



direct news

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New employability research

APSE

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Apprentice Awards 2016

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From Renfrewshire, Scotland to William Village, Malawi

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Oldham Council

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Work it out: Creating local systems of employability support



Dates for your diary

Date	Event	Location
8 December 2016	Emotional Resilience	Glasgow
12 December 2016	Leadership and Management Skills	Manchester
13 December 2016	Identifying Damp, timber mould & structural problems	Glasgow
13 December 2016	Using Volunteers? What local authorities need to know.	Leeds
13 December 2016	Marketing your local authority services to business customers	Central London
14 December 2016	Supervisory Skills Frontline Services	Glasgow
14 December 2016	Cemeteries and Crematoria Advisory Group	Manchester
14 December 2016	Highways Advisory Group	Manchester
15 December 2016	Building Maintenance Advisory Group	Manchester
11 January 2017	Local Government Finance	Birmingham
12 January 2017	ICCM - Legal and Practical Management of Cemeteries (Ensuring Compliance)	Leeds
12 January 2017	How to make a profit from restaurants, cafeterias and events	Central London
13 January 2017	Principles of contract management	Manchester
16 January 2017	Health and Safety Enforcement - What environmental health officers need to know	Central London
19 January 2017	Controlling Food Costs	Manchester
19 January 2017	Principles of Fleet Management	Leeds
23 January 2017	Health and Safety - Working on the Highway and Verges	Manchester
24 January 2017	APSE Scotland Roads and Street Lighting Advisory Group	Perth
26-27 January 2017	Facilities Management Seminar	Durham
16 February 2017	Street Cleansing Seminar	National Conference Centre
2-3 March 2017	Highways Seminar	Liverpool



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Editorial

The Rust Belt Brexit

As this edition of direct news goes to press, the UK has woken up to the news that the President-elect of the United States of America is Donald J Trump. Love him or loathe him, his electoral success came as a seismic shock; but should we be so surprised?

Within the USA, industrial decline has spread the suppression of wages, job losses and living standards, most notably in the rust belt states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Iowa. Predominantly white working class voters abandoned the Democrats – not for a straight switch to the Republicans, but for a switch to Donald Trump. The man who promised them a new settlement, abandoning the Transatlantic Trade Partnership, promised 'American jobs for American people' and as an alternative to the decline, he offered a new industrial strategy. For many, Trump is the unacceptable face of bigotry but it is too easy to dismiss his supporters as 'deplorables'.

As with Brexit, a pattern is emerging of whole communities who feel left behind. Isolated and depressed, they have not experienced the growth and renewal evidenced elsewhere within their country. There are lessons for local government in all of this.

As we have risen to the challenge of budget reductions, there is a perception that little has changed for local residents in spite of the cuts. The bins still get emptied, the streets still get cleaned, the parks still have flowers. But what about long term decline? There are only so many times we can put a sticking plaster over a gaping wound.

Local government has so much to offer in terms of local economic growth. We are uniquely placed to understand our local areas, to match skills to new businesses and jobs growth, to develop regeneration schemes that enhance public realm and make places better in which to live and work. We can develop and deliver the ambitious housing schemes to provide new affordable and sustainable homes. We can become the provider of choice on energy by developing our own municipal energy companies, creating a local boost to the green economy whilst tackling fuel poverty, which blights too many families in our communities.

In short, like the USA, we need a new industrial strategy – but one which places local government at the heart of delivery. Perhaps, with that end, we can avoid the schisms that are becoming the new norm in everyday political discourse.

Paul O'Brien, Chief Executive



Work it out: Creating local systems of employability support

APSE's latest research, in collaboration with NLGN, considers why it is vital that local government is given the power to help people get back into employment. Paul O'Brien, APSE's Chief Executive, explains the research findings.

For many areas, unemployment brings a drain on resources; supporting the fallout from people who are without work means increases in housing and welfare benefits. It often means lower educational attainment for children in non-working households, poorer housing and a detrimental effect on mental health and wellbeing. However, the approach taken by the DWP is to simply reduce the count numbers of those unemployed, taking an approach of just getting people into work regardless of the types of jobs on offer, the longevity of the jobs and the skills match in the local area.

APSE views this approach as a bit of a blunt instrument, which is why we decided to work with NLGN on a new piece of research that explores a different approach to addressing issues of local employability.

Employability is intrinsically linked to the success of local economies. We are moving away from reliance on central government grants and towards new systems of finance that increasingly rely on council tax and business rates. It is imperative to develop local skills that can attract new businesses and new jobs to local areas, alongside encouraging new people to live in local housing and

contribute to the council tax base.

As part of our research with NLGN, we wanted to find out what the barriers are to employability and how we can develop bespoke local solutions to these barriers. We started by exploring how local councils felt about employability issues and strategies in their area, including the interface with the aims of devolution for English local authorities in particular. We also developed a number of case studies.

A key finding of our research report is that local government should have more powers to help tackle persistent unemployment. 98% of councils think that employment and skills provision should be locally commissioned. We also found that:

- 80% of councils are already taking steps to improve employment and skills provision in their area
- However, 84% say budget cuts are preventing delivering the services that would be most effective
- Almost half of responding councils think fragmentation of services is preventing the provision of proper services
- Local provision has huge support from business – over three quarters of councils reported support.

This report also argues that greater devolved powers to all councils would go much further and faster towards tackling long-term unemployment. This includes devolution of the apprenticeship levy, further education budgets, and increased integration between local authorities and Job Centre Plus centres. The report also looks at tackling persistent unemployment (particularly long-term and youth unemployment).

Councils are confident that they can deliver skills and employment provision effectively, and are already taking steps to do this by establishing key partnerships with businesses and employers, which will deliver tailored training that can meet the local skills need. Over three quarters of respondent councils have found businesses to be supportive of this.

The report reveals evidence that councils are creating stronger local employment and skills systems within their existing powers:

- The City and County of Swansea Council has procurement contracts which require targeted recruitment and training for young people or long-term unemployed
- Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark councils have come together to integrate employment and welfare services to create individualised services
- Blackpool will be piloting integrating mental health provision with employment services to

help tackle unemployment in those suffering from depression and anxiety.

However, with local councils finding that budget cuts to local authorities are the greatest barrier to providing better local provision for better employment and skills, the need for greater investment to effectively tackle unemployment is obvious. The national economic benefits of reducing unemployment are well documented – and yet councils only receive 7p back from every £1 saved.

In APSE's view, devolutionary goals of better employment and fairer regional and city economies will not be achieved if we ignore the employability and skills of people in our local areas. To truly rebalance the UK economy, we need local people capable of moving into the new and emerging jobs market. Local councils are uniquely placed to understand their communities. By placing local councils at the heart of employability, we can maximise the opportunities for both our residents and our local economies.

One way we can better address the issue of employability would be to give councils more power and resources over how employability services are organised locally. This would enable knowledge on the skills that local businesses need to link individuals to local opportunities.

What is clear from our research report is that local government has a huge appetite to do more, and that there is existing business support for this. The national model of fragmented provision and accountability between government departments is falling short in communities. It is time that responsibility and resources are devolved to create a system that secures jobs for people.

The report also recommends that:

- There should be a National Learning Network to share best practice on how to tackle unemployment locally
- New data sharing legislation should be introduced to facilitate closer working relationships between all aspects of public service
- Further budget powers should be devolved around supporting the long term unemployed to get back into work.

Doing nothing is not an option when it comes to tackling unemployment but with the right resources and a commitment to local solutions, local councils are well placed to deliver on the narrative of jobs, skills and investment in our local areas.

To order copies of the report, visit the APSE website and click on Research. Alternatively, contact us on 0161 772 1810 or email enquiries@apse.org.uk.



Measuring up in Northern Ireland

APSE performance networks has been working with Northern Ireland authorities to develop a new benchmarking project, which focuses on measuring success and driving excellence in local councils. APSE's Debbie Johns, Head of performance networks, tells us more about this exciting project.

In Northern Ireland, under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, there is a duty for each council to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of its functions. They are now expected to collect information relating to their performance in order to assess their work in previous financial years and, as far as is practicable, against the performance of other councils.

This is where APSE performance networks can help. We have been working with local councils in Northern Ireland to ensure that performance networks can meet the responsibilities that councils now have under the Act. Eight of the 11 councils in Northern Ireland are now subscribed to the project, which stretches over these service areas:

- a. Leisure facility management
- b. Parks and open spaces

- c. Transport services
- d. Refuse collection
- e. Street Cleansing
- f. Cemeteries and crematoria
- g. Environmental health
- h. Planning
- i. Community development
- j. Economic development
- k. Cultural services
- l. Corporate services

Existing, relevant benchmarking modules have been refined and we have created bespoke new performance

modules by collaborating with the Northern Ireland councils. These are for planning, community development, economic development, cultural services and corporate services.

We believe that the modules could be highly informative for other APSE authorities, too. Data collection is now underway and the initial set of performance reports will be issued winter 2016-17. Though it's dependent on the successful development of these modules, we're optimistic that these new services could be rolled out to councils throughout the UK, becoming much welcomed additions to the APSE performance networks family of services.

We're continuing to liaise with the Department for Communities over the development work in Northern

Ireland. A special thematic forum will be held at the forthcoming APSE performance networks seminar in Blackpool on 1 December 2016, which will feature a presentation from Nichola Creagh, from the Local Government Policy Division at the Department for Communities

For further details about the annual APSE performance networks seminar, or about the Northern Ireland benchmarking project, please contact the APSE office on 0161 772 1810 or email performance.networks@apse.org.uk

As part of this project, we have developed new performance measures in a number of highly relevant areas. These include:

Planning

- Percentage of major planning applications processed within 30 weeks
- The average processing time of major planning applications
- Percentage of local planning applications processed within 15 weeks
- The average processing time of local planning applications
- Percentage of enforcement cases processed and concluded within the 39 weeks

Corporate services

- Organisational development / human resources performance indicators
- ICT performance indicators
- Registration Services performance indicators
- Legal Services performance indicators
- Training/Learning performance indicators
- Finance performance indicators
- Democratic Services performance indicators
- Complaints
- Overall satisfaction
- Cost of services
- Accessibility

Cultural services

- Net cost of all cultural services per head of population
- Net cost of theatres services per head of population

- Net cost of visitor attraction services per head of population
- Net cost of festivals / event services per head of population
- Net cost of other cultural services per head of population
- Theatre participation rates per head of population
- Visitor attractions participation rates per head of population
- Percentage staff absence for cultural services (all staff)
- Percentage long term absenteeism / lost time rate for cultural services
- Percentage short term absenteeism / lost time rate for cultural services

Economic development

- Number of business plan applications approved
- Percentage of business plan applications granted for a 'business start-up'
- The number of jobs promoted through business start-up activity
- Percentage achieved jobs promoted against rate POST RSI final evaluation

Community development

- Net cost of community development services per head of population (including CEC)
- Net cost of community development services per head of population (excluding CEC)
- Percentage of community development spend sourced via external funding
- Community development participation rates per annum per head of population



Delivering excellence in bereavement services

Martin Quinn from the Association of Probate Researchers (APR) discusses their new regulatory system for probate researchers, who provide a service to local authorities' cemeteries and crematoria services by tracing next-of-kin.

At the Association of Probate Researchers (APR), we are delighted to have been awarded Recognised Body Status by the Professional Paralegal Register (PPR). This new Status means that all of APR's regulated members can be trusted to carry out their work in a professional and ethical manner.

In order to achieve regulation and to be recognised by the PPR, all members of APR will have to provide evidence that they have reached a minimum of 4 years' practical experience, and of having worked on over 100 probate cases. As well as experience, our members must adhere to APR's set of professional standards and ethics code. Members must also sign up to the PPR code of conduct.

For those working in cemeteries and crematoria, this has a positive impact on you. Many local authorities use companies/tracing agents in the field of probate research to assist in locating next-of-kin of some of their residents. Arguably, using these companies is the most cost effective and time efficient process available to them, especially when trying to manage changing budgets alongside continuing to support public health funerals.

The reasons for using reputable research companies/tracing agents are numerous, but most importantly they're used to confidently safeguard that exhaustive research has been undertaken, that all legal heirs have been located and that the correct estate monies are distributed, including

the correct reimbursement of local authority fees. This is a great responsibility, so it is vital to ensure you have the correct person for the job. As such, local authorities have a duty to question how a supplier benchmarks the following:

1. Does my supplier pass the best practice test?
2. Is the Local Authority Procurement Department performing accurate Due Diligence?
3. If problems arise, will my supplier support a robust complaints procedure?
4. Is my supplier independently regulated?
5. Does my supplier have adequate Professional Indemnity insurance in place?
6. Is the research conducted by full time in-house employees?
7. Will my supplier rely on contractors or outsource the work?

Through APR, our member firms can guarantee that employees are regulated in relation to these questions.

This is an Industry First; it is great to see the first APR public sector case managers achieve regulation and with high interest being shown by other companies, we will be announcing further members shortly.

To find out more, go to <http://www.a-p-r.org>.

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From Renfrewshire, Scotland, to William Village, Malawi

Elaine Scott, Building Services Manager at Renfrewshire Council, gives an insight into the Council's recent experience in Malawi, where a team of volunteers went to build a new school for the children of William Village.

William Village is just over an hour's drive from Malawi's capital city, Blantyre. There are around 600 children in the village and the surrounding area, all of whom currently have no access to education. The area relies entirely on farming maize and small crops of vegetables, which helps to sustain the villagers. Just one person from the village had ever received a full classroom education.

In late 2014, we gathered a group of volunteers from Renfrewshire Council to visit William Village with the aim of building a school. Individuals across the council – including staff from building services, education, social work, and business support – volunteered for the build project in October 2014, and they began raising money and gathering supplies before heading out in

September 2015. The project developed into creating four new buildings; a school with three classrooms, teachers' accommodation, a toilet block, and kitchen. This was in addition to employing locals to make desks and chairs, and supplying the students with uniforms. Our aim was to ensure that no financial obstacles stood in the way of the children's education.

Before heading out to Malawi, our volunteers and supporters raised an amazing £125,000 for the trip. A total of 32 volunteers went to Malawi for 16 days to build the school and adjoining buildings. We worked alongside Classrooms for Malawi, a Scottish charity that works to help children in Malawi out of poverty and into education. The charity had existing links with Renfrewshire Schools, and this helped us to forge a very productive partnership. Through Classrooms for

Malawi we linked into Mary's Meals, a local charity that offers children in some of the poorest countries a good meal each school day. We built a kitchen adjacent to the school, which the charity could use to feed the children.

It was extremely humbling to see this village and its people. Meeting them gave us an appreciation of what poverty truly means. Hopefully, the school will help to alleviate the poverty in this community. Despite their circumstances, the locals are hard workers, and helped us in any way they could. The women would carry gallons of water on their head for the mortar mixes – usually with one baby tied to their front and one on their back. With their help, we were able to complete the three-classroom school, the Mary's Meals kitchen, and the teachers' accommodation to roof level. Mary's Meals have since fitted gas burners and have started to feed the children in the village. Work on the girls' and boys' toilet blocks had begun whilst our team were there but completed by a local contractor. The school was officially handed over to the village in February 2016 and named Renfrewshire Primary School.

The children were overjoyed when the school was finally completed. But we didn't stop there; we resolved to ensure that the students and teachers were equipped with everything they required to learn and grow, giving them the best chances in life. We designed a desk and table with a local craftsman, and he developed a sample model while we were there. Now, the new school is fitted with 108 desks and chairs. Alongside the desks, we were able to provide 800 uniforms for students. These uniforms are made by a local orphanage that teaches tailoring skills to their older children. The income generated by making these uniforms goes towards paying for the orphan children's further and higher education.

When we took photos of the village children, they were so desperate to see them and we didn't understand why. We soon came to realise that they had never seen themselves before – they have no mirrors. These are children who are used to having nothing at all, so the team were more than willing to help. We did everything we could to make the school more pleasant for the children, including making a see-saw from off-cuts of wood and mounting a handmade swing on a tree.

We also completed a number of small projects for the community; to get to William Village, we came across a very old wooden bridge with no sides and a very large hole. To cross, we had to get out of the minibus, walk across and wait on the other side as the bus crossed. On the first day of the build, an old lady from the village asked if we could fix this dangerous bridge. A local man had previously fell from it and been seriously hurt, so we were more than happy to help repair it.

We sourced the wood and labour locally, repairing the bridge at a total cost of £60. This may seem like a small amount to pay, but the villagers could never afford it. Many people there don't have shoes. One man we met would walk around wearing a single flip flop. We asked him why, and he replied that the other had broken and it was better than having none.

Alongside the building work, the team transported over half a tonne of gifted items, generously donated by people and groups back home. The children of William Village were delighted at their toothbrushes and toothpaste, clothing, toys and stationary. There were also donations for the school itself, with teachers receiving jotters, stationary, chalkboards, games and sports equipment. Meanwhile, the volunteers personally provided gifts of soap, noodles, babywear, and ladies' wraps to many of the families that live in the village.

The team also brought over a number of vital necessities for the community. Medical and first aid provisions that were collected and supplied by the volunteers were gifted to a local clinic, allowing them to continue to treat the community.

Our tools were gifted by Fyfe and McGrouther, an engineering and construction product suppliers in Scotland. There are virtually no tools available in William Village, and the few tools they do have are extremely basic. To help, we left the tools there once we were finished. The sets were passed onto the local builder, the craftsmen that made the school desks and chairs, and local people who were trying to build their own homes. Six sets of tools were given to the Classrooms for Malawi charity for use in future projects. The workwear we were given by Arco (a company that supplies safety equipment and workwear to businesses) was also given to the locals of William Village.

Our whole team virtually left everything for the village but the clothes we stood in. The people in William Village did not even have underwear. This trip has changed our perspective on life. We have seen poverty. Now, when people say they are starving we know better, we tell them they're "just a wee bit hungry". The trip has not only allowed us to do something amazing, but taught us humility and a new appreciation for our own lives. We hope to return to Malawi and do more for William Village; the next project we have lined up is a community hub, with a doctor's surgery, which we hope will improve the lives of these villagers all the more.

For more information, contact Elaine Scott on elaine.scott@renfrewshire.gov.uk.

Ten years at Guildford's hydro-electric plant

Chris Reynolds, from Guildford Borough Council, discusses how the local authority was able to create a hydro-electric plant from a derelict mill, enabling them to generate their own renewable energy.



It is now ten years since Guildford Borough Council reopened a derelict mill site on the river Wey with a new hydro-electric turbine. The project has proved highly successful and the turbine continues to generate sufficient electricity to power approximately fifty homes. In ten years of operation, the plant has generated over 1.5GWh of electricity which spills directly to the grid.

This original mill building, located close to the centre of Guildford, was constructed in 1896 and specifically to house a water turbine which pumped water to the town's reservoir on Pewley Down. The original mill ceased working in 1952 when electric pumps took over and the building became derelict. The Guildford Hydro Project involved refurbishment of the building and replacement of the water turbine which now drives an electricity generator.

Ten years ago the project cost £340,000 of which about £100,000 was needed to restore the listed building. The Council has gained a consistent income from the exported power, and has made use of a historic building that would have still required upkeep. Overall it is considered that the original objectives have been successfully met and the payback is close to the original projections. However,

community value has also been gained from the project. The Town Mill regularly hosts guided tours both by Council staff and the National Trust, and a river trip by the National Trust now includes a tour of the hydro plant. It has become a feature of Guildford, striking a balance between a heritage site and a forward-looking facility with a very modern purpose. What's more, we have been able to bring about additional community benefits, for instance it is used for school visits for year 5 and 6 pupils. These tours include a drama workshop by the local youth theatre, a tour of the plant, and a lesson on other aspects of energy such as energy efficiency.

Guildford conducted a Renewable Mapping Exercise in 2014-15. The results of this exercise confirms the importance of the river as Guildford's best opportunity to harvest heat and power from renewable sources. We typically have low wind speeds and significant other constraints on wind and large scale solar energy, however the river provides a continuous flow of potential energy and heat. The exercise has helped us understand exactly where the opportunities for renewable energy in the borough are. This will enable us to be much more effective at deploying, or encouraging the deployment of, renewable energy generation in places where it is most suitable, and with the technologies that will be most effective. Guildford has a very high proportion of the borough subject to planning constraints, for example green belt and areas of outstanding natural beauty, and the mapping exercise enabled us to create some form of hierarchy of constraint, and to see the need to use appropriate technologies in these areas.

The heat mapping part of the exercise has been especially important. It has helped us to encourage heat networking in those areas that will be viable – an important aspect of future proofing the borough. Again, this will enable the council to better understand the opportunities to save carbon in heat provision, and for planners to guide developers along this route only in areas where it has already been identified to be appropriate.

In terms of the mill itself, the original turbine, a 42" Francis open flume type, had been manufactured by a company called Gilkes and was not in a good enough condition to be operated. However, an identical model was found in

a field in Ireland and after some repair was installed along with the gearbox and generator. It is a reaction turbine which runs full of water and creates pressure differences across the blades to extract energy from the available head of water (the difference between the upstream and downstream water levels). The turbine is unusual as it rotates in a horizontal plane and at a low speed of approximately 75 rpm. The turbine is rated at 68 HP at a 6 ft/1.8m head of water.

The turbine spins over what is effectively a plughole in the bottom of the upstream river leading to the lower level. The louvres around the outside of the impeller are operated through linkages by a hydraulic ram. They accurately control the flow of water passing through the impeller.

The entire system is controlled by an electronic unit which constantly monitors the upstream water level. It is connected to a sensor which is set to a specific working water level. If the sensor detects a high level it knows that the flow entering the river upstream is greater than that passing through the turbine and it will instruct the hydraulics to open the louvres by a small amount. This allows more water to pass through the turbine. This procedure continues until the two flows match each other and the level then remains constant. Similarly, if the flow upstream decreases, for instance after a storm surge or the opening of another sluice gate to the lower level, then the sensor will detect a low level and will gradually close the louvres until the flows match. The system is therefore constantly adjusting to the maximum it can generate from the available flow.

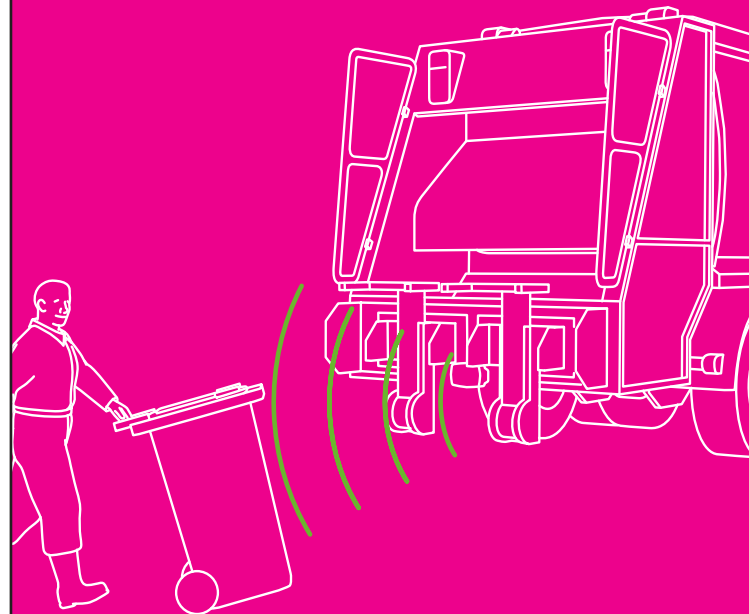
Under optimum conditions the generator will provide 45 kW and, because of the nature of hydro-electric power and the constantly adjusting equipment, this can be expected to produce continuously. The original target was to generate 260,000 kWh per year. The River Wey is a navigable river and we typically find lower yields during the summer when the river is managed to best retain water upstream for other river uses. The hydro also turns off if water flow is too high, and this occurs more often in winter during flood conditions. In December 2013, flood conditions in Guildford were so bad that the turbine housing and some other equipment needed to be rebuilt. The damage was largely caused by the amount of gravel and stones being washed downstream from the river towpaths. This resulted in a period of in-operation as rebuilding could only take place outside of bat breeding periods.

In the future, it is hoped that the hydro plant can be replicated at other suitable locations along the river, allowing Guildford to replicate this success and further develop its renewable energy sources.

For more information on this project, email Chris Reynolds on creynolds0015@aol.com.

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Providing increased protection for council home tenants

A wholly-owned subsidiary of Ei Electronics, Aico are market leaders in residential fire and CO protection in the UK. We spoke to them about the reasons why councils are investing in their carbon monoxide alarms.

Serving a population of over 122,000 people, Pembrokeshire County Council is responsible for the management of 6,500 Council homes, including a wide range of properties from bed-sits to four bedroom houses.

Until recently, carbon monoxide (CO) alarms were not fitted as standard by Pembrokeshire County Council and there is no requirement for them to do so, apart from where a new or replacement fixed solid fuel appliance is installed within a dwelling, which falls under the auspices of Building Regulations.

However, with greater awareness of the dangers of CO in the home, the Council made the decision to fit CO alarms across its entire housing stock. This is regardless of whether the properties have solid fuel, gas or oil appliances fitted, as tenants might bring in their own appliances which the council is not made aware of and does not service, which therefore pose an added risk.

Following an in-depth demonstration, Pembrokeshire County Council chose a CO alarm by Aico as, according to Chris Wade, Monitoring & Evaluation Service Contracts Supervisor, "the alarm had everything we needed".

Our Ei208 CO alarm incorporates new data extraction technology. This technology allows for invaluable real time data to be extracted via the alarm's sounder - all you need is an AudioLINK enabled CO alarm, a tablet or smartphone and the free AudioLINK App. This data is converted into an Alarm Status report, which is simple to review and store. The Report displays useful

information about the alarm and detection levels of CO, and can be emailed or stored in a key location for future reference.

This AudioLINK data extraction technology was seen by Pembrokeshire County Council as an important feature of the alarms; "It pin points where the problem is" stated Chris, "and is really convenient. Our contractors are already using it regularly". Pembrokeshire County Council will be fitting one to two alarms per property, depending on the number of fossil fuel burning appliances.

All alarms are designed and built in Ireland, specifically to meet the UK standards and regulations. We have a dedicated team of Regional Managers to support specifications and supply of products, and also offer technical support over the phone.

For more information please visit www.aico.co.uk.



Devolution and the frontline

Whilst questions hang over devolution deals, APSE's Mo Baines, Head of Communication and Coordination, explores the case for frontline services to be part of the rebalancing of the UK economy – with or without Combined Authorities.

Within the UK, economic performance is often judged on the economic indicators that are skewed by regional divides; a buoyant economy in the South East, with high levels of employment and resultant higher wages, compared to areas like the North East, suffering from post-industrial decline. Within the four nations, England out-performs the rest of the UK. Unemployment remains a pervasive issue for the north/south divide. According to the Office for National Statistics data release for August 2016, unemployment in the North East was at 6.8% – the highest anywhere in the UK – whilst in the South East, it was just 3.7%. The political response to this economic imbalance is devolution. Push power and resources out to the regions and, simplistically speaking, this should correct the regional disparities in growth and employment.

However, few believe devolution is a panacea. Huge issues remain over the level of powers and genuine fiscal devolution is a long way off. There is also growing concern over the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships. As business-led bodies, the involvement of LEPs is seen by many as critical but there is an inherent need to balance business interests with intended public policy outcomes. As more Combined Authorities hit difficulties, questions mount as to the efficacy of a vehicle so long in gestation but beset by political, cultural and practical difficulties. And yet the problems of economic imbalance remain.

APSE would posit that many of the problems that Combined Authorities seek to resolve could still be addressed by local councils directly, working where needed across geographic boundaries. In fact, excluding local council frontline services from devolution programmes could hamper the intended regional outcomes. Take transport and promises of investment in new road and rail links; how successful will this be for local

people and local businesses if people come off major transport links into pot-hole riddled local highways?

Whilst national attention has focused on Combined Authorities, there is a quiet revolution in local council frontline services. Increasingly, APSE is seeing an entrepreneurial spirit; services are embracing commercialisation, not just as a strategy to balance budgets but to add to the socio-economic benefits that devolution purports to address. Councils like Bristol and Nottingham are leading the way in addressing fuel poverty and renewable energy. In Thurrock, Harrow and Aberdeen, new housing and regeneration schemes are creating not only new homes but growth in construction and skills. In Birmingham, Swansea and North Ayrshire employability schemes are delivering tangible returns on long-term employment solutions, meeting the skills gap between local areas and new businesses. In East Riding, leisure centres aid an ill-health prevention strategy, reducing levels of bariatric surgery and tackling type II diabetes. Sadly, however, few frontline services are being engaged by Combined Authorities in delivering outcomes.

There is a case for devolution to provide overarching sub-regional strategies, yet APSE would question the wisdom of Combined Authorities who act without integrating local government frontline services. Like many things in life, the solutions to many of these socio-economic divides are hidden in full view. Is it not time for Combined Authorities to embrace the solutions that local government frontline services can offer?

Mo Baines is APSE's Head of Communication and Coordination. Share your views by email to mbaines@apse.org.uk

Enhancing independence for the elderly and vulnerable in Oldham

We looked at a home help service run by Oldham Council offering basic support to elderly and vulnerable residents so that they can stay independent in their own homes for longer.



Many local authorities have long since vacated the market for 'home help' services to the elderly and vulnerable. The market had become highly problematic, with worrying trends including companies that give their staff zero-hours contracts and minimum wages.

Despite this, a market still exists for cleaning and basic support services. In fact, it is a growing market due to the rising average age of our population. As such, there is a real desire for a service that not only provides real, practical support, but also generates revenue for councils.

In 2008, Oldham Council decided to create a service that would help elderly and vulnerable people within the Borough remain independent for longer. The idea was to provide them with support by completing everyday household tasks that enhance the client's quality of life. The service would also be used to reduce isolation and social exclusion, whilst encouraging social wellbeing.

The service is open to all. It is free-standing and has

grown from a slow start – with only 1 customer in the service's first 6 weeks – to where it now stands, at around 250 hours per week, with around 200 clients. Each client receives a minimum 2-hour slot at around £26, which is offered weekly or fortnightly, and a monthly contract, that is invoiced in arrears. The client can expect the same cleaner each time (although this is not fully guaranteed), and staff are offered a cluster of clients, where possible. The council pay for the staff's mileage whilst working, or provides them with a bus pass. There is also the flexibility to offer work to staff who also have school cleaning contracts, as these schedules can work around pre-existing contracts.

The service is currently delivered by 25 staff working between 10 and 20 hours per week, who are trained to deal with everything from cleaning tasks, to food preparation, to accompanying the client to the shops, to simply offering a social visiting service. As such, not only does this offer a multitude of basic support services, it is also a social lifeline for potentially vulnerable and isolated people.

One Oldham resident, Kathrine Hilton, has used the service for five years. In her case, cleaner Janet Ashcroft goes round once a fortnight and cleans the windows inside, makes the bed and vacuums around the house. Through this arrangement, the pair have become good friends and Janet stays for a chat and a brew.

Mrs Hilton said, "I needed a bit of help doing the things which were getting difficult to do, like stripping the bed and hoovering up. It gives me peace of mind knowing everything will be done. I was very house proud and I like my home to stay nice and tidy. I also look forward to having a chat and the company. I would definitely recommend it to others."

Not only has this had an impact on Mrs Hilton, but her family have seen the benefits of this service too. Mrs Hilton's daughter, Claire Kershaw, explained that "It's been a real help knowing someone else is checking on

mum and doing some of the jobs, as it frees me up to spend more quality time her. I've had no problems and the staff have been helpful and friendly."

The council help those who require some level of care in the community to plan ahead and get the support they require, and they advertise this too. By showing people the services that they can offer, Oldham Council are able to ensure that their constituents have access to a high-quality level of care and support. Karen Wood, from the council, explains that the service has had a positive impact on perceptions of the authority in the community, explaining that the support service "provides a valuable provision to the community and can only present a positive image of the council to the borough."

Although it is highly valued and useful, Oldham Council are careful to ensure that this service is cost-effective; there a clause in the contract which states that 'If we provide you with cleaning services, you are responsible

for providing the material and equipment necessary for the particular cleaning task. This will have been discussed and agreed with you when we carried out our initial assessment'. By doing this, the council avoids charging for cleaning equipment, as well as avoiding the responsibility of safely storing the cleaning chemicals. Similarly, the assisted shopping service states that the client is responsible for the costs of taxi transport and cost of shopping.

All in all, the service generates enough income to cover its expenses and Oldham effectively control costs in order to provide a balanced financial account. This achievement counteracts the notion that local authority-run basic social care initiatives create more problems than they solve for councils. It shows that providing this sort of service is a viable option for councils looking to boost their income and develop a service that is valued by the community.

APSE Facilities management seminar

Stepping up to the plate

Making a success of FM catering and cleaning

A major two day seminar at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Durham

Thursday 26 and Friday 27 January 2017

APSE Facilities management seminar
26-27 January 2017 - Save the date

Success





Leading the way in renewable energy and low carbon transport

We spoke to Barbara Whiting, Lead Officer Renewables Enterprise and Environment, and Tom Henderson, Service Manager Fleet Operations, both from Fife Council, in a bid to learn more about their work with renewable energy and their hydrogen bin lorries – something that they believe may be a world first.

Tell us about the project you're working on

Fife Council is part of the Levenmouth Community Energy Project, which also includes Toshiba and is led by Bright Green Hydrogen. The project is a pioneering industry development aimed at shaping the future prosperity of Levenmouth communities through a number of green hydrogen projects.

Its importance was recognised by the Scottish Government, which awarded the project a grant of over £4 million in March 2015 to help kick start the scheme. The project has also subsequently secured funding from Transport Scotland to support the installation of a hydrogen storage and refuelling station at its Bankhead

vehicle depot in Glenrothes.

What are the key aims of the Levenmouth Community Energy Project?

We aim to see the Hydrogen Office developed into the world's foremost demonstrator of innovative applications of hydrogen derived from renewable sources. Hydrogen will be stored at the business park area and reconverted into electricity at times when on-site wind and solar generation is low, helping to offset the intermittency of renewable production and, as a result, improve the facility's ability to be energy self-sufficient.

We also aim to make Levenmouth the home of one of Europe's largest fleet of hydrogen dual-fuel vehicles. This is the latest form of technology deployed in a bid to decarbonise the use of energy in Scotland. The great thing about hydrogen is that, when used to power vehicles, their only emission is water vapour.

Within just three months of the project being given the grant money, Fife Council awarded a contract worth around £1.5 million to Inverkeithing-based RCV manufacturer Heil Farid for the supply of nine refuse collection vehicles (RCV). Two of these vehicles are specifically designated to the Levenmouth project and will be converted to run on diesel and hydrogen, which we believed to be a world-first.

How is the local industry/community benefitting from the project?

Residents in the wider Fife region will definitely benefit from the Council's contract award. The new RCV vehicles will result in quieter refuse collections and significantly reduced carbon emissions, as well as benefitting the air quality for local communities. This is because they are fitted with power take offs and dual-fuel technology that both reduces noise and improves fuel efficiency during driving as well as loading and packing.

The Levenmouth project will also help local Fife businesses to boost their green energy credentials by leasing out its dual-fuel powered vans, including 10 electric-powered vans with H2 fuel cell range extender. These vehicles actually have zero emissions if charged using the Hydrogen Office's 100% green electric vehicle charging station. Also, the hydrogen range extender doubles the range of an electric van, allowing it to travel up to 200 miles before charging is required. As well as these vans, the project also includes 5 Transit dual-fuel diesel-hydrogen vehicles which are to be owned and operated by Fife Council.

Educational initiatives are also integral to the Hydrogen Office and Levenmouth project with Bright Green Hydrogen being involved with a number of key partnerships with schools and colleges, as well as industry and educational organisations. In conjunction with Fife Council's Culture of Enterprise, we also run the annual Energy Enterprise Challenge for primary pupils across the region while we regularly host education visits to the Hydrogen Office.

Local environmental charity, Greener Kirkcaldy will also benefit from the Levenmouth project with a percentage of surplus income to be given to the charity LVDT to support sustainable energy projects.

What impact have the 2 RCVs running on hydrogen/diesel had to refuse collection?

Previously, the Council's refuse collection vehicles

consumed a significant amount of diesel, greatly impacting on air quality improvement and carbon emission reduction. However, with these new hydrogen RCVs, the carbon reduction is expected to be around 50% of what it once was – a vast decrease.

These vehicles are fitted with power take offs and dual-fuel technology that both reduces noise and improves fuel efficiency during driving, and during loading and packing. The dual-fuel technology also allows an introduction to hydrogen fuel without having to pay the high costs of hydrogen fuel cells which runs on 100% hydrogen. The vehicles can also operate in diesel only mode in the event there is any interruption to the hydrogen supply.

The 2 Mercedes Econics chassis vehicles have Heil PowerLink bodies and Terberg bin lifters. An ECOpto drive system enables the use of a much larger hydraulic pump which means that when the vehicle is operating the packer and bin lifts, the engine does not need to rev so high. This results in less fuel being used and is also much quieter in operation, making early morning and late evening rounds more environmentally friendly.

Do you feel Fife's emerging hydrogen project has the potential to be world leading?

Definitely! There are already signs of this happening. The Levenmouth Community Energy Project is expected to bring significant economic benefits to the area and is widely considered as a valuable demonstration of how hydrogen can decarbonise transport applications in Scotland and help secure future energy supplies for generations to come. As such, it is expected to come under the international spotlight. The scheme is also currently the most complex hydrogen project outside of Japan that Toshiba has been involved with, which reinforces the scale of the scheme.

This project also demonstrates how renewable energy can greatly benefit the grid nationally and create one of Europe's largest fleets of dual-fuel vehicles. Fife's hydrogen credentials are industry leading.

The project has received widespread industry and community support, with the extent and high calibre of the project partners being testament to this. Together, combined with a real pride and passion, this makes for a powerful force to ensuring we achieve our green hydrogen aspirations.

To find out more about this project, contact Barbara Whiting on Barbara.Whiting@fife.gov.uk or Tom Henderson on Tom.Henderson@fife.gov.uk.



A new direction for Meals on Wheels

Neel Radia, national chair of the National Association of Care Catering (NACC), discusses the findings of new research into Meals on Wheels provision. It highlights a worrying trend for this service, but also shows ways for local councils to continue to provide Meals on Wheels without breaking the bank.

The number of UK councils providing Meals on Wheels to vulnerable older people has dropped below 50% for the first time. New research by APSE, which the NACC commissioned for Meals on Wheels Week, revealed the worrying statistic that just 48% of authorities provide a service, compared with 66% only two years ago.

Meals on Wheels gives older people living in their own homes a hot, nutritious meal, safety and wellbeing checks, social interaction, and helps prevent hospital admissions. Under-investment puts this group at risk and places unnecessary pressure on the NHS – quite simply, it's a false economy. But, because it's a non-statutory service, it will always be at risk whilst council budgets are strained.

It's not, however, all a story of negatives. The NACC has been working with the charities Sustain and Sustainable Food Cities to identify councils showing innovation in austerity and successfully adopting new Meals on Wheels service models, at little or no direct cost to the council.

The positive, fresh approaches, which include social

enterprise and combining school meals production with Meals on Wheels, have enabled councils to continue to provide, monitor and grow a Meals on Wheels service – and, we urge all councils to take inspiration and follow suit

Our research also includes a number of case studies, and one is outlined here. The others can be viewed at www.thenacc.co.uk.



Case study: A different approach in Plymouth

Background

CATERed is a local authority cooperative trading company in Plymouth that supplies a school meals and a Meals on Wheels service, prepared from locally-sourced, seasonal fresh food, for the county council.

In 2012/13, the Meals on Wheels service was transferred from adult social care to the then education catering service. At the time, the number of clients accessing the Meals on Wheels service was in decline, and labour and food costs were too high. The education catering service management team was successfully delivering sustainable, seasonal school meals and was tasked with replicating this for older, vulnerable citizens.

Offering similar meals for schools and Meals on Wheels creates efficiencies in food procurement, storage and production. CATERed uses its procurement power to purchase fresh, local and seasonal food and ingredients for both school lunches and Meals on Wheels dishes, which were initially produced by school catering staff in school kitchens.

Now, working with a privately run residential home for elderly and sight impaired residents, CATERed has negotiated a move for its Meals on Wheels operation to a purpose-built kitchen. The residential home offers full, rent-free use of its on-site kitchen (CATERed pays utilities and business rates), and in return CATERed prepares a lunchtime meal for the residents' restaurant, at a charge of £5+VAT per meal. It currently serves 25-30 residents per day and the additional income supports the cost of meals on Wheels.

The combined service maintains economies of scale on labour and allows for growth of the Meals on Wheels business without impacting on school food operations, which have seen significant increases in production since the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals.

About the service

A small team of drivers delivers 130 meals, 365 days a year, in and around Plymouth. Lunch costs £5 for people in receipt of a care package and £6 for others. Tea, a sandwich and a piece of cake or fruit, costs £2.75.

The service has approximately 270 listed clients, receiving five meals a week on average. There is no eligibility criteria to access the service, which enables it to attract a wider clientele, including private customers, as well as those receiving care and support. Since the service started, the number of private purchase meals has increased by two-thirds (67%).

In the last client survey (Sept 15), 70% of customers expressed good levels of satisfaction across a range of measures.

Added value

The service values one-to-one contact between staff and clients. Drivers are able to carry out a welfare check, plate the meal and encourage people to eat, with a protocol to raise any serious concerns with next of kin, GP, or social worker.

When delivering meals to sheltered housing, the service also plates meals in the communal dining area. There is a small additional charge for this of 54p per head.

Plans and hopes for the future

CATERed is working to increase the numbers of meals served to private individuals, private care homes and lunch clubs. The company is also exploring the potential to supply small local hospitals.

CATERed would also like to develop school lunch clubs, where older people can eat alongside pupils, and is discussing this with individual schools.

Clean, green, emission-cutting machines

We look at two excellent projects being carried out in London by Camden Council and the City of London Corporation, who are working to improve air pollution levels in the capital.



At a time when creating a healthier, greener environment is more important than ever, many local authorities are trying to find ways to contribute to this effort. With this very much at the forefront of their thinking, Camden Council and the City of London Corporation have taken the bold move to reduce the size of their fleets and begin purchasing newer, cleaner vehicles.

In London alone, it is believed that around 9,400 deaths per year are attributable to poor air quality. These authorities are seeking to reduce this figure significantly. Camden Council has reacted by publishing their commitments in the Green Action for Change Environmental Sustainability Plan (2011-2020) in January 2016. Meanwhile, the City of London Corporation have said that the new fleet policy is the latest in a number of new measures specifically created to tackle air pollution.

The aim is to ensure that they are complying with the air quality objectives for N02 and for PM10 concentrations. Keeping these low is the key to better air quality in the area. This is in accordance with Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's Air Quality commitment and the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) congestion zone coming into force in 2020.

As of 2015, Camden were continuing to comply with PM10 levels, and their levels are now reducing. However, the authority remained in breach of the annual mean

N02 objective. It was clear that something had to change. They looked to innovation within their fleet to deliver that change.

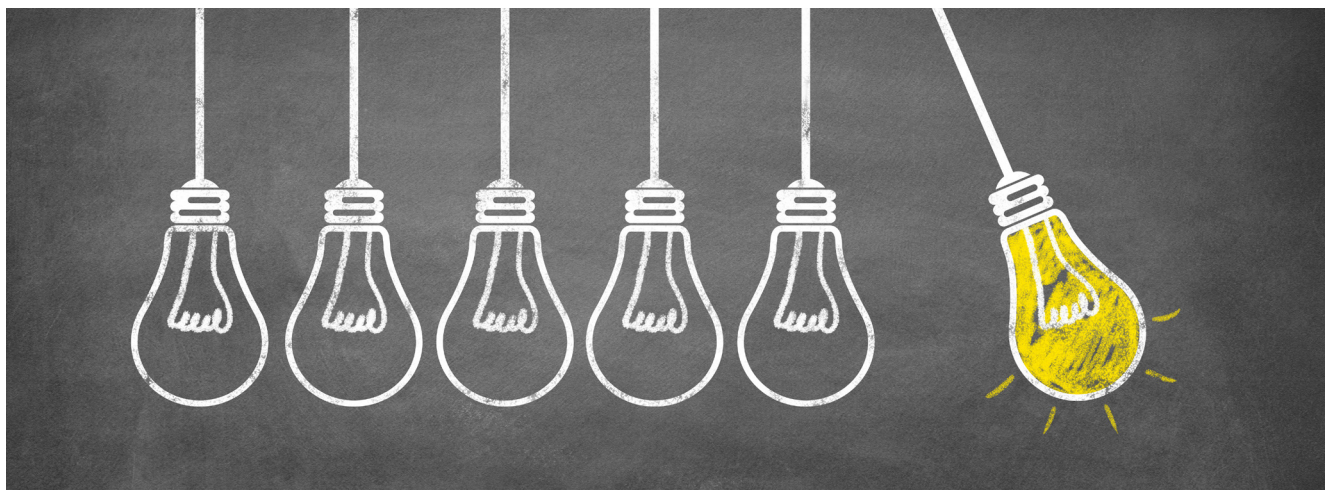
Currently, Camden Council have 284 LPG/petrol vehicles, 120 compressed natural gas (CNG), 18 hybrids (petrol/electric), and 1 electric vehicle. As well as these, they also use 134 diesel vehicles. 60 of these are hired, giving them the potential to move towards a more sufficient number of greener vehicle types across the full fleet used by Council services in the future. Now, they have pledged not to buy any more diesel vehicles as part of the Council's fleet. It is a great step forward.

In the City of London, plans to cut emissions have been going well, with 40% less N02 in the air today than there was in 2009. Over the same time period, they have also managed to cut their PM10 levels by over 50%. This excellent progress has been made possible through reducing the size of their fleet, as well as ensuring that they have invested in greener vehicles. Now, the Corporation intend to work with their partners to stop buying diesel vehicles altogether, instead favouring a fleet made of low and zero emission vehicles.

There are some slight drawbacks to using a greener fleet; these vehicles do carry an initial premium and making plans to change a whole fleet, no matter how slow the change, can seem like a huge undertaking for local authorities at this moment in time. However, the benefits vastly outweigh the drawbacks. Money will later be saved in healthcare, and better air quality will vastly improve the wellbeing of the community. Cleaner air will make a huge difference to the residents and workers of London. As such, schemes like this are ultimately about forward-thinking, which is exactly where Camden and the City of London have got it right.

Both councils have said they are proud to welcome new fuel technologies and remain committed to trialing green options to assess whether they are fit for their own purposes, as well as the needs of their residents.

Camden Council are hosting and speaking at the next APSE Vehicle Maintenance and Transport Advisory Group on 4th October, providing an excellent opportunity for local authorities to hear about their work and find out how to make their own fleet greener.



Electrifying energy

*Learn more about APSE Energy's new research report, **Investing in electricity: Reducing costs and increasing income for local authorities.***

Whilst there are complexities in the UK energy markets, APSE Energy views it as essential that local councils have a role in energy generation and supply, allowing them to alleviate fuel poverty, contribute to carbon reduction and make the most of local authority assets. This new research explores these issues through the prism of electricity and explores how local councils can make better use of electricity, including green electricity, whilst also generating an effective financial return for local councils and local residents.

Speaking about the research, Phil Brennan, Head of APSE Energy, said "The UK electricity market is unnecessarily complicated. In this new guide, we seek to provide a place for local council officers, and local councillors, to explore what they could achieve from a more discerning and proactive look at electricity. We are encouraging councils to analyse electricity use, ensure that – just like individual consumers – they are being charged correctly, and look at how electricity is purchased across the whole local authority estate".

The report considers the electricity market in the UK and the legal framework which separates electricity generation, distribution and supply. It finds that, in spite of inherent difficulties in electricity regulation, local authorities can do much more to generate their own green electricity, support cost-effective supplies to local areas and create new income streams to offset council budget reductions. A further objective that local authorities should consider is to work together to supply energy to the capacity market and gain significant income as a result.

APSE Energy Associate and lead report author Stephen Cirell, said "We would encourage local councils to develop a longer term view on their energy strategy. There are many ways in which local councils can do much more to

generate electricity and get better deals on supplies. By reviewing what you do now, and what you might like to do in the future, you can start to plan a road map to cheaper and greener electricity.

The report recommends that:

- Councils build investment intentions into their energy strategy to provide a coherent framework for energy supplies and asset management
- Councils fully utilise available exemptions to electricity licencing regulations to maximise the benefits of local electricity production, supply and distribution
- Councils should make sure that asset information is accurate so that when investment decisions are prioritised, the information about the energy element of that investment accurately informs the process
- Councils should take action to reduce the amount of electricity used – most local authorities have acted on the easy-to-achieve savings, but there is a lot more to be done in terms of energy efficiency
- Councils should engage councillors and finance colleagues. This ensures that everyone is up to date with the latest developments in the energy agenda, such as energy supply companies, batteries and storage options, and the work of other local authorities
- Councils should think about how new developments might be applicable to councils organisationally; earning revenue, and bringing economic and social value to local areas

This report is exclusive to APSE Energy members. To find out more, contact Phil Brennan, Head of APSE Energy, on pbrennan@apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810.

Report back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events

England

Employability

New APSE and NLGN research on Employability was launched at the Hub Westminster on the 20 October with a panel of speakers including Claire Mansfield of NLGN, Paul O'Brien of APSE, and Cllr Sean Anstee Leader of Trafford Council who were also joined by Stephen Gaskell, from the London Borough of Southwark. The event was chaired by NLGN's Jessica Studdart.

National Litter Strategy

APSE continues its work with DCLG on the national litter strategy and is sharing data on street cleansing and litter matters with others on the review panel.

A winter warmer

APSE's annual winter maintenance seminar was once again held at the Bradford Bulls Stadium with an opening address by Julian Jackson of Bradford Council, followed by Dave Mazurke who explained Bradford's response to flooding last winter. The seminar was also addressed by the Chartered Institute of Highways Engineers alongside the Met Office and Dorset County Council.

Cemeteries and Crematoria; Tackling the big issues

In this year's second cemeteries and crematoria seminar, APSE members heard from speakers on a wide range of issues including developing financially self-sustaining services, working with communities to shape future service provision, developing community-funded mausoleums, and the vital role cemeteries play in helping to conserve the nation's biodiversity. The event was held at the Manchester Cathedral visitor centre. Our thanks go to Fraser & Fraser, a specialist firm of genealogists, who kindly sponsored the event.

Labour Conference

APSE attended the Labour Party Conference in September in Liverpool with National Chair Cllr Van Coulter in attendance. Mo Baines addressed a strategic forum on Insourcing during the course of conference and

Paul O'Brien addressed a strategic forum on Housing. Opportunities were taken to push APSE research including discussions with Shadow Housing Minister John Healey MP. Council Leaders and cabinet members from APSE member authorities attended both strategic forum events

Conservative Conference

APSE's Strategic Forum Chair Cllr Giles McNeill hosted a dinner at the Conservative Party Conference on Commercialisation with Andrew Lewer MEP addressing delegates. Lincolnshire's Police and Crime Commissioner, Marc Jones attended and Rob Bailey gave an overview from APSE's perspective on issues of trading, charging and income generation.

Building blocks to better housing

The APSE housing and building maintenance seminar was held in Leeds on the 6 and 7 October. The event was addressed by Clive Skidmore of Birmingham, who spoke to delegates about a successful development on supported housing. Other speakers included Madeleine Bell of Harrogate Council, Tony Mousdale of Liverpool City Council and Ray Noble of the Barcelona Housing System, provided by WeLink. The event also hosted the Housing and Building Apprentice Awards 2016. You can see the finalists and winners on page 26.

It's green up north

APSE's northern region hosted a day of green fleet excellence, with Terry Pyecroft of Leeds City Council pulling together speakers from the NHS on the issue of air quality, and from Mercedes and DAF, who discussed vehicle innovations. Alongside them were speakers on driver behaviour, training and Leeds' Clean Air Zone. The event was kindly opened by Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Leeds City Council, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Environment and Sustainability, and Neil Evans, Director of Environment and Housing.

The right environment

The APSE refuse, streetscene, transport, parks and grounds seminar took place at Ettington Chase, Warwickshire on 9-10 November. Key note speakers included Dr Tim

Upson, Director the Royal Horticultural Society, Dr Colin Church, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Waste Management, and Trewin Restorick, Chief Executive of Hubbub, the organisation currently helping to develop England's Food Waste Recycling Action Plan. The event also hosted the APSE Environmental Services Apprentice of the Year awards for horticulture, and transport and vehicle maintenance. You can see details about the apprentice award winners on page 27.

Achieving Councillors

The Chief Executive recently attended the LGIU Councillor achievement awards in London. APSE National Council Member Cllr Lynn Pallister recived an award.

Scotland

SNP Conference

APSE attended the SNP conference in Glasgow on 13-15 October, where we had an exhibition stand for the duration of the event. APSE spoke to a huge amount on delegates at the stand over the course of the 3 days, and also a number of MPs and MSPs, including Willie Coffey MSP, Maree Todd MSP, Deidre Brock MSP and Martyn Day MP.

APSE also held a fringe at the event which looked at our current Scottish research "Doing local politics: Working together", which is being undertaken by University of Edinburgh, De Montfort University, and Leeds Beckett University. Speakers included APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien, Professor Steve Griggs from De Montfort University and Mairi Evans MSP. Principal Advisor Louise Melville was also interviewed on Radio Scotland as part of the event.

Wales

Monitoring performance

Principal Advisor Wayne Priestley has been undertaking APSE Performance Networks data validation meetings in South Wales, focusing on Cemeteries and Crematoria, Street Lighting and Building Maintenance.

Catering and cleaning advisory groups

On November 17th, APSE held the Catering and Cleaning Advisory group in Llandrindod Wells. Speakers included the Head of Food Category from the National Procurement Service Wales, as well as the Managing Director of Edsential, Wirral Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council.

Work in progress

Due to popular demand, APSE is currently developing a Regeneration seminar with Flintshire County Council. Keep an eye out for more details in the new year.

Northern Ireland

An excellent performance

APSE performance networks has been busy setting up the new performance indicators for Northern Ireland authorities, allowing them to benchmark their work and highlight areas of improvement. More on this project can be found on pages 6 and 7.

NILGA Conference

APSE attended the NILGA conference in October 2016 with Cllr Van Coulter, APSE National Chair addressing the conference on the circular economy. APSE sponsored this session at the NILGA conference to raise profile amongst the local councils in Northern Ireland. The Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness visited the APSE stand. NILGA's Chief Executive Derek McCallan addressed the APSE Conference in Derry / Londonderry in September 2016 and was featured in the conference highlights video with ITN. A strong relationship continues to develop with NILGA with a joint event on Brexit being discussed.



APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien addressing a full house at APSE's SNP Fringe event.



APSE Principal Advisor, Louise Melville with Martyn Day MP, at the SNP conference

Building skills, knowledge and careers

Announcing the winners of the APSE Apprentice Awards 2016 for Housing and Building Maintenance, Horticulture, and Transport and Vehicle Maintenance.

They have worked hard to learn as much as possible and develop their knowledge, to be the best in their category and showcase their skills. Now, after strong competition, we are delighted to present the winners of the APSE Housing and Building Maintenance, and the Horticulture, and Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Apprentice Awards 2016!

These prestigious awards are presented to the most enthusiastic apprentices who show themselves to be innovative and focused on producing excellence in their service area. All of our winners and finalists have proven themselves to be an asset to the local authorities they work for.

Wayne Priestley, APSE Principal Advisor, said, 'I am delighted to be involved in this year's Apprentice Awards. The awards allow APSE to publicly acknowledge the commitment that these apprentices show towards their work, and



Housing and Building Maintenance Apprentice Awards

Mechanical and Electrical Category

Finalists

Craig Paterson	Aberdeen City Council
George Smith	Bournemouth Borough Council
Tom Lester	Kirklees Council
Pamela Duffy	West Dunbartonshire Council
Ryan Fair	Fife Council
Jamie Edwards	West Lothian Council

Winner: George Smith, Bournemouth City Council

Building Skills Category

Finalists

Rhys Lynn	City of Lincoln Council
Adam Cairney	North Ayrshire Council
Darren McLeod	West Dunbartonshire Council

Winner: Adam Cairney, North Ayrshire Council

Professional Services Category

Finalists

Paul Don	East Dunbartonshire Council
Donna Smith	Fife Council

Winner: Paul Don, East Dunbartonshire Council

they also highlight councils as excellent places for people to begin, and develop, their careers. Our apprentices offer an undeniably excellent contribution to local council frontline services.'

Commenting on the awards, APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, 'it is brilliant to see such dedicated people taking the first steps in their new careers through apprenticeships. The finalists and winners highlight how vital apprenticeship programmes are for the communities they serve, and how much local councils can gain from participating in them. These apprentices are shining examples of excellence in local government frontline services.'

The Housing and Building Maintenance Apprentice Awards ceremony took place at the APSE Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance seminar on Thursday 6th October. The Horticulture and the Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Apprentice Awards ceremony took place on Wednesday 9th November at the APSE Environmental Services seminar. Congratulations to all winners and finalists!

To find out more about the APSE Apprentice Awards and to enter, go to the APSE website, click on Events, then Apprentice awards 2016. Alternatively, call the APSE office on 0161 772 1810.

Horticulture & Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Apprentice Awards

Horticulture Category

Finalists

Samuel Cheesman	Guildford Borough Council
Declan Brown	Fife Council
Liam Brown	West Lothian Council
Zak Francis	Kirklees Council
Samantha Boyle	Glasgow City Council

Winner: Declan Brown, Fife Council

Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Category

Finalists

Liam Neale	Oxford City Council
Samuel Chapman	London Borough of Redbridge
Helen Fordon	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Anthony Joannides	Wakefield MDC
Andrew Jones Lofting	Fife Council

Winner: Helen Fordon, East Riding of Yorkshire Council



Declan Brown, Fife Council
Winner of Horticulture Category



Helen Fordon, East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Winner of Transport & Vehicle Maintenance Category



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