ambitions to a neighbourhood services level. Mark also touched on the phenomenal efforts and progress of Lancaster City Council in decarbonising the Salt Ayre Leisure Centre.



Paul Bellotti, Executive Director of Communities and Environment at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, talks neighbourhoods in Session Three.



Emma Lower, Chief Executive of APSE Approved Partner Lendology CIC, takes questions from delegates in the Housing, Civic Assets and Energy Forum, which they kindly sponsored.

The work has reduced the council's emissions from natural gas by 35%, and along with a new green energy tariff, means Salt Ayre is now one of the first leisure centres in the country to become carbon neutral.

## Operational hubs

Day One was capped off with a special strategic forum session which involved three operationally-focussed hubs. These forums examined what marks effective leadership in the following frontline services:

### Forum 1: Waste, Resources, Parks and Streetscene - Kindly sponsored by Kingdom Local Authority Support

This forum explored the results of the APSE's latest research 'Transitioning RCV Fleet to Cleaner Fuels' and also considered how councils can resource their public parks in order to secure their future. Forum facilitators included Abi Ademiluyi, APSE Principal Advisor, and Ian Ross, Head of Parks and Leisure Services at the London Borough of Lambeth.

### Forum 2: Housing, Civic Assets and Energy - Kindly sponsored by Lendology

In Forum 2, the topics ranged from retrofitting leisure centres to meeting housing need, green jobs and growing local economies. Delegates were also treated to a case study in success with a closer look at the Methil Care Village: A new green community facility for the future in Fife. Forum facilitators included Phil Brennan, Head of APSE Energy, Vickie Hacking, APSE Principal Advisor, and Cllr Judy Hamilton, Fife Council.

### Forum 3: Highways, Street Lighting and Active Travel Hub - Kindly sponsored by Multevo

Forum 3 considered the role of effective travel management and street lighting in making neighbourhoods safer as well as the role of active travel in planning for the future. Debbie Johns, Head of APSE Performance Networks, was also on hand to discuss greening performance reporting: What should we measure and why? Forum facilitators included Andy Dunbobbin, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Wales, and Rob Bailey, APSE Principal Advisor.

The Seminar also ran a training session designed specifically for councillors to support strategic political leadership. Councillors from across the UK joined Fiona Sutton-Wilson, Head of APSE Training, for a bite-size interactive session examining how strategic political leadership can support councils in their drive for climate action. The session asked councillors: "Beyond the climate declarations, can you make your council a carbon-literate council? And if so, by when?" APSE recently became the first dedicated local government organisation to achieve Platinum Carbon Literate status which you can read about on page 32.

## Climate change and the ecological emergency

The first session of Day Two - Session Four - explored the contribution of councils to positive action, with a specific focus on the climate crisis. The session was chaired by Ald. Tommy Nicholl MBE, incoming APSE National Chair, and facilitated by APSE English Chair, Cllr Jacqui Burnett.

Our first speaker of the session was Glynn Humphries, Corporate Director of Communities, Environment and Climate Change at Wakefield Council. In the wake of climate emergency declarations and continuing green policy announcements by central government, Glynn gave examples of how his council was integrating climate change actions across frontline services. Glynn reiterated the importance of engaging communities as well the APSE network in helping to turn the authority's climate proposals into meaningful action.

Up next delegates heard from Mike Cockburn, Lead Commissioner for the Environment at Wirral Council, for a discussion on the necessity of a carbon literate workforce. Mike spoke of how the APSE Carbon Literacy course brought more engagement to Wirral Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and Action Plan. Targeting senior level management and councillors to take part in the course has ensured the authority has been able to increase awareness and knowledge to all service areas of the Council, further supporting the Climate Emergency. This has filtered down through the teams and ensured that all employees are considering the climate emergency in their roles.

Our penultimate speaker of the session, Fiona Horgan, President at the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP), highlighted a key challenge for the industry, which is the need for investment in people, particularly in green skills for engineering and lighting. Without investment in people, the sector risks having a workforce that lacks the competency to fulfill the challenges that lie ahead, particularly ominous considering the hundreds of local authority climate emergencies declared in the past few years and their technological ramifications for highways and street lighting services.

'What's car parking got to do with climate change?' Our final speaker of Session Four, Jonathan Allen, Head of Innovation and Technology at the British Parking Association, highlighted the important role car parking sites can play in encouraging active travel. Jonathan provided real world examples of local authorities persuading businesses of positive customer behaviours resulting in a lower carbon footprint.

## Workforce Matters: The Resources of Tomorrow

Moving onto Session Five – chaired by the APSE National Secretary Ellen Kavanagh – delegates were treated to an hour of ideas on how to develop a local government workforce fit for the future.

Getting us underway, Mo Baines, APSE Deputy Chief Executive, discussed the latest APSE survey on post-Covid return to office working, as well as the current crisis in recruitment and retention. Mo looked at what the shift to hybrid working amongst many local government 'desk-based' staff means for the future of customer service, but also noted the potential impact this winter's looming energy crisis may have on the 'new normal', perhaps reversing the trend of remote working, albeit temporarily.



[L-R] Fiona Horgan, President, Institution of Lighting Professionals; 'Welsh Wonder Woman' Lowri Morgan; and Fiona Sutton Wilson, Head of APSE Training.

**"The UK faces a cost-of-living crisis that is likely to hit hardest in the colder winter months. Some previous analysis of spend patterns found that whilst homeworkers reduce their spend on car parking fuel and public transport costs 86% reported that spending commonly increased on utility bills with this increasing to 92% for those living in rented accommodation."** Mo Baines, APSE Deputy Chief Executive

Continuing on the theme of skills for the future, our other speaker of Session Five – Anna Markova, Policy Officer, Industry & Climate at Trades Union Congress – highlighted the work of the BEIS Green Skills Taskforce. Anna made the case for a just transition; urging governments – national and local – to ensure those workers in carbon-heavy industries are reskilled for the green jobs of the future.

## Local Government Commission 2030

Our final session of the Seminar opened with Nadira Hussain, Chief Executive at SOCITM. Nadira spoke of the need to design services in favour of digital delivery but blended with non-digital for those who need it; and also spoke of the importance of reconfiguring digital and IT strategies to be place-based rather than organisation-centric.

It was a professor amongst the professionals with the Seminar's penultimate speaker, as Steve Griggs of Staffordshire University joined us for a lively discussion on the changing role of officers and councillors. Drawing on the findings of the APSE Local Government Commission, Professor Griggs asked how the sector is going to creating effective relationships between officers and elected members, in addition to asking how councillors can channel political ambitions into effective policy actions.

Last but very much not least, Steve Wilson, Director at Seminar sponsor Commercial Services Group, was in Swansea to talk delegates through the Chief Executives' Initiative; a scheme designed to support executive skills development and make a local government career an attractive and ambitious career option.

The Seminar concluded with an inspiring talk from 'The Welsh Wonder Woman' Lowri Morgan. An ultra marathon runner, Lowri spoke of her extraordinary feats of human endurance.

• If you would like to view any of the speakers' presentations, please visit the APSE website. Alternatively, email Megan Butterworth on [mbutterworth@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbutterworth@apse.org.uk)

Steve Wilson, Director at overall Seminar sponsor Commercial Services Group, talks 'The Next Generation' - finding future local government chief executives.



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## Best Workforce Initiative

Kindly sponsored by UNISON



### A human-learning systems approach to transforming urban land management

In 2019, Plymouth GEMS project set out to transform the value, care and use of natural spaces. Our innovative, partnership process took a human learning systems approach, investing in collaborative learning

## Finalists

Breckland Council  
Doncaster Council  
Dorset Council  
Kirklees Council  
Plymouth City Council  
Swansea Council  
Wakefield Council

## Winner: Plymouth City Council

and empowering the workforce to inform and lead initiatives, with the support of a new governance model combining strategy and operations to embed cultural change. Outcomes include a more effective service, new strategic partnerships, increased investment into nature-based solutions and greater ambitions developing Plymouth as an urban nature pioneer.

## Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative

Kindly sponsored by aico



### Sunderland Housing Delivery and Investment Plan

In 2020, Sunderland City Council became a Registered Provider, 20 years after it had last been a social landlord and 40 years since the last council house was built. With ambitious goals for acquiring and developing properties for affordable rent, the council aims to meet

## Finalists

Bolsover District Council  
Breckland Council  
Reading Borough Council  
Sunderland City Council  
Swansea Council  
Telford & Wrekin Council  
Wigan Council

## Winner: Sunderland City Council

the needs of vulnerable residents, including older people and those living with disabilities. Assistive technology to support residents to live independently is a central pillar of the initiative, enhancing the life chances of Sunderland people.

## Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Brightly Software



### Transforming Liverpool's alleyways

For the past four years, the 'Alleyway Programme' has gone from strength to strength, improving Liverpool's poorest alleyways, introducing brand new, sustainable methods of Refuse & Recycling collection to the city and re-establishing community spirit in areas that have been blighted for years by passage dumping and vermin. The programme has taken

## Finalists

Conwy County Borough Council  
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Durham County Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Liverpool Streetscene Services Ltd  
Ubico Ltd

## Winner: Liverpool Streetscene Services Ltd

Liverpool on a journey that has paved the way for the launch of a refuse collection method, never before tried in the city – Communal & The Underground Revolution.

## Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative (incl. Social Care)

Kindly sponsored by UNISON



### Get Out, Get Active...In Action

The Get Out, Get Active... In Action – Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon Programme is delivered through a partnership with Disability Sport NI, targeting the hard to reach, least active disabled and non-disabled people to encourage participation in inclusive and fun activities together.

### Finalists

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Cherwell District Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- Walsall Council

### Winner: Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council

Working with a broad range of partners and local volunteers, the Active Recreation Officer delivers a high quality, bespoke programme which offers participants the opportunity to improve fitness and wellbeing, make friends, engage with their community, gain confidence, achieve goals and feel positive.

## Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative

Kindly sponsored by the Roadvert



### Improving Homes, Changing Lives

We are a not for profit organisation. Every homeowner should be able to live in a home where they can feel safe, warm, and secure and for many, access to affordable lending is key to making that happen. For many, we are their only way to fund essential works to their home. Since 2005, over

### Finalists

- Bolsover District Council
- Conwy County Borough Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Glasgow City Council
- Highland Council
- Lendology in association with South West Councils
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council

### Winner: Lendology in association with South West Councils

£18.6 million has been lent to homeowners on behalf of our council partners. Over £11 million of that lending has already been repaid to re-lend.

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

Kindly sponsored by Lendology CIC



### Mid and East Antrim Collaborative Partnerships

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council works collaboratively with many organisations and businesses across the borough and beyond to deliver projects to address climate change, encourage sustainability and to protect the natural environment. The recognition that collaborative

### Finalists

- Highland Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Middlesbrough Council
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Plymouth City Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Walsall Council
- West London Waste

### Winner: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

working is needed to achieve large-scale success is very much impressed upon Council. The establishment of such strong working partnerships demonstrate our commitment to be an accessible, inclusive and engaged Council.

## Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Commercial Services Group



### Swansea Market – At the heart of the City Centre and the local economy

Swansea Market is Wales' largest indoor market located at the heart of Swansea City Centre. Its impact upon the local economy is steeped in history, with a tradition of trading dating back to the 12th century. There

### Finalists

Durham County Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
London Borough of Waltham Forest  
Swansea Council – One person's rubbish is another's treasure  
Swansea Council – Swansea Market: At the heart of the city centre and the local economy

### Winner: Swansea Council – Swansea Market: At the heart of the city centre and the local economy

have been many trials and tribulations, but today that tradition is still very much alive. Forging forward with initiatives and developments, the Market is sure to remain the beating heart of the City Centre, supporting the local economy and creating opportunities for entrepreneurs.

## Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative (incl. Community Safety)

Kindly sponsored by The British Parking Association



### Highways and Environmental Enforcement Team for deploying trackers in fly tipping rubbish

Wakefield Council has developed and launched an innovative new approach to address the increasing problem of fly tipping across the district. This has included the use of new CCTV technology in hotspots,

### Finalists

Cheshire East Council  
Falkirk Council  
Middlesbrough Council  
Nottingham City Council  
Oxfordshire County Council  
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council  
Wakefield Council

### Winner: Wakefield Council

combined with the use of new tracking information and intelligence based 'sting' operations that identify and prosecute the perpetrators. Success has relied on close partnership working, leveraging the resources of Wakefield Council and key partners including West Yorkshire Police and Wakefield District Housing (WDH).

## Best Innovation or Demand Management Initiative

Kindly sponsored by Socitm



### Durham County Council's Mobile Repairs System

Durham County Council's Building & Facilities Maintenance Team is an innovative and award-winning service, providing services across the North-East. By investing in the development of a mobile repairs system, we have enhanced our service delivery and demonstrated we listen and

### Finalists

Conwy County Borough Council  
Durham County Council  
East riding of Yorkshire Council  
Glasgow City Council  
Liverpool City Council  
Thurrock Council

### Winner: Durham County Council

adapt to the needs of customers, tradespeople, and service managers. We have also used the opportunity to further improve our excellent Health & Safety standards, streamline business processes, and generate savings.

## Best Climate Action or Decarbonisation Initiative

Kindly sponsored by AssetWorks



Salt Ayre Leisure Centre Decarbonisation Project

Salt Ayre Leisure Centre is Lancaster City Council's single largest emitter of CO2 and accounts for 35% of the council's direct emissions from natural gas, generating 642t CO2 each year. The council has delivered an innovative solution to completely decarbonise the leisure centre. The

### Finalists

- Dundee City Council
- Durham County Council
- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Highland Council
- Lancaster City Council
- South Tyneside Council
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- Wigan Council
- Wirral Council

Winner: Lancaster City Council

project, funded through Phase 1 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, was completed in March 2022 and has resulted in the delivery of one of the first carbon neutral leisure centres in the UK.

## Best Service Team: Construction and Building Service

Kindly sponsored by Kensa Contracting



Looking Back Going Forward

Fife has a high number of historic buildings and monuments, which require specialist skills to maintain and repair. The Council saw an opportunity for Fife Council employees to undertake the repairs and maintenance of Fife's historic built environment. Through a selection

### Finalists

- Durham County Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- Fife Council
- Swansea Council

Winner: Fife Council

of in-house staff, we put together a team of trades operatives who formed the nucleus of our Heritage Team, which now consists of 20 members, who carry out high quality repairs to stone-built properties and monuments throughout Fife.

## Best Service Team: Catering Service

Kindly sponsored by Staffordshire University



Innovation – From garden to plate, from

The key to Stockton's success is creating bespoke packages to schools as we believe one size does not fit all, a huge focus on special needs catering delivery and working on well established relationships. Our staff continue to be our best asset and have embraced the waste food

### Finalists

- Dumfries & Galloway Council
- Kirklees council
- Lancaster City Council
- Middlesbrough Council
- Rochdale Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner: Stockton on Tees Borough Council

recycling project. A productive year with increased meal numbers, more engaged parents and our children eating healthy meals all year round.

## Best Service Team: Facilities Management and Building Cleaning Service

Kindly sponsored by Toltec



### Building an exemplary caretaking service

Over the last three years, Telford & Wrekin Council has been hugely successful in signing schools up to its caretaking services. By providing a highly flexible and tailored package that's delivered in partnership with schools, it's increasingly becoming the service of choice across

### Finalists

Dumfries & Galloway Council  
Durham County Council  
East Renfrewshire Council  
Rochdale Council  
South Ayrshire Council  
Telford & Wrekin Council

### Winner: Telford & Wrekin Council

the borough and beyond. The fast-expanding service really came into its own during the pandemic, enabling schools struggling with staff absences to function through support from its mobile relief team.

## Best Service Team: Highways, Winter Maintenance and Street Lighting Service

Kindly sponsored by McCann



### Managing Data, Making Decisions

CCBC have been continually transforming the way in which Highway Maintenance and Street Lighting services are managed and delivered. CCBC are one of the most advanced authorities in highways asset management, which has been recognised nationally through awards

### Finalists

Cheshire East Highways  
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council  
Conwy County Borough Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Wigan Council

### Winner: Conwy County Borough Council

and case studies. Uniquely, CCBC bring transparency and consistency across all their frontline services through the adoption of innovative technology and the management of high quality asset data to make informed decisions that drives continual improvement and delivers high quality public services.

## Best Service Team: Transport and Fleet Maintenance Service

Kindly sponsored by Stertil-Koni



### The transition to alternative fuelled vehicles and equipment

In July 2019 Eastleigh Borough Council adopted a strategy stemming from its declaration of a Climate and Environmental Emergency. As part of the authority's response, the Direct Services division reviewed operations to help the Council achieve carbon neutrality, whilst still

### Finalists

City of York Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Eastleigh Borough Council  
Highland Council

### Winner: Eastleigh Borough Council

delivering a high-quality service to customers. The Neighbourhood Services team had already been transitioning the Council fleet to electric or Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) and this was given greater impetus with the Council's strong strategic direction.

## Best Service Team: Waste Management and Recycling Service

Kindly sponsored by VWS (Vehicle Weighing Solutions)



East Riding Waste and Recycling Team

East Riding of Yorkshire Council have maintained a high recycling rate while meeting challenges and budget pressures by working together to deliver a series of projects to improve service delivery and cut costs. This includes a successful waste collection round reschedule, the introduction

### Finalists

- Conwy County Borough Council
- East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Wakefield Council
- Walsall Council

Winner: East Riding of Yorkshire Council

of an app, a resident's pass for Household Waste Recycling Sites, and further improvements to our contaminated bin process.

## Best Service Team: Street Cleansing and Streetscene Service (Public Realm)

Kindly sponsored by Multevo



Partners and Pollinators

Greater demand and expectations around delivery of high-quality services combined with reduced resources has meant we have had to work in new ways. Neighbourhoods should be just as clean as the city centre. Engaging with our communities to build a robust and sustainable

### Finalists

- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Dumfries & Galloway Council
- Nottingham City Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Swansea Council
- Wigan Council

Winner: Nottingham City Council

future is essential in supporting our corporate priorities of clean streets, bee friendly, and CN28. Streetscene is integral to this. Teams have worked hard in building relationships in our neighbourhoods through our Clean Champions initiative and other partnerships.

## Best Service Team: Parks, Grounds and Horticultural Service

Kindly sponsored by The CDS Group



Lambeth's Parks Service

Lambeth's Parks have been voted by residents as the best thing about living in Lambeth and the service has been ranked as the best borough parks service in London. User satisfaction is at 90%, we have high levels of London in Bloom awards and Green Flag accreditation increases year-

### Finalists

- Eastleigh Borough Council
- Lancaster City Council
- Lambeth Council
- Middlesbrough Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Wigan Council

Winner: Lambeth Council

on-year. The service aims to be an exemplar in terms of environmental sustainability and despite huge budget cuts is working towards financial sustainability as well, with significant increases in income.

## Best Service Team: Cemetery and Crematorium Service

Kindly sponsored by Plotbox



### An holistic Grieving Space in a time of need

In 2021 Cardiff Bereavement Services has opened a new cemetery and a memorial garden which provides a holistic space for the bereaved despite the ongoing pandemic. The team provides an excellent service to the bereaved, our service users and the communities it serves every

### Finalists

Cardiff Council  
Kirklees Council  
Middlesbrough Council  
St Helens Council  
Swansea Council  
Worcester City Council

Winner: Cardiff Council

day. Excellence is what the service strives for shown by our Gold rated Charter for the Bereaved service, two Green Flag cemeteries and heritage award alongside Thornhill having been awarded cemetery of the year multiple times.

## Best Service Team Sports, Leisure and Cultural Service

Kindly sponsored by InBody



### Reading Arts & Venues championing

During the pandemic, Reading Borough Council's Arts & Venues service championed theatre, by staging live and digital performances, and maximised opportunities to improve our customers' experience. We value the social and economic benefits culture brings locally and are

### Finalists

Cheltenham Borough Council / The Cheltenham Trust  
Lancaster City Council  
Reading Borough Council  
Telford & Wrekin Council  
Walsall Council

Winner: Reading Borough Council

committed to making theatre accessible to audiences who face barriers in doing so, whilst contributing to the Council's ambition for a net zero carbon Reading by 2030.

## Best Service Team: Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Regulatory Service

Kindly sponsored by Kingdom Local Authority Support



### Avian Influenza (Bird Flu) Outbreak- A challenging team response

Following an outbreak of Bird Flu, a 3km radius Restriction Zone covering over 7000 residential properties was enforced immediately to stop further spread of the disease. The challenge for a small team was huge. An immediate response was required. Additional council teams quickly

### Finalists

Kirklees Council  
Wakefield Council  
Wigan Council

Winner: Wigan Council

responded to assist. Foot patrols of all the affected zone to identify locations of poultry being kept were completed. A media campaign was launched to inform and reassure residents. The operation was successfully completed within 5 days.

# Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery

Kindly sponsored by Waste Hero



Winner:

**Eastleigh Borough Council**

Finalists:

Conwy County Borough Council  
Durham County Council  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council  
Eastleigh Borough Council  
Reading Borough Council  
Swansea Council  
Telford & Wrekin Council  
Wakefield Council  
Wigan Council

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\* subject to an assessment of the records

Hosting your records on Deceased Online is beneficial in a number of ways. You'll *generate revenue* from your records. Your records are *digitised* and preserved. The data we provide from your records is suitable for use in any *management system*, or even just in spreadsheet format. Providing 24/7 online access for your records to the public will *save your staff time*. We have unrivalled specialist knowledge and experience to sensitively interpret burial and cremation records, including all aspects of *data protection compliance*.

# Public sector tech trends and the local government interface



Nadira Hussain, Chief Executive, Socitm, spoke to APSE Direct

about the gains made in advancing innovation and digital platforms in council services, and what more can be done.

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge to the United Kingdom's public services. The circumstances of last two years also constitute what has been described as a 'critical juncture for public services', in effect a once in a generation opportunity to deliver lasting and transformative reform of public services. As a result, the true value of a local authority led, place-based approach has come into sharper focus. Not only has the pandemic impacted directly on the health and wellbeing of people and places, it has also imposed unprecedented shocks on the wider civil society and social-economic life of people and their communities as a whole. Additionally, the impact of the pandemic is compounded by climate change, cost of living, digital poverty and a host of other issues now facing people, places and communities.

Four common 'pillars' have been identified, the '4Rs' of Reset, Reform, Renew, and Resilient that broadly characterise place-based recovery and regeneration approaches across the various tiers of local government.

The focus has moved rapidly from initial recovery onto issues of regeneration, sustainability and connectivity. These include the wider issues of digital services, integrated care, cyber security and digital

identity, as local authorities orchestrate place-based resources and assets to address the most pressing needs of their residents and communities.

There are also an emerging set of central initiatives, including: Levelling Up; health and care integration; secure, connected places; community preparedness and resilience; net zero; and housing and planning reforms, all of which impact on how local public services are funded and operate in the future.

Taking all these factors together, they point to a rapidly changing and complex environment that needs to be navigated with vision, skill and determination if we are to enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places. The next step is to tackle the deep-seated problems facing communities, being brave and implementing new digital approaches. Three main tasks for digital stakeholders within the public sector, beyond this year, are apparent:

1. Prioritising place-based technology infrastructure to support new ways of working and integrated services,
2. Understanding the broader context for digital change, including building knowledge in areas such as data ethics,
3. Developing new collaborative networks, directly between public service and citizens.

The identification of key trends that lie in the spaces between different technologies and how these will affect the public sector are also of great significance - for example, a much greater focus on interoperability, systems integration, and exploitation of opportunities arising from a growth in processing power, coupled with harnessing data and new tools to unlock opportunities that lie within our communities.

Normalising new ways of working with the digital infrastructure to connect employees; designing services in favour of

digital delivery blended with non-digital for those who need it; and reconfiguring digital and IT strategies to be place-based rather than organisation-centric, are all key considerations in delivering innovative and modern public services. The opportunities presented will appeal to all those with a stake in regenerating public services and creating thriving communities - employees, citizens, digital leaders and policy makers alike - as they face up to the extreme challenges facing the public sector.

As a result of the insights generated from our members, our partners and wider activities across the local public sector, we have seen the emergence of the following strategic priorities:

1. The need to build upon the phenomenal response of local authorities and the wider public sector to Covid-19.
2. The need to sustain the step changes that local public service providers have taken.
3. The need to harness digital – cultures, capabilities, technologies and data – to enhance the resilience of people, communities, organisations and places.

Timing is of the essence. As a sector, we must prioritise and proactively encourage the wider use and adoption of digital solutions to enable the transformation of public services.



• Nadira delivered a presentation on this topic at the APSE Annual Seminar 2022. Visit the APSE website to download the PowerPoint.



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# Pay and the local authority transport sector

Drawing on the findings of recent APSE workforce surveys, Mo Baines, APSE Deputy Chief Executive, discusses the issues surrounding recruitment and retention in the sector.

The cost-of-living crisis dominates the news and winter rationing of energy is now under active consideration by the National Grid. With inflation currently over 10% and some alarming predictions that this could rise to over 18% in the winter of 2022, it is unsurprising that we are seeing a significant ripple of industrial unrest across UK industries. Workers across sectors are struggling to pay household bills and meet rising food and travel costs. Local government is no exception.

Council worker pay has reduced in real terms with below inflation pay awards for a number of years. Some trade unions have argued that this leaves workers 20% worse off due to the cumulative impact of below inflation pay awards. Coupled with this, the National Living Wage increases have placed pressure on the bottom-rungs of local government pay spines, leaving little headroom between those pay rates and the lowest paid. This is almost unique to local government as a part of the public sector which is not covered under a pay review body, and where pay rates have fallen behind both the private sector and public sector bodies. ONS data suggests that at the end of last year, private sector wage growth, including bonuses, picked up by 5.4%. Yet the public sector was less than half that at 2.5%. Nevertheless, the local government employers are keen to stress that they are not minimum wage employers.

So where does this leave local authority services reliant upon drivers and other transport industry jobs? APSE's workforce recruitment and retention survey, conducted in the third quarter of 2021-2022, found that local authorities consistently reported driver shortages.

**A perfect storm of long-term pay suppression, a cost-of-living crisis, and a very real energy emergency, probably means that previous offsets such as relatively good terms and conditions, including pensions, may no longer hold sway in attracting and retaining drivers into the public sector.**

Overall driver shortages were particularly problematic with 71.8% of respondents reporting severe or moderate shortages. The situation was much worse in the South of England, where HGV driver shortages rose to 77% compared to the UK wide figure for severe shortages in the HGV category at much lower at 30.2%. These figures are directly linked to pay pressures in the sector, not least due to the exodus of qualified drivers post Brexit. A difficult but less stark recruitment and retention issue also came through in vehicle maintenance where 73.6% of respondents reported severe or moderate shortages; in many cases attributable to an ageing workforce and lack of new recruits coming into the service.

Over 63% of respondents suggest that pay is the biggest barrier to successful recruitment and retention of staff but less than 10% have been able to make a positive intervention in pay rates. In part this is for sound reasons; job evaluation has, by and large, made a positive contribution to raising the pay rates of low paid part-time women workers in local government such as social care workers. However, such systems, by necessity, prevent employers from interventions that cannot be 'objectively justified'; though arguably the chronic issue emerging on pay, and risk to service delivery, may act as a catalyst to explore options.

In a further APSE survey - specifically on driver pay in refuse services - we found that HGV pay remains relatively low in local government with HGV drivers earning around £24,651 with non-HGV driver earnings at £21,410. The caveat to these figures is huge UK wide variations dependent on the job roles in individual councils. However, the cost of labour in refuse services, as an overall percentage of service costs, excluding waste disposal costs, has remained at a steadfast 45% over a number of years. So, any jump in pay rates will clearly impact on overall service costs in an area that is already a high-cost high-impact service for councils.

The situation remains bleak. A perfect storm of long-term pay suppression, a cost-of-living crisis, and a very real energy emergency, probably means that previous offsets such as relatively good terms and conditions, including pensions, may no longer hold sway in attracting and retaining drivers into the public sector.

As we go to press, the local government trade unions have or are in the process of asking their members to consider an employer side offer of £1,925 which should leave everyone with a minimum increase of 4.04%, for those within scope of the NJC, with the lowest paid receiving a significantly higher percentage increase. However, will this be enough to tempt some to remain in the sector? It seems that a better option, as suggested by many of APSE's member councils, would be invest in a 'grow your own' strategy; upskilling existing drivers and new recruits, and investing in training and recruitment for the long-haul.

*APSE Direct readers can access free download of two reports which support this article:*

- *Local government: Skills shortages and workforce capacity - Author Mo Baines, APSE*
- *Pay rates amongst refuse workers in the UK: An analysis of the challenges facing the sector - Author Matt Ellis, APSE •*



## Ash dieback costs risk further hollowing out council budgets, a new APSE survey of local authorities warns

A recent survey on the impacts of ash dieback found nearly a quarter of the local councils surveyed expect their total costs for dealing with ash die back to amount to over £10m.

The survey also found that 75% of local authority respondents expect their ash tree population to fall by 60 –95%, putting the carbon reduction objectives of local and national tree planting strategies at risk.

The management of ash dieback is proving a real challenge for tree managers as to whether trees should be felled, or allowed to stand, in order to develop resistance to the disease and protect species which are reliant upon the ash for their home. There is also the issue of public safety with regards to falling branches, a symptom of the disease. Having received a number of enquiries as to how local councils are dealing with ash die back, APSE pulled together a survey of our member authorities.

### Key findings

- Over **75%** of respondents expect their ash tree population to fall by **60 –95%**, most reporting figures at the higher end of this scale.
- **29%** estimate the eventual total costs for dealing with the impacts of ash dieback to be over **£1.1m**, with nearly a quarter expecting losses to be over **£10m**.
- There is less demand in the coming two years to fell and remove diseased tree than in the coming 3-10 years; from **2.5%** in the next two years to **33%** in the next 6-10 years.
- Between **10% – 40%** of highway verges have trees suffering ash dieback.
- **86%** feel the Government is not providing sufficient funding to local authorities to address the problem.

Speaking about the findings, Wayne Priestley, APSE Principal Advisor, said, “At a time when there is a national drive to increase tree numbers to combat climate change and carbon emissions, talk of the UK losing at least 75% of its ash population to ash dieback will have a hollowing effect on the carbon reduction objectives of tree planting strategies.

“From the results of the survey, it is clear there will be a large expense involved in dealing with ash dieback, and it is unlikely local authority budgets alone will be able to deal with these costs. Therefore, over the coming years it will be anticipated that Government will need to step in, not only to promote the planting of new trees to address climate change, but also to help deal with the felling and removal of dead and dying ash trees.

“Dealing with ash dieback may very much be like trying to hold back waves, as the disease is now so entrenched in the UK’s ash tree population. But that does not mean we cannot learn lessons, such as having the correct biosecurity measures in place to prevent the future importing of tree and plant diseases, if we are to ensure we can guarantee the future health of our trees and woodlands.”

- *APSE held an online seminar on 21 September exploring the risks to service delivery and climate objectives ash dieback poses for local authorities, as well as measures currently employed to mitigate these risks. Visit the APSE website to download presentations from the event.*

**29% estimate the eventual total costs for dealing with the impacts of ash dieback to be over £1.1m, with nearly a quarter expecting losses to be over £10m**

# Workforce Matters: The Resources of Tomorrow

Emma Link, Industry Analyst at The Construction Industry Training Board, looks at what role local government can play in constructing a future for the UK building trade.

A substantial proportion of councils across the UK are pledging to be carbon neutral by 2030 (Find a council – Climate Action Plan Explorer (climateemergency.uk). In order for net zero targets to be met local authorities will need to tackle the amount of carbon in heat and buildings, the majority of which is in the existing building stock. The construction supply chain will also need time to develop and upskill, train and recruit additional workers.

Buildings constructed now will deliver four times the performance of older buildings. In terms of emissions therefore, the existing stock is responsible for 95% of the problem. Existing stock is the priority for removing operational carbon.

CITB's latest research shows construction in many areas, both geographically and in skill set, is just not ready to deliver retrofit at scale, although there are pockets of excellence across the UK already working to make public buildings net zero compliant

The engagement team is also working with local government organisations like Combined Authorities. CITB is a member of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Retrofit Taskforce led by Andy Burnham. The taskforce has developed and is now implementing an action plan to retrofit Greater Manchester's homes, commercial and public buildings. CITB is supporting with skills plan, which has included delivery of retrofit skills training to over 1,000 people living and working in the area. CITB has recently delivered a

retrofit conference for Greater Manchester's FE and private providers to support them with medium term planning for delivery of retrofit training.

The construction industry has, of course, had enough notice that net zero builds are coming but the problem of resource comes back to that of chicken and egg. The sector cannot train people until the demand for the work exists. Grant funding is available to businesses for training, but until they have a pipeline of work committed, employers don't know how best to spend their pot of training money.

There is an opportunity now to work in a collaborative way with local government. Construction is looking to local government procurement tenders to offer a commitment to a long-term pipeline of work and clarity on what the jobs required to deliver it will involve.

We must all now work together as Local Skills Improvement Plans are mandatory in England following the Skills and Post-16 Education Act, which was made law in April 2022. This is an opportunity to prioritise construction skills, as post 16 technical education must now meet local labour market needs.

Working together isn't a 'one size fits all' as every area has different housing stock with different availability of the skills and training needed to transition to net zero.

To ensure that Net Zero buildings operate effectively as a system, all trades involved in their construction or retrofit need to be highly skilled, communicate effectively with each other, and build on each others' work to the high same standard.

• Visit [www.citb.co.uk](http://www.citb.co.uk) for more information



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We have undertaken over 400 feasibility studies and completed over 40 new cemeteries in the UK and overseas. As a result of the success and reputation in the cemetery market, CDS expanded into designing and developing new crematoria sites for both private companies and local authorities using our inhouse team of engineers and architects.

Our dedication to your vision has enabled us to gain recognition in both the cemeteries and crematorium market, **but now we are expanding.**

Our business now focuses on three distinct areas, namely Cemeteries and Crematoria, Parks and Leisure, and Environmental Solutions.

Our Parks and Leisure team can help design sports facilities, landscaping of parks and public spaces as well as designing drainage solutions.

The Environmental team can assist with investigating contaminated land sites under Part IIA and brownfield land, bringing to life forgotten parcels of land, helping to contribute to the local community and provide potential income generation for the local authority.

We currently have new sites under construction with many more in different stages of project feasibility, design and planning. The quality of our work has not changed; maintaining the high level of service you expect.



CDS are with you every step of the way, from Feasibility Studies, Landscape and Concept Design through to Planning, Construction and Delivery, ensuring a seamless experience from inception to completion.

Our team of highly qualified specialists - field surveyors, engineers and designers - are committed to creating beautifully landscaped and thoughtfully constructed developments.

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Our Green Agenda also ensures that our developments are environmentally friendly, offer reductions in emissions and pollution whilst helping improve biodiversity.

For more information on how The CDS Group can help, please phone us on +44 (0)1525 864387 or visit our website.

Discover what's beneath.



# Platinum power for APSE: Becoming a Carbon Literate Organisation



APSE has recently achieved the distinction of becoming the first dedicated local government organisation

to achieve Platinum Carbon Literate Organisation status in the UK. APSE Head of Training – Fiona Sutton Wilson – details our journey in partnership with the Carbon Literacy Project.

**Carbon Literate Organisation**  
Platinum



Finding new, sustainable forms of power is hot on the agenda as temperatures soared this summer. Love it or hate it, this year's record-breaking heat is a symptom of rapidly increasing global temperatures and the climate crisis.

As a long-standing champion for climate action, APSE is the first dedicated local government organisation to achieve Platinum Carbon Literate Organisation status in the UK.

But what is a Carbon Literate Organisation and how can it help?

A Carbon Literate Organisation (or CLO) has to demonstrate "An awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions on an individual, community and organisational basis." The Carbon Literacy Project

Carbon Literacy training does just that. It explores the causes and impacts of climate change, as well as what we can do to prevent further unnatural global heating. The training also explores ways in which we can adapt to climate impacts and simultaneously address the inequalities we have in our societies.

Shouldn't all public organisations be aware of the causes of climate change, the source of emissions and what can be done to stop this crisis getting any worse?

The scientific evidence is overwhelming. The weather we experience is governed by the Earth's climate. Soaring temperatures, wildfires, winter storms and flooding from heavy rainfall are all symptoms of a changing and chaotic climate.

Throughout history, it's true to say that, the climate has been inconsistent - there have been ice ages (with lower levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere) and warmer interglacial periods (with higher levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere). The climate has always changed. So why is it different now?

Power is the determining factor. We rely on coal, oil and gas – our fossil fuels – to power our world. These fossil fuels are laden with carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other dangerous greenhouse gases, which collect in our atmosphere and trap heat close to the Earth. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, we have released billions of tons of greenhouse gases causing the planet to heat up.

Our average global temperature is now more than 1o above pre-industrial times and this unnatural global heating is as a result of human activity. However, this doesn't just affect us, it affects all living things, so

we need to invest in our ecological systems and biodiversity at the same time as tackling the climate crisis. This is about survival. Humans have created the problem and humans have the power to fix it.

Power is the key. How we use our power matters. The decisions we make across public services today, not only impact on the people living in our communities right now, but they affect the lifestyle and choices of future generations.

The power of our decisions and actions will help us to tackle the major infrastructure and capital challenges of addressing the ways in which we power our world into the future. To have any chance of getting to net zero we cannot continue to rely on the finite supply of fossil fuels. The source of power and how we use it from now on, will influence the lives of future populations across the globe.

Some would argue that there isn't any point taking climate action, unless all countries of the world act together. This is just a convenient tactic to delay. If we all took that view, nothing would improve. Instead, let's be leaders in this. With a spirit of optimism and innovation, let's understand the challenge and raise our heads above the parapet, empower each other and do what we do best, in local government: deliver results equitably for the benefit of our communities. We need to use our power wisely to protect the health and wellbeing of all members of society and their decedents.

APSE has been a champion for climate action for decades and is walking alongside local authorities on the path to net zero. As a Platinum accredited Carbon Literate Organisation (CLO), APSE can now proudly wear the visible 'badge' that showcases our commitment to Carbon Literacy training (100% staff trained) and our commitment to supporting, fostering and maintaining a low carbon culture.

There are four tiers of CLO accreditation, and the criteria for each are explained in detail on the Carbon Literacy Project webpages, where you can also learn about the process.

There are lots of co-benefits of climate action and Carbon Literacy training.

*"Carbon Literacy training makes a tangible contribution to staff well-being, to the effectiveness of workplace learning, to the employability of learners, to the efficiency of work-places, to the competitiveness of companies – and of course to our collective role in tackling climate change."* The Carbon Literacy Project

We have been delighted to support UK local authority staff to become Carbon Literate and to support some in pursuing CLO status, including Dacorum Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Wirral Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council.

This is not an easy path, but it is incumbent upon us to address the power balance and work together to create a more sustainable low carbon culture.

We offer a full suite of certified Carbon Literacy courses, designed to meet the needs of local government. We deliver them as open and in-house options, both onsite and online:

- Carbon Literacy for Local Authorities
- Carbon Literacy for Leaders and Managers
- Carbon Literacy for Elected Members

• *To find out more about our Carbon Literacy training, or if you have good practice to share, please contact us on [info@apse.org.uk](mailto:info@apse.org.uk).*

## Local Social Enterprise lender launch their second Social Impact Report



APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien, incoming APSE National Secretary Ellen Cavanagh and outgoing APSE National Chair, Cllr Andrea Lewis present Lendology's Approved Partner Certificate to their Chief Executive Emma Lower in Swansea.

Lendology CIC, working with council partners, provide access to low cost, responsible finance. Unlike other lenders, Lendology make their decisions with people, for people and put impact before profit.

Their second Annual Social Impact Report has been prepared to evidence how this translates into tangible improvements to individuals, communities, and councils across the UK. The Report has been independently audited by The Financial Inclusion Centre, a not-for-profit research organisation, to verify the results.

With over 51% of households in the Southwest not having access to emergency savings, over 11% of households in fuel poverty and 24.2% excess winter deaths each year, the Report highlights the stark challenges already faced in the region, even before the energy and cost of living crisis hits this winter.

Healthy homes are critical to the health and wellbeing of its occupants and reduce the impact on local services, such as the NHS. Housing is a 'social determinant of health' that can dramatically impact physical and mental health inequalities throughout life. Ensuring homeowners have access to fair finance to maintain their homes means that homes are kept healthy for the families who live within them.

Emma Lower, CEO at Lendology, said: "2021-22 was our best year on record for lending with over £1.7million lent to homeowners to enable the provision of home repairs, improvements, adaptations or energy efficiency and renewable energy measures. However, as a Social Enterprise we look beyond the numbers, and the case studies throughout the report highlight how affordable finance has transformed lives with improved living conditions and better health and wellbeing as a result. The standout figure for me is that for every £1 invested by councils in the scheme, £2.58 of impact is generated locally"

Read the full Social Impact Report: <https://www.lendology.org.uk/about/our-social-impact/>



# Almost 87% of local authorities are reporting an increase in demand for allotments

APSE's latest State of the Market Survey on Local Authority Allotments.

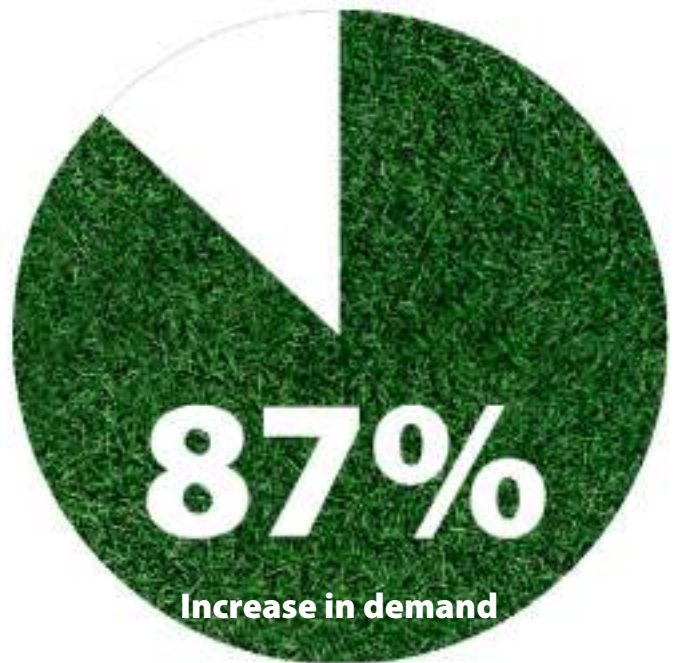
The survey found that 47% of respondents stated that their council plans to increase the number of allotments, up by 9% from the previous year's survey (36%).

The survey also found that, with regards to the average waiting time for an allotment plot, over 58% of respondents reported that over 18 months was the average, which is an increase of 26% on 2021 when the figure was 34%.

## Other key findings

Of the local authorities surveyed:

- **93.5%** reported they have council owned allotments within their authority.
- **27%** of local authority respondents, who do not currently manage sites, had received requests for new allotment provision.
- **42%** reported they have an allotments strategy, a **6% increase** on last year. Of the **58%** that haven't currently got a strategy in place, **60%**, stated that the council is planning to develop one within the next 2 years.
- **60%** reported they cultivate plots organically and almost 27% of allotment sites have begun to use solar power instead of mains power.
- Not a single authority reported that they would return a surplus through their allotment service.



Speaking about the findings, Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive, said:

"This year's standout statistics from APSE's State of the Market on Allotments has to be the fact that over 87% of local authorities are reporting an increase in demand for allotments and continuing high levels of visits. This statistic alone demonstrates the ever-increasing value the public places on allotments; whether for exercise or recreational purposes. It may also reflect, especially in light of spiralling grocery bills and tightening household budgets, a renewed public interest in using allotments to 'grow your own' fruit and vegetables.

"Naturally, the booming interest in allotments across the UK has led to a burgeoning demand for plots. Despite the best efforts of local authorities, 33% of those surveyed reported having over 1000 people on their allotment waiting list. The surging demand is also causing concern amongst existing allotment holders, as is the reductions in council budgets, which is having an impact on the ability to maintain such sites.

## Despite the best efforts of local authorities, 33% of those surveyed reported having over 1000 people on their allotment waiting list

"The survey identified that 68% of councils surveyed subsidised the cost of the provision of allotments, whereas the remaining councils simply broke-even. This approach recognises the public value of allotments and the multiple benefits they bring, which have only been increased during the recent pandemic, then they are acknowledged as being a key community asset and one which local residents, allotment holders and agencies across the country are increasingly helping to sustain."

*A full analysis of APSE's State of the Market Survey on Local Authority Allotment Services 2022 can be viewed online.* •











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