



direct news

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The sun is shining!

Neil Saunders
PAGE 14-15

Clean and green in Nottingham

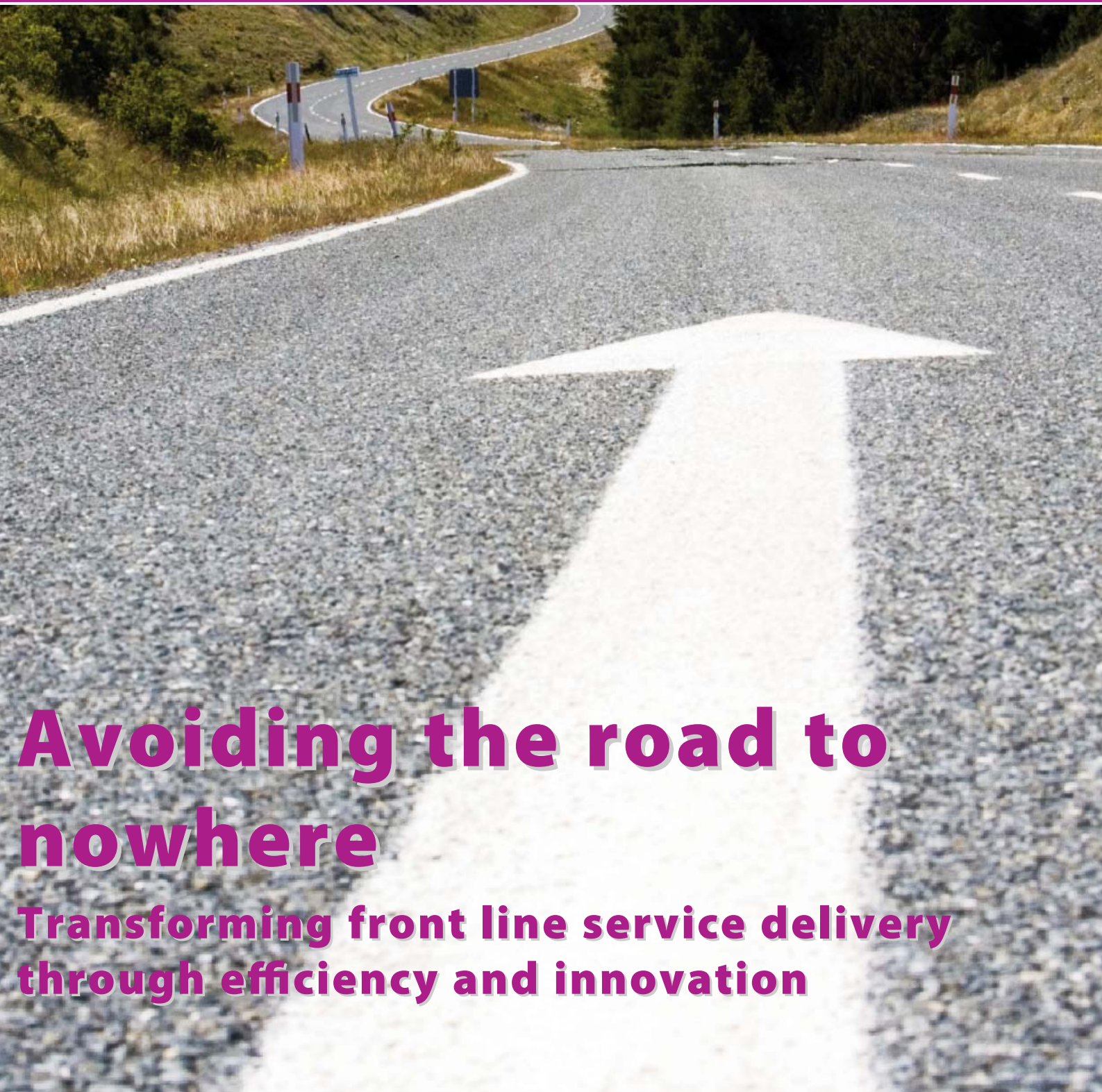
Andy Vaughan
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Delivering social care the Essex Way

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The Localism Bill

Walker Morris
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Avoiding the road to nowhere

Transforming front line service delivery through efficiency and innovation

Events diary

| Date | Event | Venue |
|---------------|--|------------------------|
| May 04 | Renewable Energy Masterclass | Manchester ● |
| May 05 | Senior managers PRINCE2® project management overview | Manchester ● |
| May 06 | Project Management in Leisure services | Leeds ● |
| May 09 | Delivering efficiencies through developing public partnerships | London ● |
| May 10 | Carbon Reduction Commitment | Birmingham ● |
| May 13 | Innovation forum: The Localism Bill | Birmingham ● |
| May 13 | Scottish Housing and Building Maintenance Advisory group | Hamilton ● |
| May 17 | How to reap the benefits of Solar PV | Birmingham ● |
| May 16 | Managing attendance in local government – Northern Ireland | Belfast ● |
| May 17 | Scottish Soft FM Advisory Group | Hamilton ● |
| May 18 | Refuse Collection & Street Cleansing Advisory Group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| May 23 | Scottish Fleet Waste and Grounds Seminar | Aviemore ● |
| June 01 | Scottish Sports and Leisure Advisory group | Hamilton ● |
| June 03 | Scottish Highways and Street Lighting Advisory Group | Hamilton ● |
| June 07 | Highways and Street Lighting Advisory Group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| June 07 | Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Advisory Group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| June 09 | Project Management in Leisure services | Glasgow ● |
| June 10 | APSE Scotland AGM | Dundee ● |
| 14 June | Renewable Energy Masterclass | Leeds ● |
| June 22 | Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Advisory Group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| June 23 | Building cleaning advisory group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| June 24 | Catering advisory group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| June 28 | Leisure advisory group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| June 29 | Social care Advisory Group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| June 29 | Refuse Collection & Street Cleansing Advisory Group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| July 05 | Project Management in Leisure services | Bristol ● |
| September 7&8 | Annual Seminar | South West ● |
| September 22 | Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Advisory Group | Manchester Town Hall ● |
| September 28 | Refuse Collection & Street Cleansing Advisory Group | Manchester ● |

Contacts

- Keisha Swaby 0161 772 1810, kswaby@apse.org.uk
- Laura McNab 01698 454 015, tmoug@apse.org.uk
- Michael Egerton 0161 772 1810, megerton@apse.org.uk
- Joe Sparrow 0161 772 1810, admin2@apse.org.uk
- Gary Mooney 01698 454015, gmooney@apse.org.uk
- Jan Mazzone 0161 772 1810, jmazzone@apse.org.uk

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2nd floor Washbrook House • Lancastrian Office Centre • Talbot Road
Old Trafford • Manchester M32 0FP

telephone: 0161 772 1810
email: enquiries@apse.org.uk

fax: 0161 772 1811
web: www.apse.org.uk



Editorial

Avoiding the road to nowhere

Over the past month or so, I have been discussing efficiency and service transformation with APSE members at a series of events throughout the UK. Most authorities now appear to have their plans in place to manage on significantly reduced budgets for the next few years and are moving at pace to implement them.

This usually involves a different approach than the slightly abstract debate national politicians are having about the future of public services. In an attempt to deny councils are under severe financial pressure there has been a move to paint them as slightly incompetent, frivolous with money or suggesting that new providers can be found thus allowing services to continue and savings to be made.

The latter point assumes that the private or third sector can deliver services more cheaply, which is a questionable assumption. Private companies by definition need to make a profit but cheaper solutions can often mean reduced service levels, if savings are to be made. Similar assumptions are made when it comes to the third sector. The third sector cannot provide services that are not commercially viable for them, it is not a 'free' public service utopia and it creates all the same pitfalls and risks of any other form of outsourcing. Divesting services is a risky business at the best of times but when we face serious reductions in current and future finances the risks are magnified.

At APSE we are not naive enough to believe that service delivery can carry on regardless of the financial constraints we are under, but there is an alternative to simply divesting service delivery. In Local Government we can, and have a track record of, improving services from within and in collaboration with partners. Service transformation does not happen overnightbut neither does outsourcing!

Frontline services came through CCT and have faced tough financial challenges before. This may mean reducing some service levels or even stopping some services and introducing charges for others to continue. These are tough choices and will be driven not only by the needs of service users but through the stark financial realities that we face. But at least this route puts councils in the driving seat with control of their own destiny. This will be a difficult but at least honest response.

Best wishes

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive

Greening the frontline brings more bang for your buck

With anxiety about cuts to services and jobs dominating local government, APSE's seminar 'More bang from the green buck' stuck a welcome positive note.

The one-day event at Manchester City Stadium on 21st January examined income generation and efficiency saving opportunities that the greening of frontline services can bring. APSE's chief executive, Paul O'Brien, urged councils to explore alternatives for income generation arising from the environmental agenda during these tough times. 'This means bringing environmental and economic goals together and looking at ways to be innovative around green jobs and skills,' he said.

Andrew Stunnell, parliamentary under secretary of state for Communities and Local Government, told delegates that the Coalition government aims to be 'the greenest government ever'. He outlined opportunities arising from policies such as the White Paper on Energy Efficiency, 2016 Zero Carbon Buildings requirement, Feed In Tarriffs (FITs), Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) and the Green Deal. Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) are very much fixed on green growth, he said, and development of renewable power requires the sorts of skills that exist in the UK.

'There is a gap between talking about this stuff and doing it. There needs to be a bridge between words and actions,' the minister said. 'The Localism Bill will enable local authorities to decide their own priorities. I hope they will be innovative and not always looking over their shoulders and waiting for central government to tell them what to do,' he said.

Delegates raised fears that sustainability will slip down the local government agenda in light of intense pressure on limited resources however. The minister highlighted the connection between the economy and the environment and responded: 'It is up to local authorities to set their own priorities and green issues will remain a priority for many... We can have cuts and sustainability or just cuts.'

Tom Handysides, environmental policy manager at Ofgem, described the regulator's environmental programme, schemes including FITs, the Climate Change Levy and Renewables Obligation (RO) and the role of local government in them. He said most successful bids to the £500m Low Carbon Network Fund have a local authority partner. Details of the Renewable Heat Initiative to promote a range of technologies are imminent. 'We are encouraging stakeholders to come forward with ideas,' he said.

Nottingham City Council and Birmingham City Councils, two authorities that are linking up their sustainability and economic development priorities, described their experiences to delegates at the seminar.

'It's not all doom and gloom,' said Nottingham City Council's director of neighbourhood services, Andy Vaughan. Despite the downturn, the green jobs market, low carbon infrastructure and technology supply chain can all be nurtured locally. It is ten years since the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change was launched, the majority of English councils have now signed up and the city has remained at the forefront of the sustainability agenda.

Renewable energy is a priority for the city because gas and electricity for buildings accounts for 60% of carbon emissions, 8% of households are living fuel poverty, energy supply is insecure and prices are unstable. Nottingham is the UK's most energy self-sufficient city with one of the largest district heating systems – but it still only generates 3% of its own energy.

The city's Renewable Energy Plan explores potential to reduce costs, provide security of energy and create jobs. It sets a target to produce 20% of energy from renewable or low carbon options by 2020, through measures such as solar panels, wind turbines and hydro-power as well as the existing district heating systems. Talent at the city's two universities and a new University Energy Unit are being better captured to benefit the local economy.

'Political leadership has been vital and making the connection between jobs and the environment is essential,' Mr Vaughan said. The green energy strategy has been a driver behind the work of the council's economic development team and a feature of LEP and RGF bids. There are plans to double the district heating system, which currently covers 4,500 properties and 150 businesses. A new Energy Innovation Park will create an appropriate blend of jobs at every level and provide cost effective fuel to the nearby car plant. A concession contract has also been awarded for 600 photovoltaic panels to be installed on social housing in the Aspley area, for which 30% of the contract evaluation is based on job creation. A commercial lawyer has been seconded to deal with the complex partnerships that are being created.

'It is important for community cohesion that everyone gets a benefit from this,' Mr Vaughan said. Green Deal and Warm Zone schemes are making housing more energy efficient and reducing fuel poverty. The city is also home to Mozes, a community-owned power company. Nottingham's in-house DLO has provided the flexibility and capacity to enable the council to respond easily to green energy plans.

Birmingham has also made a firm commitment to sustainability. The Birmingham Declaration on Climate Change states that 50% of energy consumed by the council should be from renewable sources, and 10% of Birmingham homes will be linked to district heating systems by 2015. Keith Budden, environmental partnerships manager at BeBirmingham Local Strategic Partnership, believes the public sector can provide a strategic framework and engage residents in efforts to address climate change.

Energy costs the city economy £1.5bn annually and the council consumes £30m worth of energy a year. Birmingham Energy Savers (formerly the Green New Deal) is investing £40m in retrofitting properties in order to reduce fuel poverty and create jobs and opportunities for enterprise. Boosting local supply chains through market access for small- and medium-sized businesses is a core objective of the project. Training programmes in local colleges are supporting demand for installation skills.

Leadership is a key issue in developing skills for a low carbon economy as well as understanding how to access financial opportunities. The city has raised £13m under prudential borrowing for 2,000 solar installations and will borrow £100m in next phase of a rolling programme of energy efficient retrofitting in 10,000 households from January 2012 to March 2015. 'This is an economic development tool that can result in jobs locally, but getting the procurement right in order to realise social and economic objectives is the challenge,' Mr Budden said.

Solicitor and consultant Stephen Cirell, urged councils to tap into resources that are available through RO, FITs and the RHI as this is investment that will reduce energy costs and also offer a good yield. 'The private sector has worked out that FITs offer a good deal with a 7-10% return on investment. What bank or any other financial instrument gives you such a good return? But the £360m in the pot is finite, so early movers have an advantage.' He outlined how investment in renewables could be financed through; local authority reserves, prudential borrowing, commercial borrowing, equity, institutional investment, and public offerings. 'There is huge future in selling shares or bonds to the public so they have a stake in renewable energy projects,' he said.

Mr Cirell is the author of the APSE publication, 'The virtuous green circle', which shows how a local government 'revolving fund' can be established to invest in renewable energy, which will generate income to reinvest. A 'new green DLO' could be developed that is equipped with skills to make the most of emerging green economy opportunities, he explained. 'To get people on board with this, talk about jobs and economic development rather than playing the green card,' he advised.

APSE has supported the publication a book by Philip Monaghan head of sustainable development Knowsley MBC, called 'Sustainability in Austerity', which offers local authorities powerful, cost neutral ways to advance sustainability in difficult financial circumstances. It is necessary to build 'the business case for sustainability', Mr Monaghan said.

Mr Monaghan told delegates at the APSE 'More bang from the green buck event': 'It is possible to stave off cuts and generate funds to invest in green energy.' He said it is necessary to tailor language in a way that motivates elected members, officers, and the public in order to achieve behaviour change.

Contact: mbaines@apse.org.uk





Clean and green in Nottingham

Andy Vaughan, Director for Neighbourhood Services at Nottingham City Council explains why Nottingham is transforming its neighbourhoods and the public realm to make Nottingham England's cleanest big city.

Nottingham has the ambition to become a world-class city but to achieve this we need to deliver the things that really matter to local people and ensure that our city is clean, green and safe. These challenges, laid out in the city's Sustainable Community Strategy and Council Plan are why Councillors have invested both financially and operationally in having high-calibre, multi-skilled teams based in neighbourhoods, with local knowledge and ownership of their areas: working with local people to transform their communities.

To achieve this ambition required the development of closer working relationships with all our partners but also by placing the citizen at the very heart of every decision. Over the last 18 months, the Council has embarked upon a major transformation programme to do just that.

Our new approach tackles local environmental quality, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and enviro-crime in-depth, with a mixture of innovative service delivery, enforcement and education to collectively transform all of Nottingham's neighbourhoods into clean, safe and thriving communities.

A fundamental restructuring of services has been implemented, focussing on managing the public realm as a whole rather than managing as professional silos, and by then ensuring these services are shaped around local priorities. This aims to make sure that all neighbourhoods are as clean and safe as the city centre. Given Nottingham's diversity, this is not a one size fits all strategy.

To realise these operational aims, a new division called City Services was created, consisting of Refuse Collection, Street Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Highways. This new division focuses on local public realm priorities, making it easier to access services, within a system where employees, who have received extensive training and development, are empowered to act.

A key role has been to create neighbourhood-based teams, with each ward having its own local area supervisor, linked in to local communities and working with Ward Councillors to make sure that no local issues go undiscovered and that there is always a friendly local face of the Council, listening and acting on what local people want.

In addition, we've also created area based Neighbourhood Environment Managers, who act as the custodian of the public realm, resolving the more complex, medium term issues which perhaps require investment from a number of agencies to resolve.

This is a radical modernisation programme, but with attention to detail. We have changed the ways our front-line staff work, with roles made simpler, by introducing 4 generic multi-skilled 'Public Realm Operatives' job descriptions, replacing the previous 14. This new generic role has been complemented by more flexible working patterns to ensure that our neighbourhood based teams are at work when they are most needed. Investment in our people is the key to true success and as such, and to ensure personal growth, a comprehensive training and development programme is

being implemented, making staff feel valued and motivated to deliver services better.

We're coordinating our activities through Quarterly Ward Action Plans, setting out what needs to be done, and reflecting the views of Ward Councillors, local residents and partners. Effectively engaging our communities is a must and is why a new environmental watch scheme called "My Street" has been launched, allowing easier and better incident reporting. We've an initial target of 1000 local reps.

All of the above has been underpinned by effective enforcement and supported by Community Protection's nationally unique "one justice system". Nottingham has 100 Community Protection Officers (CPOs) working within the neighbourhood policing structure in local beat teams, providing a highly visible and constant face for the areas they work in and dealing with issues that are identified by residents themselves.

The focus is on solving signal crimes – working on the premise that if you sort out the problems when they are small they are less likely to get bigger.

This is all supported by a calendar of education and behavioural change campaigns. Success has been achieved in linking local campaigns such as the Big Summer Clean and "Bag it and Bin it" with national Keep Britain Tidy campaigns, for Vehicle Litter, Dog Fouling and Chewing Gum.

We're also redesigning the way our services are delivered, for example fly tips were identified as a problem and bulky waste collections needed to be easier. A pilot study looked at how these could be tackled resulting in an innovative weekly, door-step bulky waste collection service being rolled out across the city, collecting the majority of items put on the kerb-side. In the pilot area, bulky waste collections increased by 600% during the trial and fly tipping decreased by 49%. This scheme will go city-wide by March.

Dog Fouling was another area of concern identified by local residents. To highlight the issue, a local campaign in spring 2010

carried the message that people could use any bin to dispose of dog mess. "Bag it and Bin it" was timed to take place before the national campaign in the autumn. As part of the campaign a "Poover", a specially adapted motorcycle was purchased that uses a suction tube to safely remove dog mess from the street. Cards are put through letterboxes to advise when a street has been "Poovered" and an additional 100 new bins have been installed, along with 50,000 biodegradable dog waste bags being distributed to residents. We're also telling people about what we're doing through a newsletter called the 'Dog Poo News'.

Throughout the summer, an education programme was taken into local schools with targeted enforcement following the educational campaign. Nottingham was then selected as a partner for the national campaign in September allowing the reinforcement of the message around bagging dog waste. The overall results show an impressive 79% reduction in dog waste.

These are supported by over 400 events such as weeks of action that have taken place over the last year.

Nottingham has taken both the neighbourhood and community warden models used by many authorities throughout the country and transformed it. At a Neighbourhood level and through breaking down silos and delivering services in 'true partnerships', we've made noticeable improvements that are being recognised by our citizens.

The ambition is to make Nottingham the cleanest city in England and we're well on the way to achieving this. The next challenge is to maintain this level of performance.

There has never been a greater need to work together with our communities and partners given the financial challenges that lay ahead.

Contact: Andy Vaughan is Nottingham City Council's Director for neighbourhood services, email: Andy.Vaughan@nottinghamcity.gov.uk





Delivering Social Care the Essex Way

Mark Lloyd, Managing Director of Essex cares Ltd, explains how the development of a wholly owned local authority trading company (LATC) has delivered both service improvements and efficiencies in social care services as well as giving Essex Cares market freedom to develop.



Like many local authorities Essex County Council was keen to deliver service improvements in social care and respond to the changing needs of the population. Within the local authority setting we delivered a range of services including equipment services, domiciliary care, day care services and learning and disability support services and operated across a range of centres. We were however keen to deliver better use of our resources and generate some savings from a 2007/8 budget base of £48 million for Adult Social Care.

Following a full review, a number of options for future service delivery were put forward including 'stay as we are', tender, become a social enterprise or a LATC. It was clear that Essex County Council valued their role in service provision and a Trading Company route was decided as the way forward. It was considered that this route provided the right balance to allow innovation and new ways of working coupled with the more business driven approach of a private company; we described this as the 'best of both worlds'.

We of course didn't just jump into a trading company arrangement and prior to the company being formally launched we set about reconfiguring some of our services to make them 'fit for purpose'. By way of example we reshaped the domiciliary care service into a reablement service. We explored how we might best respond to the changing dynamics of the personalised care agenda and individualised budgets and crucially we studied our financial performance. We were able to make what were traditional corporate support services more responsive to our needs through open market competition for these back office support needs. In practice whilst we have purchased some of our back room services from the open market we have also remained with the Council for others through this exercise.

By July 2009 the Trading Company was formally launched as a wholly owned local authority company limited by shares, with Essex County Council as the shareholder. The model of the LATC must comply with the legal test which is defined by the 'Teckal Exemption' which requires a Council to meet two core requirements. Firstly, that the Council retains a level of influence and control, and secondly, the services provided are deemed to be statutory provision for the Council to provide. Staff were subject to a TUPE transfer and we honoured their terms and conditions and became an 'admitted body' to allow pension continuity within the Local Government Pension Scheme. We received excellent support from the Unions through the transition, as a consequence of the protection of their members terms and conditions.

The service has gone from strength to strength. Our budget base which was significantly reduced pre transfer through service redesign for 2010/11 is now around £35 million with efficiency savings requirements and a dividend return to the Council achieved in the first year of operation. These are real efficiency savings that have benefited the Council. We delivered services to over 100,000 service users in our first year of operation with clearly defined Key Performance Indicators in place to monitor the quality of delivery. Staff performance in service delivery continues to improve within a business freed to operate in the commercial sector. A good indicator of this is the drop in our sickness rate for days lost which has dropped from around 15% to just 3%. Whilst the LATC model attracts a corporation tax issue for any shareholder dividends from the Trading Company back to the Council, a cost benefit analysis has proven that the benefits of more efficient and effective service delivery outweighs any taxation liabilities. We are on schedule in our second year of operation to return a dividend to Essex County Council and look set to increase that as service improvements continue.

In a changing world the model has also allowed us to exploit income generation opportunities for services of a non statutory nature. With the advent of individualised and personalised budgets the model allows us to be flexible in what services we offer. We can respond quickly and with relatively independence to changing demands of our client users. We have been able to set up our own internal agency the 'personalised assistant agency' to respond to the demands of increased personalisation of care needs. The advent of the Health and Social Care Bill has brought into focus the prospect of much more localised commissioning of health and social care services with GPs as budget holders. The Trading Company model has allowed us to traverse the gaps between local government and health and places us in an excellence position to do the same with GP consortia. For example we have redesigned our services to ensure we can offer direct service delivery to the emerging GP Consortia's thereby bridging the gap between social care and health delivery.

Whilst all of these new service demands could result in a negative impact, lessening local governance and regulation, putting at risk our most vulnerable clients, we have in fact mitigated this risk. The Trading Company has provided a robust framework for local governance and acts as an informal (and in

some case a formal) market regulator. We continue to fully comply with safeguarding adult processes and checks, which we would all expect of a local authority or a best practice provider. These are carried out under the umbrella of the trading company. Where there are fragmented services this is a critical aspect of ensuring we are able to protect our more vulnerable clients.

Whilst the board of Essex Cares does not have elected member representation we are nonetheless accountable to our local authority shareholder. We produce a quarterly shareholder report which explains progress against our business plan and financial performance. We also report to a client monitoring officer at the County Council on 39 key performance indicators on a monthly basis. Fundamentally the contract provides for the council to issue financial penalties if we fail on the key performance indicators. Essex Cares is locked into a culture of performance which is welcome on all sides. The board arrangement also allows us to recruit specialist support through non-executive directors from backgrounds, not only in social care services but in finance, legal and business disciplines.

If I were to be asked what is the biggest difference that Essex Cares has made it would be the strong culture shift that has occurred right the way through our organisation. Frontline staff have bought into the process and they are supportive of our business aims, so too have frontline managers who are now given the time to dedicate their skills into ensuring we deliver excellence on the frontline to our service users. Our customer satisfaction ratings remain high and are rising. We constantly measure our performance with welcome feedback from our service users. Elected members are able to exercise good governance of local services through our reporting arrangements. In the climate of budget reductions and the potential 'threats' of increased fragmentation through personalised and individualised budget pots I would certainly suggest that the Trading Company option is worthy of greater consideration. A Trading Company route could prove to be a flexible friend to delivering social care.

Contact: *Mark Lloyd is Managing Director of Essex Cares Ltd, a wholly owned trading company of Essex County Council, email: katie.webster@essexcares.org*



Achtung APSE apprentices

Finalists in this year's APSE Apprentice Awards for Transport and Vehicle Maintenance not only enjoyed the prestige of being among the best local authority apprentices in the UK – they also won a trip to Germany, where they could gain insight into the transport industry internationally.

When the award winners were named at the APSE national environmental services seminar, it was also announced that those who had been shortlisted would be rewarded with a trip to Germany, courtesy of FAUN Zoeller, the company that sponsored the APSE Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Apprentice award.

The winner and finalists visited the company's production facility in Bremen and were taken on a tour of the town on 29-30 November 2010. The apprentices who went on the trip were; Leon Flattely from Luton Borough Council, who was the winner of the award, plus Richard Houseman of East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Joshua Dale of Hull City Council and Ethan Trumpet of the London Borough of Redbridge. The other finalist, Christopher Shipp of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, could not make the trip. Ashley Webster and Christine Foxley accompanied them representing FAUN Zoeller.

A factory tour was conducted by the municipal vehicle manufacturer's factory manager Juergen Thierase followed by a visit to Bremen Christmas Market and Schlachte Magic held by the River Weser where they sampled local drinks including Gluhwein and a traditional German evening at Paulaner's restaurant. The next day a walking city tour of Bremen was enjoyed by all and finished the trip racing Go Karts at BB kartbahn.

The trip marks an interesting international development in the APSE awards scheme, which has

been running for the past 10 years to recognise promising apprentices and promote local government apprenticeship schemes.

Each apprentice is supported by a mentor from their authority, who helps build confidence and enables them to have a single point of contact.

Carl Gillyon, Vehicle Services Manager at East Riding of Yorkshire Council is mentor to finalist Richard Houseman. His council currently employs five Apprentice Vehicle Technicians in its Vehicle Maintenance Unit. He says: 'Over the past 10 years we have noticed a huge decline in the number of suitably skilled vehicle technicians applying for positions and therefore feel that the investment in this group of young people is an essential part of our business improvement plan.'

He says Richard was nominated for the APSE award because: 'From day one, Richard integrated into the team and was soon the apprentice who was called upon by many of the older members of the team to assist with many workshop duties.'

Richard commented: 'I think that starting my career as an apprentice has really helped me because as well as learning at college, I am also gaining experience in the workplace. The skills that I learn whilst being at work are skills that can't be taught at college, things like teamwork and time management are very important

skills and are used often in the workplace.

He added: 'The trip to Germany was really beneficial. We visited the FAUN Zoeller factory in Bremen and saw sheet metal in one area of the building being cut and shaped and then as we walked around we were shown it being painted and welded together to make a complete refuse collection body.'

Tony Kirk, Joshua Dale's supervisor at Hull City Council says he was nominated because of his attitude towards work and outstanding college grades. Attending the APSE awards ceremony, as well as the Germany trip, was a good confidence-boosting experience. Joshua commented: 'I was amazed by the size of the factory and impressed how much goes into making the vehicles. It was good to meet other apprentices and learn about German culture.'

It looks like those lessons from Germany will hold these apprentices in good stead for a long time into the future.

APSE would like to say thank you or should that be say Danke sehr to Faun Zoeller in supporting the APSE apprentice awards and the trip to Germany.

Contact: Please email Jenny Hughes at APSE on Jhughes@apse.org.uk for details about APSE's apprentice awards in other areas.

Efficiency Savings from Asset Management

Charles Leleux is an APSE interim manager in facilities and asset management. Here are some thoughts from him on how improved focus on asset management practices can lead to securing those all important efficiency savings.

I have over 20 years' experience as a senior manager, most of this gained in managing the corporate property portfolio of Scotland's fifth largest Council, which included a £7m annual operational budget.

When I first became involved in asset management, I realised quickly that without sound asset management practices in place, then you don't really have anything to guide your investment decisions for:

1. Responding to changing property needs of your department and the Council on a short, medium and longer term basis
2. Responding to legislative requirements such as public access
3. Assessing the suitability and sufficiency of your property portfolio
4. Property disposals/acquisitions
5. Capital programmes
6. Legislative compliance and testing regimes (primarily asbestos/fixed electrical and water quality)
7. Assessing likely dilapidations requirements (for leased properties)
8. Annual maintenance programmes,
9. Area-based reviews of property holdings on a cross-departmental basis

Sitting behind your Asset Management Plans should be a wealth of survey data on the condition of the properties, running costs, the amount of usable office space (by sq m) and the numbers of employees per building. This then allows comparisons to be made as to the efficiency of each property, broken down by the unit costs per employee and by the square metre. Looking at two key areas in closer detail:

Energy Costs

Don't be over-reliant on estimated bills – ensure that your employees take meter reads every month and insist on your provider undertaking reads at least every second quarter. Ensure that every floor of your building has a regime of shutting down pc's and monitors every evening.

The option of installing voltage optimisers should be looked at – this spend to save initiative reduces the voltage coming in to a building from the standard 240 volts to around 220 - the installation costs are recouped within usually 3-5 years, and can generate 10-15% annual savings on electricity (it should also help you achieve improved ratings for your Energy Performance Certificates, and there may even be grants available).

Ensure that you have a water meter installed for every property otherwise you will be billed on the rateable value

which inevitably works out to be more expensive.

Space Utilisation

Consider introducing a Council-wide target for every department to work towards average space occupancy per employee of around 9 sq m – allowing you to maximise your office space. This can be achieved through introducing more flexible open-plan layouts, including reducing desk sizes to 1400mm; reviewing provision of single-occupancy offices for managers/supervisors, and introducing desk-sharing.

There should be strategic area-based property reviews looking at options for departments to share properties and possibly realise capital receipts by selling others. Generally, moving towards giving up leased properties and centralising within properties which are owned is a good objective, as usually leased properties also bring the legal obligation of carrying out dilapidations at regular intervals which can prove to be very expensive!

Contact: agardiner@apse.org.uk

Despite the current economic climate it is very encouraging to see that local authorities still see investment in frontline supervisors as a priority. Supervisory skills in street cleansing/StreetScene, catering/cleaning, transport, and building maintenance/housing repairs remain the most sought after courses. With courses in-house averaging at £60 per delegate this is a cost effective way for APSE to provided continuous development.

New to APSE lifelong learning and development from APRIL:

- Tools for efficiencies in building cleaning
- Tools for efficiencies in street cleansing
- Strategic health and safety (½ day course)
- CDM refresher training (½ day course)

Don't be shy! Get in touch for no obligation quotes on in-house courses for a cost effective way to ensure your staff receive the training that they need.

Contact Jan Kennedy on 0161 772 1810 or email jkennedy@apse.org.uk

Are you ready for the Agency Workers Regulations?

1st October 2011 sees the introduction of the new Agency Workers Regulations (AWR). This new piece of legislation will have a significant impact on business and performance as it means that the majority of temporary agency workers will have the same basic pay and employment conditions as permanent staff.



Temps will receive the same basic pay and employment conditions as permanent staff

Under the AWR temps employed for more than 12 weeks will receive the same basic pay and employment conditions as permanent staff. This means that agency workers will receive the same rate of hourly pay as permanent employees and this will include overtime, shift allowances, unsocial hours premiums, dangerous duty bonuses and commission payments. It does not include sick pay, pensions and bonus payments based on organisational performance.

Day one rights – These start from Day One!

This means that agency workers will be entitled to access to almost all the same benefits that permanent employees receive, i.e. childcare services and canteen facilities, provision of transport services and the right to be notified about any vacancies which may arise.

Calculating the 12 weeks.

This is a contentious issue. How will the qualifying 12 week period be

calculated? The bad news for employers is that any time worked within the first twelve weeks of an assignment will go towards the qualification period. For example, a part time agency worker could work for you a full day every Friday. After they have done twelve Fridays they will be entitled to the same rate of pay and holiday entitlements as their directly recruited counterpart. This could be a nightmare for local authority who rely on part time and casual agency workers.

According to the CBI over 44% of temps will be covered by the AWR.

This is an issue which needs to be addressed in the short term by HR and the Senior Management Team; policies and processes drawn up and training given to front line managers to ensure that their teams are aware of the implications well ahead of the changes coming into force.

Due to the fast-moving nature of the legislative changes taking place it is vitally important managers are kept abreast of developments. On the 1st October 2010 the Equality Act came into force adding another element widening the scope of discrimination. This could be a very powerful vehicle for adding onto less favourable AWR potential claims. All of this will add to the pressure that line managers are already facing.

Can we terminate agency workers before the 12 weeks?

The AWR has been put together in such a way that unscrupulous employers seeking to avoid the 12-week rule will be taken to task. Employers intending to replace their agency workers before the 12-week period will face anti-avoidance fines of up to £5,000 per temporary worker. However, employers can refuse temporary agency workers access to the day-one rights (access

to canteen, childcare, transport provision and information about vacancies), but only if they have a legitimate reason for doing so. For example if there is a waiting list to use the childcare facilities.

Previous recessions have resulted in an increased use of agency workers post recession.

This is a sign of the market picking up and companies often use temporary agency workers initially while confidence in the market is growing. In the past the public sector has saved money by having a recruitment freeze on all permanent posts. This has resulted in the public sector using more temporary to deliver front line services and given the fact that agency workers offer excellent value for money.

Employers use agency workers for a wide range of reasons, to cover short-term sickness, respond to peaks in demand, fill vacancies or cover maternity leave, for example, and people become agency workers for a wide range of reasons – it's flexible, varied and can pay very well.

In short, there is little likelihood of a drop in demand for agency workers for the front line services, combined with the new regulations coming into effect and the fact that many employers are unaware of the changes which are coming. This all adds up to a potential time bomb.

All management teams should bear in mind is that this is not just a paper exercise – it will have a significant impact on the way in which your organisation runs and there are penalties if you fail to meet these new regulations.

Contact: Dr Julia Gardner is an APSE associate. For further details please contact Alex Gardiner at APSE on agardiner@apse.org.uk



Lifelong learning and development

APSE, in conjunction with Julia Gardner, is pleased to announce the development of a new course on the new Agency Workers Directive (AWR).

This legislation comes into force on 1 October 2011 and will affect HR Managers and any line managers who use agency staff.

The course will examine the impact of the new directive, and the implications that local authorities need to consider for training and education, and council policies.

Places on these events will be strictly limited as they will be highly interactive, working sessions.

The sessions will cover:

- Introduction and overview of the new legislation
- The scope of the legislation
- The implications to the employer
- The implications to the agency staff
- Training your staff
- Duties and responsibilities for local authorities
- Choosing compliant suppliers
- Liability
- Local authority action and response

Forthcoming training schedule

| | | |
|------------|--|------------|
| 04 May 11 | Renewable energy Masterclass: | Manchester |
| 04 May 11 | Catering service, Cleaning service supervisory skills for team leaders | Manchester |
| 05 May 11 | Senior managers PRINCE2® project management overview | Manchester |
| 06 May 11 | Project Management in Leisure services | Leeds |
| 09 May 11 | Delivering efficiencies through developing public partnerships | London |
| 10 May 11 | Carbon Reduction Commitment | Birmingham |
| 10 May 11 | CDM regulations refresher Masterclass (half day event) | Manchester |
| 12 May 11 | CDM regulations refresher Masterclass (half day event) | Dundee |
| 16 May 11 | Supervisory skills for the building maintenance and repairs sector | Cardiff |
| 16 May 11 | Managing attendance in local government – Northern Ireland | Belfast |
| 17 May 11 | Street cleansing and Street scene supervisory skills | London |
| 18 May 11 | Agency Worker Directive | Manchester |
| 23 May 11 | Waste, Recycling and StreetScene Recycling workshop for team leaders | Manchester |
| 24 May 11 | Writing, developing and delivering service level agreements | Manchester |
| 26 May 11 | A Duty to involve | Glasgow |
| 06 June 11 | Catering service, Cleaning service supervisory skills for team leaders | London |
| 08 June 11 | CDM regulations refresher Masterclass (half day event) | Glasgow |
| 10 June 11 | Agency Worker Directive | Manchester |

Please contact **Jan Mazzone** on 0161 772 1810 or email jmazzone@apse.org.uk for more information

The sun is shining on Swindon Commercial Services

As more and more councils consider installing photovoltaic panels to their housing and other property assets we take a look at Swindon Commercial Services Limited and explain how they moved to successfully installing solar panels.

Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels provide local authorities with real incentives to green their electricity supplies as well as providing the opportunity for more affordable energy for local residents. In this context Swindon Commercial Services Limited (SCS) set about developing an approach to Solar PV to benefit both the local environment and local communities.

SCS were aware that opportunities to develop an approach to designing, installing, registering and monitoring solar PV panels would need to consider income risk and to understand how secure the levels of the feed-in tariff would be. With the recent clarity given by the fast track review undertaken by the Department of Energy and Climate Change we have a greater certainty over the medium term for installations of less than 50 kilowatt peak (kWp).

The full review on feed in tariff for installations smaller than 50 kWp will be undertaken during 2011, with tariffs remaining unchanged until April 2012 (unless the review reveals a need for greater urgency).

SCS is interested in a number of PV related opportunities with our main focus on SCS acting as a developer for Registered Providers of Social Housing.

In autumn the SCS management team decided to appoint a Project Manager to lead the development of this opportunity and Neil Saunders was appointed to this role. Neil brings a wealth of experience along with the necessary energy and project management skills needed to drive such complex projects forward.

One of the key drivers for SCS has been the retention of the design and delivery stages of any PV project to ensure that we could maximise the local economic benefits of fitting solar PV to our buildings. As part of our strategy we have developed our own approach to financial modelling and spent some considerable time and resources in perfecting this. Our model is totally flexible for all end-users.

When embarking on this process we found groups like APSE, Energy Saving Trust, Regen South West and even Google to be the best sources of advice and more general information. As part of our approach we have spoken to and visited a number of key individuals in the emerging PV sector. By consulting with this range of people it has helped SCS build up its knowledge base and provided us with a clear focus on what we want to achieve and how we would be able to deliver a new sustainable renewable energy business.

A key consideration has been whether to install solar PV for ourselves rather than contracting in an installer. It quickly became apparent that not only were we able to install solar PV panels on our own buildings, such as houses and offices, but to also expand our PV installation activity to other buildings, such as elderly person group dwellings, sports centres and privately owned buildings.

Like any new project of this size we also needed to identify competitive supply chain partners for the Solar PV panels and related items e.g. inverters. Our experience has shown us that there are a large number of manufactures or wholesalers ready to supply the growing UK market. At SCS we are working with a German company and a number of wholesale routes to drive our costs down and we are also exploring with other major PV project developers where combining our volume with others to group purchase and drive out greater efficiencies. This work is progressing well and we are confident we can generate some industry leading levels of cost efficiency through this process.

A further issue was that of training our employees. The Microgeneration Certification Scheme was introduced by Government to protect consumers who have PV's installed. In Swindon we set about ensuring our compliance with this scheme through training our installers. After researching a number of training companies and building a good understanding of the training process itself, we contacted one of the accredited companies providing MCS training and

eventually settled on NICEIC as the best option for our compliance.

NICEIC is the UK electrical contracting industry's independent voluntary body. They offer certification services and act as an auditor for the MCS scheme.

It was ideal for us at SCS as we are already an electrical company registered to NICEIC. They were very helpful in suggesting ways forward and the right approach to completing the process.

They helped put us in touch with a training company 'ESE' situated in Oxfordshire and from there we were able to get our staff trained up and to then go through the certification process with our project manager, office management and the qualified electricians. The training included teaching to standard '2372 / 2399 Certificate in Installing and Testing Domestic Photovoltaic Systems'.

We have completed a number of installations and our first was within our own depot (pictured).

The 3.29kWp, 14 panel installation, cost £10,000 to install and is predicted to provide an income of £1,333 per year. The installation is on a slate roof and took just over two days to install by SCS's own team. There were a number of lessons learnt along the way, mostly on the practical front, of access to and from the roof and

the types of tools required. The scheme includes a display in SCS's Main Reception showing the performance of the panels.

Getting started on solar PV installation may seem difficult but with the right project plan and a willingness to try something new it is well worth the 'pain' to reap the 'gain'. Future rewards include a trained workforce, the financial benefits of the Feed-in Tariff and of course a greener and more secure energy supply for Swindon.

So our advice is to give us a call! SCS is more than happy to share our experience to help support your new PV project.

Contact: nsaunders@swindoncommercialservices.co.uk



The Localism Bill

Special feature with Walker Morris

Community empowerment; the right to buy, the right to challenge: Are these new powers needed or will it lead to more bureaucracy? Richard Auton and Caroline Finnett of Walker Morris solicitors debate the issues.



Part 3 of the Localism Bill entitled "Community Empowerment" contains a number of the proposed new powers to the community including the Right to Challenge and the so called Right to Buy. But do they really work, and what do they add? Much of the legislation relies on the later introduction of secondary legislation and until the form of that is more certain there is a lack of clarity about whether it really does what it purports to, whether it will do it effectively without additional cost and bureaucracy or whether it's a licence to [make mischief] at Council tax payers expense at a time when money and resources are heavily stretched?

Consultations are currently on-going in relation to the proposed SI's with responses by 3rd May this year seeking views on what they should contain. APSE have issued a short questionnaire and members of APSE are urged to comment.

So what do they do?

Right to Buy

Chapter 4 Part 4 of the Bill contains the so called "Right to Buy" provisions which have been well publicised e.g. the Star Inn pub in Salford. The Bill doesn't actually

contain a right to buy but, in brief, Local Authorities will be required to maintain a list of land in its area that is Land of Community Value. Regulations will prescribe the form of the list and will determine whether or not a building or other land is Land of Community Value. If the owner of the land wishes to sell the land (whether in public or private ownership) this will trigger a moratorium period which will give community interest groups (also to be defined later by Regulation) a period in which to submit a bid to purchase. It does not however guarantee that they will be successful in such action. Councils will clearly need to consider their section 123 obligations and private sector owners can clearly dispose to whoever they choose but will be restricted by the moratorium period.

Land may be included by an Authority in its list in response to a Community Nomination or where otherwise permitted by Regulations. A Community Nomination is made by a Parish Council or by a person specified in regulations. The regulations may also allow a Local Authority acting on its own initiative to include land in the list. If a Community Nomination is received the Authority must accept the nomination if the land is in the authority' area and is of community value. It would generally stay on such a list for a period of 5 years.

- An Authority must also keep a list of unsuccessful nominations.
- The owner of land may ask the Authority to review the decision.
- The regulations may make provision for payment of compensation to an owner affected although it's not clear who would meet the cost of any such compensation.
- Inclusion in the list is a local land charge.

So much of the draft legislation is left to Regulations – even the definition of Community Assets themselves that it is difficult to comment without a level of scepticism about the extent to which this achieves what's intended. The ability to make assets available

which are owned by the Authority to community interest groups is already something they are able to do and it's difficult to see what this adds.

We note that on the Communities website on 3rd February Mr Shapps refers to using existing powers (the 'Right to Reclaim' as it is described in the website article) from the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 which obliges Authorities to keep a register of land holdings not being used (sufficiently) for its function. It would appear that it is now intended to issue Regulations under this legislation to assist groups in utilising underused public land.

Arguably therefore the new powers are only really needed in relation to assets in private ownership.

There remain issues to be resolved around (amongst other things) Restrictive Covenants (for example pubs) as well as sales through insolvency/administration for privately owned Community Assets

Right to Challenge

The Bill makes provision for certain types of body to submit to a Local Authority an expression of interest in providing or assisting in providing a service provided by or on behalf of that authority in the exercise of any of its functions.

Those bodies are:-

- voluntary or community bodies,
- bodies or a trusts established for charitable purposes only,
- parish councils, or
- two or more employees of the authority,

The Secretary of State can also by Regulations prescribe other bodies of persons who may be eligible to submit an Expression of Interest and also public authorities other than Local Authorities who will be subject to the process. The consultation paper referred to above proposes that it should also refer to Fire and Rescue Authorities

and seeks views on this suggestion. The use of later Regulations could also leave it open to extend the power to the private sector

Where an Authority receives an expression of interest it must either

(a) accept the expression of interest, or

(b) reject the expression of interest (but only on grounds specified in Regulations). The consultation paper suggests a number of such grounds including where the Expression is outside of a time period specified by the Authority including for services being carried out by the Council as well as third parties. It also makes reference to Best Value duties and where the proposal deliver poorer value for money. It doesn't currently refer to interface / cross service issues although this may be covered by the Best Value reference. APSE would be particularly interested in member views on the proposals in the Consultation paper.

The Authority will have the ability to modify a proposal in so far as is necessary to make it acceptable.

In considering an expression of interest, the Authority must consider whether acceptance of the expression of interest would promote or improve the social, economic or environmental well-being of the authority's area. The Consultation Paper doesn't clarify how the information to be provided in an Expression of Interest will be used to do this. On the face of it the information to be provided by interested parties is potentially detailed but much of the information may be redundant / irrelevant to how a decision to accept and what the procurement might look like.

If the Authority accepts the expression of interest it must carry out a procurement exercise for a contract for the provision on behalf of the authority of the relevant service. The exercise such as it is must be appropriate having regard to the value and nature of the



contract that may be awarded. Normal procurement law will apply and accordingly the contract award may be to a body other than that which submitted the expression of interest and/or which is not one of the types of body entitled to submit an expression of interest.

The Authority in scoping the procurement is required to consider in so far as permissible under procurement law the extent to which the procurement exercise might promote or improve the social, economic or environmental well-being of the authority's area.

The concerns that many APSE members may have is will this be a fresh route to some form of 'enforced competition' in a similar fashion to Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) that we saw in the eighties and nineties. We shall of course have to wait to see Mr Pickles guidance to see if these concerns are justifiable and the guidance will of course not be issues until after the Bill has passed through Parliament and received Royal Assent.....so watch this space!

Contact: *Caroline Finnett*

caroline.finnett@walkermorris.co.uk

Procurement toolkit :

Taking sustainability into the future

APSE Assistant Chief Executive Mark Bramah explains how APSE's new Procurement Toolkit developed in partnership with Walker Morris and the Environment Centre at Southampton University can help your council go green through procurement



In a speech to the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in May 2010 the new Prime Minister, David Cameron pledged to make the Coalition Government “the greenest government ever”. We know that tackling climate change and preserving scarce resources is at the heart of achieving long-term viable sustainability for our economy and society. One of the principle means at our disposal to secure sustainability is through the considerable power of the public sector in terms of its procurement spending.

The U.K. public sector spends some £220bn per year on goods and services and £42bn of that spend is through local authorities. In a period in which public spending is going to be seriously restrained it is absolutely vital that public bodies and local authorities secure the maximum value for money out of every public pound spent. But in securing more efficient procurement we cannot afford to simply reduce public procurement to the lowest common denominator of price alone if we are going to secure wider economic, social and environmental objectives for our communities.

Public procurement has the potential to deliver long-term gains and efficiencies through focussing on “whole life” benefits.

Government has also indicated that they will support a Private Members Bill, Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value), put forward by Chris White, MP for Warwick and Leamington. Key elements of the Bill include a requirement that local authorities, when entering into public procurement contracts, give greater consideration to economic, social or environmental wellbeing during the pre-procurement stage. This could prove to be a welcome development in the context of putting environmental objectives at the heart of procurement strategies.

That is why APSE together with the Environment Centre of the University of Southampton and Walker Morris Solicitors has produced the Sustainable Procurement Toolkit. The aim is to build on the work that APSE has previously done on local economic multipliers and the use of community benefits in procurement by providing an interactive tool to assist local authorities in defining and prioritising competing policy objectives in procurement.

We were conscious in developing the toolkit that there is often a ‘disconnect’ between the wider policy objectives and goals of elected members and the practical application of procurement rules in order to ensure that local authorities can remain within the law and meet their fiduciary duties. Therefore we have produced a procurement policy tool that can assist elected members and officers in testing out policy objectives and competing priorities against realistic and practical

measures in procurement. The tool can also assist in evaluating the outcome of procurement exercises in order to refine policy for the future.

Public procurement is big money. Public authorities spend some 16% of the EU's gross domestic product. In 2007, research by the Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (IEPs) (formerly the Centres of Excellence) identified that each year £42 billion is spent by local government on external contracts, of this hugely significant amount:

- £12 billion of this is spent on commodities, goods and services
- £13 billion is spent on constructing and maintaining buildings and roads
- £6 billion is spent on adult social care
- £3 billion is spent on waste services

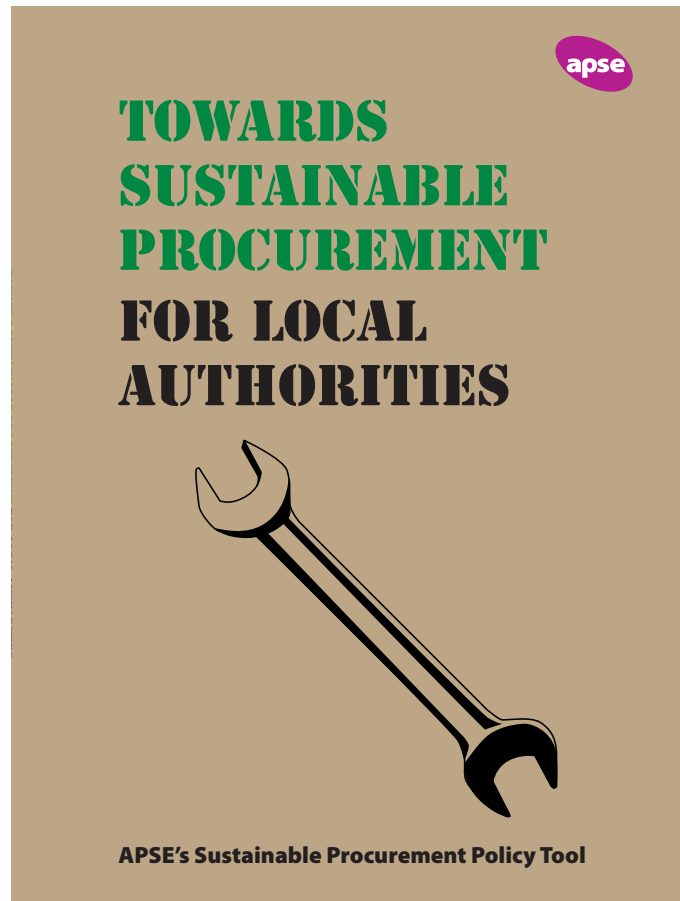
APSE members will already know that we recently published a research document considering the impact of local authorities from the perspective of the economic footprint of public services. This document highlights the way in which local authorities directly influence the local economy through the provision of employment for and services to members of the local community. A key finding was that for every £1 spent on public services there is a return of £1.64 into the local economy. If we can have this kind of economic impact the potential for local authorities to push forwards on sustainability is huge. Just imagine what could be achieved in not just economic terms but in social and environmental terms.

APSE believes that local authorities are at the centre of their communities. They have a significant impact on the lives of residents and have the specific impacts within the community in a number of different contexts, including:

- Service delivery
- Public accountability and transparency
- The local economy – employment and local supply chains
- Efficiency
- Skills and training

Achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental well-being is absolutely vital to

creating a vibrant and thriving economy for the future. Our report and the interactive procurement policy tool that accompanies it will hopefully provide you with a useful means of developing your own procurement strategy and in terms of driving the sustainable procurement agenda within your local authority.



Complimentary copies of towards sustainable procurement have already been distributed to APSE main contacts and Chief Executives of member local authorities. To order additional copies please contact Wai Lee on wlee@apse.org.uk. Copies are priced at £20 for members and £40 for non members and the publication includes the sustainable procurement interactive tool supplied on a CD.

Report back

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

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

England

Big society: Big debate

Mark Bramah APSE's assistant chief executive attended a workshop at Demos in London on 27 January on redesigning public service relationships as part of the University of Birmingham and Demos Policy Commission on the future of local public services in the 'big society'.

Mark also attended the National Litter Convention organised by Defra at Westminster Central Hall which brought together partners from government, local authorities, business and the voluntary sector for the launch of the 'love where you live' campaign.

Future of Audit and Inspection

APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien recently gave evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee Inquiry on the future of audit and inspection in local government, held at Portcullis House.

He also represented APSE at a meeting with the Department of Transport on the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme, on which APSE is a partner body.

London Calling

Paul recently attended the Public Sector Efficiency Expo at the Business Design Centre in Islington and the Sustainable Development UK conference at the QE11 centre.

Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)

APSE held a strategic forum at Parliament to discuss the opportunities created for local government by the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

The guest speaker was Dr Alan Whitehead MP, the Chair of PRASEG, the Parliamentary Renewable and Sustainable Energy Group.

Shakespeare's country

The Conservative Councillors Association annual conference 2011 held in Warwickshire provided an opportunity for APSE to host two workshops on 'avoiding the road to nowhere' in performance management. The conference also hosted a panel session with the Department for Communities and Local Government Ministerial team.

Less megaphone diplomacy

Paul O'Brien attended the Guardian Public Services Summit opened by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. In response to the DPM's plea that local government should not engage in 'megaphone diplomacy', Mr O'Brien pleaded for the same consideration from Ministers when referring to public servants!

Wales

A nibble of something healthy

APSE has produced the Appetite for Life report for 2009-2010 for councils throughout Wales and has sent a copy of this to the Welsh Assembly Government. APSE presented on the findings of the Appetite for Life report at the Local Authority Caterers Association (LACA) Wales meeting in Builth Wells in December.

Road to improvement

The County Surveyors Society (CSS) Wales (highways and transportation group) have looked at moving from the Welsh Audit Office to APSE performance networks to monitor performance from 2010-11. APSE is in the process of finalising arrangements for new authorities to sign up to performance networks, this was agreed at CSS Wales meeting in August.

A Welsh Symposium

APSE held two symposiums in Wales in March on 'Avoiding a road to nowhere: Transforming front line services through efficiency, entrepreneurship and innovation'. These were held in Llandudno on 15 March 2011 and Cardiff on 18 March 2011. They featured presentations from the Welsh Assembly Government, APSE's Chief Executive and case study's from member authorities, followed by workshops in the afternoon.

Scotland

Focus on the frontline

APSE Scotland's Building Maintenance and Housing event saw speakers from across political parties and the Scottish Government as well as leading expert speakers from across the industry. A focus was placed on best practice case studies and sharing and learning particularly on delivering efficiencies and sustainable solutions in frontline services.

APSE also held its prestigious annual housing and building maintenance apprentice awards at the event. Well done to all winners and finalists. Full details on APSE website.

CoSLA

APSE Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien and Principal Advisor, Andrew Spowart attended the annual CoSLA conference.

Conferences

APSE held a major one day conference on the 'Avoiding the road to nowhere' theme at Scottish Football's National Stadium, Hampden Park. Speakers included Colin Mair from the Scottish Improvement Service.

APSE's Chief Executive Paul O'Brien took part in a debate on outsourcing at a major Holyrood conference in Edinburgh.

Northern Ireland

Local Government reform takes centre stage

The Department of Environment has issued a Local Government Reform Policy Proposals consultation paper which includes issues around performance improvement, governance and service delivery. APSE has already issued a briefing paper and will be issuing a response to the consultation.

The Northern Ireland Audit Office has also issued a draft Code of Practice for Local Government Bodies for consultation and APSE will again be responding on behalf of its Members.

Castlereagh fit for winners

On Thursday 10th February, Councils in Northern Ireland celebrated the winners of the 2010 Local Government Awards Northern Ireland. Broadcaster Pamela Ballantine hosted the event in Castlereagh and announced the winners of the seven award categories. Well done to all the finalists and winners!

APSE held a one day 'avoiding the road to nowhere', seminar in Belfast on 14 March in conjunction with NIPSA. This looked at the financial context for local government and the Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency (ICE) Programme.

APSE also held a series of free workshops across Northern Ireland on performance management during March and April.

Below: The DCLG team at the Conservative Councillors Association Conference 2011

Below and across bottom of page: Celebrations of success at the Northern Ireland Local Government Awards 2011



Ground source

Robert Ebbs of A1 Housing Ltd explains why Ground Source Heat pumps allowed them to fly high on carbon reduction



A1 Housing Ltd made a corporate decision to move into installing renewable energies in some of its housing stock. This was dictated by the need to reduce their carbon footprint to achieve the governmental targets for 2020 and beyond. The demographic area of Bassetlaw was once a thriving Coal Mining area with most of its properties using solid fuel for heating. There is a large amount of outlying villages that have no access to the gas network and therefore have various forms of heating. There were 700 properties that were not or ever likely to be connected to the gas network.

A1 Housing's first step into a renewable form of heating was the installation of a Heat-king unit in Worksop that was to run the properties central heating only.

This was partly successful due to the fact that it occasionally froze up in winter due to a build up of ice on the evaporator and no forms of defrost built into the system. This was our first step on what would become a steep learning curve into Air source heat pumps.

In May 2007, A1 Housing entered into a project in conjunction with E-On to install six Calorex Ground Source Heat pumps at Riverside Bungalows in Cuckney, which is one of our outlying villages near Mansfield.

Following on from this successful step into a renewable energy system we looked at Calorex's Air Source units with a plan to install one and evaluate its performance. The contributing factors for choosing Calorex was that their unit could produce hot water at 65°C and Heating to 55°C and not requiring a borehole which is expensive for one off property. A property in Worksop was chosen that had just had its solid fuel heating condemned. In consultation with the tenants and Calorex we decided this would be a good test of Calorex's claims that a 9Kw unit would give adequate heating and hot water for a 3-bedroom house.

However, due to the Heavy rainfall in June 2007 a number of properties in Habbleshorpe were badly damaged due to flooding from the River Trent. These properties were heated by oil that was supplied from a communal oil tank that was also badly contaminated by the floodwater.

A1 Housing had at this time already started its Decent Homes works, so a decision was made to refurbish the damaged properties and use this opportunity to install renewable heating systems to each individual property. Having just installed the Calorex unit at Worksop it seemed the most appropriate decision to keep with Calorex and fit their units at Habbleshorpe.

ECA Technologies on behalf of E-On and A1 Housing monitored this project.

A1 Housing continued to install Calorex units in its housing stock as and when solid fuel heating systems were condemned.

During 2010 A1 Housing made the decision to install 141 Ground Source Heat Pumps with E-on, who

project managed the works and acquired the grants available through CERT and LCBP funding. A1 Housing secured a total of £500,000 funding.

In January 2010, the Heating and Technical & Design departments started to investigate how it could become MCS accredited. This was to help us gain access to becoming a more efficient installer and improve our systems for controlling how we monitored our installations. After visiting the MCS website it was decided to go with ELECSA as A1 Housing were already accredited to the ECA through its electrical department. Having spoken with ELECSA and various other people it was thought that someone from A1 Housing should attend a course on how to achieve MCS accreditation. We attended the one-day course run by "MCS – Made Easy" in Milton Keynes, this gave us the direction needed to fulfil the requirements of the MCS governing body. From this A1Housing developed its MCS systems over the next few months and achieved its MCS accreditation in July 2010.

A1 Housing has been monitoring the ASHP market for other manufacturers units. They trialled two other makes and decided on the Mitsubishi Eco-Dan with it's ability to modulate its performance dependant on the outside temperature and also to defrost itself without a buffer store of hot water.

A1 Housing have fitted ten Mitsubishi Eco-Dan units with four more planned. With the experience that A1 housing's installers have achieved with rigorous quality control measure's they ensure that all MCS guidelines are adhered to.

A1 Housing is presently pricing to fit up to 400 Mitsubishi Eco-Dan units at outlying villages this next financial year. With the experience gained from fitting these units it will make them well placed to go out into the open market through Branching Out (their Social Enterprise Scheme which trains local unemployed people) and enables them to fit units for other ALMO's and Councils.

A1 Housing and Mitsubishi Eco-Dan are MCS registered, enabling them to claim any available grants or RHI (Renewable Heat Incentive) for the owners of the properties, this being councils, RSL's or individual private properties.

Contact: Robert.Ebbs@a1housing.co.uk



Building the tools to meet the financial challenges that local government faces

Adele Reynolds has recently been appointed as a KTP Research Associate and is working on a research partnership between APSE and De Montfort University. Here she outlines how the KTP will enable APSE members to respond strategically to the financial challenges they face.



The context that local government operates within changed significantly in December 2010 when the coalition government announced their financial settlement for local councils. This was described by the Local Government Association as the 'toughest in living memory' and has left councils across the country with deeply challenging decisions to make as they set their budgets. Over the next few years local authorities will undoubtedly face significant choices, which will shape local services as we move forward into the future.

It is within this context that APSE has made the strategic decision to invest in its research programme and enter into a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with De Montfort University. The research partnership builds on APSE's track record of successful collaboration with De Montfort's Local Governance Research Unit. This gives APSE an exciting and worthwhile opportunity to further its own research capabilities through collaboration with an external partner.

The external research programme is a key priority for our National Council and the driving theme will be to

develop a positive vision for the future of local government around the notion of the 'Ensuring Council'. Innovation is crucial to the Ensuring Council model and the KTP will explore ideas such as a 'Revolving Investment Fund' to generate income for local authorities through investment in renewables and considering whether and how co-operatives and mutuals can complement and support public service provision.

We are at the starting point of building these new ideas about transforming front line services, empowering public sector staff and building a positive, sustainable future for local government. For more information about some of the policy issues and challenges we are tackling please visit DMU Policy Exchanges and be part of the conversation.

The KTP will deliver tangible benefits for APSE member authorities by developing the tools and practical guides which will enable APSE to offer specialist services to and advocacy for councils addressing the transformational challenges of reduced public spending. The research partnership will ensure that these new tools and services reflect the changing needs of APSE member authorities and have at their core a critical evaluation of good practice and innovation. All of the outputs that the KTP will deliver will underpin effective engagement with stakeholders and ensure that APSE continues to be a successful advocate on behalf of local government.

Contact: areynolds@apse.org.uk

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Tuesday 17 May 2011



APSE briefing notes update

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It's never too early to plan for Christmas!

Whilst the daffodils have yet to make an appearance David Parton of Gedling Council shares his diary thoughts from the December snowfall and provides a frontline managers perspective on planning for bad weather. David advises it is never too early to plan for the Christmas snows!



I'm standing at my office window trying to gauge the amount of snow we have had by estimating the level on a sheltered wall opposite. Some of the refuse crews have joined forces with the street cleansing crews and are busy snow clearing and gritting car parks and warden aided complexes. Other refuse employees are working with Nottinghamshire County Council highway employees, snow clearing and gritting the town centres of Arnold, Mapperley, Carlton and Netherfield.

Grounds maintenance crews are gritting the cemeteries paths, main park paths and our shopping centre car parks. A crew is also filling grit bins around the borough. We have two funerals today and another planned for Friday morning. This grave will need excavating.

I've decided the level has reached a good 12 - 14 inches, it's Wednesday 1st December, the short term weather forecast is not good and Christmas is just around the corner. We will have a big backlog of waste which will need clearing as quickly as possible and the forecast for the Christmas holiday period is still unknown. Time is against us.

We operate an alternative weekly collection of domestic waste (black bin) and dry recyclate waste (green bin) based on a 50/50 split across each collection zone per day. We also have a

fortnightly collection of glass from kerbside boxes collected on the same day as the green bins and a fortnightly collection of garden waste (April - mid December and monthly, January - March).

Gedling Borough Council's topography creates real difficulties in adverse weather with many steep hills, narrow roads and tracks that will not have seen a County Council gritter.

So decisions need to be made and this is easier when you have a plan and following the problems encountered in January 2010 we had developed a better approach to tackle the service issues during adverse conditions. Emails needed to be sent out to the Councillors, call centre staff and our communications team informing them of our plans to catch up on the backlog, the Website needed updating daily and the Media advised. So first decision, cancel the fortnightly glass collections, bulky household waste collections and garden waste service until further notice. We've now got an extra 14 employees (potential 5 extra crews available) to collect domestic waste using the 3 freighters available from garden waste and bulky waste collections. We operate with 2 spare freighters so just enough if we don't have any major breakdowns.

Domestic waste is the priority, but there was to be no further collections this week. Crews had been put on standby for Saturday domestic waste collections earlier in the week but this was cancelled early Friday morning as the forecast of severe low temperatures meant the risk of injury and danger to the public and the employees was too high. Crews remained on snow clearing/gritting duties. Gritting stocks are becoming depleted. Another update to the Members advises them of progress.

So the plan for Monday 6th December 2010 was to use the normal 10 rounds collecting domestic waste (five rounds) and recyclate waste (five rounds) and use the existing resources to collect the domestic waste missed the following Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Friday afternoon, we've just sourced a supply of grit although the price has been hiked up considerably. We do not have a highway agency arrangement so we have to source our own grit. Nevertheless; we really needed more supplies so we ordered 15 tonnes and from our local supplier, 45 tonnes of building sand. So we have 60 tonnes of grit/sand mixed to put down from 6th December 2010 if the weather does not relent. (That's about a week's worth but we also have a further delivery planned through Notts CC later in the week).

Monday 6th December 2010, my Waste Services Manager has determined that the Refuse Collection service would resume. Temperature is minus 6.5 and conditions are difficult. Many streets will not be passable and instructions to the refuse drivers' is proceed with care. Loaders are issued with shoe chains. It will be another difficult day and crews regularly update the back office by radio the streets they have not entered. These are recorded and a response team will attend to any missed domestic waste bins these as soon as it is possible. An email to Members advises them of our service provision and as always, I include the latest weather update from the Met Office.

Tuesday 7th December, it's now minus 13, but fortunately the day's collections are in the Arnold area and the topography here is flatter. We collect all but for around 600 bins. A really good day's effort by the crews and I send a message of thanks to the crews via their Supervisor. I'm pleased and inform the Members again by email with the latest Met office weather update.

Wednesday morning, for the 8th consecutive day I've walked the two miles in to work as it has not been possible to get my car out of my street. It is our domestic bin collection day today and I live in an area of steep hills. I can't see the freighter getting around this area. Temperatures are still very low and I've advised all the Members that due to the area, it is unlikely that the refuse crews will be able to collect from a considerable number of properties today. We achieved over 90%, far more than I had expected and the crews working on the backlog of black bins were also reporting they had almost caught up from the previous week. News also came through that a large supply of grit would be delivered Friday afternoon and this meant we were getting on top of the situation.

By the 13th December, refuse services resumed as normal. Temperatures were still in the minuses but signs of an improvement in conditions were coming through on the forecasts. Stock graves for the Christmas and New Year period were being dug out. We always have around 10 -12 graves prepared. Snow would continue to fall over the next week, but not severe and street cleansing also commenced albeit on a restricted service.

Everything is planned for Christmas in early October. My Waste Services Manager had agreed with the County Council which disposal facilities would be available and the back office staff prepared the annual refuse and recycling leaflet and calendar with effect from 1st December. Doing it this way means we can include the Christmas and New Year arrangements.

Friday afternoon 17th December 2010, Transport Services staff are changing the Agrippa signage on the refuse freighters as they come into the depot. On goes the Christmas and New Year collection message advising residents to check their calendar or visit our website. This year refuse collections, domestic and recycle, and glass collections have not changed. From Monday 27th December normal collections take place all week and Monday 3rd January 2011 is also a normal collection day.

Only adverse weather can stop the plan. 30 tonnes of grit are delivered at 5.00pm so we have enough to cover the next few weeks.

Friday 24th December 2010, I email the Members with the daily update and include the Met Office forecast over the Christmas period. We've done really well all week, having missed the snow that fell in the south of the UK. Better temperatures see a thaw towards the end of the week and the shoe chains, which have been so effective keeping the loaders upright, are removed.

A Street Cleansing crew is set up to work from 5.00am on Christmas Day for 2 hours cleaning the town centres after the Christmas Eve frivolities and the same is organised for New Year's Day.

Friday 31st December 2010. Good weather all week and the refuse service has gone without a hitch. Compliments from residents arrive by email, phone and letter.

Friday 7th January 2011. I'm really pleased; all residents who presented bins have had a full two weeks service over the holiday period. More compliments for the services have been received.

Conclusion:

Have a plan for bad weather, and have a second contingency plan to support this.

Suspend non-essential services.

Keep the media and Members up-to-date regularly.

Our latest 94% satisfaction survey result for waste services is a clear indication we are getting it right even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Contact: David Parton is Head of Direct Services at Gedling Borough Council



APSE innovation forum: **The localism bill**

Bookings for this event are now being taken!
Contact Keisha Swaby on kswaby@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.

Innovation forum, Aston Villa Football Club

Friday 13 May 2011

apse seminars