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Municipal entrepreneurship

Local authority
Innovative public services ahead

NO

Bureaucracy

Inefficiency

Stick-in-the-mud attitudes

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A background image featuring a dense field of 3D-rendered numbers in various colors (white, yellow, green, blue) and sizes, creating a sense of depth and data. A purple diagonal banner is overlaid on the bottom right of this image.

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Speakers include:

- Michael Portes, Director National Institute of Economic and Social Research
- Kersten England, Chief Executive, York City Council
- Rt. Hon. Margaret Hodge, MBE, MP, Chair of the House of Commons Public Accounts committee
- Richard Partington, Managing Director, Telford and Wrekin Council
- Professor Michael Hughes, Former Director of Studies at the Audit Commission and Independent Consultant
- Mark Bramah, APSE Assistant Chief Executive

Workshops:

- Building cleaning
- Building maintenance (housing & non-housing)
- Catering (education, civic hospitality and welfare)
- Cemeteries and crematoria
- Civic, cultural & community venues
- Highways, winter maintenance & street lighting
- Parks, open spaces and horticultural services
- Refuse collection
- Sports & leisure facility management and culture, leisure & sport
- Street cleansing
- Transport operations and vehicle maintenance

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Editorial

The real story behind the headlines

'First class waste of money', '£50 million in golden goodbyes' and '9607 spying missions'; these are just some of the recent headlines that have appeared in the national press. It is unlikely that we will see headlines that say 'Innovation at the Heart of Local Government' or 'Commitment to First Class Public Services Shines out in Local Councils' or 'Councils are Simply the Best at Entrepreneurialism'. But these latter headlines are certainly more reflective of the local councils that are members of APSE. Our latest research 'Municipal Entrepreneurship' which you can read about on pages 24-25 of this edition of direct news highlights examples of modern council innovation in public services.

Embracing an entrepreneurial spirit is actually commonplace amongst local councils in spite of the fiscal challenges that they face. Our latest research shows case studies as diverse as saving a filmmaking studio from the cutting room floor, to developing it as a commercially viable business entity, to deploying service redesign outcomes that improve productivity, whilst saving money in parks and open spaces. Bureaucracy and inefficiency are not common parlance in local councils and we should not be willing to accept, without challenge, biased perceptions of our public services. I hope that you will find the latest APSE research not just a source of inspiration, but a welcome tonic to the negative headlines.

Continuing the theme of innovation it would of course be remiss of me not to mention our service award winners and finalists. It would be easy to give up on celebrating the success of public services during times of austerity but the APSE awards provide the opportunity for councils, the length and breadth of the UK, to share in best practice, to learn from each other. Over the coming months award winners and finalists will be invited to share their experience at APSE advisory groups, seminars and events and indeed here in direct news where you can start by reading about Nottingham City Councils approach to service delivery as the APSE Council of the Year in Service Delivery for 2012. Congratulations to Nottingham City Council and indeed to all our winners and finalists!

Best wishes

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive

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'Small State' City Government: Lessons (and Warnings) from Baltimore

Research on neighbourhood revitalisation in the City of Baltimore, Maryland, provides an example of 'small state' provision in the United States, enabling consideration of the impact of local government on local communities, and the ability of civil society to step in when the state is much reduced. Dr Madeleine Pill explains

US Context

The US's devolved federal government system means that there is limited federal intervention at the local level. The competencies of local (in this case city) government derive from the state (of Maryland) via 'home rule' (or self-government) provisions. Local government tends to be the locus of authority and responsibility for city governance. Thus city-level circumstances - such as economic and social conditions, the institutional characteristics of its government and governance, and civic society traditions - are key in determining the potential for local action. Over time, reductions in what federal aid has been available, combined with the city's shrinking tax base, have led to what is regarded as a 'more realistic' approach, explained below.

Baltimore

Baltimore's circumstances, which shape potential for local action, derive from a legacy of depopulation which has concentrated deprivation. The city's population stands at around 630,000, a 30% decline since its peak in 1950, and nearly a quarter of its residents are below the US 'poverty threshold'. One in five of the city's 300,000 housing units are vacant. Its once strong civic society traditions have accordingly declined, as this city government officer explained: 'The population loss... the nature of leadership in the communities changed, so prior there always was somebody to talk to, now maybe there wasn't in a given neighbourhood...'

City government comprises a 15 member city council with power vested in the Mayor. The city's governance comprises public, private and non-profit institutions. Of great significance are Baltimore's 'anchor' (relatively immobile) institutions, in particular the Johns Hopkins University and its Hospital and Health System, the largest private employer in the State of

Maryland. Sponsors of neighbourhood-based community activities do include the federal government via its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), to which the city has been entitled on a needs basis since its introduction in the 1970s. However, annual allocations have been in constant decline, now at around \$20 million a year. These funds are disbursed by city government within extremely broad guidelines. The State of Maryland's Office of Neighborhood Reinvestment also funds activities as long as city government is in agreement. The national and city-based foundations which operate in Baltimore are also key sponsors of neighbourhood community-based efforts.

The guiding principle for these sponsors' activities is the 'asset-based' approach to resource allocation, as represented by the 'housing market typology'. As a city government officer explained, 'We went from a needs-based approach to an asset-based approach. We had unlimited need but fairly limited resources. So, it basically became an issue, how do we target our resources?' The typology was developed by a local philanthropic foundation and then adopted by the Mayor as a basis for the City Master Plan, as well as informing disbursement of the CDBG allocation. The typology maps each neighbourhood down to block level according to its housing 'assets', defined in terms of housing market value. It sets out different strategies for different markets. There is a focus on the 'middle' ('emerging, stable and transitional') categories where interventions are regarded as being 'able to improve the market', like supporting homeownership and marketing vacant homes. An example is the Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, established by a local foundation and then adopted by the Mayor.

'Distressed' neighbourhoods are prescribed demolition, albeit with recognition of the need for 'social service interventions' in the meantime. They are a focus only if there are opportunities for redevelopment. The predominant example is the East Baltimore Development Initiative, involving clearance of the area and relocation of its residents to create a bioscience business park adjacent to a Johns Hopkins facility. This megaproject has taken much of the city government's energy and was slated to receive significant state and federal government support via funds and tax credits. According to a city councilperson: 'Basically, any administration - any - needs to put its capital where the people are or where the sympathies are... Or where Hopkins is [laughs], right? ... Hopkins has a lot of self-interest going on, and I don't say that in a negative way, I mean, if it weren't for Hopkins I don't know who'd have a job.'

Community Examples

Two examples illustrate the implications of the city's governance of its neighbourhoods at community level. Operation Reach Out South West (OROSW) is a non-profit founded in 2000 by the foundation of a local hospital that is anchored in its inner-west Baltimore neighbourhood. OROSW is essentially the community outreach offshoot of the foundation. The foundation runs the programmes and OROSW provides the mechanism for resident input. But it is not really an example of direct community action. As a foundation officer explained, 'One of the unintended consequences is a capacity imbalance between the foundation and residents... it ends up that we are controlling the process'.

The other example, of a Community Benefits District (CBD), is interesting given the current push in England to create neighbourhood councils able to levy a Council Tax precept. The CBD is

a public entity enabled by state and city government legislation and funded by a 'surtax' levied on residential as well as business properties (in contrast to the Business Improvement District model which has already proved popular in the UK). The origins of the CBD lie in residents seeking to self-help by funding and managing their own response to local problems. But it is generally regarded as pretty unrealistic and has not been replicated. The area it covers is felt to be too large (extended at the state's insistence to include neighbouring poorer areas) and despite initial more comprehensive ambitions, it has retrenched to a focus on 'crime and grime' given lack of resource. The CBD was intended to supplement rather than supplant both voluntary activities and city service provision. But the community is not regarded as being particularly engaged - they pay the surtax and expect a service. There have also been problems with the City's provision of baseline services.

Conclusions

Does small state provision work? In Baltimore, the impact of city government on local communities is mediated via a governance network which includes private and non-profit interests, in particular education and medical anchor institutions (notably Johns Hopkins) and philanthropic foundations. These bodies have had a significant role in policy-setting. Baltimore's huge needs and lack of resource, compounded by the weak fiscal equalisation of the federal system, have resulted in what has been described as 'a triage approach to policymaking', investing only in those neighbourhoods deemed 'viable'. 'Unviable' neighbourhoods are effectively abandoned.



The evidence from Baltimore does not indicate that civil society can step into the breach when the state withdraws. Neighbourhoods' ability to engage in self-help behaviours depends on their capacities and resources. Both the examples given here are ongoing because they are 'anchored' (by a hospital foundation and a surtax mechanism). They are operating in spite of, rather than because of, city government. Other neighbourhoods lack these resources. Overall, Baltimore highlights the difficulties of substituting volunteering for government-led revitalisation, and provides a warning of the difficulties of attaining big society voluntarism.

This article draws from:

Davies, J.S and Pill, M.C. (2012) 'Empowerment or Abandonment? Prospects for Neighbourhood Revitalization under the Big Society' Public Money and Management 32(3): 193-200.

Davies, J.S and Pill, M.C. (2013) 'Hollowing-out Neighbourhood Governance? Re-scaling Revitalization in Baltimore and Bristol' Urban Studies, 49(10): 2199-2217.

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Nottingham City Council:

APSE Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery

Carole Mills-Evans, Nottingham City Council's Acting Chief Executive, explains the winning formula for the City of Nottingham and the difference they are making to local residents.

We are absolutely delighted to have been awarded the honour of APSE Council of the Year 2012, which is due recognition of the hard work by our front-line teams day in and day out. City Councillors have made high performing front line services a priority for many years and clearly understand that delivering big-city ambitions such as economic growth, job creation and developing integrated transport, such as the tram, and continually improving educational attainment can only be achieved if our core service offer is of a very high quality; this means our city's streets being clean, our parks being well used, our roads being free from pot holes and reducing levels of crime. That is why the whole organisation, alongside our city partners, relentlessly focus on continually improving these core services. It is why we've seen satisfaction with the Council rise from 47% in 2008 to 68% in 2011

Nottingham City Council has been a strong advocate of APSE for many years and as a Council, we share APSE's values and beliefs in high-performing, high-quality in-house front-line services and for Nottingham to be recognised by our peers as achieving excellence in these areas is both humbling and gratifying. I would like to take this opportunity to once again pay tribute to our front-line teams who throughout the year and regardless of the weather conditions continually strive to make our city cleaner and safer; this award belongs most of all to them.

So what have we done differently and successfully to achieve our ambitions so far?

Waste Management

In Nottingham, we know that waste management is one of the most visible and important services we provide and is why, over the last 2 years our approach to both waste collection and waste disposal has been transformed.

We have redesigned our waste collection service, one of the Council's most high-profile services; this has meant working alongside our workforce and trade unions to undertake a whole-scale round redesign project, which has led to changes to the majority of citizen's collection days and our operational rounds and practices. This was a very significant change management undertaking. The result is a highly efficient and productive waste collection service and realised efficiency savings of £000s.

As well as changes to our round collection arrangements, we also moved towards a fully employed Council workforce and removed any need for agency staff. This was part of a broader restructuring of public realm services covering waste collection, street scene and grounds maintenance and we now have a fully integrated, Council employed public realm workforce. Not only does this give our employees greater certainty of employment, it also allows a great deal more operational flexibility, with operational staff moving between service disciplines seamlessly and routinely. This is very important given the

seasonal variations within our services and has been well received by both our workforce and our citizens.

Waste collection is only one side of the coin and waste disposal is of equal importance. We are increasingly seeing waste disposal as part of the Council's overall energy strategy and here in Nottingham, we are fortunate to have an Energy from Waste (EfW) facility located within the city's boundary. This EfW facility is used to provide electricity and heat to around 4,500 homes and 150 business along 65km of pipe and is something we're seeking to build upon and have plans in place to extend; this means more citizens will be able to benefit from reliable, cheaper energy. We are also developing new energy facilities, such as the proposed Energy Park in the north of the city.

This doesn't mean that more traditional endeavours around recycling are any less important and we aim to produce the lowest amount of household waste of any core city and we are committed to work alongside our communities on behaviour change programmes, especially the SCoRE project, which operates in the city's around waste and energy management.

Innovation in parks and open spaces

Nottingham City Council Parks and Open Spaces has faced budget reductions of over £1million in the past couple of years, but the team is proactive with social entrepreneurship, commercialisation and innovation to increase income and maintain a high profile. External revenue now represents over 50% of service costs and income generation is around three times the national median. An impressive £10 of external capital funding is generated for every £1 match funding. Successes include a £3.1million Lottery grant to restore the Forest Recreation Ground, and doubling income to the Nursery. As a result the service is more sustainable with improved sites and services, resulting in resident satisfaction levels of 81% and a record level of quality accreditation.

This continues a remarkable five-year improvement programme with millions of pounds of investment, including 40 new playgrounds, three new skate parks, a string of outdoor gyms and multi-use games areas, restoration of historic sites, and investment in Neighbourhood Bloom. Imaginative partnerships with business, funders and the community includes work with Nottingham Retail BID to create an award-winning floral trail of contemporary wicker sculptures; engaging more than 6,000 citizens in Neighbourhood Bloom; a special award from Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust; climate change and sustainability initiatives including work with Nottinghamshire Bee Keeping Association and support for food growing initiatives, and a partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to improve our cemeteries.

Major programmes for capital works

Nottingham City Council's Major Programmes was formed in 2010.

The team's remit is to successfully deliver a portfolio of projects for the Council on time, within budget and to the quality expected. To date Major Programmes has delivered projects with a combined capital value of over £180m and is currently working on over 80 projects. The team also provides support and guidance in relation to corporate projects and is embedding project and programme management skills across the organisation, as well as implementing a very successful new project methodology which has already delivered savings of £3.5m on other corporate projects. But of course from a city wide perspective the programme has played a significant role in boosting Nottingham's economy. By bringing together existing pockets of good practice the Council's Corporate Leadership Team aimed to mitigate risk or project overruns and budget increases and improve project management skills across the Authority. The success of the new arrangements is a testament to the skills of the team and the outcomes they have achieved.

Moving forward on Transport

The Transport Services Team had previously operated on a silo function basis for Fleet, Workshop and Passenger Services but following a Corporate Transport Review there was a fundamental shift in the role of the service. The Transport Team, moved from that of provider of transport for operational areas to one of manager and custodian of the Council's major fleet assets

The new team was charged with delivering significant savings and efficiencies in addition to providing corporate ownership of transport activities. The combination of project-led savings and transformational change was a challenge in the traditional role of transport services.

Fleet alone accounted for £6m of expenditure so the Fleet unit was tasked with taking up the mantle of challenging operational heads of services on fleet provision and utilization to reduce the fleet by over 10% or 450 vehicles. They was also a need to address the 'gradual drift' of service areas deferring replacement decisions which gave rise to a £450,000 expenditure on hire vehicles. Radical actions were deployed to remove 75% of vehicles from hire within a proactive realignment of the fleet replacement programme and the purchase into fleet of hire specialist vehicles at attractive rates. This achieved savings of £320,000 in two years on the hire vehicle bill.

Innovative use of fleet pool, reduced garage downtime and removal of

supervisor van provision to be replaced by pool provision realized reduction in mileages and fall in the number of spare vehicles. The Fleet office were given the space to take ownership of the project principles and found solutions, having challenged themselves in how their technical knowledge could provide service area support, in controlling transport access, expenditure and implementing effectively their new corporate influence on transport across the Council.

The Diversity Academy

The Diversity Academy is an innovative partnership between Nottingham City Council, Nottingham Forest in the Community and several voluntary community organisations working predominantly with Black and Minority Ethnic communities. Establishing partnership working with the BME voluntary and community sector has been an effective tool in our work to increase the number of BME citizens engaging in our services and community provision, and ownership from within our target communities has been fundamental to its success.

There is wide spread national, regional and local evidence to indicate that BME communities continue, in the main, to be under-represented within all facets of sport and physical activity; whether as participants or becoming volunteers, leaders and coaches. The Diversity Academy partnership continues to successfully increase the number of sport and physical activity leaders, coaches and volunteers from BME groups. We have also gone on through our innovative partnership approaches to improve accessibility of sport and leisure service provision for underrepresented BME groups and engage people from BME groups in sport and physical activity at a young age to encourage sustained participation including building capacity with community organisations to deliver sustainable sport and physical activity within their communities.

The impact and progress that the partnership has made has been recognised nationally at the inaugural Asian Football Awards (supported by the FA, Kick It Out and Sporting Equals), where the initiative was awarded 'Best Development Initiative of the Year 2012'

Whole system approach to energy management

Our vision for Nottingham is clear. We want to create a prosperous, leading, low carbon and resilient city, maximizing the opportunities for green growth and attracting investment in prestigious projects. We have set ambitious targets



Above: Carole Mills-Evans

to reduce city-wide CO2 by 26% by 2020 (2005 baseline) and to generate 20% of our energy needs from low or zero carbon technologies. In order to meet these targets, a holistic approach, focusing on technology, communication, and behavioural change is required.

One of our technological approaches has been the solar PV installation programme, focusing particularly on social housing and areas of fuel poverty. To date, over 2200 panels have been installed; the initial phase of 600 panels funded through a partnership with Eon, and the second phase (over 1600 panels) funded with over £7 million of investment from Nottingham City Council. The homes taking part could see their household energy bills fall by £120 a year. But as we all know it doesn't matter how many PV panels you install, or how well you communicate, unless people change their behaviour as a result, limited energy and carbon savings will be made.

As part of our approach in Nottingham behaviour change has been fundamental. The Schools Collaboration on Resource Efficiency (SCoRE) programme, funded by Climate East Midlands, and managed by the Carbon Trust, supports and encourages all stakeholders within schools to make simple changes, such as changing heating settings and turning off lights. One participating primary school has already made an estimated saving of £1,635.08 per year, which equates to approximately 9.91 tonnes of CO2.

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A message from the new APSE National Chair Cllr John Kerr Brown



It is a great privilege to have been elected as APSE's National Chair for the second time since I have been serving on the National Council of the Association alongside John Coates from North Lincolnshire Council who has agreed to act as my National Secretary.

As APSE continues to reflect the priorities and concerns of the APSE membership my over-arching theme for the next year will be to 'keep it real' and make sure that what we do matters to front-line operational services.

I am in the enormously privileged position of inheriting an organisation that is financially sound, is producing a wealth of important research and developing a strong portfolio of services to support its membership. I intend to both safeguard and develop that inheritance for APSE over the coming year.

I intend to make sure that APSE is a well managed, and viable organisation, which provides both value for money and quality in the services that it provides to the local government community.

But in addition to good housekeeping there are a number of key themes that I would like to see the Association develop in terms of its overall work programme.

Firstly, I want to continue with APSE's pioneering work on the role of local government in the green economy and addressing the enormous opportunities for local authorities through renewable energy projects, looking at innovative ways of saving on energy costs and delivering more sustainable and environmentally friendly services. In particular I would like APSE to do some practical work around alternative fuels and the potential benefits of electric fleet.

Secondly, given the huge success of the London Olympic and Paralympics games and the feel good factor it has

provided to the whole country during very difficult times, I would like APSE to look at how local authorities from right across the U.K. can benefit from the Olympic legacy and ensure that the enthusiasm for sporting achievement, as well as the economic, and wider health and social benefits, can be maximised over the coming years.

Thirdly, local authorities are facing some difficult challenges following on from the Coalition Government's welfare reform programme, including the introduction of universal credit and changes to the benefit system. This will impact both on the services we provide and the communities that we represent. APSE's vision for local government around developing ideas of an 'ensuring council' will need to address the implications of welfare reform and how councils can sustain services and be the advocates for deprived communities as well as creating opportunities and pathways for people through employment and training.

Finally, I want to ensure that APSE continues to build effective engagement with its own members in order to reflect their priorities in the work that we do, but also to make sure that our members can benefit from the range of research, practical advice and examples of best practice that are the bread and butter of APSE.

Over the last year, APSE started to set out its own vision for a strong and positive future for local government. An 'ensuring council' rather than the hollowed out 'enabling council' with little capacity or means to do anything other than manage reducing budgets and make cuts to vital services. In our work we gave a voice to elected members, managers, staff and their trade unions who are all too often ignored by those who only see a residual and marginal role for local government in the future.

We are putting forward a positive vision for local government that builds on our rich municipal heritage. A strong, self-sufficient, innovative and entrepreneurial local government which takes its stewardship role seriously and has the capacity, skill and experience to deliver on behalf of our communities. Without this, local government will begin to lose its relevance and be faced with a fairly grim future, lacking the ability and the resources to meet the challenges that we face. So it is my intention that in order to take APSE forward we will embed the principles of the ensuring council and apply its tests to all the work that we do over the coming year.

I will of course listen to and take the advice of my colleagues on the National Council during my year of office, since we have built a very strong team of councillors and officers who have an excellent rapport and understanding of APSE both inside and out. I hope that as the year progresses my term of office will allow me to meet the APSE membership in person at our regional and national events. I certainly hope that you will be joining me in making this a year in which the APSE membership are truly regarded as the voice of integrity in local government frontline services.

APSE Annual Seminar 2012

Conference report

This year's annual seminar was themed on 'Thriving frontline services: Councils, communities and citizens: working together for better neighbourhoods'.

The seminar was opened by Derek MacKay, MSP, Minister for Local Government and Planning who warned that UK changes to planning laws could risk 'throwing the baby out with the bath water'. Mr MacKay also highlighted the vital role that local councils have in supporting local communities during times of austerity and advocated a strong role for local councils as local champions of communities and local economies.

Local councils international

The seminar's opening plenary session provided an international perspective on the role of frontline services within local government with speakers providing an overview of the issues in Spain, The Netherlands and the USA.

Professor Carlos Alba outlined the processes within Spain that had led to 'territorial devolution' and the development of a new framework for local government in Spain. Over 85% of Spanish municipalities are made up of populations of less than 5,000 residents; however over 25% of the population live in the larger municipalities of up to 500,000 residents. Local government accounts for just 13% of public expenditure whereas regional government accounts for 36% and central government for 51% of public spending. The limitations in local spending power have been harshly felt

since the central government austerity measures reported Professor Alba.

Professor Hendrik Wagenaar reported that Dutch local government has increased in importance and sovereign power over the last 30 or so years; he said that The Netherlands has always been called, somewhat paradoxically, a 'decentralized unitary state', but that in the last three decades the balance has shifted from the national centre towards local governance. Professor Wagenaar said there had been a 'push and pull factor at work' whereby successive governments had transferred the implementation of large policy domains, such as education, social welfare, housing, disability, crime and safety, to municipalities – often accompanied by deep budget cuts. However Hendrik said that municipalities were becoming 'less and less shy to flex their muscles' when they disagreed with national policies. At the same time municipalities have developed considerable governance capacity to the point that nowadays the function of alderman in a big city is often seen as a springboard for a career in national politics.

The USA overview was provided by Dr Madeleine Pill of Cardiff University who has led on several research studies including a study on neighbourhood revitalisation in the City of Baltimore, Maryland. Dr Pill reported that the US's devolved federal government system left limited capacity to intervene at a local level. Within Baltimore local circumstances were she said exacerbated by depopulation and

concentrated deprivation. Action to stem the decline had included a local philanthropic foundation and the adoption by the Mayor of a City Master Plan. However Dr Pill warned that the experiences of Baltimore do not indicate that civil society can step into the breach when the state withdraws. Perhaps a timely lesson in the context of the Big Society for the UK?

Shaping public policy that works for the frontline

Katie Schmuecker Associate Director of the IPPR North, Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive and Heather Wakefield Head of Local Government for UNISON debated the future of frontline services with Ms Wakefield.

Ms Schmuecker opened discussion by highlighting that some of the problems we face are not just about the current austerity measures but long term systemic problems such as how best to fund and provide social care services. Paul O'Brien highlighted the work of APSE's research programme on innovation and the future role of local government warning that solutions are not necessarily to be found in new structures or legal forms. O'Brien said that councils need to look at the resources and powers councils already have at their disposal to be innovative in service delivery, and entrepreneurial in their approach to service transformation.

A service delivery symposium saw Brian Devlin, Executive Director of Land and Environment at Glasgow City Council, Richard Auton of Walker



Derek Mackay MSP



Carlos Alba



Prof Hendrik Wagenaar



Madeline Pill



Katie Schmuecker



Paul O'Brien



Heather Wakefield



Brian Devlin

Morris solicitors, Iain Waddell of Tayside Contracts and Dr Steven Griggs of De Montfort University explore differing models of service delivery. Mr Devlin provided an analysis of the differences between private sector delivery models and the public sector and, whilst recognising the necessary differences in approach are necessary, pointed out the dynamics of shareholder interest compared to community interest and the public sector culture compared to that of private sector ethos.

Richard Auton continued this theme by explaining that although public law does fetter certain approaches there are also powers that can often be underutilised and which would allow greater 'commercial' approaches to service delivery such as charging and trading in non-statutory services and a whole framework of permissive regulations to govern shared service outcomes. Iain Waddell highlighted precisely Richard's point in explaining the shared services approach in Tayside Contracts which brought together Angus Council, Dundee City Council and Perth & Kinross Councils employing 2400 staff with an annual turnover of some £65m in catering, cleaning, construction and transport.

Following the theme of service delivery Dr Steven Griggs highlighted the latest collaborative research between APSE and De Montfort University 'The Ensuring Council' and explained to delegates the research findings show councillors, council officers and trade union respondents do not support 'enabling' models of local government and believe that hollowed out councils will not only lose the capacity to deliver local services but will also lose the capacity to intervene in local economies and for the benefit of local communities. Griggs highlighted that an 'Ensuring' council sees a core role for continuing local capacity.

Innovation zones

For many delegates the innovation zones on different service disciplines provided a unique opportunity to both

learn from best practice and discuss service improvements that others have adopted. This included speakers on the local environment, highways and street lighting, soft FM services and sport, leisure and public health and innovation and excellence in building and housing maintenance.

Delivering on the big neighbourhood issues

Housing, public health, unemployment and the tackling the big neighbourhood issues dominated the debates on day two of the seminar. Paul Jukes, Executive Director of North Lanarkshire Council said that council services can play a key role in tackling the big issues such as youth unemployment, worklessness, and rehabilitation of ex-offenders and highlighted North Lanarkshire's Working Youth Investment Programme which includes the development of modern apprentices, a graduate internship programme and a work placement programme. Elaine Melrose, Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development of West Dunbartonshire explained that as a 'lifer' in local government her vision and that of West Dunbartonshire was to allow local communities to dream and to inspire for a better life. Whilst there were hard decisions to be taken the approach of West Dunbartonshire was to nurture partnerships to make the vision possible and this included not just building new homes but developing aspirational communities and young people in particular.

Sally Burns, Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that public health was an essential part of the neighbourhood jigsaw in York but that the city had a proud history in supporting public health. Ms Burns highlighted Rowntree Park, a public space but put to good use as a space for public health benefits including a quality social space, recreation, leisure and sport, education and learning, apprenticeships and healthy foods (and of course ice cream!). Sally said that the Park's origins were to 'encourage the wellbeing of the people' but that is still true as much today as when it was founded in 1921.



Richard Auton



Iain Waddell



Steve Griggs



Paul Jukes



Elaine Melrose



Sally Burns



Andy Vaughan



Cllr Alex Norris

Andy Vaughan, Director of Neighbourhood Services, at Nottingham City Council and Cllr Alex Norris, Cabinet Member, continued the theme of the value of the local environment to local communities and neighbourhoods, in a presentation that highlighted Nottingham's aims to Britain's cleanest city. The Nottingham speakers highlighted the importance of involving citizens in behaviour change to support the local environment and the public realm including improving waste and recycling services.

The green symposium

The value of the green economy to local public services was brought to life by a symposium session which included Steven Cirell an APSE solutions associate, Jonathan Edwards of Wrexham Council and Duncan Simpson of CIWM. Cirell explained the ability for councils to create an investment cycle which could not only help to generate income but could help achieve new jobs and skills in the local economy. Jonathan explained Wrexham's approach to the development of Solar PV projects on social housing which was helping to tackle fuel poverty as well as generate inward investment opportunities. Duncan Simpson of CIWM explained the statistical trends in waste and recycling and the imperatives of tackling waste minimisation specific challenges such as plastics recycling and the ability to deal with packaging issues. If climate change targets are to be met there is a need for new and innovative ways to tackle waste and recycling and 'work' the green

economy opportunities to tackle waste differently.

Performance, performance, performance!

In the final plenary session of the seminar Professor Michael Hughes, Neil McInroy Chief Executive of CLES and Mark Bramah Assistant Chief Executive of APSE discussed the need for effective data and performance management in public services in order to continue to demonstrate 'best value' or 'value for money' in public service delivery. They highlighted that good data is not about protectionism but an essential means by which the public could hold local councils to account for the services that they provide. It was also argued that in times of cuts good data can help make the arguments for budget setting processes and demonstrate that cuts will have an impact on some frontline services. Neil McInroy tackled the arguments for 'Big Society' explaining that whilst it is theoretically possible to measure social returns on investment these were not often quick wins and longer term measurements and longer term analysis of success would be needed. However the value of investment in local economies and the ability for councils to intervene in order to stimulate local economic activity were vital components of creating resilient local economies.

Contact: mbaines@apse.org.uk



Steve Cirell



Jonathan Edwards



Duncan Simpson



Alan Brodie



Neil McInroy



Mark Bramah



Michael Hughes

Service Awards 2012



“Once again we see the true face of local government. Innovative, inspiring and ready to deliver the very best in frontline services to our local communities”

Cllr Jim Docherty, APSE National Chair 2011/12



West Lindsey District Council



London Borough of Enfield



Swindon Commercial Services

Best Employment & Equality initiative

Kindly sponsored by UNISON

Aberdeen City Council
Falkirk Council
Fife Council
Middlesbrough Council
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
West Lindsey District Council

Winner: West Lindsey District Council

Transforming the Workforce

West Lindsey District Council's transformation programme was about positive values, cultural change, empowered staff and the development of leadership and skills. All key to an Entrepreneurial Council where people enthusiastically work to their full potential.

Our deal with our staff has resulted in no redundancies, a workforce with opportunities to develop themselves, a stronger corporate one team ethos and a strong focus on matrix working that reduces professional silos with greater focus on results for citizens and the district.

Best Local Democracy

Kindly sponsored by Velocity

Broxtowe Borough Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Gedling Borough Council
London Borough of Enfield
Stockton on Tees Borough Council
West Lindsey District Council

Winner: London Borough of Enfield

Community Engagement

Local people involved in local decision making is a key priority for the current administration in Enfield. In order to support Councillors to fulfil this aim, the focus for Democratic Services has changed from a traditional office administrative function, to a front line Democratic, Scrutiny and Outreach function covering not only the core democratic functions but more importantly a wider outreach role that engages the community and helps Councillors determine what their community wants.

Best Housing & Regeneration initiative

Kindly sponsored by Morrison Scotland

Aberdeen City Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Durham County Council
Hull City Council
Swindon Commercial Services
West Dunbartonshire Council

Winner: Swindon Commercial Services

Swindon Commercial Services Ltd - Malmesbury Gardens

Swindon Commercial Services Ltd (SCS) is strongly establishing itself as an innovative constructor of sustainable homes delivering strong financial returns for Swindon Borough Council, as well as reducing the Council's carbon footprint. Lyndhurst Crescent is the latest scheme to demonstrate the commercial viability of renewable materials in mainstream construction with this landmark social housing development for Swindon Borough Council.

Best Efficiency initiative

Kindly sponsored by LHC

Blackpool Coastal Housing
Caerphilly County Borough Council
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Efficiency East Midlands
Fife Council
Liverpool City Council
Newcastle City Council
Warwickshire County Council
West Midlands Council

Winner: Liverpool City Council

Development and Implementation of Reduced Frequency Cleaning Services without Compromising Standards

Liverpool City Council's Building Cleaning Service has successfully introduced reduced frequency cleaning services in its five main city centre administrative buildings without compromising on cleaning standards. This has led to real savings of over £200,000 year on year



Liverpool City Council

Stockton on Tees Borough Council/
NHS Stockton on Tees

London Borough of Havering

in the delivery of the service and contributed greatly to the financial performance of the service, and the council as a whole, following the significant reductions to operational budgets implemented following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010.

Best Health & Wellbeing initiative Kindly sponsored by UNISON

Birmingham City Council
Durham County Council
Fife Council
Leeds City Council
Manchester City Council
South Yorkshire Police
Stockton on Tees Borough Council/ NHS
Stockton on Tees

Winner: Stockton on Tees Borough Council/ NHS Stockton on Tees

Reducing Excess Winter Deaths in Stockton-on-Tees

Cold weather increases the risk of many health conditions, contributes to social isolation and reduces an individual's ability to live independently. In Stockton-on-Tees, approximately 106 more people die in winter months compared with other times of the year. A large number of these Excess Winter Deaths are preventable. This health and wellbeing initiative is reducing Excess Winter Deaths through effective partnership working, the targeting of interventions, joint commissioning and joint provision of health, social care and housing services.

Best Public/ Private Partnership Working Kindly sponsored by Eversheds

Amey
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Caerphilly County Borough Council
East Lothian Council
Flintshire County Council
Hull City Council
London Borough of Havering
Renfrewshire Council
West Lindsey District Council

Winner: London Borough of Havering

The Banking Protocol

The 'Banking Protocol' has been developed as a good practise guideline for banking transactions; to be implemented and used by private sector banking staff. The scheme has been developed by the London Borough of Havering (LBH) in partnership with local banks, Metropolitan Police, Community Police Consultative Group and Age Concern. The purpose of the scheme is to protect the Borough's older and vulnerable residents by safeguarding cash withdrawals.

Best Public/ Public Partnership Working Kindly sponsored by Liberata

Dorset Waste Partnership (Dorset County Council)
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Guildford Borough Council (Surrey Waste Partnership)
London Borough of Merton
North, East & South Ayrshire Councils
Renfrewshire Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Yorkshire Police
Xentrall Shared Services (the Stockton and Darlington Partnership)

Winner: North, East & South Ayrshire Councils

All Ayrshire Minor Maintenance Works Framework

North, South and East Ayrshire Councils' shared service initiative for the procurement of external works resulted in the development and implementation of an innovative electronic web-based procurement and management system; realising cost savings for the Councils and ultimately benefiting local communities and contractors. Reductions in submitted contractors' rates and benchmarking of the Councils' performance through system generated benchmark rates, has identified savings equating to approximately £870k from £11.4m of works carried out by both external contractors and in-house service providers.



North, East & South Ayrshire Councils



Sheffield City Council



Derry City Council

Best Public / Voluntary Partnership Working

Kindly sponsored by Walker Morris

Aberdeen City Council
Blackpool Coastal Housing
City of Edinburgh Council
Milton Keynes Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Nottingham City Council
Salford City Council
Sheffield City Council
Stirling Council

Winner: Sheffield City Council

Disability Sheffield: Within Reach and Activity Sheffield

The Disability Sheffield Project is delivered in partnership with Within Reach (Disability Charity) Activity Sheffield (Sheffield City Council) and together their mission is to assist more disabled people in accessing sport, staying in sport and fulfilling their potential in the city of Sheffield. Their aim is to;

- Increase sustained opportunities for disabled people to participate in sport and physical activity
- Create a pathway from grassroots participation through elite level competition
- Develop a sustainable workforce for disability sport

Best Community & Neighbourhood initiative

Kindly sponsored by Multihog UK Ltd

Aberdeen City Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Derry City Council
Falkirk Council
Havant Borough Council
Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Stirling Council
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Winner: Derry City Council

The Challenging Underage Drinking initiative (CUD)

The Challenging Underage Drinking initiative has brought the public, private and voluntary sectors together, reducing crime by 43%, transforming lives of local residents and invigorating community spirit. Young people, previously drinking alcohol in the streets and causing nuisance, have now befriended elderly residents who had feared them. Alcohol retailers are part of the solution rather than the problem. A key achievement is improved working relationships and trust between all sectors, delivering better outcomes for citizens with minimal additional resources.

Best Information Technology & Communication initiative

Kindly sponsored by Consilium Technologies

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire Council
Cordia (Services) LLP
London Borough of Havering
Newcastle City Council
South Ayrshire Council
Vale of Glamorgan Council

Winner: Aberdeen City Council

Confirming a really effective IT solution

Aberdeen City Council sought a highly effective and efficient IT system to work across all service areas, replace a myriad of individual computer systems and support a responsive and highly visible programme of maintenance, upgrade and repair of Council-owned assets. The selected IT solution has seen a five year increase of 85% in the number of inspections carried out with a parallel increase of 69% in the number of jobs completed for the benefit of Aberdeen's citizens, businesses and communities.



Aberdeen City Council

Wrexham County Borough Council

Stockport Homes Ltd & Stockport Council

Best Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency initiative

Kindly sponsored by Stroma

Aberdeen City Council
Fife Council
North Tyneside Council
Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Swindon Commercial Services
Wrexham County Borough Council

Winner: Wrexham County Borough Council

Solar Photovoltaic Installation Project

Wrexham Council's multi million pound Solar Photovoltaic (PV) installation project is the largest social housing scheme in the UK, with 3,000 domestic properties fitted with solar panels.

Designed initially as an internal carbon reduction project, the scheme has transformed into the UK's flagship Solar PV scheme, demonstrating the potential and value of the renewable energy market within the UK.

Headline grabbing benefits include:-

- Tackling Fuel Poverty
- Generating long term sustainable income
- Creating jobs
- Stimulating the local economy

Best Service Team Construction & Building

Kindly sponsored by City Building (Glasgow) LLP

City & County of Swansea
Lisburn City Council
Nottingham City Council
South Lanarkshire Council
South Tyneside Homes
Stockport Homes Ltd & Stockport Council
Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner: Stockport Homes Ltd & Stockport Council

Repair 1st

The team went through a transformational change to work collaboratively in partnership with the private sector delivering excellent repairs and void works services to customers. This has included capital investment works, planned maintenance projects, PV installations, third party works and further exciting growth opportunities within the team. The team has met or exceeded all its increasing standards and targets for six years in succession, with plans to continue to grow and improve the service in future.

Best Service Team Catering

Kindly sponsored by CRB Solutions

East Renfrewshire Council
Gateshead Council
Manchester City Council
Newcastle City Council
Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Wigan Council/ MetroFresh

Winner: Wigan Council / Metrofresh

M people

We're proud to present our very own m people!

And whilst they don't claim to be chart-toppers, these passionate award-winners are committed to going that extra mile and have much to be proud of in their relentless pursuit of professional excellence.

Over the past eighteen months, they have repeatedly proven their ability to show business acumen, whilst still having fun and acting as an inspiration to colleagues, clients and communities.

The proof of their success is definitely in the pudding.

Best Service Team Building Facilities Management & Cleaning

Kindly sponsored by Numatic International

Aberdeen City Council
Gateshead Council
Liverpool City Council
Newcastle City Council
Renfrewshire Council



Wigan Council / Metrofresh



Scottish Borders Council



Dorset County Council

Scottish Borders Council
Wolverhampton City Council

Winner: Scottish Borders Council
Building Facilities Management Cleaning service

Scottish Borders Council Cleaning Services have been proactive in creating initiatives that not only answer the need to produce budget savings, but which also improve working conditions for employees, and have a positive effect on the customer and wider community. These initiatives range from the introduction of daytime cleaning and new technology to the development of a school play. We have created a much leaner organisation, with improved absence rates, and a more effective service and sharper client relationship.

Best Service Team Highways, Winter Maintenance & Street Lighting

Kindly sponsored by Nu-Phalt & Jetpatcher Ltd

Aberdeen City Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Dorset County Council
Hull City Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
South Lanarkshire Council
Thurrock Council

Winner: Dorset County Council

Dorset Highways - Continuous improvements to efficiency and performance in challenging times

A new approach to service delivery which has seen the establishment of an integrated service delivery team "Dorset Highways" to replace traditional client / contractor arrangements and has successfully achieved the £2 million of efficiency savings per annum required to contribute to the corporate austerity targets.

Whilst introducing these new arrangements, the team have designed, and constructed major schemes to ensure the infrastructure for the 2102 Olympic sailing event was complete and ready within the predetermined timescales.

Best Service Team Transport & Fleet
Kindly sponsored by DAF Trucks

Aberdeenshire Council
Gateshead Council
Knowsley Council
Newcastle City Council
Nottingham City Council
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Wakefield Council

Winner: Knowsley Council

The Drive Forward to be the Best in Class

Knowsley Fleet and Logistics Management Services (FLMS) is the sole provider of fleet supply, management and maintenance services within the Metropolitan Borough of Knowsley. It also provides logistical support to service directorates through the provision of depot, stores and delivery/courier services. It is not an overnight success story it represents a steady evolution of an organisation that has built its current success on a solid foundation of first class practices and procedures. Fleet policy and day to day operations have been developed to meet the needs of the business whilst at the same time not being afraid to seek continuous improvement and change in order to provide as efficient and cost effective service to its customers as possible.

Best Service Team Waste Management & Recycling

Kindly sponsored by Zero Waste Scotland

Caerphilly County Borough Council
Gateshead Council
Hertsmere Borough Council
Hull City Council
Milton Keynes Council
Nottingham City Council
Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner: Caerphilly County Borough Council

Increasing recycling rates through expert service delivery and growing public satisfaction

Caerphilly County Borough Council is continuously at



Knowsley Council



Caerphilly County Borough Council



Wakefield Council

the top of the tables for their outstanding achievements and improved recycling/ composting rates. Our continuous customer satisfaction enhancement over the past few years presents the efficient and effective service delivered by Waste Management at Caerphilly. Our success is no doubt: a result of the first class service provided by our "helpful, polite and courteous" team with a "fantastic spirit." We believe our ongoing improvements will ensure Caerphilly remains a highly respected Welsh authority.

Best Service Team Street Cleansing & Streetscene

Kindly sponsored by GT Cleaning Machines Ltd

Belfast City Council
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Fife Council
Oxford City Council
Renfrewshire Council
Wakefield Council

Winner: Wakefield Council

From Engagement to Action

Wakefield Council's Street Scene Engagement Team has established an innovative way of providing community groups with support to develop green spaces within their communities. They have successfully created a localised development framework, with strategic objectives, to provide improvements for green spaces that reflect the needs of the local community. Challenges are being overcome to create sustainable green spaces that are inviting and that the community is proud of.

Best Service Team Parks, Grounds & Horticultural

Kindly sponsored by SGM Contracts LLP

Birmingham City Council
Durham County Council
Knowsley Council
Nottingham City Council
Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Wakefield Council

Winner: Nottingham City Council

Nottingham Parks and Open Spaces - a team of social entrepreneurs

Nottingham City Council Parks and Open Spaces team embraces financial challenges with a spirit of social entrepreneurship, commercialisation and innovation. The team brings in over 50% of the cost of the service and generates £10 of external capital funding for every £1 of Council funds. This has made the service more sustainable, broadened its appeal and increased income. Working imaginatively with partners, funders and citizens supports an ambitious multi-million pound programme of improvements, resulting in resident satisfaction levels of 81%.

Best Service Team Sports, Leisure & Cultural Kindly sponsored by Kyron Energy & Power Ltd

Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Broxtowe Borough Council
Durham County Council
Gedling Borough Council
Sheffield City Council
South Gloucestershire Council
Stockton on Tees Borough Council

Winner: Durham County Council

Prison Library Service

Durham County Council's Prison Library Service provides library services to four prisons in County Durham, serving prisoners ranging from young offenders to high security. In total, the service covers six libraries in HMP Frankland, HMP Durham, HMP Low Newton and HMYOI Deebolt. Along with the library service, the team provide general reading groups and a variety of computer software in all four prisons as well as running a number of projects to help prisoners learn and develop skills.



Nottingham City Council



Durham County Council

Overall Council of the Year in Service Delivery

Kindly sponsored by Reactec Ltd

- Aberdeen City Council
- City of Edinburgh Council
- Durham County Council
- Nottingham City Council
- Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
- Sheffield City Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Stockton on Tees Borough Council
- Wakefield Council
- West Lindsey District Council

Winner: Nottingham City Council



Overall Council of the Year:

Nottingham City Council

APSE would like to thank all sponsors of the Service Awards 2012 for their support





Pitfalls of Ignoring Safety Issues for Public Sector

With the number of Hand Arm Vibration claims rising, health surveillance is not 100% effective and paper based HAV monitoring proves to be ineffective against claims; companies are under more pressure than ever to secure the welfare of their workforce and company from HAVS risk, whilst reducing cost.

In 1985 vibration white finger was officially listed as a prescribed condition in the UK. Now, with more than £100m of government compensation having been paid out to victims, councils across the country are buying into preventative solutions.

Medically known as Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS), vibration white finger (VWF) affects hundreds of thousands of British workers employed across the private and public sectors.

However with some five million people exposed to the risk of VWF daily, that number is only expected to rise.

HAVS is the result of over exposure to vibration equipment - such as power tools, diggers and grass cutters - and can mean painful and disabling injuries of the blood vessels, nerves, joints and muscles in the hands and arms and in extreme cases it can mean the loss of fingers.

Although these figures are startling, many councils in England and Wales also want and need to be viewed as considerate employers, which is why many UK local authorities have invested in a new preventative technology to safeguard their employees.

Five million users of hand-held or hand-guided power tools.

Over one million users are at increased risk of disease because they are exposed to HAV above the action level set by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

300,000 people are estimated to have advanced symptoms of vibration white finger.

Norfolk County Council is one authority that has taken measures to ensure its employees and the council are protected from HAVS by introducing a clever monitoring device – aptly named the HAVmeter – to its manual workforce.

Colin Tibbenham, from the council's Environment Transport and Development department was project manager for the roll-out of the new equipment. He says Norfolk aim to make the HAVmeter an extension of the road workers' personal protective equipment (PPE) which is an industry standard requirement set by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

He said: "We trialled the HAVmeter from June 2008 until August 2009 then introduced the device to our workforce in January 2010 after receiving a number of HAVS related claims from former employees who had worked on council projects in the past.

"We knew that to avoid this kind of thing in future we had to take action to protect our teams and of course to protect the council's limited funds. We needed a better monitoring system in place to make sure we knew who was working with what machinery and for how long."

"After reviewing a number of potential solutions, we decided on the HAVmeter because it was the only option that ticked all the boxes for us in terms of accountability as it could give us detailed records of what our teams were exposed to."

"Through our investment in preventing HAVS we have been able to reinforce the message to our workforce that Norfolk County Council takes health and safety very seriously and that we care about and value our workers.

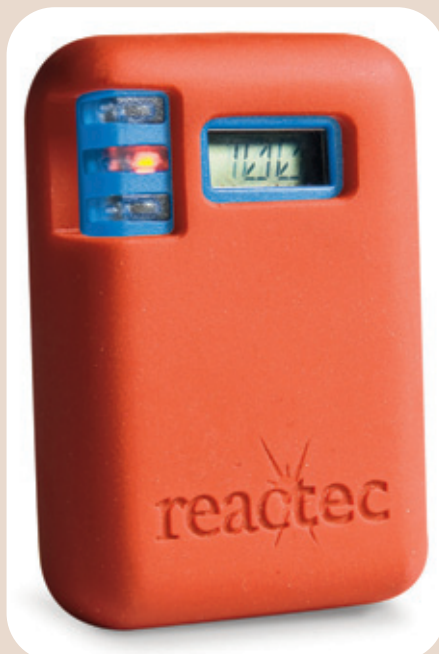
"Also, the devices mean we now have a robust defence in place to protect us against any claims."

The HAVmeter system allows any workers using vibrating tools to easily and accurately monitor their exposure levels to Hand Arm Vibration.

The HAVmeter provides a constant readout of exposure level and flashes a warning to the worker when his/her exposure limits are reached.

A simple yet 100 percent accurate method to monitor workers' use of vibration equipment, the HAVmeter allows both employee and employer to know exactly who has been doing what and when.

While HSE regulations require employers to take responsibility to monitor time spent using vibration machinery, until the arrival of HAVmeter there was no reliable solution to ensure workers' time spent exposed to vibration levels was 100 percent accurate.



The HAVmeter system builds up a complete and detailed record of tool usage and HSE exposure points for each employee every day. Once the data is uploaded into Toolminder software, a comprehensive set of standard and custom reports can be created that show workers a full breakdown of their exposure to vibration levels that management and occupational healthcare staff can use to manage each employee's healthcare plan.

The reports are complete, accurate and with no ambiguity – providing the most comprehensive information about exposure to HAV levels in the workplace.

Colin Tibbenham said: "This is a system that will be with us for some time because like all public bodies, we are accountable, and huge claims and employees with illness are not good for anyone. The system is helping us to monitor exposure to HAVS and look after the safety of our men and women."

Contact: For further information on the HAVmeter, visit www.reactec.com or phone 0131 221 0930.





Measuring up to Highways success

Nottinghamshire County Council is reviving the traditional role of a parish Lengthsman in a bid to give local communities more say in the upkeep of their surroundings says Paula McManus of Nottinghamshire County Council.

A Lengthsman is an old term used for a person in charge of a particular length of road and who maintains the weeds, grass and hedges that surround it. The term dates back hundreds of years when the person doing the job was required to "walk the length of the parish", to ensure that the ditches and drains were clear.

In the 21st Century the role is much the same except that the Lengthsman has modern tools and cleaning equipment and required to do any number of jobs

Letters were sent out earlier this year to local councils asking for expressions of interest for a grant to set up a number of local schemes, with up to eight "clusters" made up of neighbouring parish and town councils who would share a Lengthsman.

A pilot is being run by Nottinghamshire County Council until 31 March 2013 which aims to return to the days when villages were kept spick and span through employing local labour to address minor issues – something which the County Council may not always be able to prioritise or address immediately.

If successful, then the Lengthsman scheme will be rolled out across the county, to be funded 50% by the County Council and 50% by the contracting parish/town councils.

Each parish or town council would benefit from a Lengthsman for around 135 hours a year. Their time would be spent carrying out scheduled County Council tasks such as grass cutting and seasonal work such as minor snow clearance.

In addition to these tasks, the local council will be free to determine any other local work which might need doing.

The scheme is expected to result in an increased frequency and improved standard of service to participating parish/town councils. Possible benefits include:

- ♦ improved satisfaction levels amongst residents
- ♦ increased frequency and improved standard of local service delivery
- ♦ parishes being able to prioritise local activity to meet local need
- ♦ recurring minor issues being dealt with more efficiently

Similar schemes have been rolled out elsewhere in the country by other county councils.

"A lengthsman scheme will be of considerable benefit to local communities," says Councillor Martin Suthers, deputy leader of Nottinghamshire County Council.

"It will ensure that local concerns are acted upon quickly, nipping minor problems in the bud before they become significant and costly issues, and with a quick response time for urgent local matters.

"It will also provide local employment opportunities and is part of the Government's localism agenda whereby communities become more involved and take pride in their areas.

"It's how the County Council delivered such services in the past so it's not a new idea – more about trying to adapt it to modern circumstances."

Among the first Lengthsmen to be appointed under the scheme in Nottinghamshire are a father and son team from Harworth in the north of the county.

David and Matthew Brearley have taken up the part-time role after a cluster of villages, including Harworth and Bircotes, Hodsock, Scrooby, Ranskill, Babworth and Blyth town and parish councils signed up for the scheme.

The scheme has the support of David and Matthew who say they're proud to help keep their local area looking neat and tidy.

"We make a good team and work well together," says dad David.

"We both come from Harworth and it's a source of pride to us that we can make our local area look good.

"We drive through most of the villages every day and it's great that we can say: "That looks nice -- we did that!"."

The Nottinghamshire scheme to reintroduce the ancient role has attracted interest from an unlikely quarter – Russia.

A TV crew from Russian TV station NTV has filmed in Nottinghamshire after seeing coverage of the proposed scheme in UK newspapers.

The subsequent report was shown on NTV's daytime news bulletins.

NTV is the largest non-state TV network in Russia and broadcasts to an audience of approximately 100 million people across countries from the former Soviet Union. It is also the main Russian language channel broadcast all over the world via satellite.

Anton Volskiy, chief correspondent for NTV's London bureau, said: "We found the proposal for the Lengthsman scheme very interesting. There is no-one in Russia doing this sort of thing."

Contact: Paula McManus is the lead policy officer for the lengthsman scheme, email paula.mcmanus@nottsc.gov.uk

Pictured left the lengthsman scheme in action with Russian TV crew.

Setting new standards in winter maintenance



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Municipal Entrepreneurs leading the way

APSE's latest research shows that far from being outdated and monolithic today's councils are leading the way with a spirit of municipal entrepreneurship to enhance and develop local public services.

To read much of the national press local government it would appear is excessively bureaucratic, set in its ways and lacking in the commercial knowhow and the spirit of innovation with which the private sector is constantly credited. But this outdated image is far from the reality of what's happening in most local authorities in modern Britain.

The underreported fact is that entrepreneurship within local government is not only increasingly but is a vital response to delivering high quality public services as budget cuts bite. APSE's latest research provides clear evidence that entrepreneurialism is alive and flourishing in councils across the country. And it is a stark contrast of public success stories compared to those of private sector failure including the high profile cases of Olympics security firm G4S and South West One in Somerset.

APSE's research report, Municipal Entrepreneurship, demonstrates that commercial skills and business acumen are thriving in local government and that entrepreneurial managers are succeeding in fostering a commercial culture among council staff. The research was carried out as part of APSE's knowledge transfer partnership with De Montfort University. The report highlights challenges and opportunities for local authorities that are embracing entrepreneurship and draws upon case studies to provide lessons for others.

The case studies represent some of the best examples of what is being achieved by councils that are committed to taking an innovative approach to improving public services. They show that commercial skills and business acumen are not unique to private companies, but can benefit the public sector if the right culture and environment are put in place. West Lindsey, Kingston-upon-Hull and Swansea are three of the examples discussed.

West Lindsey

West Lindsey District Council is transforming itself into an 'Entrepreneurial Council' and been able to sustain frontline services and deliver efficiency savings of £2.13m as a result.

The vision set out in West Lindsey's Corporate Plan is, 'to be a council less dependent on formula or regional grants, that is innovative in investments and achieving income in other forms to meet district needs'. Crucial to this new way of working has been a commitment to valuing and developing the workforce, as chief executive Manjeet Gill explains: 'Redundancies have been avoided whilst staff have been multi-skilled in order to increase their employability.' This multi-skilling has involved increasing the commercial and financial skills of managers and enhancing the community development skills of all officers. These efforts have been consolidated by the development of an agreed set of values

to which all staff and elected members work.

The importance of developing innovative approaches to service delivery and seeking out opportunities to generate income is instilled into employees. Ms Gill says: 'A key pillar of our income and trading strategy is selling services where the in-house expertise exists.' Efforts to move towards a more commercial approach have been consolidated by improvements to the efficiency, productivity and effectiveness of services. For example, the refuse and street cleaning service has been re-engineered, re-assigning labour requirements at different points in the collection process and rationalising recycling points, which has resulted in a net reduction in the cost of the service. Net savings of £2.13m have been delivered between 2009/10 and 2011/12 and further savings are forecast.

Critical to taking West Lindsey's 'Entrepreneurial Council' strategy forward are plans to further develop an investment approach to tackling social issues and a more comprehensive income and trading strategy.

Kingston upon Hull

Kingstown Works Limited (KWL) is a local authority company delivering building maintenance and repairs works, primarily to Hull City Council but also trading with other councils and housing associations. Since 2008, KWL has returned over £3m to Hull City Council in the form of surpluses.

KWL is built on the model of a successful income generating company wholly-owned by the local authority, which is the sole shareholder. The subject of Hull City Council's repairs and maintenance service to open competition was identified as a timely moment to set up a company to provide services to the local authority.

Democratic accountability is ensured through the Kingstown Works Limited Shareholding committee which receives reports from the board of KWL, which is itself made up of eight elected members from Hull City Council. The organisational model developed by KWL prioritises tight financial controls to ensure that the company has the freedom to innovate and bid for work as it arises within an overall framework of democratic accountability.

Recently, KWL has taken advantage of opportunities to move into the renewable energy market by developing expertise in installing and maintaining Solar PV panels on domestic properties. KWL's buying power has been a key factor in the development of an entrepreneurial, innovative approach. As one senior manager explains: 'Our buying power has allowed us to provide competitively priced solutions for clients who have contracted KWL for solar PV schemes and the financial strength of the business

gives clients the confidence that the installer will be around long enough to ensure that the schemes are properly maintained well into the future.'

Priority has been given to maximising the impact of KWL on the local economy. Of 300 staff, 99% are local as are 98% of staff employed by subcontractors. The management team has put in place a widespread performance culture and bonus scheme which has, in the words of one frontline employee, 'encouraged us to come up with solutions'.

Swansea

Taking an entrepreneurial approach to redesign of the council parks and open spaces service has saved the City and County of Swansea more than £155k pa. APSE's consultancy arm, APSE Solutions was commissioned to undertake a service redesign, assisting service managers to think entrepreneurially and improve the competitiveness of the in-house service. This involved identifying different processes within the authority and capturing any possible duplication of resources. By deploying a range of techniques, service redesign can dramatically reduce the number of steps in the supply chain, make significant savings and improve residents' experience of services.

APSE established that Swansea's in-house grounds maintenance unit provides a value for money service, benefiting from strong leadership, a motivated workforce and an effective productivity related bonus scheme. However, reprogramming of working hours to meet the seasonal variations of grounds maintenance operations was identified as a move that would result in a reduction in demand for seasonal part-time staff, which meant potential cost savings in excess of £50k a year. Increasing use of machinery while reducing the number of units of machinery used should also deliver potential cost savings of up to £100k- and the sale of any surplus items will also generate income.

These are just three examples from the wealth of evidence that testifies to a renewed spirit of Municipal Entrepreneurship but whilst analysing the case studies the research report, has enabled us to develop a series of lessons about factors that enable councils to develop innovation and commercial acumen.

'Think collaboratively' is the first message that emerges. Collaboration brings in new ideas and can challenge existing practices whilst mobilising new resources. You do not need complex legal frameworks to achieve much by way of collaborative working.

Making the most of your 'windows of opportunity' is another important factor. Moments of organisational crisis can be a chance to introduce new programmes and solutions. In many of the councils studied, a challenging political and economic context acted as a catalyst for change.

It is also important to tap into strategically placed champions. Local officers and elected members should look to identify individuals who might fulfil championing roles. There needs to be sufficient space or support for such individuals to emerge across organisations.

An over-riding lesson that emerged out of all the examples analysed was the need to embed a culture of innovation and change in the organisation or service. Where entrepreneurship and innovation developed over time, staff were commercially focused, working within an overall framework of income generation combined with a not-for-profit ethos delivering improved local services.

Ensuring democratic accountability to local elected members and taking a proactive approach to pre-empting and dealing with risk contributed to the creation of an environment in which where staff had the freedom to innovate.

Related to this, is the need to remember that this is not a magic wand to be waved over struggling services. Entrepreneurialism and innovation can end in failure, which has implications for the public sector in terms of both accountability and risk. So councils must consider the costs and risks of innovation as well as the benefits.

More and more local authorities are looking at how to make services more commercially viable by either reducing costs or generating additional revenue to offset budget cuts or by simply introducing innovative ways to deliver services better. In the face of national debate about the future of local government this latest APSE research should prove to be a useful evidence base by which local government can challenge the unfair stereotype of local government services. The challenge for us all is to replace the un-evidenced stereotype of monolithic, officious, bureaucratic local government and to reflect the new reality – a local government that is increasingly built upon highly innovative, commercially savvy and entrepreneurial staff and services.

Contact: po'brien@apse.org.uk

The image shows the cover of a report titled 'Municipal Entrepreneurship'. The top section is a solid purple color with the APSE logo in the top right corner. Below this is a blue sign with a white border, set against a background of a blue sky with white clouds. The sign is divided into two sections. The top section of the sign says 'Local authority' in large white letters, with 'Innovative public services ahead' in smaller white letters below it. The bottom section of the sign says 'NO' in large white letters, followed by 'Bureaucracy', 'Inefficiency', and 'Stick-in-the-mud attitudes' in smaller white letters. Below the sign, there is a purple text box containing the following information: '**Municipal Entrepreneurship** is available to order from APSE at £40 for non members and £20 for members. Email wlee@apse.org.uk

APSE people pages...

Welcome and congratulations...



New south and south west Principal Advisor ...Helen Burkhalter

Helen joins APSE having started her local government on the IDeA National Graduate Development Programme. After completing placements in workforce development, performance management, strategic policy, and project management, she secured the position of Portfolio Officer for Climate Change at Denbighshire County Council. She was internally recruited into Denbighshire's Business Transformation Team in 2010, project managing activity around asset rationalisation, energy management and renewables, in addition to a devolution and empowerment project involving Town and Community Councils. In 2012 Helen relocated to Oxfordshire and worked as an Economic Development Officer for the Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils. In June 2010 Helen made the final four of the first national Local Government Challenge. The public sectors answer to The Apprentice!

Helen holds a Masters Degree in Public Management from the University of Warwick Business School.

Helen is interested to hear new ideas from APSE members for APSE services in the south and south west of England. To get in touch email Helen on hburkhalter@apse.org.uk



Sarah Kay

Sarah Kay has joined APSE as an Administration and Finance Assistant and is responsible for supporting APSE Training, APSE Solutions and the associations financial work. Sarah was previously employed by the NHS as a communications assistant.



Vicky Starmer

Vicky has joined the APSE support services team to assist with general office administration and event bookings. Vicky previously worked for the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation as a Policy, Information and Research administrator, where her responsibilities included updating and maintaining their databases and coordinating events.

APSE briefing notes update

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

12-51	Traded services and client contractor splits	October 2012
12-50	Scottish Government Draft Budgets	October 2012
12-49	Scottish Government Legislative Programme	October 2012
12-48	Winter maintenance state of the market survey	October 2012
12-47	Community planning and single outcome agreements	October 2012

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

Enviro Detectives...

A CAST of colourful characters is set to sweep into schools as part of a fun, free web-based environmental education tool pioneered by Charnwood Borough Council

Enviro Detectives is a completely free resource to help Key Stage Two children learn about what they can do to become better stewards of the environment.

It uses interactive videos linked to activity packs and factsheets to help teachers deliver lessons which focus on protecting the environment.

Stonebow Primary School in Loughborough is the first school in the county to sign up – as one of its pupils, Charlotte Buckland, stars in one of the interactive videos.

Councillor Jane Hunt, Charnwood Borough Council's Cabinet member for Regulatory Services, said: "Enviro Detectives is a spin-off of our award-winning Don't Muck Around environmental campaign and we really hope local schools take advantage of this free resource.

"As a Borough Council, we are committed to prosecuting offenders - but it is even more important that we educate and raise awareness of enviro-crime and how we can all do our bit to protect the environment.

"That's where Enviro Detectives comes in. It is fun, free and accessible to all schools, groups or organisations who want to benefit from the learning packs our officers have put together."

The Enviro Detectives crew is made up of Lenny the Litterbug, Ollie the Owl, Sophia the Squirrel, Dale the Dog, Felix the Fox and Harriot the Hedgehog. Each character has its own area of expertise to help young people learn about specific environmental subjects.

The characters invite schoolchildren on a sleuthing journey to uncover important information and facts about the environment and how they can get better at improving and protecting it.

The website and activity sheets were designed with help from local teachers and schoolchildren from Wymeswold Primary School.

Contact:

You can check out Enviro Detectives at www.envirodetectives.co.uk

For more information, please contact:

Mike Underwood,
Communications Officer
Charnwood Borough Council

Tel: 01509 634705

Email: michael.underwood@charnwood.gov.uk



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Meetings diary

	Date	Event	Location	Contact
October	17	Cemeteries and Crematoria supervisory skills for team leaders	Dudley	skay@apse.org.uk
	18	Preparing for a leisure services in house bid	Birmingham	skay@apse.org.uk
	18	Gas Safety Awareness	Edinburgh	skay@apse.org.uk
	19	Raising the issue of Healthy weight	Manchester	skay@apse.org.uk
	29	The Localism Act	Leeds	skay@apse.org.uk
	30	Senior Managers Prince2 Project Management Overview	Manchester	skay@apse.org.uk
	30	Supervisory skills for the Building maintenance and repairs sector	Carlisle	skay@apse.org.uk
	30	Service delivery models advisory group	Manchester	kswaby@apse.org.uk
November	02	Service Improvement and Performance Management Advisory Group	Manchester	kswaby@apse.org.uk
	05	Managing Gas Contracts	Glasgow	skay@apse.org.uk
	06	Handling difficult conversations with staff	Edinburgh	skay@apse.org.uk
	07	Housing and building maintenance advisory group	Manchester	admin2@apse.org.uk
	7&8	Environmental Services Seminar	Leicestershire	kswaby@apse.org.uk
	13	Identifying damp, timber mould and structural problems	Edinburgh	skay@apse.org.uk
	15	Renewables Advisory Group	Manchester	admin2@apse.org.uk
	21	Project Management in local government	Manchester	skay@apse.org.uk
	28	Sports and leisure seminar 2012	Wigan	admin2@apse.org.uk
December	04	Project Management in leisure services	Liverpool	skay@apse.org.uk
	6&7	Performance Networks seminar	Blackpool	vstarmer@apse.org.uk
	11	Cemeteries & Crematoria Supervisory skills	London	skay@apse.org.uk
	16	Supervisory Skills Streetscene	Blackburn	skay@apse.org.uk