

Open public services white paper

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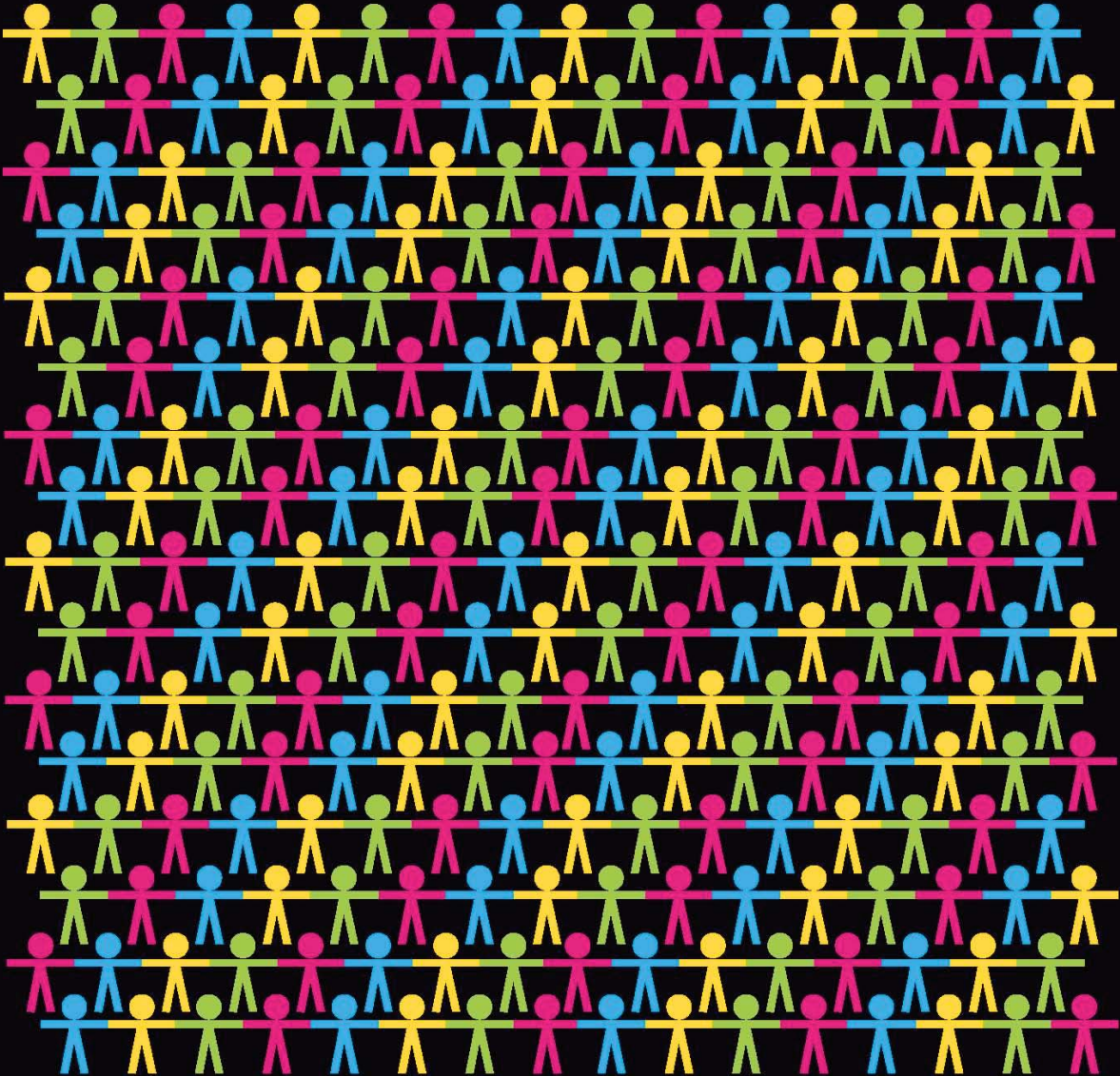
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Co-ops and mutuals

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Proof of delivery?

A review of the role of co-operatives and mutuals in local public service provision



Events diary

Date	Event	Venue
August 3	Transport services Supervisory skills for team leaders	Newcastle ●
August 4	Catering and Cleaning supervisory skills for team leaders	Liverpool ●
August 22	Project Management in Leisure services	Bristol ●
August 23	Writing, developing and delivering service level agreements	Liverpool ●
August 24	A Duty to involve	Glasgow ●
August 25	Project Management in Leisure services	Leeds ●
August 31	Agency worker directive	Birmingham ●
September 01	Accident investigation Masterclass	Glasgow ●
September 02	Catering and Cleaning supervisory skills for team leaders	Glasgow ●
September 7&8 Annual Seminar and service awards 2011		Bristol ●
September 13	CDM Regulations 2007 Refresher skills Master Class	London ●
September 15	Tools for efficiencies and savings in street cleansing	Manchester ●
September 16	Presentation and facilitation skills	Manchester ●
September 19	Procurement in Northern Ireland Master Class	Derry ●
September 21	Highways advisory group	Manchester Town Hall ●
September 21	Performance networks validator training course	Manchester ●
September 22	Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Advisory Group	Committee Room 1 ●
September 22	Writing, developing and delivering service level agreements	Warwick ●
September 23	Street cleansing and street scene supervisory skills	London ●
September 26	Street cleansing and street scene supervisory skills	Liverpool ●
September 27	Agency worker directive	Manchester ●
September 28	Refuse Collection & Street Cleansing Advisory Group	Committee Room 1 ●
September 28	Waste, Recycling & Street scene workshop for team leaders	Edinburgh ●
September 29	Tools for efficiencies in Building Cleaning	Manchester ●
September 29	Waste, Recycling & Street scene workshop for team leaders	Glasgow ●
October 4	Street cleansing and street scene supervisory skills	Southampton ●
October 6&7	Housing Seminar	Hilton York Hotel ●
October 6	Writing, developing and delivering service level agreements	Edinburgh ●

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Editorial

"As the recent budget crisis in the United States has shown, the pressures on Government spending across the globe and the perceived need to reduce deficits, continues to bring into a sharp focus differences about the role of the state and the future of public services. Sluggish economic growth, rising welfare bills, and falling tax revenues simply compounds an already difficult environment for public services. As the title of the article by Kenny Harris in this edition of Direct News states 'we have no money, so we will have to think'.

Think differently about relative priorities, think differently about how we are going to deliver more efficient and better public services with fewer resources, and think innovatively about how we can generate new revenues to replace or enhance other dwindling funding streams."

It is clear that the world economy and that of the UK is not out of the woods yet. That is why the theme of this year's APSE annual seminar 2011 'Changing World: Changing Services' is highly relevant to APSE member authorities. With a world economy still perilous close to collapse we need to prepare for, and own, changes to the public sector. There is a real danger that despite localist intentions Government will attempt to impose centrally driven changes to public services. As evidenced in the recent 'open public services' white paper.

If local government does not come up with its own answers then who could blame central government for seeking to impose its own solutions? So our theme this year, looking at how local government's frontline should respond to the changing world in which we live, is not only timely but an essential platform in which we can share ideas, debate the ideology of change but more importantly take ownership of our own futures in local government frontline services.

I hope to see you in Bristol on the 7-8 September at the one annual event that is truly designed for our frontline local government services.

Best wishes

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive

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Open Public Services or Compulsory Tendering?

This seems to be the key question emerging from the Open Public services White Paper published by the Government on 11 July 2011. Judith Barnes of Eversheds asks is this just a question of emphasis?



The Coalition's commitments, stated in the white paper, include a drive towards providing good public services with less cash and state 'The old, centralised approach to public service delivery is broken' as total public spending increased by 57% in real terms from 1997/08 to 2010/11, but outcomes, they claim, have remained static for the most disadvantaged in society.

The White Paper sets out five principles of open public services and these are:

- Choice, where service users are given direct control over their choice of provider, though where that is not possible elected representatives are given more choice about who provides services and how;
- Decentralisation and devolution to the lowest appropriate level;
- Diversity of supply/supplier to increase competition and drive up service quality;
- Fair access to services to improve outcomes for those most reliant on public services, who are often those most in need;
- Accountability so that public services are held to account by citizens and their elected representatives - 'waste and inertia are no longer tolerable'. There is also a recognition of the need to harness the power of new technology to transform public services (have you developed any applications? How far have you utilised cloud computing? Do you use social networks etc?).

Although the Government states it has no single ideological presumption that only one sector should run services and that high quality services can be provided by the public sector, the voluntary and community sector or the private sector it goes on to say that competition can be 'very effective' even within one sector. It cites schools and voluntary sector providers in social care and private sector

highways maintenance providers as examples of where competition has worked.

The Coalition Government's approach is to split services into three categories:

- Individual services giving 'power to the people' who use them (yes the White Paper does use that expression);
- Neighbourhood services where power is devolved to town, parish and community councils or other appropriate fora; or
- Commissioned services, creating an open framework for those services that cannot be devolved 'such as tax collection, prisons, emergency healthcare or welfare to work'.

Many of the reforms in the Localism Bill will support neighbourhood service delivery by introducing measures such as:

- The community right to buy/transfer;
- Community right to challenge - a duty for the authority to consider (not necessarily agree) to pursue alternative provisions - where they do, because there are economic, social or environmental benefits, then there must be a procurement;
- Neighbourhood planning;
- Referenda on spending and to veto excessive council tax rises;
- Other initiatives such as the community right to build etc.

Individual services are already developing in many areas where, for example, adult social care authorities are offering individualised budgets to enable people to purchase their own care.

So what might neighbourhood services look like? The aim would be to transfer community services to neighbourhood/communities, following consultation on a national framework for local schemes of delegation. Many authorities are already considering devolving functions to parish, town and community councils to manage buildings, deliver libraries and other functions in neighbourhood areas through existing powers to delegate under Sections 101 and 102 Local Government Act 1972. So what is different here? The Government will potentially provide money through community budget to help neighbourhood councils take greater control over local services. They will also consult on neighbourhood councils taking greater control of local public realm, leisure opportunities and community activity, which could include: street improvement, parking and traffic restrictions, local libraries, local museums and arts, sports,

local parks and leisure facilities, non liquor licensing of premises, minor bye-laws, lower level anti-social behaviour and community grants.

These measures would be strengthened by the so called 'democratic decentralisation' with the creation of police and crime commissioners, elected mayors and health and wellbeing boards, amongst other functions.

We have to wait until page 29 of 57 pages (what has happened to the brevity we expected from White Papers) to get to the third category of commissioned services. Here the Government's aim is to 'switch the default from one where the state provides the service itself to one where the state commissions from a diverse range of providers. There will be some exceptions, for example in relation to national security, the judiciary, core policing, intelligence services and the military. However, there may still be support, specialist and back office functions where diversity of supply is still appropriate in these services.

The new arrangements will require a purchaser/provider split to encourage innovation and diversity of provision and providers. The government sees the benefits of this approach as encouraging new, innovative providers to compete, allowing payment by results and/or incentives for supporting particular social groups to be built into contracts and enables a disaggregation of services into specialist functions. Perhaps these last comments were pre-empted by the comments of Margaret Hodge, Public Accounts Committee Chair at the CIPFA Conference stating that fragmentation of service delivery means that it is difficult to demonstrate value for money.

Hidden in paragraph 5.4 is the requirement to introduce an 'open commissioning' policy in a number of specific services, after consulting on areas where it should be introduced. 'In those areas, commissioners should: consult on and be challenged by potential providers from all sectors on the future shape of service; seek and fully consider a minimum of three providers, from whichever sector, when they contract for services; and transparently link payment to results.'

The government says that open commissioning and payment by results are critical to open public services so that providers are free to innovate and eliminate waste and to get good value for money for taxpayers, so that mediocrity is not tolerated nor paying when services are of poor quality.

The paper goes on to suggest that support for better commissioning and innovation in public services may require robust accreditation of what works, so there will be further consultation on how to establish bodies that can mirror the work of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence in the health service.

Innovation needs to be celebrated and an annual prize will be recognised by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for the top ten public sector bodies demonstrating the most innovative ways to deliver high quality and more responsive public services!

One positive comment for local authorities is recognised on page 30 where open commissioning is said to be much better established in local authorities than in central government. 'The wider public sector has much to learn

from local authorities successes in commissioning, for example in adult social care and highways services'.

The Government believes that the starting point for good local commissioning is public engagement and accountability so that the public's priorities should drive the type of services commissioned.

The Government says that it will consult with local authorities and the wider public sector about how to go further in opening up locally commissioned services in:

- Customer contact;
- Planning;
- Property and facilities management;
- Back-office transactional services;
- Family support;
- Support for local looked-after children;
- Trading standards and environmental services; and
- Housing management.

It is not clear what services may be caught by some of these expressions, for example, how wide is 'back-office transactional services' and would it encompass legal, financial, HR and many other services?

In addition the Government would welcome views on the potential to extend commissioning to other national services including:

- Court and Tribunal administration;
- Payment processing;
- Prevention, detection and investigation of fraud;
- Debt management and enforcement services;
- Identity - related services;
- Land and property information services;
- Customer contact services;
- Back- office functions for prosecutors; and
- Immigration and visa administration.

Whilst the Government has an overarching aim of achieving choice in service delivery it appears that this does not necessarily translate into choice for elected representatives on public authorities, whose choice will be limited for those services where enforced tendering is imposed from above. However, the stakes for poor tendering/commissioning practice are now much higher than CCT days, following the introduction of the Contracts Regulations and the Remedies Directive, particularly the prospect of damages if the decision to award is successfully challenged.

Overall the proposals seem light on the detail of the new Government policy for compulsory tendering and the White Paper seems to have been a lot of effort for measures that are already happening or that will largely feature in future consultation. Are we just being gently softened up for the return of CCT?

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Judith Barnes will be addressing delegates on this topic at the APSE Annual seminar 2011 in Bristol. See www.apse.org.uk for details



Trading places:

A journey through the review of Nottingham County Councils' Trading Services

Kevin McKay, Group Manager for Catering and Facilities Management at Nottinghamshire County Council explains why delivering value for money, whilst providing first class customer care, is at the heart of what they do.

Like every local authority across the country Nottinghamshire County Council is undergoing a process of significant change with a key emphasis on maintaining levels of service, whilst reducing cost.

As part of Nottinghamshire's wider improvement programme, a review of trading services has been taking place. This included a large percentage of the traditional facilities management areas covering staff, schools catering, building cleaning and grounds maintenance.

The first stage of the review was to 'test the market'; we had to calculate what the value of these potential contracts was

and look at the market appetite.

Very early on in the debate there was support from Chief Officers that Nottinghamshire should continue with its history of supporting schools in service provision, if of course it was required. In January 2010 work began to assess the current positioning and viability.

To set the financial context in relation to the review; in April 2009 the National Job Evaluation exercise was completed and implemented during the year therefore the early analysis was conducted with a 20% increase in schools catering and 10% increase in building cleaning pay costs. Suddenly after many years of a surplus trading position we

were now in a deficit position and therefore reliant on a subsidy from the Council of £2.3m. The previous administration recognised full costs recovery had to happen but that it should be over a three to four year period and the action plan had been prepared accordingly.

Before any services were even looked at being outsourced it was essential that any areas of cost savings should be made. The County's office estate was still very much run on the lines of the traditional client and DSO split in functional responsibility. It became quickly apparent that to both drive out inefficiencies and to better position the services for market testing that our existing service delivery model should better reflect that of the market provision e.g. a full facilities management service. In preparation the transfer of responsibilities including mail rooms, security, courier services, waste disposal, building maintenance, catering and cleaning were all combined under one management structure. In addition the property rationalisation programme would see a potential reduction from 15 buildings down to 5. To drive down costs the site management was reduced, cleaning hours cut through a process of voluntary redundancies, the potential value of a contract was reduced by £300k per annum to just over £1m.

Running in parallel to this programme was the accelerated implementation of the NJE recovery strategy that relied on re-engineered cleaning services in schools for example term time only or for customers to pay the increased cost of the service attributable to NJE, originally planned for three years set at 3% above inflation this was achieved in two years with a maximum of 4% increases (including inflation).

Schools catering with £1m to find out of a turnover of £12m had less than three years to achieve its savings. The economies of scale achieved in food purchasing by joining forces with Nottingham City Council and consolidating all of NCC food spend including meals on wheels combined with the pay freeze achieved 50% of the target. A reduction in planned equipment replacement and better housekeeping fully engaged in by all managers within the service and aided by an increase in paid meal take up provided the other 50% so the catering accounts for 2010/11 closed without the requirement for a financial subsidy two years ahead of target.

Demonstrating value for money without going to full market test, i.e. preparing and letting contracts was always going to be hard. Fortunately as a member of the APSE performance network comparative data on performance was available

which over a five year period demonstrated that Nottinghamshire was above average in a number of categories but more importantly like most authorities evidence existed of continuous improvement, improved productivity and comparatively reducing costs.

Buying Solutions, the Government backed procurement agency, via their Facilities Management framework provided some private sector comparisons to help determine the positioning of existing costs and the potential for achieving savings. Although not an exact like for like basis, with some adjustments to reflect different variable and fixed costs elements it soon became apparent we were performing well. External accreditations such as for Health & Safety (OHSAS 18001), Quality Management (ISO 9001) do have their place in demonstrating non financial measures of performance.

Finally, the understanding of the importance of an annual contribution of £1.5m to corporate overheads, the elimination of a subsidy, the fluidity of the schools market and potential buy-in issues from schools for a corporate contract, together with senior officer and member support demonstrated that the cost of letting and managing contracts would far outweigh any potential savings. The Member Reference Group set up for the purpose concluded and consequently recommended that Catering & FM services should remain in-house; a recommendation approved by full council on the 30th June 2011.

Whilst important, reliance on buyback levels is definitely not the only indicator when we're evaluating. The driver for service delivery will always be to strive in providing excellence in customer care and of course value for money. Recent evidence of one of our successes is our latest stats which show the number of children eating healthy school meals in Nottinghamshire has climbed for the 3rd year in a row. With more than 34,000 children now having a school lunch every day it's a great example of where we're working with schools to deliver a quality service at the right price.

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Pictured: Nottinghamshire children tucking in to delicious school meals

Rio earth summit 2012: Focus on the future?

Professor Jim Kitchen, Visiting Professor at the University of Ulster and former Head of the Sustainable Development Commission in Northern Ireland explains the role of councils in developing a sustainable future including social, economic and environmental outcomes.



In June 2012, the world's leaders will assemble in Rio for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, twenty years on from the original Earth Summit. In the two decades since the concept of sustainable development began to influence public policy, the global challenges have multiplied. We now understand the severity of the climate crisis and the need to live within environmental limits. We also understand the benefits to be gained in a low-carbon economy: the social benefits of improving housing and reducing fuel poverty, the health benefits of good quality green spaces and the potential for jobs to be created in the regeneration of our built environment.

The Northern Ireland Executive has embraced sustainability as a key requirement within its Programme for Government, seeking to capture the social, economic and environmental advantages of the transition to a sustainable future. Integration of effort is critical - sustainable development is not the preserve of a single department, nor can it be delivered by government alone. The Executive's 2010 strategy, Everyone's Involved, set out a context within which delivery plans have been devised; that delivery is detailed in the new implementation plan, Focus on the Future.

A lot has changed since the first NI sustainable development strategy was produced in 2006. Issues associated with energy and climate have a greatly increased public profile, fuel poverty and other elements of social exclusion get too many headlines and the effects of the global economic recession continue to reverberate. There is also a growing understanding that many of these problems are the consequences of past decisions, made with too little thought for their long term impacts. They are, in other words, a legacy of unsustainable living. However, we can make opportunities of our difficulties as we move towards a low-carbon future and devise strategies to prosper in it, to harness the acumen and ingenuity of the business community and the experience of an unrivalled voluntary sector, framed by supportive public policies.

Councils will have a critical role in helping to make progress on the Executive's six priority areas for action. Their significant and commendable list of commitments form an important part of the implementation plan, covering a wide range of responsibilities, such as sustainable procurement, 'green' travel plans, community development, waste management and housing standards. Each Council will develop and implement its own sustainable development policy and action plan, incorporating a set of targets agreed with Government.

Those policies will need to take account of the duties on Councils with regard to sustainability. Principal among those duties is that contained in the NI Miscellaneous Provisions Act which charges Councils with a responsibility to act in the way best calculated to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is expected to publish guidance on this Act for Councils in the near future, something that has been needed for several years now.

The duties of that Act will be supplemented by several new obligations arising from two new legislative functions. The first of those concerns land use planning. The Planning Act (NI) 2011 states that the Department of the Environment must exercise its functions with the "objective of furthering sustainable development and promoting or improving well-being." The Act also contains provisions for Councils to determine local development plans which will include matters concerning the physical, economic, social and

environmental characteristics of their district. They must also include the potential impacts of climate change. Planning in Northern Ireland is on the cusp of change; under the Review of Public Administration, it was widely anticipated that many functions of land use planning would move to Councils. Although that process was stalled under the last Executive, this new Act provides for the transfer of functions to Councils. These governance arrangements are thought to have a high priority for the new government and it seems appropriate for Councils to anticipate this particular wind of change.

The new NI Housing (Amendment Act) 2011 adds new powers for Councils in relation to the energy efficiency of housing in their areas. In Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive is the designated Home Energy Conservation Authority. Although many Councils have already worked in close co-operation with the Housing Executive to promote energy efficiency and tackle the high incidence of fuel poverty, others have shied away. Some have claimed that they have no responsibilities to undertake such work, an argument that is addressed by the new Act.

But it's important to give credit for some of the far-reaching work that has already been undertaken by Councils in Northern Ireland. For example, Ballymena has invested heavily in energy conservation and renewables, North Down's waste management centre is powered by wind and solar panels, Banbridge has achieved very high recycling targets, Newtownabbey and Craigavon both

have excellent biodiversity conservation strategies, small businesses have benefitted from EMS systems in several councils and Newry is on a fast track to becoming a low-carbon city.

Common to all of these fine initiatives is a strong sense of leadership. If businesses and households are to be persuaded to live more sustainably, the agencies of central and local government must reinforce that message through their practical actions, such as reducing their carbon footprints, managing biodiversity on their estates, promoting sustainable procurement to help local businesses thrive. This necessitates going further and faster than legislative requirements, driven by the sort of leadership that recognises the challenges and threats of an imperilled future.

Councils with an eye to the future will embed sustainable development as the central organising principle of their governance, focussed on the wellbeing of all of their citizens, determined to protect the natural resources that ultimately support the economy and conscious of our collective obligation to future generations.

Professor Jim Kitchen is Visiting Professor at the University of Ulster and former Head of the Sustainable Development Commission Northern Ireland and Independent Researcher and Sustainable Development Consultant

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Fairness starts here

Cllr Andy Hull, vice-chair of the Islington Fairness Commission, explains his authority's pioneering approach to making the borough a fairer place, which is now being adopted by other councils around the country

It is easy to talk about the concept of fairness in the abstract, but what does this mean for local government in practice? This is a question that the London Borough of Islington has asked itself very seriously over the past year. While this is by no means an easy question, some useful answers have been provided by a specially-established Islington Fairness Commission.

Our plan for building a fairer borough has been set out in the final report of this pioneering Commission, which is the first council-sponsored body of its kind. We are delighted that Fairness Commissions have now also been set up in Liverpool and in York and discussions are under way about others being established elsewhere in the country.

Despite its wealthy image, Islington is one of the poorest boroughs in England, with a massive divide between rich and poor. The Fairness Commission, chaired by Professor Richard Wilkinson, co-author of bestselling book *The Spirit Level: Why Equality Is Better For Everyone*, was set up a year ago to tackle poverty and inequality and create a fairer borough for the benefit of all.

Its final report with 19 recommendations for a fairer Islington was published in early June. It sets out practical steps that can be taken in the borough, such as:

- All employers in Islington should pay their directly employed staff at least the London Living Wage. This should also apply to contracted staff wherever possible.
- Major employers in the borough should publish pay differentials to show the difference between pay for those at the top and bottom of the organisation.
- The council will seek to pass a by-law to stop payday loan companies from operating in Islington and also take strong action against illegal loan sharks.
- Employers in Islington should help support young people into training and employment or help them set up their own business.
- A single phone number should be set up so Islington residents can get faster action to deal with antisocial behaviour.
- Unused communal space in Islington - especially on estates - should be freed up and made accessible and useful to local residents.

Launching the report, Prof Richard Wilkinson commented: 'Large differences in income and wealth increase the social distances between people and add to distinctions of class and status. To want to create a classless society without reducing income differences is like wanting to get slim without reducing

the calories. Success will require much more than the implementation of the recommendations made in this report. But Islington is taking the lead in addressing issues of inequality.'

We are concerned about deprivation and inequality in Islington, which is highlighted by some hard facts:

- Islington has the second highest rate of child poverty in the country with around half of Islington's children living below the poverty line.
- Men in Islington have the lowest life expectancy in London at around 75 years.
- 73 per cent of pupils who are eligible for free school meals in Islington leave primary school having achieved Level 4, compared to 83 per cent of children who were not eligible for free school meals: a gap of 10 percentage points.
- Working age residents without qualifications are four times more likely to be workless than those with a degree level qualification.
- Unemployment among Islington's black and minority ethnic residents is twice the unemployment rate among white residents.
- Disabled young people are nearly three times more likely to be out of education, employment and training than their peers.

We are determined to make Islington a fairer place for all. With such huge divides between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' this is no easy task and it is made no easier by Government cuts on an unprecedented scale.

The report looks at progress so far and discusses the decision to bring cleaning staff in-house on the London Living Wage as a highly positive step in contributing to fairness in the borough. The in-sourcing process, which is featured in detail as a case study in a forthcoming report for Unison by APSE, means 150 staff who were formerly employed by contractors and agencies



now being directly employed on decent terms and conditions at the London Living Wage. This has been achieved at no additional cost to the council as a result of enhanced efficiencies and will lead to long-term savings on the cost of providing other services associated with supporting low-income families.

The Fairness Commission report was tabled at the Islington Council meeting on 30 June, for formal adoption by the council. The initial timeframe for bringing about change is to 2014 but we hope the impact of the Commission will go far beyond that. This report is only the start - the really hard work of delivering change begins now.

The full report can be seen at: www.islington.gov.uk/fairness

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Looking beyond the data

The open public services white paper points out data is the new buzz word in local government but as Andy Mudd, APSE principal consultant explains, data alone will not solve problems but effective process benchmarking will reap rich rewards

The open public services white paper makes many recommendations but a key issue that councils cannot afford to ignore is the new 'right to data' proposed by the Coalition Government. The White Paper is littered with references to making data, on how services perform on both cost and quality, available to the public. The Government believes that this new right to data will help to inform local choice in services and to provide accountability and transparency for 'armchair auditors' or local citizens to you and me!

Those councils that are already active in APSE Performance Networks will no doubt breathe a sigh of relief that they are in good shape to provide meaningful performance data on frontline services. But should the use of performance data be simply about telling local people how you are performing? I would argue not. Data is only the start not the end of the process. Whilst the Government may have a point in seeking to make local performance data more open, Councils should avoid using data as simply a box-ticking exercise – it is far more fundamental to service improvement and efficiency than simply reporting how well you have performed so far.

It is impossible for a service to effectively improve or find efficiencies if it cannot gauge its current performance. This assessment should not be a one off exercise; authorities should be in a continual cycle of measure and improve. APSE believes that ongoing comparative benchmarking through Performance Networks is an essential tool for facilitating this process. However, it is crucial that front-line managers, the corporate centre and elected members actively analyse this information to challenge ways of working and levels of expenditure. Headline benchmarking data provides a signpost to where further work needs to be done, to where services are working well and to what should be promoted as good practice throughout the council and within the wider local government arena.

There are various ways that councils can use benchmarking data. One way is through process benchmarking. Process benchmarking is a way to look beyond the data, identifying specific areas of performance to examine in greater depth to tease out the

different processes and activities that take place across different councils. By examining processes in detail, authorities can quickly change procedures to perform better by adopting what other group members are doing well. This improvement will then show up in the next performance networks benchmarking exercise.

Through the Scottish APSE advisory groups there has been a demand to develop an approach to process benchmarking as a way for services to measure and improve. Whilst it is not necessary for the various groups to engage APSE to progress process benchmarking, experience has shown that without the consultancy input such projects tend to grind to a halt early on due to a lack of resources, which is why these groups have opted for a consultancy project.

The groups meet to discuss what specific areas they would like to compare in more detail. For example, the recently completed street cleansing questionnaire and subsequent report covered the following:

- Salary Bands, Ratios and Labour Costs
- Shift Working and Bonus Payments
- Areas Covered and LEAMS Scores
- Environmental Enforcement
- Vehicle and Plant Types and Usage
- Customer Satisfaction
- Quality Performance
- Educational Programmes
- Street Scene, Recycling and Departmental Arrangements

The APSE Consultant, drafts questionnaires around specific topics chosen by the participating authorities, these are then discussed and agreed. Following ratification they are issued to the participants by the Consultant. Thereafter the information provided is collated and analysed by the Consultant who will lodge a final report on the PN web portal of the APSE web site.

The reports are discussed at benchmarking meetings that follow on from the Advisory Groups. At these meetings any issues for follow-up and or clarification along with the

next tranche of topics are identified and a decision made as to whether the groups themselves or the Consultant will progress the identified issues. It is at this point that post project support for any non-finite projects is offered to participating authorities by APSE's Performance Networks and an opportunity is given to the groups to decide on any topics they wish to have reviewed on an annual basis through the PN templates.

The Building Maintenance Process Benchmarking project (now 19 authorities) was the first commissioned and have compared the processes used in the management of over twenty topics including Capital Investment Programmes, Gas Servicing, Repair And Maintenance, Kitchen Refurbishment, Response Repairs, Voids, Sickness Absence, Asbestos, Stores and Procurement and Periodic Testing.

The first stage of other Scottish process benchmarking projects has just been successfully completed and follow up projects are emerging:

The Parks, Grounds and Street Cleansing group (12 authorities participating) has compared processes used in the management of Workshops, Machinery & Vehicles, Cemeteries and Street Cleansing and the pricing of a Bill of Quantities for a Generic Park.

The Roads and Street Lighting group (11 authorities participating) compared the processes used in the management of Communication, Procurement, Fleet Management and Risk Assessment.

The Waste Management and Recycling Group (10 authorities participating) has compared processes used in the management of Waste Streams Tonnages and Sources, Resources, Fly Tipping and Bulky Uplifts.

For details on how APSE's best value consultancy team can help your process benchmarking contact Andy Mudd on amudd@apse.org.uk or Alex Gardiner on agardiner@apse.org.uk. Please mark your email 'Direct News'.

For more information about APSE performance networks service please email Emma Nolan at enolan@apse.org.uk or Cheryl Walker at cwalker@apse.org.uk

A full APSE briefing on the White Paper is free to download on the APSE website at www.apse.org.uk; go to membership resources, briefing and download briefing number 11-36



Contact us to make an appointment, get a cost savings analysis or demonstration of the BigBelly.

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Trinity College Dublin



Larne, Co Antrim



Prototype in excellence

A ground-breaking Glasgow House Project has been nominated for two top awards after delivering a prototype in building excellence. Willie Doherty, Managing Director of City Building (Glasgow) explains.

A unique partnership between City Building, Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) and PRP Architects was formed to deliver the first energy-efficient, highly insulated prototype house in Glasgow. The parties worked closely together at all times and were equally involved in ensuring the objectives of the project were met.

City Building was responsible for building the four prototype properties on the site of its Construction Skills Academy in Glasgow, utilising two different construction methods in order to determine the optimum combination of design and materials.

Glasgow City Council's arms-length construction company took its place among the finalists in two categories at the Scottish Home Awards 2011, the industry's flagship event in Edinburgh.

The Glasgow House project was also shortlisted for the Environmental Excellence Award after members of the public, local authorities and potential developers recognised the project's potential to reduce fuel bills and carbon emissions, and create a positive environmental legacy for Scotland from which other countries can take the lead. The project has also been nominated for an Innovation in Housing Award for the Saltire Awards.

It is hoped that the Glasgow House concept will ultimately be rolled out on a larger scale with discussions already underway about potential development opportunities.

The Glasgow House prototypes incorporate high levels of insulation and air tightness, efficient heating systems, solar gain through the use of sun rooms and solar thermal panels. Tests have shown that they comfortably exceed both industry standards and project targets for both energy efficiency and air tightness.

City Building has also been nominated for Community Partnership of the Year after it teamed up with GHA, PRP Architects and a range of local stakeholders and suppliers, ensuring there was widespread community involvement during this unique project.

Due to its proximity to its Construction Skills Academy, local City Building apprentices were able to make a contribution to the project, while housing and community groups were invited to tour the buildings at various stages.

Royal Strathclyde Blindcraft Industries (RSBi), one of Europe's largest supported employment facilities, manufactured timber kits and furniture, while members of the public were invited to view the properties during Glasgow's Doors Open Day in September 2010.

As managing director of City Building I'm very proud of our organisation for being nominated in two award categories as the standard of entry is extremely high and competition is fierce. The Glasgow House project is a fantastic example of how organisations can work together to benefit the community and the potential benefits from this particular piece of work are huge.

If we can realise our vision of rolling out these attractive, comfortable and energy-efficient homes in Glasgow and beyond, it will play a major part in helping Scotland to meet its carbon reduction targets. By changing the way we approach housebuilding, Scotland can look forward to an environmentally friendly future.

Contact: *Melanie Brookes, Marketing & Communications Manager, City Building (Glasgow)*
 e-mail: melanie.brookes@citybuildingglasgow.co.uk

Brigade Rubbishes False Claims

Brigade Electronics says it can provide commercial vehicle operators with a reliable witness and protect the reputation of their driver's in the event of false claims such as damage to parked vehicles.

False claims by third parties cost companies millions of pounds each year and put drivers under increased scrutiny. Without solid evidence it is often easier to simply settle the claim, making them soft targets.

David White, Transport Manager, Ashfield District Council explains: "The MDR helps us to decide whether it is or isn't the fault of the driver. It actually makes the driver's life easier because he hasn't got to come and justify himself, as we already have it on film."

Often a false claim is made when a vehicle wasn't even at the given location. The optional GPS can pinpoint the exact location of a vehicle, as well as date, time and even speed. The evidence often deters claimants before reaching court. David White agrees: "The MDR has been invaluable on a number of occasions where we have been able to disprove claims, saving the council a great deal of money."

The MDR records real time footage from up to four cameras for all round vehicle coverage. Data access is simple yet secure (lockable front panel), meeting the requirements of rules of evidence for legal use in court. The MDR can be connected to a computer and played back on the viewer software or connected to a monitor and viewed in the cab.

Brigade's PR manager, Emily Randall said: "Digital recording has often been perceived by drivers as 'big brother is watching you' but we are seeing a shift in this view. Drivers are beginning to welcome digital recording because it protects them and provides them with a valuable witness. They know they are good drivers and become frustrated when forced to prove their innocence. In an increasingly litigious society, MDR is becoming more and more necessary."

Contact: For more information visit www.brigade-electronics.com or phone 01322 420 343.

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Barn conversion with a difference

With severe winters on the increase Trafford council and other AGMA authorities have pooled resources to convert and share salt stocks into a new purpose built salt barn enhancing winter resilience across the sub-regional area.

Trafford Council's commitment to ensuring the main roads remain safe and open for motorists travelling into, through and around the Borough during the icy winter months has been boosted by the addition of a purpose-built, covered salt barn.

The Commons Transport Committee estimated winter disruption due to adverse weather cost £280 million per day in transport costs alone. If the severe weather trend continues, Councils have to be more prepared and resilient. It is imperative therefore strategic networks are kept open both locally and nationally because the costs to businesses can be huge.

At a cost of approximately £250,000 the barn, capable of holding approximately 4500 tonnes of salt, has been funded through the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and Trafford Council.

The structure is flexible and can be easily extended or even relocated should the operational needs of the

Council change. The structure complies with Environment Agency guidance on salt storage. A translucent roof allows significant diffused light into the facility therefore reducing the level of light and energy consumption required during daytime activities.

An important addition to the resilience of the Council's winter maintenance planning, previously the Council's salt storage capacity was around 2000 tonnes, it means for next winter maximum salt levels can be stored. This strengthens significantly Trafford's ability to cope during extreme winter weather conditions.

The barn also provides sufficient storage capacity to enable the other nine AGMA authorities to store up to 150 tonnes each, boosting their locally held salt reserves.

Additional savings will also be made because keeping the salt dry means less material will be needed for spreading. It is estimated that, depending on salt usage, the full cost of the salt barn will be recovered in 10 – 15 years.

Executive Councillor Alan Mitchell said last winter saw some of the worse weather in recent times, although locally every effort was made to ensure people could continue their daily lives.

"With winters getting colder and more snow and ice becoming commonplace, the Council's continued commitment to ensuring the Borough's main roads are effectively treated and kept open is vital. The safety and mobility of residents, businesses and visitors remains our key priority.

Our winter maintenance programme and careful planning has allowed us to keep local main routes clear and safe. Knowing next winter we will have a full salt barn before the worse weather hits gives us and our neighbours extra resilience and local people the reassurance the road networks will be treated whenever the weather dictates.

Through partnership working, each of the AGMA authorities can plan more effectively the amount of salt they have at their disposal for next winter."

AGMA Policy and Programme Manager Mark Holden said: "The North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NWIEP) is a partnership dedicated to helping local authorities and their partners achieve efficiency and improvement objectives. NWIEP and AGMA are proud to support Trafford's construction of a dry salt barn at its Carrington operational base.

The salt barn will contribute strongly to AGMA's overall winter maintenance resilience as its geographical location is just 4 miles from Manchester, 4 miles from Salford, 8 miles from Stockport and 20 miles from the Winsford salt mine."

Neil Smith of Kinetic PLC and Trafford President of the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce said: "Trafford MBC did a fantastic job of keeping the main roads moving for business during the winter's heavy snows. The decision to locate the storage of vital reserve salt supplies in Trafford is a testament to the excellent transport links the Borough enjoys and the work the Council does keeping the roads moving".

It is envisaged there may be further commercial opportunities available to the Council such as being able to treat areas such as private car parks, business frontages etc, although providing salt to maintain local road networks will always be the first priority.

Contact: Karen Galvin, Communications and media, Trafford Council Email: Karen.Galvin@trafford.gov.uk

Left: Neil Throssell, Contract Manager De Boer, Mark Holden, AGMA NWRIEP, Peter Molyneux, Trafford's Corporate Director of Environment, Transport and Operations, James Irving Trafford Council's Highway Maintenance Manager, Robert Alvarez, Sales Director, De Boer, Trafford Council Executive Councillor for Highways and Transportation Cllr Alan Mitchell

Below: The new barn under construction





Can Co-ops and Mutuals fill the void in the Big Society?

APSE assistant chief executive, Mark Bramah, explores the dynamics of public policy that places a move towards co-ops and mutuals at the heart of public service reform and questions whether this is really consistent with early 'co-operative' values.

There is a blue plaque on the side of the Angel Meadow Council flats at Wilton Street, Heywood in memory of Charles Howarth (1814 -1868) one of the original Rochdale Pioneers which states that the "social innovator, founder member and president of the Co-Operative Movement died here in abject poverty. Originator of the Co-Op dividend, Howarth applied in all things his passionate belief in a fair deal for the working class."

Reading that testament to one of the founders of the Co-Operative movement, one cannot but help to be struck by the profound contrast between the aspirations of the fledgling Co-Operative movement in the mid 19th Century and the latter day advocates of new mutualism and co-operation in the provision of public services. I would hazard a guess that many of these new converts wouldn't know who Charles Howarth was or what he stood for.

But here is the nub of the problem. There is an enduring attraction in the values of co-operation and mutualism that offers an alternative to red in tooth and claw market based solutions for public services. And yet what we in the public

sector are being sold is more price based and cut throat competition in an era of public spending cuts and scarce resources, albeit with co-ops and mutuals as an alternative to purely public or private forms of service delivery. I am not sure that the founders of the co-operative movement would have appreciated the subtleties of the distinction. Co-Operatives are about collaboration, mutual benefit and social purpose and yet what we are being offered is more competition.

There is of course a continuity in public policy discourse which binds together Government's of different political persuasions stretching back over 30 years and that is largely the story of the 'marketisation' of the public domain. A belief in the efficacy of markets to allocate resources efficiently, provide value for money, improve choice and quality in public services and drive down costs. But at its heart this is not an evidence based approach and offers nothing greater than the totems of ideological blind faith rather than any real tangible benefits which can be 'evidenced'.

That was APSE's starting point in undertaking its own research into the potential benefits that co-ops and mutuals

can bring to the delivery of public services. Is there really any properly evaluated outcomes that can demonstrate how these new forms of service delivery can deliver better more cost effective services? What are the essential characteristics of co-ops and mutuals that set them apart from other public service providers and if so how do you ensure that this can be sustained in the medium to long term?

It may or may not surprise you to learn that there is little or no evidence that points to the superiority or benefit of co-operative and mutual service delivery over other forms. From 1600 sources our researchers were only able to identify 12 case studies where there was some impact evaluation on the outcome of co-ops or mutuals and even then the evidence was partial or 'biased'. Some of the case studies came from outside the U.K. and there is no reliable basis for making informed comparisons.

The first and by far the most important point to make therefore, is that despite the often exaggerated claims made on behalf of co-ops and mutuals there is no evidence that they are a better form of public service delivery and therefore we are being asked to take a giant leap in the dark in place of properly informed public policy making. This is of course one of the disadvantages of divesting public services at such a rapid pace in response to the most draconian public spending cuts many of us have ever known. It does not allow for a full and proper appraisal of the options and therefore to informed choices.

The second point is that there is a complex configuration of factors that needs to be present for a co-op or mutual to operate successfully within the public sector. Critical success factors include:

- Contract lock in – not only a sufficiently long contract in order to give the co-op/mutual certainty in terms of the volume of work and financial stability, but also mechanisms that prevent the divestment of service in future which would essentially change the character of the original body.
- Collaboration – the need for ongoing support through public subsidy, advocacy and expert advice in order to ensure that the fledgling co-op/mutual can operate effectively in providing services.
- Buy in – there also needs to be buy in from staff, elected members, citizens and service users for the co-op/mutual to be a long term success.

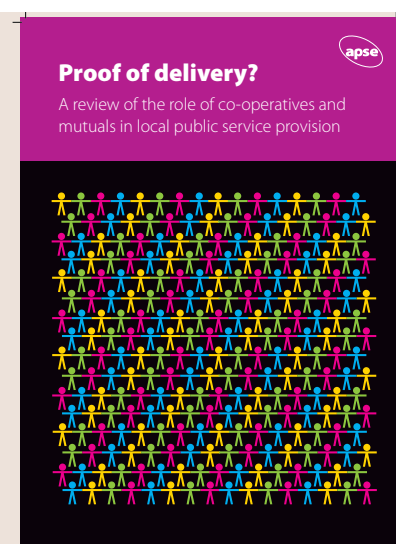
So the main lesson is that this is not about local authorities divesting services to the social economy sector as part of the retreat of the local state and the blossoming of a 'big society', but about the enduring need of the public sector to retain an active and supportive role in order to ensure long term success. This runs counter to much of the rhetoric that suggests that co-ops and mutuals are a better alternative to public provision. Our research suggests that without the active involvement of the public sector the seeds of the social economy are likely to wither and die.

The third point to note is that our research pointed to the

downward pressure on staff terms and conditions which the formation of co-ops and mutuals tended to bring. Are we seriously suggesting that as the Coalition Government removes the statutory protections which ensured that staff transferring to private and third sector providers and new starters, enjoyed no less favourable terms and conditions and pension arrangements than their public sector counterparts, there should be a race to the bottom in employment standards and relative pay led by the co-operative and mutual sector? If so, how can these 'ethical' bodies distinguish themselves from the worst of the private sector excesses of the CCT years, when pay and terms and conditions were routinely cut in order to win contracts?

The final and fundamentally important point is that there is very little evidence of accountability to elected members and/or the wider community. Democracy and community accountability have become the 'buzzwords' of the new mutualism, but there is no evidence that it in any way enhances this. What we are being offered is 'self interest' dressed up in an apparel of convenience. As public services fragment we need to strengthen accountability and democratic legitimacy, not just pay lip service by pointing out that the Emperor's new clothes are made of the finest thread.

APSE is calling for an honest and informed public debate about the benefits of co-ops and mutuals. Where they can add real benefits to public services then of course their value should be properly considered. But where this is merely a Trojan horse for more competition and privatisation of directly provided public services, then it should be exposed as such and we should stop pretending that it offers a better alternative in an era of public spending cuts and big society rhetoric.



APSE research on co-operatives and mutuals '**Proof of delivery?** A review of the role of co-operatives and mutuals in local public service provision' will be launched at the APSE annual seminar 2011 on the 7- 8 September and a plenary debate on future public sector delivery models will also form part of the seminar programme.

To pre-order a copy of the research (£40 for non members and £20 for APSE members) please contact Wai Lee on wlee@apse.org.uk



Catering in Carmarthenshire!

Sandra Weigel, Catering Services Manager at Carmarthenshire County Council explains the road to improvement that led to them being named the LACA Catering Team of the Year.

Carmarthenshire showcases some of the most diverse landscapes in Wales with spectacular mountains, rolling landscapes and secluded, ancient forests and vast expanses of golden sandy beaches. It's diversity however throws up some unique service delivery issues especially within catering with a service that covers school meals, including breakfasts, in over 100 primary schools and 13 comprehensive establishments and with an advisory role to monitor the social care catering service and meals on wheels. We produce over 22,000 meals a day with a 62% uptake and we have just one school that has 'opted out' of the catering offer from the council.

I work with a very committed enthusiastic Catering Team whose aim is at delivering the highest standards for a quality service, which is I believe our key

to success. Over the years we have received praise from many high places including HRH Prince Charles and we have been cited as an exemplar of best practice on BBC's Question Time. Professor Kevin Morgan quoted us as something of a beacon Authority with our good practice. We have also been recognised by a number of external achievements.

In 2009 Carmarthenshire achieved Platinum Corporate Health Standard based on our catering department's case study on the Local Sustainable Food Strategy (LSFS). The LSFS was developed to support and help deliver our school meals nutrition strategy and promote regeneration within the county. We use local suppliers as much as possible, such as Franks Ice-cream in Carmarthenshire, where we have made a significant increase to local businesses. Wherever possible when we develop food

contracts we build in as much quality as possible, look at reducing environmental impacts through delivery lots, and now with the current economic climate consider price as a key driver for the evaluation – often helped by reduced transport costs amongst local suppliers.

Part of our approach has been developed through the 'The School Meals Nutrition Strategy' (SMNS) this was implemented in 2003 with the aim to improve the nutritional value and quality of school food. With our mission "to ensure all our customers are offered good quality healthy appealing food cooked from as much fresh ingredients as possible". As part of the strategy we work in partnership with a variety of people such as other councils on a cross-boundary basis, LACA, NACC and of course APSE. Collaboration with dieticians, healthy schools to have a whole school approach and 'Cymru cooks' which helps to teach

cooking skills means that we take a holistic approach to spreading the word, and the skills needed to enable pupils and their families to make good choices about healthy eating.

One important partnership has been with the recycling team where we have produced a 'Healthy Eating and Recycling Road Show' performed at Primary schools, to deliver the message of the importance of eating healthy nutritious food and the consequences of "fatty junk food and sugary drinks". We had 'The Gregory Brothers' deliver this and the show was firstly in English and later in Welsh. It proved very successful with no negative feedback at all from the pupils or teachers. Our main objective being to raise awareness of the importance of eating a nutritionally balanced school meal.

This approach of course ties in with 'Appetite for Life' the Welsh Assembly Government guidelines as Carmarthenshire has one of the highest obesity statistics in Wales. We are actively trying to reduce the burden that this causes on the National Health through illnesses such as chronic heart disease,

diabetes, joint and back problems and of course certain cancers.

We have questioned why more pupils don't eat a school meal as compared to fastfood 'Happy Meals' which is a more expensive option. In Carmarthenshire a two course meal is just £2.00 and a free breakfast is available if they choose and all our meals encourage the '5 a day' message. Despite not being able to use the word "market or promote" in this years grant submissions one of our catering girls staff made a little poem for the pupils to encourage healthy eating.

Five a day is here to stay
Healthy eating all the way
Carmarthenshire school meals will give
you a start
Get you on your way to retain a healthy
heart.

We haven't stopped improving and we firmly believe that if you do what you have always done then you will get what you have always got so we are firmly committed to change. Our future service improvement plans include:

- Some big investments including

respotex walls, ventilation in kitchens and upgrading to our facilities

- A £100,000 saving in this current financial year through changing how we deliver certain services and menu changes which include

- A set choice for primary pupils
- Streamlining but still making a good offer for our Comprehensives' menus including sandwiches, rolls, Panini's, baps with all the hot and cold choices and salad bars.

We were absolutely delighted to be named the LACA catering team of the year, which is to us trade-wide recognition of our achievements so far. We will be going forward 'onwards and upwards' as they say and at the heart of our plans is the high quality affordable and delicious school meals we are able to offer the children of Carmarthenshire.

Sandra Weigel is the catering manager for Carmarthenshire County Council.

Contact:
SJWeigel@carmarthenshire.gov.uk





“We have no money, so we shall have to think”

So said Ernest Rutherford, known as “The father of nuclear physics”. Had he lived in our times, and worked in Public Service, he may have added “... incidentally, we have no time either”.

Our two most vital resources, money and time, are in very short supply right now. Come to think of it, can you remember a time when they weren't? OK, perhaps things are even tighter now than they have been, but I suspect there has never been a time when you and your organisation had ample funds to do everything you wished, or too much time and too few priorities to fill it!

But accepting that we live in challenging times, how can we get done what we have to do, with little money and no time?

Well, the first thing to do is to disabuse ourselves of the idea that great ideas depend on pots of money, and lots of time. Some of the greatest ideas, and the most creative and productive thinking, have come in times of hardship – World War II Britain, Rutherford's labs from 1917 to 1932 and the like.

Lack of money – and lack of time – is just another thing to get creative about. If we have no money who else

can we collaborate with? If we have little time, how can we spend this most valuable of resources more effectively?

I work with organisations large and small, public and private, helping them improve the way their people and teams think more creatively and productively. My aim is to show them how to have more ideas, and better ideas – more quickly and more often. And there's often a problem with time – time can be wasted or spent unwisely.

The conference where half the time is spent listening to presentations of figures rather than thinking, working, collaborating. The brainstorm with no proper facilitation so that half the team are trying to come up with ideas while the other half are still pointing out why the idea from ten minutes ago might or might not work.

If you want to see the perfect example of a team that wastes time and effort, watch any episode of the Apprentice. Then, consider your own situation – and do the opposite of the Apprentice!

Kenny Harris will be providing a motivational address at the APSE annual seminar 2011

Annual seminar preview

Changing world: Changing services How should local government's frontline respond?

The coalition government pledged to protect frontline services but as budget cuts bite it is clear that local discretion over service delivery choices may mean some frontline services will be cut, and, in almost all cases, will need to change. Coupled with the budgetary pressures Governments across the UK are developing new policy initiatives, whether it be the Christie Commission in Scotland or the 'Open Public Services' white paper, issued in Westminster.

This year's APSE annual seminar is dedicated to issues that impact upon frontline services and frontline service providers.

Open public services white paper

Key note speakers will explore the issues that arise from the 'Open Public Services' white paper including proposed moves to develop 'purchaser / provider' splits in service delivery and commission and the new 'right to data'. Judith Barnes of Eversheds will ask is this a return to CCT during a plenary debate.

Where next for performance data?

With the emphasis on demonstrating cost effectiveness and being open about how public services are performing Michael Hughes, Director of Studies at the Audit Commission, will ask how we can evidence local performance and how we can best use performance data in local government's frontline services.

It's all about the money!

As the budget pressures squeeze what is left to spend on local services? Key note speakers will look at innovative ways to tackle service pressures. Delegates will get the opportunity to explore innovative solutions including income generation strategies in front line services, service reviews and new ways of delivery which can help ameliorate the impact of budget reductions.

Frontline futures?

What will future service delivery models look like? There is much talk about co-ops and mutuals in service delivery but do these models add up or are they too risky and experimental? Will they face the same or worse funding issues than other models? What will street scene services look like in a post recession environment? Will we expect the public to do more for themselves? Phil Barton, Chief Executive of Keep Britain Tidy and Steve Davies of Cardiff University are amongst the plenary speakers who will dissect the arguments for changing how services are

delivered and will explore the opportunities and trap doors in new models of delivery.

Social, environmental and economic well being - exploiting the green economy?

In a special symposium session Richard Auton of Walker Morris solicitors will explore how councils can best use procurement to promote social, economic and environmental well being. Whilst Dr. Andy Rees of the Welsh Assembly Government will explore the waste strategy in Wales and ask what lessons can be learned for UK councils. Stephen Cirell, APSE associate will also explain how councils can get more bang from the green buck by exploiting feed-in tariffs and the Scottish Government will tackle the carbon reduction plan in Scotland.

Professional practice forums

Uniquely the APSE annual seminar is not just a talking shop for policy debate – as important as these debates are it is APSE's role to look at how they apply in the context of frontline services. Will the 'Open Public Services' white paper mean in-house teams need to prepare for CCT style competition? How can in-house services best use performance data to comply with new requirements for data transparency and openness? How have other services managed to better match service needs with the available workforce? The professional practice forums provide an ideal forum to network and share best practice, develop industry based innovative responses in the delivery of excellence in frontline services and of course find money saving ideas.

- **Environment and street scene**
- **Fleet and transport**
- **Soft facilities management (catering and cleaning)**
- **Housing and building maintenance**
- **Sports, leisure and healthy communities**
- **Highways and street lighting**

See you in Bristol! Can you afford not to be there?

Bookings are currently being taken. Please contact Joe Sparrow on 0161 772 1810 or email jsparrow@apse.org.uk for a booking form. Alternatively visit the APSE website www.apse.org.uk

Report back

A round up of APSE lobbying and events on behalf of our members

March and April proved busy months for APSE with a range of conferences, meetings and lobbying activity on behalf of APSE members.

England

Staying ahead of the Game: The open public services white paper

Delegates to the open public services white paper event 'Staying ahead of the Game' held at Manchester United football ground on the 15 July had the opportunity to debate the Coalition Government's new policy paper on the future of public services. Key note speaker Judith Barnes explores the issues further in this edition of direct news on pages 4-5.

Liverpool Cathedral: Cemeteries and crematoria seminar

On the 28 June APSE delegates were able to debate a range of issues in the cemeteries and crematoria services sector including service funding, green issues and new regulatory issues such as the mercury abatement deadlines to comply with new statutory requirements.

Biomass: Palace Hotel

On the 21 June at the Palace Hotel Manchester APSE members considered wet and dry biomass such as food waste and wood chipping and explored how biomass can be used to reduce cost and carbon emissions.

Liberal democrats head to Bristol

APSE hosted two excellent fringe event workshops at the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors Conference held at the Engineers House, Bristol, one featuring a debate on the new Localism Bill and the second looking at the local council role in green energy and fuel poverty. The event held on the 18 June was opened with a key note address by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg.

UNISON in Manchester

In a city often divided by tribal football loyalty the City was in UNISON (or should that be that UNISON was in the city!) for the UNISON local government conference 2011. APSE addressed a number of fringe events including a housing event on moving forward with social housing and call for investment in new build council housing to address the housing shortage and exploit new technologies to allow rapid building developments including greener housing.

Birmingham Symphony

APSE attended the Local Government Association 2011 conference held in Birmingham on the 27 – 29 June and as well as an exhibition stand promoting APSE services to member council held two strategic forum events. The first event on asset management and regeneration was chaired by Cllr Robin Brown of Northamptonshire Council and a second forum on Co-operative models in public services was hosted by Cllr Richard Williams, APSE National Chair.

Birmingham symposium

APSE took part in a discussion with international guests with representatives of De Montfort University and INLOGOV as part of its series of European discussions and the knowledge transfer partnership programme on the 9 June. APSE warned of the dangers of service fragmentation if local councils do not retain a strategic ownership role over local outcomes.

Stand clear of The Platform

Lancaster council hosted a performance networks benchmarking site visit for civic cultural and community venues showcasing the excellent venue of The Platform, Morecombe. The venue is a refurbished rail site complete with its own community theatre and venue hire space and as well as showcasing local theatre talent provides an excellent tourism offering including family fun days, pet shows and musical events. ...and it is walking distance to the famous statue of Eric Morecombe!

The House of Windsor

A Parks event at Saville Gardens, Windsor on the 20 July heard a series of speakers share their ideas on the future of parks with addresses from Sue Ireland, Director of Open Spaces at the City of London Corporation, and Sarah Moore of Greenspace. Topics featured the future of parks funding, street scene operations and apprenticeships and allotments.

Enough to make you dizzy?

APSE continued in series of roadshow events on its revolving fund research at a series of events held across England, Wales, and Scotland with roadshows in Birmingham on the 17 May, London on the 1 July, North Larnarkshire on the 14 July and Llandrindod Wells on the 19 July

We never tyre of transport issues!

Shared service options for transport and fleet services and new statutory requirements for health and safety and licensing issues were all up for discussion at the Heritage Motor Centre, Gaydon, Warwickshire on the 12 July.

Waste in Wolverhampton

APSE Central held its Annual General Meeting at Wolverhampton Civic Centre alongside a themed event on Environmental services and waste issues on the 22 June. Key note speaker Steve Brown, Head of Environment at Shropshire Council addressed delegates.

Wales

Avoiding the road to nowhere in Wales

A shared services event on the 30 June featured examples of collaboration with a key note address from Ian Waddell of Tayside Contracts, one of the UK's largest and most successful examples of shared services originating in Scotland. APSE Wales have now commissioned research to explore how that shared services model could be applied in Wales. Delegates were addressed by Reg Kilpatrick of the Welsh Assembly Government and Value Wales.

Scotland

Joint Work with Audit Scotland Advisory Group –(June)

Together with representatives from Audit Scotland and the Scottish Local Government Improvement Service, APSE is working to provide an overview of the use of cost and performance information in local government. APSE has utilised its experience and expertise, gained through its Performance Networks to supply information to support the work of the Advisory Group.

Joint Project Group with SCOTs - (July)

Following the publication of the Audit Scotland report into the state of Scotland's roads, APSE is working with SCOTs on a joint project to develop a comprehensive suite of performance indicators for the service. It is hoped that all of Scotland's 32 local councils will come on board.

Christie Commission

The Christie Commission report into the future of public services was issued in June 2011. APSE lobbied the Commission and prepared a full and detailed response which was cross referenced in the final report.

North Ayrshire

North Ayrshire Council hosted an event attended by over 100 managers on benchmarking performance data at a session in July 2011 facilitated by APSE and the Local Government

Improvement Service. The APSE input will inform the Councils strategic approach to benchmarking/performance management both of which are integral to the Councils best value strategy.

Annual General Meeting for APSE Scotland

Dundee City Council played host to the APSE Scotland AGM. There were no changes to the composition of the Regional Council. A rounded discussion took place on the APSE publication "Avoiding the road to nowhere" in terms of its contribution to the Councils efforts in transforming/renewing themselves.

Northern Ireland

Making it last

Sustainability and the role of local government was the hot topic amongst delegates attending an APSE Northern Ireland seminar held on the 29 June in Ballymena with key note speakers including Professor Jim Kitchen, visiting professor at the University of Ulster and former head of the sustainable development commission NI. Professor Kitchen was joined by Patricia Mackey of Sustainable NI.

The APSE Northern Ireland annual general meeting was also held as part of this event.

SOLACE NI

APSE and SOLACE NI met in Colrairie to look at how SOLACE and APSE could continue to collaborate on the use of APSE Performance networks data in process benchmarking and performance improvement. Watch this space for further news.

Below: Members of APSE performance networks civic, cultural and community venues outside 'The Platform'





New litter boat 'Irwell Pride' sets sail in Salford

For Councils struggling to keep waterways free of litter an innovative 'litter boat' project pioneered by Salford City Council may help steer thinking in a new direction

Irwell River Park is part of the Manchester City Region's new international waterfront destination. Embracing 280 hectares, Irwell River Park will transcend three local authority areas, provide inspirational waterside spaces, connections and placemaking, deliver new cultural, leisure and sustainable transport routes and promote excellence in environmental quality that will be a benchmark for 21st century sustainable regeneration. However with people at the heart of Irwell River Park, from local anglers, rowers and residents to tourists, office workers and investors it was important to ensure the area was clean, welcoming and of course litter free. As a gateway to many nationally recognised tourism landmarks, showcasing the region's assets and stimulating tourism the vexed question of how to ensure the waterways were litter and debris free required a new and innovative approach. After all clearing a waterway is markedly different to clearing footpaths!

An innovative solution was found with a new purpose-built boat. The boat has been launched on the River Irwell to clear the water and river banks of litter and debris. The brainchild of Salford City Council and Manchester-based aquatic science consultancy APEM, in association with the Healthy Waterways Trust, the boat will patrol Irwell River Park from Greengate to

MediaCityUK at Salford Quays. Its crew of specially-trained volunteers will collect litter and recycle it at a local facility. This is part of a wider plan to transform the river corridor at Irwell River Park into a top waterfront destination.

The boat, named the 'Irwell Pride', will be operated by trained and licensed skippers from APEM, the company that has monitored the water quality of the Manchester Ship Canal and the Irwell for the last 25 years, and has overseen its transformation from dangerously polluted to a thriving ecosystem.

Councillor Ray Mashiter, lead member for environment at Salford City Council said, "The litter boat will help us to create a pleasant set of walkways and cyclepaths for local residents and visitors to enjoy, as well cleaning up the environment which supports local wildlife.

A huge number of businesses and residents are currently moving into Salford Quays and we are making real improvements in and around Ordsall. By continuing to improve the natural environment, we hope to bring further investment to our historic waterways."

Dr Keith Hendry, managing director of APEM, added: "Having monitored the river for 25 years, we have seen the litter problem getting steadily worse and

affecting the reputation of our city, so we decided to do something about it.

The Irwell passes many busy hubs including MediaCityUK, Ordsall, Castlefield, Spinningfields, the Lowry Hotel and Greengate/Victoria Station - so any floating litter will be seen by hundreds of thousands of people.

Owing to the nature of the river channel, litter transported downstream is deposited on the river banks and is only accessible via boat, which is why we came up with the idea of purchasing this stable six metre aluminium catamaran."

The council and APEM are currently negotiating with local businesses to get their support for the project. Companies' staff can volunteer to be fully-trained and insured litter-pickers, and employers can expect exclusive rights to on-board advertising hoardings. APEM believes that income from these deals will pay for the continuous operation of the Irwell Pride up to seven days a week.

Contact: Leila Hogarth, Salford City Council
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APSE people pages...

Congratulations...



APSE (little) people.....

Congratulations to two new arrivals in the APSE family!

Laura McNab of APSE Scotland office gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. Wee Katie McNab was born on Friday 20 May weighing 7lb 1oz and both Laura and Katie are doing just fine.

Not to be outdone by baby Katie the gorgeous baby Aljay Benjamin Swaby put in his first APSE appearance on Wednesday 25 May weighing 7lb and 8oz – a delightful baby boy for Keisha Swaby of APSE's Manchester office!

Congratulations Laura and Keisha from all at APSE!



New APSE people

Welcome to new member authorities.....

Douglas Borough Council of the Isle of Man

The City of York Council

Wyre Borough Council

Thanet District Council

APSE briefing notes update

Briefing notes and research reports produced since the last issue of Direct News

11-36	Open public services white paper	July 2011
11-35	Future delivery of public services in Scotland	July 2011
11-34	Surface treatments	July 2011
11-33	Bribery Act	July 2011
11-32	Arms Length Organisations	July 2011
11-31	Unfair leisure contracts	June 2011
11-30	Achieving value for money in roads maintenance	June 2011

For more information on the briefing notes and research reports, contact the APSE office on 0161 772 1810 or visit our website at www.apse.org.uk

The practicalities of providing and improving a building maintenance service

Bookings for this event are now being taken!

Contact Mike Egerton at megerton@apse.org.uk for a booking form or visit the APSE website at www.apse.org.uk for a copy of the full programme and booking information.

Health and safety across the services

APSE Housing, construction and building maintenance seminar 2011, incorporating the APSE Health and safety seminar 2011,

Thursday 6 and Friday 7 October 2011

apse seminars