

apse direct news

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Editorial

A budget through the looking glass

Like 'Alice Through the Looking Glass' and the book of Jabberwocky I am finding it necessary to work in reverse print to fathom the real outcomes of the 2016 budget for our APSE local council members.

The headline saving for local councils in England is presented as being just 0.5%, which on the face of it, is a welcome relief following the deepest austerity budgeting in councils in decades. However when we take into account increased demands, and the gaps still left by the 2% council tax 'precept' on social care, the impact on frontline services really starts to come into focus. In fact analysis by APSE and New Public Intelligence suggests that the impact on our liveability services – parks, streetscene, refuse and recycling, leisure, highways and street lighting - could feel more like 20% as councils struggle to meet their statutory social care requirements.

The shift in business rate retention is equally perplexing. Whilst we have areas with good capacity to grow their business rate base we also have areas which will struggle to attract, and retain, the new business base to nurture a growth, which could then translate into new funding. So we are left with a confusing mix of funding needs, not necessarily matched by capacity to grow new income from business rates, at a local level. Moreover the redistributive mechanisms are a long way from being resolved.

Holding a mirror to the budget provides us with an image of the future where our liveability services are squeezed to the bottom of the funding pile. A future where parks decline into no-go areas of graffiti and anti-social behaviour, where businesses are turned off by dirty streets and litter, where public realm investment becomes a distant pipe-dream.

It is time for the case in our liveability services to be made. Peering into the future should be a stark reminder that we do not want to return to the past. Unlike Alice we know that a bleak future for our local services will not be a dream that we can step out of but a waking nightmare for our local communities and our local services.

Best wishes

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive

The Housing and Planning Bill - what's the problem?

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the Town and Country Planning Association and Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive of APSE comment on the key issues in the controversial Housing and Planning Bill.

Currently, the Government's new Housing and Planning Bill 2015-16 is in the second reading stage in the House of Lords. The Bill has been seen as hugely problematic by many, including APSE and the TCPA, because it is still unclear how the actions described in it will help relieve the housing crisis facing the UK, despite the Government claiming their plans will kick-start a 'national crusade to get one million homes built by 2020' and transform 'generation rent into generation buy'.

Keen to gauge how others working in local government felt about the proposed changes, APSE teamed up with the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) to create and distribute a survey to local authorities across the country. This generated some very interesting, and some rather concerning, results. However, before we look at those in depth, it would help to first contextualise the Housing Bill and look at the problems it raises.

The Housing and Planning Bill 2015-16 aims to speed up the current planning permission process, working on the premise that less bureaucracy means more housing can be delivered quickly. This, the Government expects, will encourage people to self/custom build their housing, as well as giving developers some extra opportunities to build more commercial housing. This is welcome news as it gives authorities, private firms and the general public more freedom to build the houses they require. However, many believe this has come too late; though the permission is there, we will struggle to meet the country's demand of 250,000 homes each year due to a shortage of workers and supplies.

Alongside this, the Government intend to build more Starter Homes for first-time buyers, namely people under the age of 40 who have not previously owned a home. Offering 200,000 homes by 2020, the Government has said there must be a discount of at least 20% to the buyer. These homes, which should be targeting teachers, police officers, nurses and other professional roles, will have a discounted price of no more than £250,000 outside London and £450,000 in London, making these properties unaffordable for most of the target workers. These are the kind of people that starter homes should be accommodating, yet they are the ones who will be unable to afford them.

In terms of social housing, the Bill details a Pay to Stay scheme, in which social tenants with incomes of over £30,000 – over £40,000 in London – will have to pay market rent on their properties rather than their current social rent. For local authorities, the money this generates must be given to the Government, whilst Housing Associations are able to keep the extra rent money. Moreover it is considered unviable by many councils who see this as adding to the ongoing problems of a poor private rented market – so forcing people on affordability terms from secure council

tenancies into the private rented sector - will do little to alleviate local problems.

As well as this, the Right to Buy scheme is being extended to housing association tenants. This move is deeply worrying as it will lead to a decrease in the amount of social homes available for those most in need. Despite allowing these properties to be sold off, the Government have no plans in place to give local authorities the funds needed to build more and replace them. This is a major concern for the already-shaky future of social housing.

So what did the APSE and TCPA Survey tell us? Well the headline news is that others share our concerns. We found that 93% of councils do not think that Starter Homes will address affordable housing need. Moreover almost 80% of local councils do not think that Starter Homes should be classified as affordable housing and only 7% of councils think they will address the need for affordable housing in their local authority areas.

We also found that over two thirds of respondents anticipate that they will be building less social and affordable housing as a result of the Government's plans to reduce social rents by 1% a year for the next four years. This is against a backdrop of 96% of councils describing their need for affordable homes as 'severe or moderate'. Moreover nine out of 10 councils are concerned that the extension of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants will mean that there will be less socially-rented homes available.

Most starkly for the Government 53% of respondents are from Conservative controlled councils – this clearly shows a huge difference of opinion between Conservative Councils, charged with delivering more homes at a local level, and central Government policy.

So with the House of Lords scrutinising key measures in the Housing and Planning Bill, and pressure to deliver the Bill is there room for concessions? The answer has to be yes – there is a growing cross-party consensus for a series of amendments to be tabled which may well yet 'gut' the worst excesses within the Bill. APSE and the TCPA hopes that with cross-party working more sensible approaches can be taken to delivering the homes our communities desperately need. It is time now for the Government to listen to local councils; they are best placed to really know and appreciate the impact of housing policy within their communities.

More details can be found on www.apse.org.uk and www.tcpa.org.uk

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Taking out the rubbish: Tips and tricks from award-winning Kettering Borough Council

Kettering Borough Council's Dela Moreland talks about how they run their waste and recycling services, which won them the prestigious title of Refuse Best Performer at the 2015 APSE Performance Networks Awards.

One of the fastest growing towns in the UK, Kettering appears in the charter of 956 AD granted by the Saxon king Edwy. It is historically known worldwide for its boot and shoe industry, although this has diminished considerably since the 1970s. There is good news in Kettering though; our refuse service won the APSE Performance Networks Best Performer Award 2015. Both myself and the crew are delighted at this achievement, and we're happy to share our trade secrets with other APSE members.

Kettering Borough Council delivers a waste and recycling collection service to 43,000 homes across four towns and 28 villages of varying sizes. These consist mainly of urban developments which include terraced, ex-corporation, council and new-style large housing developments. Our refuse service is part of the Northamptonshire Waste Partnership, which is made up of six authorities, including Kettering. The partnership shares the Northamptonshire Waste Education and Energy Team, who promote national campaigns, assist with recycling rollouts, and help with dedicated authority campaigns. We attend school educational assemblies and curricular lessons with a fully-equipped educational bus, in order to help children in Northamptonshire to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, and to become more energy efficient. These projects are vital to instilling recycling at the heart of our community.

As for our own service, working out of one depot, the Kettering Borough Council waste team consists of 44 members of staff operating seven rounds. The team provide the waste collection service, and are therefore the only council team to visit every property in the borough weekly. Each crew is assigned

between 1,500 and 2,000 properties per day, walking an average of 14 miles per day, and emptying over 4.4 million receptacles per year. We've recognised that round optimisation is key to ensuring that the quality of the collection service is maintained; we are currently working on round re-alignment to cover the next 5 years, which will be regularly reviewed.

We work to a two-week schedule, where dry recycling and green waste is collected on alternate weeks to general waste. This gives every household in the borough the opportunity to recycle at the kerbside, though we also offer recycling at 32 bring bank sites. In addition, the team provides kerbside bulky and white goods collections, weekly clinical collections, and also operates a commercial waste service.

In summer 2013, we acquired a new fleet, giving us the much-needed opportunity to revisit and improve the current recycling scheme. We moved from kerbside boxes that were sorted by the household to a co-mingled system, and took the opportunity to replace the old 55 litre blue boxes with 240 litre wheeled bins. Although, paper remains source-separated due to it being a high commodity. Both streams are collected using a 70/30 split-bodied vehicle.

We offer additional recycling containers free of charge to all residents, as well as flexibility within our fleet to accommodate increases in peak seasons. We can interchange vehicles and the type of collection at times like Christmas, where we are able to utilise both staff and vehicles to accommodate the extra collection of dry recycling, and manage it without using additional vehicles.

Residents have embraced the new recycling scheme, and Kettering's recycling rate has increased from 45% to 48%. This continues to grow, with recent quarterly reports of over 50%, despite the fact that we do not run a food waste collection. Alongside this, the popular green waste service remains completely free; in January 2015, we removed a 'second garden bin charge' in line with the dry recycling receptacles. This has further improved our aim to capture all possible recyclables, and helps alleviate the amount of waste going to landfill. Also, we offer a free Christmas tree collection service, collecting around 1,800 real trees per year, which, again, improves the green waste we capture over the winter months.

Keeping on top of contamination is the key to ensuring that we capture quality recycling. To do this, we receive regular reports from our material recycling facility, and we continually monitor our crews and households via non-collection tagging. Going ever further, we have also introduced a DIY waste composition, in which random collections of up to 3 tonnes are analysed with a focus on targeting the types of contamination found. We do this with both dry recycling and domestic waste in a bid to ensure that we are delivering the right messages to the public.

We fully believe that our crews are the key to high performance and excellent service delivery; our crews operate a 4-day week, working 9.25 hours per day over 5 collection days, giving us the flexibility to cover sickness and holidays by using staff on their non-working day. This keeps continuity within the team, as all our staff are familiar with the daily rounds and the expected standards of service.

We actively encourage career progression within the department by offering driver training to loaders, driver trainer qualifications, and other recognised industry qualifications. All staff receive 'tool box talks' four times a year, which cover health and safety, reversing procedures, manual handling/lifting and general operational procedures that includes clinical practices (such as handling needles). Also, we were one of the first authorities to produce an in-house reversing training video,

which has been viewed, and the practices adopted, by many APSE authority members. Our staff also receive a bi-annual one-to-one crew assessment in the field.

I would say that our continued success is down to best practices, a continually improving performance, open communication, and keeping staff involved with what we are doing to ensure our ongoing commitment to provide an efficient service. We actively participate in both the APSE Waste Management Advisory Group and in APSE's Performance Networks. Having the ability to share advice and experiences from waste experts, to learn from others face-to-face and through network queries, has contributed towards improving the way in which we do things, and was proven by Kettering winning Refuse Best Performer 2015.

We aren't saying we're experts – we may not be doing anything different from other authorities – but we've been smart and used performance data well, offering us the opportunity to monitor what we do, benchmark ourselves against other authorities, learn from best practice, and not be afraid to change the way we do things.

Ultimately, making small changes and having a positive, open attitude, has made an enormous difference to our service; we won the Performance Networks award because we were in the top quartile for 8 of the 9 performance indicators, showing that consistency, dedication and benchmarking are fundamental to success in this service area.

Dela is happy to speak to other local authorities about the refuse work Kettering does. To contact her, email DelyeneMoreland@kettering.gov.uk or call 01536 534461

For information about APSE performance networks, email performance.networks@apse.org.uk

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Going for gold:

APSE's Investors in People journey so far

APSE's Chief Executive Paul O'Brien talks about what it means for the organisation to gain its Silver Investors in People (IIP) award, and why he doesn't intend to stop until APSE reaches the top.

I believe that a supportive, friendly workplace environment allows the workforce to flourish. At APSE, we have all worked together to create an excellent working environment, and we have used the Investors in People award to set the standard we want to reach. Currently we're at Silver level, which places APSE in the top 12% of businesses for investing in our staff, and next year we're determined to get Gold – we aren't far off it at the moment.

I have found the experience of reaching this stage very humbling. I am proud that we have been able to achieve such an excellent working environment through all the staff working together. It has been

brilliant to hear the comments from IIP, vocalising how well I know we've done in the past 12 months. I'm proud to share with you that John O'Sullivan, Investors in People Assessor, said 'It was clearly evident from the recent assessment that APSE has a clear focus on excellence and an aspiration to be a world-class organisation. Staff feedback reflected inspirational leadership through an open, honest and trusting management style. There was also clear evidence of strong alignment to a public service ethos with people believing in and seeing themselves as custodians of APSE's core values.' These words of praise not only show the local government world how much we strive to make

APSE an excellent place to work, but also prove that everybody at APSE has bought into our organisational vision. This is everybody's achievement.

This journey first began for APSE in the early 2000s, but it became more important whilst writing the latest APSE business plan in 2014. APSE's National Council, who embody our aims and objectives, saw a need for us to develop the investment we make into our staff. We had held the basic IIP accreditation for around 12 years and the National Council were very vocal in their insistence that building on this was a priority. Here, we began the pursuit to become a world-class organisation.

This change wasn't easy. It depended on the hard work and determination of the entire APSE staff, including the APSE Scotland and APSE South/South West offices. It hinged upon a change of culture, which isn't something that can be instilled overnight. An email and a meeting on office culture wouldn't cut it – it was something that all of us at APSE had to work on every day we spent in the office.

Lindsay Towler, APSE's Head of Business Resources, is right behind the ambition to work our way up the IIP ladder and she works hard to make staff feel happy in their role at APSE. Lindsay has been instrumental in creating vital strategies and policies within the company, like the new APSE organisational development strategy, the corporate social responsibility strategy and our new appraisal system. Whilst creating these, she ensured that all staff were given the chance to have their input; I know she strongly believes that every person at APSE is an integral part of this journey. More importantly, Lindsay makes sure that everybody is happy in their job, that they know their purpose within the organisation and how their role fits alongside everybody else, and she makes APSE a fun, inclusive and engaging place to work. Not only that, but our staff are encouraged to socialise together outside of work. We also encourage a healthy work/life balance in order to fully support their mental and physical wellbeing.

At APSE, we insist on continuously investing in training and developing all our staff. APSE is a knowledge-based organisation; the more we know as an organisation, and the more we learn, the better the outcome will be for our members. As such, we've tried to create an environment where all our staff feel they are supported in their role, encouraged to achieve bigger and better things, and feel that they are given the training that they require to do their jobs efficiently. How else could APSE succeed? It depends entirely on people.

Some people may think it's not worth investing time and money into their staff, but it's a false economy not to. Once the mind-set was established at APSE, and we'd created a happy, fulfilling workplace, the organisation itself began to reap the benefits. Last year, we saw a 9.6% growth across all our activities. I put this solely down to the excellent office environment we have achieved here. At APSE, everybody contributes to all parts of the organisation, everybody buys into the business plan. Nobody's voice goes unheard. As a result, we work as a team to build this great and vital organisation into something that we are all proud of.

At the end of the day, this isn't about gaining awards like IIP to boost APSE's reputation. It's about using that process of achieving the award for the purpose of building excellent organisational standards but, more importantly, developing a world-class working environment in which our staff and, as a result, our members can grow and thrive.

*Sophie Bannister, APSE communications officer
sbannister@apse.org.uk*

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We are back!

Scotland's largest and brightest seminar and trade show is back at Aviemore. APSE Scotland's Fleet, Waste and Grounds seminar, together with the Rising Star Scotland awards once again return to the highlands on the 17 – 20 May.



As ever we have a packed programme with key note speakers debating the future challenges facing Scottish local authorities, and of course solutions to those challenges, with speakers sharing innovation in both service delivery and new tools and techniques.

Transport Scotland will be highlighting their roadmap to the widespread adoption of plug in vehicles and exploring future measures and goals for low carbon vehicles, whilst Dundee City Council's electric vehicle project highlights the importance of clean fleet technologies. And it's not just driverless cars on the television APSE delegates will be treated to a vision for the future of vehicle technologies with DAF trucks who will explore what new technologies councils will be able to utilise in the near future.

Zero Waste Scotland will provide an update on developing the Household Recycling Charter and will also call upon delegates to take a collaborative approach on long term litter and flytipping prevention. The theme of recycling best practice continues with the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian project exploring the latest developments with food and residual waste infrastructure whilst East Ayrshire Council shares views on the commodities market in recycling. The waste theme continues with a Clyde Valley case history and shared services contracts for residual waste.

Alongside the operational issues having a good strategic vision is crucial for frontline services. North Ayrshire Council's Executive Director of Place, Craig Hatton, will explore the future challenges for local authority environment services. Brian Devlin, Glasgow City Council's Executive Director of Land and Environmental Services will take delegates through a service transformation approach whilst APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien will highlight what the state of the market data is telling us about service design, delivery and future direction of travel. As budgets are squeezed Simon Dale, Assistant Director of StreetScene at Plymouth City Council will highlight how an approach to commercialisation can increase income into services to offset budget reductions. Statutory issues will also be highlighted with views from Aberdeen, Falkirk and Dundee City Councils' on Transport Public Inquiries which will inform transport managers of the importance of governance and accountability issues.

Continuing the recycling theme Conwy Council stackable kerbside recycling container system will showcase the practical ways in which councils can help to implement

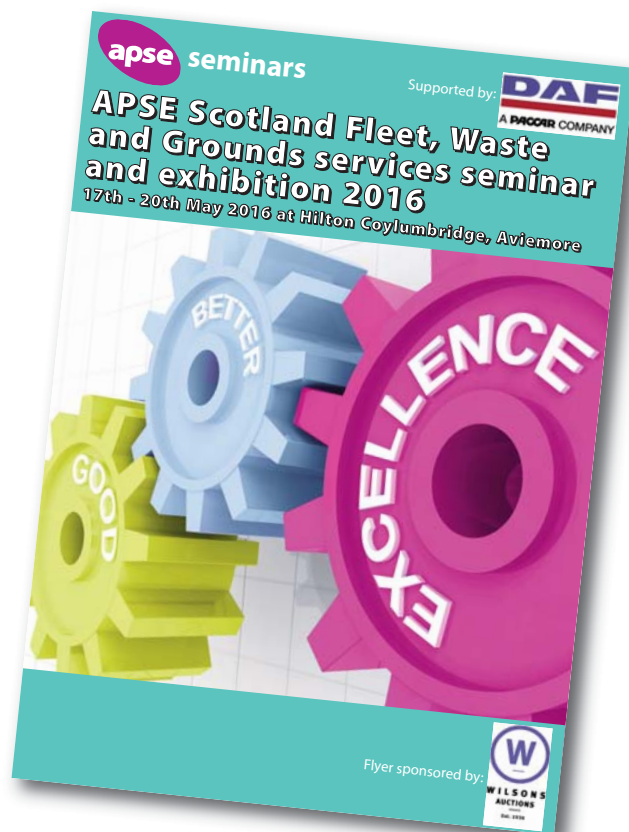
kerbside recycling schemes, whilst maximising the use of fleet to control costs will be shared by Fife Council.

As ever Parks are a highly visible and well regarded local council service and getting the service right can bring in a real sense of achievement and local pride. East Lothian Council will explain how they have used better engagement with residents to improve their parks operations and use customer led service design to re-imagine their parks service.

With the largest trade show in town, showcasing the latest inventions, innovations and new systems this two day event will culminate with the APSE Scotland Rising Star awards, kindly sponsored by Zero Waste Scotland, hosted during the evening of the Thursday 19 May. The best of luck to all the finalists!

And of course it would be remiss of us not to thank our overall conference sponsor DAF Trucks! You can catch up with DAF trucks in our special trade show exhibition and see how they are keeping the wheels turning for local council services.

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Providing end-to-end funeral care: The way forward for local authorities?

APSE Solutions Senior Consultant Karen Dyson talks about APSE'S latest project, in which we work alongside Councils to consider – and potentially redefine – the role of local authorities in the funeral business.

Benjamin Franklin famously said that 'the only certain things in life are death and taxes.' Whereas recent headlines about organisations such as Google and Amazon show that we're more than willing to talk about taxes, death is a less popular topic of conversation. 60% of UK adults don't have a valid will, and 37% die without having made plans to pay for their funerals. The numbers of local authority funerals provided under the Public Health Act 1984, when no one is willing or able to take responsibility for the arrangements of the deceased, have been increasing year on year, with 2,580 occurring last year. Further, not everybody knows the many options available to them. Though most people know that they can donate their body to science or be buried at sea, did you know you can have your ashes shot in to space in a specially adapted rocket, be buried in your back garden (as long as it doesn't interfere with water supplies), or be stored in a niche in a long-barrow columbarium? Your relatives may not know either, and only 9% of adults have written down what they want to happen to them after their death.

APSE, however, has been bucking this trend. We recently set up a new advisory group for Council staff, elected members and Unions working with bereavement services. Our Performance Networks conference included a workshop on the most current issues, and we will shortly be holding our second national Cemeteries and Crematoria seminar.

APSE's Solutions team has also been working on these issues. In 2015, we held a workshop with member Councils from around the UK, which looked at commercial opportunities

in bereavement services. Whereas most Councils will charge for things like cremations and burial plots, the workshop recognised the bulk of the costs for the average funeral will be paid to the undertaker, for taking the deceased to a mortuary and chapel of rest, and making the arrangements for the funeral. There will also be ancillary costs for items such as flowers, catering, venues, and so on – many of which Councils could provide themselves.

Three Councils decided to take this further, and jointly commissioned APSE to work with them to develop a business case for offering an end-to-end funeral service, where the Council takes on the role of undertaker, as well as providing other essential services.

We used APSE's 'five case' model to assess the legal, strategic, commercial, financial and operational cases and found that Councils are well placed to make a strong business case for providing an end-to-end service. They have commercial advantages in terms of trust, reputation, partnerships and resources that would enable them to move into this industry.

Our research showed that legally, there are no more restrictions on Councils to trade in this area than there would be for other types of trading. Taking the average cost for a funeral, which is £3,590, and statistics from the ONS, the UK funeral market is worth around £2.1 billion annually, with the two biggest providers, Cooperative Funeral Care and Dignity handling around 36% of the market.

Despite this, the range of options offered to customers is often poor, with the emphasis on a traditional funeral model that has not changed since Victorian times. Funerals are a 'crisis purchase' with people being

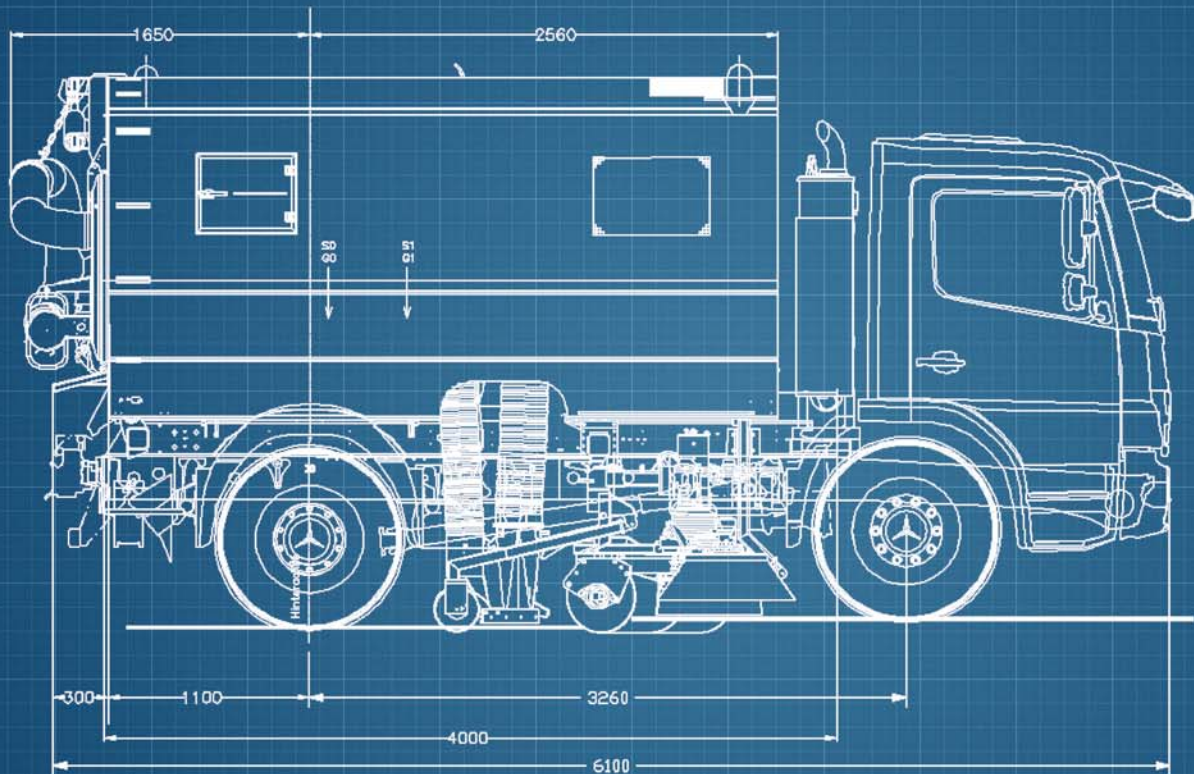
required to make quick decisions about substantial expenditure when they are emotionally ill-equipped to do so, and so not likely to shop around and make the sorts of comparisons they would for other services. Alongside this, funeral poverty is increasing with more and more people unable to meet the cost of the type of funeral they might want, or that they believe the deceased would have wanted. People take on debt, including pay day loans, to meet the costs, and only 59% of applications to the social fund are successful.

APSE will continue to work with the three Councils, providing further support for them to move forward with their business models.

In the meantime, the knowledge and experience we have developed from carrying out this, and other work, means we are well-placed to work with bereavement services in order to carry out needs assessments for cemeteries and crematoria, provide support with burial and cremation planning for input into Green Space strategies and Local Development Plans, and deliver workshops on commercial development and trading issues.

For further information, contact Karen Dyson, APSE Solutions Senior Consultant. Email kdyson@apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810.

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Finding the Solution:

Boosting the take up of free childcare places in Liverpool

We look at the work of Outreach Solutions, a social enterprise that has used an intensive outreach programme to boost the take up of free childcare places in Liverpool.



After struggling to reach families across the city, Liverpool City Council decided to use an alternative method to encourage parents to take up free childcare places – a carefully developed, intensive programme run by Outreach Solutions. The company, previously called Digital Outreach and Convey, delivers engagement for communications and behaviour-change campaigns through the voluntary and community sector. So far, they have had considerable success in Liverpool, with participation jumping by 17% in six weeks. Now the team at Outreach Solutions hopes that factors behind the scheme's success, such as the way it uses tailored approaches to reflect parents' different circumstances, will help to boost the take up in other areas and raise awareness of the value of early years learning and support.

Liverpool has around 3,000 free childcare places for two year olds as part of a national programme which aims to help low-income families. Despite a year-long push by the council to increase numbers, by June 2015 over 1,100 places had still not been taken up. Outreach Solutions was brought in to run a campaign in two deprived areas of the city where take up was particularly low, to ensure more eligible children can benefit from early education.

During the course of the programme there were 378 one-to-one conversations, 75 local businesses and community venues were engaged, there were briefings at 13 end user events, and information on free childcare places was distributed across 122 community venues. The initiative successfully helped an additional 187 two year olds into childcare and early years learning places during the six-week programme.

Key to this success was how the programme was able to engage communities and nurture local champions to become advocates for early learning; a wide range of activities in many different settings, from local shops to children's centres, were used to get the message across. As a result, across the target areas of Clubmoor and Norris Green to the north of Liverpool, and Knotty Ash and Yewtree in the east of the city, the number of eligible children taking up the free places rose from 56% to 73%, which is continuing to rise. All of these children will now receive 15 hours of childcare per week which will enhance their learning and development.

Outreach Solutions has also produced a report based on the results of this programme, designed to help future campaigns to segment their audience and tailor their approaches. This report shows how the programme reflects the different circumstances of mothers, such as teenagers living at home, those who are single and unemployed, those with full time jobs, and mums with special educational needs. This can help local authorities to develop targeted initiatives, aimed at

improving the take up of free childcare.

The outreach programme formed part of an overall city-wide strategy by Liverpool City Council to boost the take up of free childcare places for two year olds. Combined with other activities, it has played a part in boosting participation across the city, marking a significant improvement in the Council's ranking amongst local authorities in terms of the take up of free childcare places.

Jan Gallagher, Service Manager of Early Help at Liverpool City Council, said that the new programme is definitely impacting positively on the take up of free childcare places, especially for the hardest to reach families. "It demonstrates the value of taking a tailored approach that also engages communities and involves them in championing the importance of early years learning", she explained. "The programme has really energised communities to raise awareness of free childcare for two year olds and this should continue to push up participation rates in those areas in the future."

For more information and to view their report on the take up of childcare places, visit the Outreach Solutions website:

www.outreachsolutions.org.uk

The final piece of the jigsaw: Elected members, everyday politics and local democracy in Scotland

The role of the local councillor is one that seems to be difficult to define, and tends to fluctuate from authority to authority. As such, this figure's future remains debateable. APSE's latest piece of research, commissioned by APSE Scotland and produced by a collaborative team from Edinburgh University, Leeds Beckett University and De Montfort University, seeks to offer a novel contribution to ongoing debates over the future of elected members and local democracy in Scotland.

Building on APSE's 2014 report, *The Future of Elected Members in Scotland*, this new research carefully examines the everyday practices of local councillors. Awareness of these everyday practices, we argue, has to inform any redesign of Scottish local politics; it is too easy for local authorities to take these frequently neglected routines, rules, and local capabilities for granted. Elected members who participated in this study recognised the constraints on their current role, and indeed the varying effectiveness and commitment of local councillors themselves. But, the new common sense ultimately runs the risk of bypassing local councillors in any discussions on the future of local democracy in Scotland. It either constructs councillors as part of the 'problem' rather than part of the 'solution', it tends to ignore them, or it takes their role for granted, with councillors becoming the symbolic vessel for a host of demands and grievances that cannot be simply attributed to the failings of local representative politics.

This study ultimately argues that we need to recognise the multiple roles undertaken as part of the everyday practice of local

councillors. Rather than bypassing councillors, we need to reinvest in the work of elected members, building any reforms using a deeper understanding and engagement with what councillors actually do when they do 'local politics'.

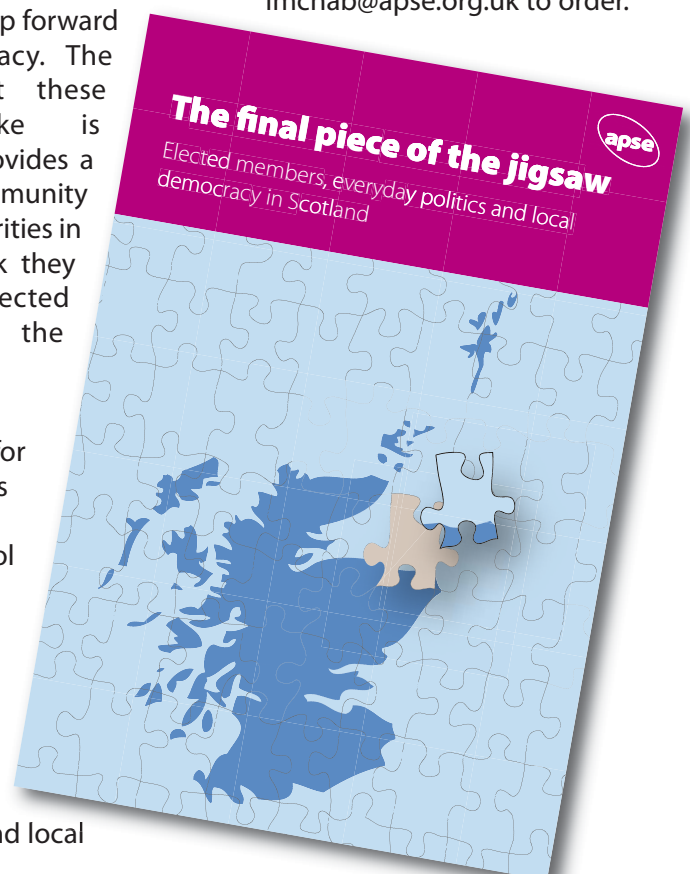
APSE's Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, 'This is important and timely research. Its approach to the ongoing debate about the future role of elected members is surely a positive step forward for local democracy. The contribution that these councillors make is significant, and provides a good sense of community spirit to local authorities in Scotland. The work they do must be protected and ensured for the future.'

Complete with recommendations for action, we hope this new research will provide a timely tool to facilitate discussion and broaden understanding about the future role of elected members in everyday politics and local

democracy within Scotland.

To download a digital copy for free, please visit www.apse.org.uk, click on 'Research' then 'Current Research Programme'.

Print copies may be ordered for party groups or democratic services teams at the member price of £20.00 for one copy, or £15.00 per copy if purchasing 5 or more copies. Email lmcnab@apse.org.uk to order.





The sad process of respectfully removing and disposing of three beached sperm whales

James Gilbert, Communications, Consultation and Tourism Manager, talks about how the team at East Lindsey District Council managed to respectfully dispose of the three whales that beached at Skegness.

Despite having significant experience at removing whales from beaches, all of us at East Lindsey District Council were shocked and saddened to wake up on Sunday 24th January and find that three of the magnificent mammals had come ashore in Skegness. The news followed reports from a couple of days previously that a sperm whale had become stranded at Hunstanton, just down the coast. It seems that more members of the whale pod were in the North Sea – a significant distance from their usual home in the deep oceans. One whale came ashore close to the resort's main beach, whilst the other two washed up further south on an area of special scientific interest, close to the Gibraltar Point Nature Reserve.

Though all anybody could do was speculate as to why this tragic phenomenon had occurred, it was a

situation that the Council had to deal with quickly. As such, we were soon busy working with HM Coastguard and the Receiver of Wreck (who has a responsibility for 'Royal Fish' that come ashore such as whales, dolphins, porpoises and sturgeon), focusing on putting immediate plans in place to respectfully remove and dispose of the whales.

These plans were swiftly put into action, as this tragic situation wasn't entirely new to us; in 2006, East Lindsey DC saw two Bottlenose Whales beached in Skegness. They were re-floated, only to come lifelessly back ashore the following day. Again, in 2012 a large sperm whale, slightly bigger than the recent whales, came ashore just north of the Pier. This whale was removed using a similar method to the one we used this January, so we knew very clearly what to do when this situation arose.

On Monday, the day after the whales had come ashore, the Zoological Society of London arrived in Skegness to undertake post mortem examinations on the three whales, in an attempt to understand how they'd come to arrive in the North Sea, and to determine the cause of death. By this point, we had also informed the Marine Management Organisation of the incident, and liaised with Natural England, as two of the whales beached on land of special scientific interest.

We appointed a contractor, Welton Aggregates, to carry out the removal and to take the whales on their final journey; in a discussion with the Receiver of Wreck, it was decided that moving the whales whole was our most appropriate and respectful option. Alongside this, we had to acquire a movement license to transport the whales to a site in Sheffield. Once all of these necessary steps had been taken, we were able to make preparations to move the bodies.

Around midday on Tuesday, we moved heavy machinery into Skegness, including an excavator, bull dozer and a wheeled loader. Due to the total weight – approximately 30 tonnes per whale – moving the whales, even with this sort of equipment, would take some time.

Health and safety was a key consideration for us and our contractors moved all three whales in a slow and careful process to the middle of central beach, where they were temporarily buried in mounds of sands. This move was important because we were concerned that the high tide could have lifted the whales and taken them out to sea, re-beaching them at a location that would make their already difficult removal much harder.

We moved the whales on Wednesday evening. Health and safety throughout this operation was a major part of the planning, given the location and the type of equipment being used. We used coastguards and police to keep the public safe, and chose to move the bodies later on in the evening, in order to avoid attracting a crowd. In an operation lasting six hours and starting at 7.30pm, we began loading the whales, one by one, onto extended low loader trailers, and we covered them in tarpaulin, ready to be taken to their final place of rest.

In a last minute change of plan, the whales, which were initially due to go to a landfill site for burial, were sent for rendering at a plant in the Sheffield area.

We were very clear from the outset that we wanted to treat the three whales with great respect during any operation to remove them. The reality is that you can't get away from needing to use heavy machinery, but we wanted to take the carcasses to their final resting place whole, rather than undertake a grisly and less dignified removal.

This situation was different to others we'd dealt with as it is rare to find three beached whales at one time. International media attention immediately turned to Skegness; many major news outlets sent journalists, film cameras, photographers and even helicopters to the area. We decided to utilise this coverage in a bid to keep the public informed at a safe distance. Sky News did a live broadcast showing the loading and transportation of the whales, with BBC News, ITN and local media also showing huge interest in the operation. In this way, we were able to keep the majority of people away from the beach.

What really touched us all during this process was the great sense of sadness and loss that many people in Skegness and from much further afield felt. This is something that hadn't been so apparent when this had happened previously. So many people from across the country came to our beach, as a mark of respect to the whales. One family from Nottingham brought their daughter, who wants to be a Marine Biologist, as they thought this could be a once in a lifetime opportunity for her to see a whale so close. There was a sense of sorrow and empathy, not only from those in our Council team but also from people in the wider community.

Though it was an upsetting time, we are pleased that we had the knowledge to offer these whales the respect and dignity they deserved. We would also like other local authorities to know that we are available to offer more information, guidance and help to any Council who finds themselves in this situation or something similar.

Contact: James.Gilbert@e-lindsey.gov.uk

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On the road to success: The winners of the 2016 APSE roads, street lighting and winter maintenance Apprentice Award and Rising Star Award

The portfolios have been handed in, the interviews have wrapped up and now we are pleased to announce the winners of the 2016 APSE Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Apprentice Award and the Rising Star Award.

One of APSE's most anticipated awards, this year's Apprentice finalists are a shining example of the excellence and hard work that is carried out by people learning a new trade in local government. By recognising the achievements of these excellent finalists, we not only celebrate their success, but we also highlight the importance of apprenticeship schemes, which are vital for teaching the skills necessary to maintain important frontline services.

This year's Apprentice Award winner is Francesca Lawton-Vaughan from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, who beat off strong competition by demonstrating her exceptional problem-solving and critical thinking skills, as well as her outstanding work ethic. Well done, Francesca!

New this year, the Rising Star Award celebrates local authority employees who show the skills, mind-set and innovative thinking to make them stand out as potential future leaders in the public sector. Our outstanding finalists have all shown exceptional abilities through the projects that they have completed and the ideas they have developed. They all have a fantastic set of skills that allow them to shine bright in their roles.

The winner of the first Roads, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Rising Star Award is Dave Fothergill. He is a very supportive member of staff at Newcastle City Council who is always taking colleagues into consideration. He has a great team spirit that has helped him to carry out some very successful high-profile projects. Congratulations, Dave!

APSE's Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, 'these awards are an excellent

way of celebrating those who are currently developing bright careers in the public sector. All of our finalists have shown a vast wealth of knowledge in their particular area, and demonstrated the skills that their particular career paths require for progression and success. Through holding the Apprentice Award and Rising Star Award, APSE hopes to help local councils identify the people in their employment that deserve praise and recognition, as these people are a credit to themselves and the local authorities they work for.'

Congratulations to all the winners and finalists!

For more information on the APSE apprentice of the year awards, or to apply for any category, visit apse.org.uk/events



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Get Ready for a 'LegenDerry' Experience!

APSE annual seminar 2016!

Visit Derry is delighted to welcome the Association of Public Service Excellence back to the city on 7- 9 September 2016 for its' Annual Seminar and Awards. In between the sessions of your action packed programme, there is much to see and do and Visit Derry is here to help you plan your trip!

Located in the stunning North West of Ireland, the charming city of Derry~Londonderry is renowned as one of the finest Walled cities in Europe, full of fascinating history and culture. This vibrant destination offers a unique combination of rich heritage and a buzzing social scene – Derry was named as 'Friendliest Destination in Northern Ireland' so you will be guaranteed the warmest of welcomes! Uncover the many cultural delights on offer; take a trip back in time and discover over 400 years of history strolling along the historic 17th Century Walls, home to one of the largest collections of Cannon in Europe. Enjoy magnificent historic buildings and cathedrals or check out one of the many museums to uncover this unique destination's fascinating story and journey to peace.

A busy few days is guaranteed to work up an appetite so check out one of the many restaurants for a bite to eat. 2016 is Northern Ireland's "Year of Food and Drink" and Derry was named as runner up in the prestigious 'Restaurant Association of Ireland's 2015 'Foodie Town Awards' so you can be sure to enjoy the very best of locally sourced produce including 'from pier to plate' seafood caught locally in neighbouring County Donegal.

So where to next? Catch a performance at one of the city's theatres or why not discover Derry's vibrant cultural vibe and enjoy live music and home grown artists in action at one of the many pubs, cafes and bars.

For anyone wishing to extend their stay, less than a 1 hour transfer takes you the UNESCO World Heritage Site the Giant's Causeway and Bushmills Whiskey Distillery, the oldest licensed distillery in the world! To the South of the city lie the Sperrin Mountains, a stunning area of outstanding natural beauty and to the West you can marvel at the magnificent natural beauty of County Donegal, home to fabulous attractions such as Glenveagh National Park and Doagh Famine Village, not to mention some of the best links golf courses in Europe and gateway to the spectacular 'Wild Atlantic Way' - the longest defined coastal touring route in the world!

Winner of the inaugural UK City of Culture 2013 and named by highly acclaimed travel publication 'Lonely Planet' as a 'Top 10 City in the World to Visit' we guarantee a 'LegenDerry' experience!

For details about the APSE Annual Seminar 2016 visit the APSE Website on www.apse.org.uk

Cultural experiences to make your visit worthwhile!

Guided Tour of 17th Century Walls

Discover the Derry~Londonderry's unique history and heritage with a guided walking tour of the iconic Walled city. Tours depart daily from the Tourist Information Centre (44 Foyle Street) at 10.00am, 12.00pm, 2.00pm and 4.00pm www.visitderry.com

St Columb's Cathedral Built in 1633, St Columb's is the oldest building in the city and it's Chapter House Museum houses various artefacts from the Siege of Derry, furniture gifted to the Cathedral by the Thomas Chippendale and some of the oldest examples of Irish silver on record www.stcolumbscathedral.org

St Columba's Heritage Centre

Located within the Saint Columba's National School which dates back to 1813, the centre promotes the shared history and heritage of St. Columba, the city's founding father www.stcolumbaheritage.org

The Guildhall One of the most striking buildings in the city the Guildhall is home to one of the largest collections of stained glass in Ireland and also houses a new 'Plantation of Ulster' exhibition www.derrycity.gov.uk/guildhall

Siege Museum Visit the newly opened Siege Museum dedicated to the history and heritage of the Apprentice Boys and the Siege of Londonderry 1688-1689. www.thesiegemuseum.org

Museum of Free Derry Discover the people's story of the struggle for Civil

Rights, the Battle of the Bogside and Bloody Sunday www.museumoffreederry.org

City Sightseeing Open Top Bus The fastest way to view the city's key landmarks such as the 17th Century Walls, the Guildhall, the Bogside and the Waterside Murals www.citysightseeingderry.com

Tower Museum This museum houses two exhibitions; the Story of Derry and also The Armada Shipwreck which showcases artifacts unearthed from the La Trinidad Valancera, found wrecked off the Donegal Coast www.derrycity.gov.uk/museums

Galleries Check out the city's many galleries including the Centre for Contemporary Art www.cca-derry-londonderry.org and Void Gallery www.derryvoid.com

Welcome... Stirling Lloyd



Stirling Lloyd Polychem Limited, a highly experienced market leader in waterproofing, protecting and surfacing, have joined the club and received APSE Approved Partner Status.

Through this partnership, APSE hopes to ensure that local councils are able to take advantage of Stirling Lloyd's innovative and forward-thinking approach to maintaining buildings and street works. Working closely with our building maintenance and roads service areas, our growing network of councils will be able to gain new ideas and insights from Stirling Lloyd's 40 years of expertise.

Speaking about their new Approved Partner status, APSE Principal Advisor Phil Brennan said that, "as a supplier that looks to provide a range of solutions to protect infrastructure assets in any climate, Stirling Lloyd fits well with APSE and our local authority members who are responsible for road and highway maintenance.

"Asset management is a theme long promoted by APSE and Stirling Lloyd is following a similar approach. APSE is keen to work with suppliers who are committed to the local government sector and who provide answers to address the practical problems our members encounter every day."

As Approved Partners, Stirling Lloyd will appear at APSE exhibitors' events, as well as speaking about their innovative practice at a service area-specific advisory group. They are a great addition to our community and we look forward to their contribution as they help support local authorities achieve excellence in frontline services.

APSE's Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said "It's great to have the expertise and experience of Stirling Lloyd to help APSE in its pursuit of excellence for all local government frontline services. They will be a great resource for our members in the highways, street lighting and road maintenance sector. I'm sure you will all join me to congratulate them on their status as APSE Approved Partners."

Stirling Lloyd were presented with their APSE Approved Partner certificate at the APSE Roads, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance seminar in Newcastle on the 3rd March.



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Report back

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

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

England

Conservative Councillors Association Conference

APSE took part in a plenary session debate on devolution with Mo Baines of APSE joining a panel of speakers including Baroness Williams of Trafford and Cllr Sean Anstee, Leader of Trafford Council at the CCA Conference 2016 held in Oxford.

Workshops on income generation in local services proved popular, with packed attendance by delegates. The workshops were chaired by Cllr Paul Findlow of Cheshire East Council and addressed by Cllr Robin Brown of Northamptonshire County Council and Rob Bailey of APSE.

Town and Country

APSE's ongoing work with the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) continues with Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive, attending a roundtable on devolution and combined authorities on the 2nd March in Manchester. The 9th March saw APSE and the TCPA host a further roundtable to support the latest research on Housing, with a new report to be launched in the spring.

It's all about the strategy

APSE has hosted two strategic forums, with the first of the year taking place on the 27th January in West Lindsey. It was chaired by Cllr Giles McNeil with guest speaker Manjeet Gill, Chief Executive of West Lindsey. Moving to the North East, Cllr John Kerr Brown hosted a discussion on local government finance on the 15 March with key contacts and councillors within the region.

Congratulations...

To Mark Bramah who is retiring as Director APSE Energy as of the 31 March 2016. All the team at APSE wish Mark well on his retirement.

Phil Brennan is Acting Head of APSE Energy and can be contacted for APSE Energy enquiries on pbrennan@apse.org.uk



Tatton Park

Drew Bennellick, Head of Landscape and Natural Heritage Lottery Fund, was the headline speaker at APSE's national Parks

seminar 2016. Tatton Park proved a beautiful and popular setting for the parks debate, which looked at future challenges and opportunities for our municipal parks.

An award-winning dinner

APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien attended the LGC awards dinner in London on the 16 March in London which celebrated the achievements of local councils and local services. Congratulations to APSE Member Tameside MBC who won the overall council of the year.

On the streets

Aston Villa Football Club was the setting for APSE's Streetscene seminar with a key note address from Jane Bickerstaffe, Director of INCPEN, speaking about the need for a national litter strategy and action plan. A busy trade show also saw exhibitors sharing innovation with APSE delegates. You can download presentations at www.apse.org.uk

York Facilities Management

The historic city of York played host to the APSE Soft Facilities Management Seminar 2016, with key note speakers including Myles Bremner, Director of the School Food Plan, Ian McGrady, Managing Director at Edsential Ltd, a Wirral council development, and Brad Pearce, Managing Director of CATERed, which was developed by Plymouth City Council. If you go to www.apse.org.uk you can download presentations under our events pages.

Reaching the peaks at the Chill Factor

A snowy ski slope provided the backdrop to the APSE Leisure seminar 2016, addressed by keynote speaker Andrew Honeyman, Head of Physical Activity and Olympic and Paralympic Legacy, from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The event, held in an indoor ski and snow attraction, saw delegates debate future funding challenges, bringing inactive residents into physical activity, as well as receiving details about the latest sports research and an update on 'Leisure Law'. At the end of the event – and proving APSE practices what we preach – delegates were invited to take part in a free ski session. Although we hear some people sloped off early... (sorry!).

Taking the High Road

APSE Roads, Highways and Street Lighting seminar 2016 was held in Newcastle with the seminar culminating in the first APSE Rising Star award for the sector, coupled with the Apprentice Awards for 2016. See page 20 for details about our winners.

Northern Lights

APSE's Northern Region hosted an enlightening event for members in the north of England on regeneration, housing and public realm in Durham on the 16th March, with speakers from Blackpool Coastal Housing, Sunderland City Council, North Tyneside Council, Liverpool City Council and Durham Council. Presentations are available from the APSE Northern pages at www.apse.org.uk

Branching out

APSE's South and South West region has continued to bloom as we approach the Spring and within the last month, the London Borough of Haringey has been welcomed into APSE membership.

Membership perks

South/South West advisory groups are proving popular, with the Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance Advisory Group hearing from Clive Skidmore of Birmingham City Council, and Mark Jaggard of Oxford City Council.

All the new groups in APSE's South/South West region are free to attend for member authorities. To find out more, email Mary-Ann Kamau on MKamau@apse.org.uk

Ship shape and Bristol fashion

In mid-March the region hosted a seminar called 'Moving Towards a Self-Sustaining Future', which explored devolution issues and the future possibilities for councils to self-generate additional income. The event included Michael Lockwood, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Harrow.

Wales

A note about the Local Government (Wales) Bill

Following consultation with Welsh local authorities in regards to comments on the draft Local Government (Wales) Bill, APSE forwarded both a response on behalf of APSE Wales members and also produced an informative briefing note. It looks at the issues of reorganisation which are, once again, at the forefront of debate and discussions, particularly some recent proposals on Combined Authority matters, as well as highlighting issues of democracy, accountability, and local authority powers.

To view this briefing note, go to www.apse.org.uk, click on Member's Resources, then go to Briefings. It is named APSE Briefing 16-08: Response to the draft Local Government (Wales) Bill. Alternatively, email Wayne Priestley on wpriestley@apse.org.uk

Generating a new way of balancing the books

There is an upcoming APSE seminar looking at the powers and opportunities that local authorities have in relation to income generation, entitled Balancing the books: Income generation, trading, charging and investment, which will take place on the 28th April at the Metropole Hotel in Llandrindod Wells. We will look at a range of income generation matters, including

different models for generating income. For more information, call 0161 772 1810 or email wpriestley@apse.org.uk

Scotland

Scottish Building, Housing & Renewables Seminar

The APSE Scotland Building, Housing and Renewables seminar was held on the 18th and 19th February in Dunblane. Opening the event was a "political question time", with speakers Sarah Boyack MSP, Cllr Mark Ruskell, Cllr Peter Barret and Cllr Les Sharp. They debated on topics such as community energy, investment in housing, and the protection of apprenticeships. Other sessions at the event focused on the launch of the APSE Scotland Solar PV toolkit, Falkirk Council's buyback scheme, and a demonstration of South Lanarkshire's cosmetic repair service. For presentations from this event, please contact Louise Melville on lmelville@apse.org.uk

Northern Ireland

High profile performance

APSE is continuing to help councils in Northern Ireland with Performance Improvement, as set out in the Local Government Act. We have held three workshops so far, looking at a range of services and considering how to adapt APSE's Performance Networks to meet the needs of NI local authorities. The most recent of these was a forum looking at leisure services, held in Ballymena. For details on future workshops, contact Phil Brennan on pbrennan@apse.org.uk



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SENTINEL SYSTEMS EXPANDS IN GROWING VEHICLE MARKET

Nationwide company now offering dedicated services in Scotland, with new and enhanced products available

Last year Sentinel Systems celebrated 30 years in the commercial vehicle safety market and has gone from strength to strength. In particular, 2015 saw the company's expansion with several new staff members and technical engineers joining the company in response to the increase in demand for Sentinel products in both the private and municipal vehicle markets.

Most notably, last year Sentinel appointed an experienced sales and technical support team to be permanently based in Scotland to ensure that a true national company presence is maintained there. With the team offering dedicated support in Scotland and Northern England, Sentinel's customers can be sure that their needs are understood and prioritised no matter where they are located.

Sentinel has also expanded its team of highly experienced field-based engineers to carry out all systems installations, training and maintenance in other areas of the UK. Major installation contracts have seen key companies in food services, construction and distribution, as well as public sector bodies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and England, opting for Sentinel Systems' cameras and reversing aids to ensure their fleets are amongst the safest operating vehicles on UK roads.

Within Scotland Sentinel has seen a rapid increase in business in response to customers' dissatisfaction with previous levels of service within the industry. Sentinel's workload has included the installation of its own solutions, from individual safety products up to comprehensive safety systems, as well as the maintenance of previously installed products in situations where Scottish customers have valued locally based support.

Sentinel Systems invests heavily in research and development. Assuring product quality and reliability is obviously the first priority in developing products that protect drivers and vulnerable road users. But Sentinel also



Sentinel Systems has developed a new and advanced radar system designed to detect pedestrians, cyclists or buildings by causing the vehicle to automatically brake if an obstruction is detected within a predetermined range.

understands that different customers each have their own specific operational requirements. Listening to a customer's needs and offering a tailored solution with local support have resulted in the development of a range of products that can be adapted to suit specific circumstances.

This commitment enables the company to offer an extensive range of innovative systems, including the award-winning Bike Hotspot cyclist safety system and a range of high performance 360° vehicle cameras, which most customers choose to link to mobile recording devices - with Live View as an option. Sentinel's most recent development is the latest generation model of its advanced reversing radar system. This new system is designed to detect pedestrians, cyclists or buildings by causing the vehicle to automatically brake if an obstruction is detected within a predetermined range. If active braking is not required, the system can be offered with a range of audible and visual alerts. As ever, Sentinel tailors the system to its customers' needs: employing its own engineers rather than subcontractors allows the team to work closely with its customers from specification through to commissioning.

The new radar systems will be on display at Sentinel Systems' stand at the APSE Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar in Aviemore from the 17th to 20th May 2016, where the company's local team of sales and technical engineers will be available to discuss and demonstrate its leading products and systems.



Sentinel Systems offers an extensive range of innovative safety systems including 360° vehicle cameras, which can be linked to mobile recording devices and Live View as an option.



Visit Sentinel Systems at the APSE Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar for more information on their products and latest installations, or visit www.reversewithsafety.com or call 01285 771333

Upcoming
events...

April

13 April	Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Advisory Group	Manchester
15 April	Catering Advisory Group	Manchester
15 April	Scotland Commercialisation Seminar	Glasgow
15 April	Housing and Building Advisory Group	Manchester
19 April	Sports and Leisure Group	Manchester
20 April	Scotland Renewables and Energy Efficiency Advisory Group	Edinburgh
21 April	Building Cleaning Group	Manchester
22 April	Cemeteries and Crematoria Seminar	Kenilworth
26 April	Parks and Horticultural Services Advisory Group	Manchester
29 April	Scotland Building and Housing Advisory Group	TBC

May

4 May	Renewables Advisory Group	Manchester
6 May	Scotland Roads and Highways Advisory Group	Perth
10 May	Scotland Soft FM Advisory Group	TBC
12 May	Refuse, Recycling and Street Cleansing Advisory Group	Manchester
13 May	Social Media Seminar	TBC
17-20 May	Scotland Fleet, Waste and Grounds Seminar	Aviemore

June

29 June	Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Group	Manchester
30 June	Building Cleaning Advisory Group	Manchester



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