



# direct news

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## Editorial

### School's in for summer!

Many of us are glad to take a well-earned break as we head into the summer months. This year is no exception, with the unexpected General Election adding a further complexity to how we plan for local government finance and the additional work that the election itself brought to many of our council officers involved in delivering all of the processes and systems that make for a democracy. A tough ask on top of the day job.

However, summer can also be a time for us to take stock of where we are mid-year and where we might need to be by the year end. I don't, of course, mean our failed attempts to keep up the daily run, swim or cycle - important as those are - but taking stock of our local council services. Are they viable and sustainable? Are they fit for purpose? What are the challenges we will face? So, in this edition of *direct news*, we have brought together some innovative ideas to think about over the summer.

As ever, critically we need to consider the funding options for councils and in 'Bricks-Mortar-Money', our research with CIPFA Property Services considers a managed risk approach to developing income from property investments. We also look at communicating with residents with the innovative approach from Bath and North East Somerset using video and infographics to communicate with their citizens; a summer school lesson in how to transition citizen engagement. Over in North Ayrshire, we hear how they have branched out their award winning catering service to deliver catering and vending services to the private sector. Then, of course, there is the thorny issue of Brexit. Details about what a deal might look like are still very sketchy but local government is tied into EU issues at a number of levels; from climate change and environmental considerations through to public procurement and employment regulations. There are no services that will be untouched by changes. A comprehensive guide to what Brexit may mean for local councils is therefore our summer blockbuster, with a roundup of all the issues from David Kilduff of Walker Morris, who will also be testing your summer school reading as a guest presenter at the forthcoming APSE Annual Seminar, when our term for innovation begins on the 6 and 7 September. See you in class!

*Paul O'Brien, Chief executive*



# Bricks - Mortar - Money

*We discuss the results of the latest APSE and CIPFA Property Services collaborative research on property investment trends in local government.*

It always seems to come as a surprise to people but historically local councils have been amongst the biggest landlords in the UK, with ownership of farms, shopping precincts and offices. Social purpose was often a driver, for example, providing local shops on new housing estates was an important element in the development of post-war community estates. Then, as now, risk was carefully managed. However in recent years, some have encouraged councils to divest their assets, assuming that it is not the role of local government to manage property investments and supposing that selling the assets for a capital receipt would be better. APSE was never fully convinced by this overly simplistic argument and its failure to recognise the much broader role of assets and investment, in both the potential to generate income and the ability for councils to use assets for much broader social outcomes, such as regeneration and local economic growth. It was in this context that APSE set out with CIPFA Property Services to explore the current context of asset investments for local councils.

The research set out to identify the scale, scope and advantages of municipal investments and as part of that, alongside a survey of local councils, a number of case

studies were identified. The results of our research found that councils are taking a measured approach to investments. In many ways, asset investments allow councils to convert capital investment into revenue - helping them to sustain local services. Critically, however, it is how this approach is developed in the context of local circumstances that should be a driver for local authorities who are considering expanding or developing an investment strategy.

To help local councils formulate their thinking, our research provides a ten step guide to approaching investment opportunities. A key step is to establish what properties you already have. This might seem too obvious but councils will often have tenanted properties such as shops and other premises but may have some properties that they want to keep, regardless of returns, because there is a different value to those properties in terms of regeneration or sustainability of a local area. Equally, before embarking on new ventures we would expect councils to look at the performance of their existing portfolios; this should typically include a true reflection of costs such as energy, maintenance and support to gauge the true return on investment. Once you know where you are with your current properties, it is time to take stock of your strategy.

Are you doing this purely for a financial return or will your strategy be linked to local aims and outcomes? Increasingly councils are taking advantage of investing outside of their own geographic boundaries to gain a better return on investment.

Funding is also critical. Will the investments be financed by borrowing or from reserves? Whatever route is adopted, councils should take cognisance of CIPFA's treasury management code which stresses the importance of prudent investment strategies. The skills and capacity of the people charged with delivering your strategy is critical to success; it may be that buying in capacity can bring you longer term benefits. A delivery model that utilises your existing staff skills and capacity brought in as and when needed appears to be a popular options. It goes without saying that councils should acquire investment properties carefully. Does it meet all of your investment requirements? Acquisitions tend to move quickly when investment properties become available and, again, this will potentially need a more dynamic approach to the traditional models of decision-making in councils. Finally, once you have your assets it is not time to put your feet up. Portfolios should be proactively managed to ensure the return on your investment, consider any changes in the market and make sure you are getting as good a return for local taxpayers as you can.

As ever with any investment (here comes the small print!) values can go up as well as down, but with current borrowing rates at a low and a sensible approach towards risk, 'bricks and mortar' investments could deliver the money that local councils desperately need.

So, our approach is a far cry from the analogies drawn by some to councils acting as 'casino bankers'. Instead, our research has found a sensible approach to investments, designed to balance risk and rewards. APSE is certainly not arguing for councils to step away from their core role of delivering excellent local services but if those same services are under threat of extinction, given the current financial pressures, then all options for extra cash need to be on the table. Asset investments is just one of the tools that councils should consider. It may not work for everyone but for some it is proving to be a worthwhile endeavour.

*The report is available to download on the APSE website. You can also purchase print copies for £20 for members and £40 for non members by emailing Wai Lee on [wlee@apse.org.uk](mailto:wlee@apse.org.uk). For more information about the report, please contact Mo Baines on [mbaines@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbaines@apse.org.uk) or call 0161 772 1810.*



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# The impact of Brexit on the public sector

*David Kilduff, Partner with Walker Morris LLP, provides a comprehensive guide to the issues for local councils.*

In June 2016, the UK voted to leave the European Union in a referendum. The exiting process was then initiated by an article 50 declaration by the UK government in March 2017. The UK now has 2 years within which to negotiate its exit. The negotiations will be complex and wide ranging due to over 40 years' worth of legislation and related guidance needing to be considered. There are a variety of issues that need to be resolved including whether the UK remains in the single market, has membership of the customs union, whether the free movement of labour will continue, and how EU law will be adapted to apply domestically.

Of particular interest is the impact of this decision on the public sector, one of the sectors most highly regulated by European law. According to the Office for National Statistics the public sector employs 17.1% of the national workforce including teachers, doctors, police officers, and public administrators. With such a large sector, the potential impact of changes resulting from Brexit is significant. Potential impacts arise in relation to key areas of financing,

resource availability, regulation, and employment. The focus of this article will be on the impact of Brexit for the public sector in relation to these key issues.

## **Uncertainty**

With negotiations still at an early stage, there are a lot of unknown future decisions that will need to be made affecting what the final outcome of Brexit will be. Clarity will emerge as the negotiations continue. This means that the issues outlined here have the potential to change very quickly in the future, altering the whole outlook of the impact of Brexit on the public sector.

In the short term, these high levels of uncertainty combined with continued austerity could lead to further budget cuts. This lack of clarity over the implications of Brexit is especially pronounced in the public sector as services will continue to operate in parallel alongside the negotiations allowing little scope for delaying decisions to wait for that clarity.

## Financing the public sector

### *Current situation*

Currently the UK contributes roughly £16.8 billion each year into the budget of the EU. The UK does receive a rebate due to its funding of various EU initiatives, meaning that in reality the average annual net fee paid is closer to £8.8 billion. This constitutes a share of 0.5% of GDP. These fees will continue to be paid for the whole negotiation period. The UK also is the largest recipient of foreign investment from the EU and some of this goes into funding public sector initiatives.

### *How will this change?*

Upon leaving the EU, the UK will no longer be required to make contributions to the European budget but it is expected by the EU that the UK will make payments towards the residual costs of EU Institutions and programmes which are likely to be amortized over a number of years given the potential scale of the sums involved. This means that promised 'savings' might not materialise for some years and that monies to support additional investment in public services will need to come from other sources: prosperity, additional taxes, printing money or public borrowing increases. It may be that as part of the deal negotiated, annual contributions are required for access to various EU institutions. This would likely be less than the current membership contribution but overall will not deliver any windfall benefit unless funded by other means.

In relation to EU investment directly into the public sector, Brexit will result in this ending. Amelioration of the effect of removing investment depends on any attempts by the UK government to replace these funds. This is certainly true in areas such as Further and Higher Education (e.g. universities) where EU investment helps to fund research. If this finance is not replaced, there is a risk to the reputation and research quality of universities as well as longer term financial support from donors and industry. It has been suggested that this potential shortfall could be avoided using the money saved from EU membership fees. The problem with this suggestion is that recent government spending shows a London-centric bias, indicating that this money may not be invested evenly around the country impacting the public sector outside London more severely. This would need a major change in government policy to resolve. There will also be an end to funding from the European Regional Development Fund which may exacerbate this problem in poorer regions of the UK and the government will also need to seek to replace this funding.

The practicality of re-investing money saved from not having to pay EU membership fees does depend on the economic impact of Brexit. If there is a period of economic instability, it may (subject to the influences described above) result in less government money being available and may reduce public sector spending. This would then result in difficulty for the public sector in attracting and retaining employees. It is widely agreed that there may be an economic shock resulting from Brexit and so the

potential impact of this on public sector budgets needs to be avoided and reduced. Already the falling value of the pound has led to rising inflation, increasing operating costs. Even if a major shock was avoided, there will still be some economic difficulties stemming from Brexit due to the high costs of administering the change. The costs associated with administering and implementing Brexit are expected to be the single greatest contributor to government borrowing over the next five years and this cost means that the financial benefit to the public sector of Brexit may not be as high as may have first been estimated when the potential savings were considered alone.

## Procurement

### *Procurement costs*

The public sector relies on effective procurement within its supply chain to deliver the efficiencies and outcomes it requires. Access to particular overseas markets without the disruption of cost or other distortions may be essential to optimise value or deliver particular goods. The potential impact of leaving the single market and the EU customs union is that the public sector may find itself subject to tariff limited access to the European markets, increasing the cost of goods, delaying their delivery and potentially at odds with diverging UK/British Standards. This will have a significant impact on the public sector.

It was suggested by some campaigners for Brexit that the costs saved from not having to follow EU procurement law would be considerable and could be reinvested. These savings seem unlikely because successful procurement is an efficient and effective means of creating market opportunity and achieving lower overall transaction costs. It needs a clear and secure environment to take place in. This means that it is essential that confidence in the system is maintained and so even if the EU rules were removed, there would need to be a domestic system with which to replace them with. For example s.135 Local Government Act 1972 has always required Local Authorities to have standing orders which secure competition for some contracts and regulate the manner in which tenders are invited. Further, the Public Contracts Regulations 2014 introduced provisions for sub-threshold procurements beyond the requirements of EU rules. The NHS had also regulated other areas not covered by the previous EU regime (see the Health Service (Procurement, Patient Choice and Competition) (No. 2) Regulations 2013/500). The world has moved on since the 70's and requirements for good governance now requires more comprehensive procurement processes.

Furthermore, membership of the WTO-GPA rules is likely to be a condition of any trade deal that the UK has with the USA, Canada or other trading partner. This will require a public procurement regime that is non-discriminatory, open, transparent and judicially reviewable. Looking forward, authorities are unlikely to have the ability to favour UK or regional suppliers.

In terms of challenge, although the current specific challenge process under the Regulations might go,

decisions of a public body are potentially subject to judicial review. There is also precedent for the courts intervening where an authority failed to comply with its internal or published rules for tendering on the basis that they form an implied contract. Of course, another change which has occurred in recent years is a tendency amongst contractors to seek redress in the courts if they believe they have been wrongly treated. So procurement challenge are likely to remain firmly on the agenda.

### **Labour accessibility**

#### *Current situation*

The free movement of people is one of the central freedoms of the EU. This means that the public sector is able to employ anyone who is an EU citizen, giving access to a large pool of potential employees. According to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, 10% of NHS and social care workers originate from within the EU. This indicates the size of the group that these people make up in the public sector workplace.

#### *Labour markets after Brexit*

After leaving the EU, free movement will end. This will mean that the public sector will need to adjust to a major reduction in the talent pool. This will increase the difficulty of recruiting enough workers to fill vacancies, especially considering the constant need for employees to alleviate pressure on modern public services.

The potential difficulty in attracting overseas workers is further increased by a perception that the UK is a less welcoming place after the Brexit vote. This suggests a possible further reduction in potential employees willing to come to the UK from abroad. The public sector will therefore need to focus more closely on attracting domestic workers. The risks of squeezed budgets in the case of economic difficulties could also mean that there a lack of funding for the training of these workers which might lead to resourcing issues.

Currently there is no deal in place to allow EU citizens who currently work within the UK to remain in the country after Brexit. If this remains the situation, a large number of the current workforce will have to leave the UK making it very hard for the public sector to deliver services to the required standard. It is likely that the rights of current residents to remain are high on the agenda of both sides in the negotiations so there should be progress on resolving this issue in the near future.

If the incoming labour stream is reduced due to the reasons suggested above, there is evidence that the remaining incoming workers would become overly concentrated in London. This would exacerbate skills shortages elsewhere in the country, having a serious impact on employee availability in the public sector. This will need to be considered by the government in formulating its new immigration policy and exceptions or quotas may need to be considered in areas where there are skills shortages (e.g. doctors, midwives, nurses).

### **Legal Regulation**

#### *General EU legal issues*

The Repeal Bill will repeal the European Communities Act 1972, converting existing EU law into domestic law. Each piece of legislation will then be assessed to see if it needs amending in the UK context. This will result in a large administrative cost for government assessing what needs changing. This cost is especially significant considering the level of lobbying that there is likely to be from some parties trying to get particular changes made. This process does mean that at least in the short term, the public sector will still be bound by current EU law. This means that regulations for workers such as the Working Time Regulations 1998 will still have effect, as will requirements such as data protection laws and environmental regulation. There is a further need for clarity where legislation requires access to EU institutions such as in relation to health and safety law as it is unclear what will happen when access to these institutions is withdrawn. It is impossible to say what changes will occur moving forward. Any changes will have a potential significant impact if the public sector has to change working practices to accommodate them.

### **Conclusion**

The potential impacts of Brexit to the public sector are potentially significant, albeit in the short term the Repeal Bill will minimise immediate changes based on a degree of continuity of legal requirement. The acceptance, for example, of the new EU wide approach to Data Protection (General Data Protection regulations) is also an example. In the short term, the removal of free movement of goods and people, and the loss of EU funding streams will likely be the more obvious areas of impact – causing current 'EU' employees to reconsider their position or deter inward job migration.

Longer term impacts will include the demand of the costs of Brexit on the public purse, the potential negative effect on the economy overall, the effect on the demand for public services as well as the sheer distraction of dealing with Brexit. A successful outcome in the negotiations is crucial and rests very much with HM Government and to the extent the Government determines along the way, Parliament. Local Government will have views and a voice – whether it will be heard in the cacophony of Brexit noise is another thing. It is perhaps more important than ever in this crucial period of change that the quality and delivery of essential public services is maintained and this, arguably, should be the sector's primary focus.

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*For more information please contact David Kilduff on [david.kilduff@walkermorris.co.uk](mailto:david.kilduff@walkermorris.co.uk) or visit the Walker Morris LLP website on [www.walkermorris.co.uk](http://www.walkermorris.co.uk).*

# Rethinking roles and working relationships

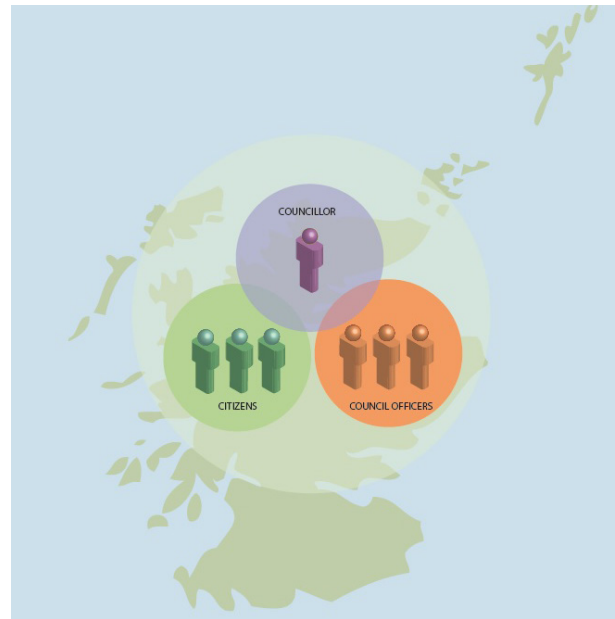
*The latest APSE research in Scotland takes a closer look at the three worlds of local politics – that of the councillor, the officer, and the citizen – and considers how they interact with one another.*

Local government has undergone significant changes in recent years, and this has led to every aspect of its existence being reimagined and reconceptualised by researchers. However, one part of this debate that always seems to be absent is an understanding of the everyday roles and functions of local politics, or a consideration of the benefits of improving the working relationships between the three worlds of local politics – councillors, council officers and engaged citizens.

APSE Scotland's latest research is a collaboration between University of Edinburgh, De Montfort University and Leeds Beckett University and is a continuation of the work done in 2014 on *The future of elected members in Scotland*, which looked at explaining the makeup of Scottish councillors and what they do on a day-to-day basis, and 2016's *The final piece of the jigsaw: Elected members, everyday politics and local democracy in Scotland* which looked more deeply at the role of the councillor and its shifting political context.

Through various interviews that the research team undertook with councillors, council officers and engaged citizens, we have concluded that by resisting the temptations of prescriptive, top-down interventions to 'fix' these roles, and allowing maximum flexibility and accepting the 'messy' nature of political work, we can support these individuals to fulfil their local political roles in a range of different ways. This is important for attracting a wide range of individuals to local politics, especially for councillors who we found to have extremely underdetermined roles (e.g. with no defined job description, hours of work and requires no specialist training or qualifications) when compared to council officers.

Several interviewees remarked that austerity had brought these different worlds together in unintentionally positive ways, such as councillors being provided with a greater amount of information to inform their decision making, or officers seeing communities as less of a disturbance to their daily tasks and more of a regular, important part of their local network. This needs to continue under any circumstances, as this can lead to positive outcomes like more informed decision making, decisions made in consultation and collaboration with the community (rather than at odds with it), more trusting and positive relationships, and less blame culture. This can also lead to more understanding between these groups when circumstances call for unpopular decisions to be made.



Improving the working relationships between councillors and council officers is something that APSE has always tried to foster (through avenues like advisory groups), creating spaces where those groups of people can come together with the joint goal of improving their services for their communities. By bringing the differing worlds of local politics together and improving their understanding of each other's roles in the political process, we can develop the kind of positive networks that councils will need as they rethink how they will deliver their services in the future. Giving these worlds the tools to deal with what the research team calls the "inevitability of difference, conflicts and contestations" can only help local authorities to deal with the myriad of competing challenges they face in the short, medium and long term. However, this should not be misinterpreted as a call to depoliticise local policymaking, as the ability to harness local demands through locally formed groups clearly has its benefits in delivering the outcomes that their communities want from locally elected governments.

In publishing this latest piece of research, we hope to communicate the vital need for local authorities to continue national discussions around the future of local government.

*To find out more about this research, contact Garry Lee, Acting Principal Advisor for Scotland, on [glee@apse.org.uk](mailto:glee@apse.org.uk) or call 01698 459051.*



# Animating the key messages

*We spoke to Bath and North East Somerset Council about how they are successfully using infographics in videos to reach their audience.*

**H**ow do you address the perennial issue of communicating with customers in a changing environment in a way that's informative, educational and most importantly, relevant to what they want?

We think we have found one answer in a series of animated infographics.

At Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES), we had been talking about customer needs and preferences for communication for a while. With our resident population as well as visitor numbers increasing, yet with a finite amount of resources available to communicate key messages and handle queries, just how to do it was a question that was being asked more frequently and across a diverse range of services. With the question resonating loudly in our heads, the Business Support Unit for the Council's Place Directorate began to consider the options available.

The solution needed to work for B&NES now but also in the future when a new contemporary Council Internet site would be up and running. From research we also discovered that the solution needed to tap into the

growing trend of how customers want to engage and access information:

- 60% of internet access is via mobile devices
- 66% of people given the choice will click on a video first rather than read text
- 55% of people watch videos online daily
- Over 80% of smartphone users watch video on their devices
- By 2018 video will account for 79% of consumer internet traffic
- 98% of users say they've watched an explainer video to learn more about a product or service.

Our favoured option, and the one we thought would work best, took us back to a local Community Interest Company (CIC) that we had successfully worked with previously to address School Crossing Patrol recruitment difficulties through the production of a short film. We approached them with the view to making further short films for some of our key services' high demand areas, however they suggested another option; infographics – moving, animated infographics!

We'd seen and even used the basic, static infographics used to convey statistics and data in a more engaging, easy to read and digest way but we'd never seen animated infographics. We were shown an example video infographic and we were convinced that this was the solution we needed. Especially as research shows that 1 minute of video is equivalent to 1.8 million words!

We were even more convinced that infographics were the way to go when the first one rolled off the production line. After an initial scoping session and a few tweaks during production, in only a matter of weeks the feedback from officers across the Council and wider services was, "When can we have one? It's just what we need."

Since the inaugural infographic was produced for our Parking Services, we've produced six further infographics for parking. We've also produced a further eight infographics covering Planning (x3), Building Control (x1), Housing (x3), Pest Control (x1) and are considering production of an infographic for Licensing Applications.

The infographics have proved to be a great way for us to communicate key, often complex messages, in a manageable and easy to understand way for our customers and the results speak for themselves – within the 12 months post publication there's been an average of 2,000 views per infographic, with one getting as many as 11,000 views. Some infographics have had over a 50% view rate per internet page view and we are beginning to see more customers for things like our Pest Control service.

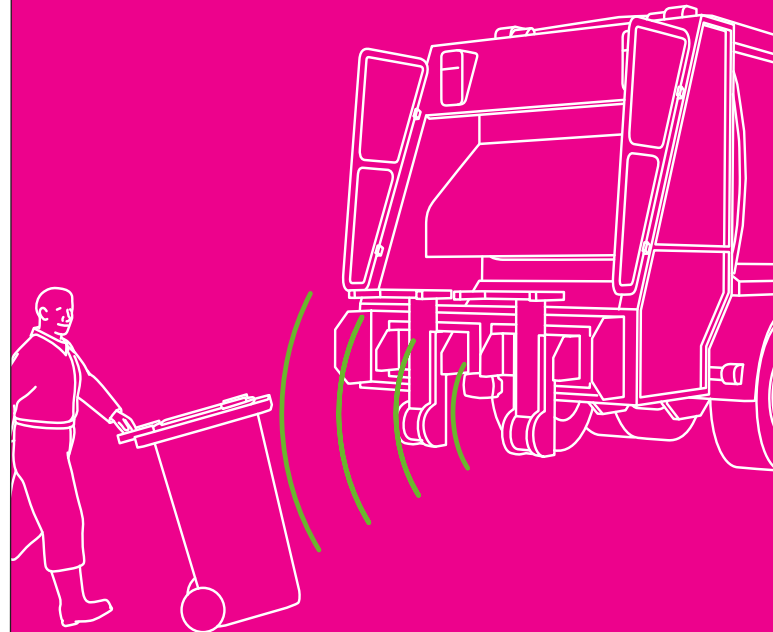
And we aren't the only ones to have seen a benefit in the use of infographics as an engaging tool to communicate with and inform our customers. A collective of councils in the South West of England approached us after seeing our Building Control infographic. As B&NES had already scoped out and produced the infographic, they were able to buy a version personalised to their Council at a lower cost than would have otherwise been possible and were in receipt of their infographic in less time than producing one from scratch.

We are happy to share and have other infographics in the production pipeline, as we really do think they are a fantastic way of communicating with our customers.

*To find out more please get in touch with Alison Eldam, Performance Project Manager, on 01225 39 6374 or email [alison\\_eldam@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:alison_eldam@bathnes.gov.uk). Alternatively, contact Jon Evans, Head of Business Support, on 01225 394910 or email [jon\\_evans@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:jon_evans@bathnes.gov.uk).*

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# Designing out crime

*Secured by Design's Chief Operating Officer Jon Cole explains how designing out crime at the planning stage can achieve sustainable reductions in crime, build safer communities and lead to cost savings for hard-pressed Council budgets around the UK.*

Local authorities have a legal obligation under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to do all they 'reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder'.

Secured by Design (SBD), the national police crime prevention initiative, has a network of police staff around the country to work with the construction industry and local authorities to promote secure development and building security to reduce crime and enable people to live in a safer society.

They are known as Designing Out Crime Officers or Crime Prevention Design Advisors and have been trained by SBD to advise architects, developers, builders and local authority Building Control Officers and Approved Inspectors about crime prevention

and security in the built environment.

SBD carries out this work on new-build developments, refurbishments and change of use projects in sectors including housing, commercial, retail, mixed use, transport, health, education, leisure and others – and has produced a range of supporting guides, such as SBD Homes and SBD Commercial.

Our advice on the built environment could include creating safer spaces through the use of natural surveillance, landscaping, lighting, fencing, gating and other measures. In addition, we would provide guidance about the physical security of buildings and would want to see the use of products, such as doors, windows, and skylights, which meet our 'Police Preferred Specification'.

Our police accreditation requires manufacturers to achieve independent third-party certification to ensure quality is maintained over time – going one-step further than the one-off testing required to meet Part Q (Security – Dwellings) of the Building Regulations.

With a wealth of expertise and experience spanning nearly 30 years and adapting our guidance to keep pace with changing patterns of criminal behaviour, SBD's crime prevention techniques have been embedded into many thousands of homes around the country and have been proven to be effective at deterring and preventing crime.

Independent academic research from the University of Huddersfield shows that SBD developments that incorporate crime prevention techniques in the built environment and SBD accredited security products can reduce crimes like burglary by up to 75% in new-build homes. All the evidence suggests that this figure is sustainable year-on-year and represents a significant reduction, especially as the vast majority of SBD developments are in social housing, some of which are in deprived areas. As part of the same research, SBD developments also outperformed their non-SBD counterparts in a visual audit which included graffiti and vandalism, litter and broken windows.



Providing extra security at the design stage does not add significant costs which range typically from £70-£240 for upper and ground floor apartments respectively and £170 for a 2/3 bed detached house. (Source: University of Huddersfield 2017).

Including crime prevention into the built environment and physical security reduces demand on police and council resources because there is less crime and anti-social behaviour, freeing up capacity, resources and budgets to be allocated to more pressing issues and concerns. In addition, police accredited products like doors and windows are built to higher specifications, which means they last longer and require less maintenance, repair and replacement over time as well as providing a long-term legacy of safer, more cohesive and desirable communities where people

choose to put down roots.

Whilst police staff work closely with local authorities around the country, Epping Forest District Council in Essex has gone one step further and included specially trained police officers in the Council's Community Safety Team, which seeks to create safe communities and look after residents most at risk. This team gets together with planning and housing officials prior to planning application stage to consider how all new developments submitted by independent and commercial builders can achieve SBD standards of security for both the built environment and physical security. We asked our colleagues at Epping to provide us with a comment and this is what they said:

Heather Gurden, Strategic Designing Out Crime Officer, Essex Police, said: "This is best practice because it brings together allied professionals who share the same concerns to make sure we deliver a better quality place to live and work."

Paul Gardener, Community Safety Officer, Epping Forest District Council, said: "The collaboration with SBD is a no brainer. It has been shown to produce significant reductions in crime and will also help reduce the cost to the public purse on investigating crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour."

Alan Hall, Director of Communities, Epping Forest District Council, said: "We are encouraging as many developers as possible to adopt SBD. Why wouldn't you harness the expertise of specialist police staff, community safety officers, developers and architects to achieve longer term community benefits?"

The partnership working between SBD and Epping Forest District Council is due to feature in an SBD film made in partnership with ITN Productions, ITN's bespoke production hub, at the APSE Conference in September. The programme features key industry interviews and news-style reports along with sponsored editorial profiles.

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*For more information, contact Secured by Design on 0203 8623 999 or email [enquiries@police-cpi.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@police-cpi.co.uk). Alternatively, visit the website on [www.securedbydesign.com](http://www.securedbydesign.com).*

*Secured by Design are collaborating with APSE on our new ITN Productions programme 'Redefining neighbourhoods: Beyond austerity' which will premiere at the APSE Annual Seminar 2017 in Oxford on 7 September.*



# Supporting business: Commercial waste and the night time economy

*Andy Mudd, Head of APSE Solutions, looks at how councils can utilise underground bins to lower the cost of their commercial waste operations.*

APSE has always encouraged local authorities to develop innovative solutions to meeting the many challenges they face in an era of ever reducing funding. Changes to the way services are provided to make better use of resources and to control demand are often at the core of innovation. APSE Solutions has been banging the drum for underground, communal refuse storage, for instance for a number of years. The advantages are mainly around reducing the cost of collection but underground bins also reduce the need

for street cleansing, boost the quality and quantity of recyclables and reduce vehicular movements.

For commercial waste operations underground storage facilities could be a cost effective answer to the problem of how to meet the needs of small businesses, where they can be trading round the clock, with little space to store waste. Rubbish sacks piled up on the street awaiting collection are not an unusual sight in town and city centres and create

a significant additional burden on hard pressed cleansing operations. Frequent day and night time collections can ease the problem but give rise to safety issues, particularly at night, when refuse collection vehicles pose a risk to users of night time economy services. In many authorities night time collections are also expensive and erode the commercial viability of commercial waste operations. In locations where there are multiple operators, additional safety issues arise from collections being uncoordinated.

Underground bins vary in size and in the way that they are collected. The aim in a commercial area would be to provide sufficient capacity to significantly reduce the frequency of collections and obviate the need for this to take place at night. Controlled access through a fob allows detailed information to be collected on the level and type of waste disposed of by each business which, in turn, creates the possibility of accurate charging arrangements and incentives to boost recycling. Fill level sensors in bins further adds to the efficiency of the system.

APSE Solutions has looked in some detail at the financial case for underground refuse bins. The capital costs are high but very significant revenue savings make it an eminently affordable solution – at least in relation to domestic refuse where there is relative certainty about future demand. It is more difficult to make a case for a trade waste service because it is more difficult to project future revenues from a service that operates in a commercial environment. Thus, an innovation that has the potential to reduce cost to local businesses, improve the amenity value of town and city centres and eradicate risks associated with the night time removal of waste, is unlikely to be implemented – unless that is, a solution can be found to the inability to predict future volumes of business. APSE Solutions wonders whether the solution might be to incorporate the collection of commercial waste into a Business Improvement District scheme.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a mechanism by which improvements to an area can be funded from a precept on business rates. The establishment of a BID requires the agreement of a majority of businesses within a defined area. Once a BID has been agreed the associated precept applies to all business, regardless of how they voted in the ballot. Typically BID precepts pay for improvements to infrastructure and enhanced environmental services. In at least one case, a BID scheme has entered into a contract with a preferred collector of commercial waste.

A BID could be a mechanism to create a guaranteed

revenue stream for a council commercial waste service that provides the long term financial certainty needed to invest in waste storage infrastructure. In essence, the cost of refuse collection would be met through a precept on the rates, rather than through individual contracts.

The benefits to businesses would be 'free' or at least lower cost commercial waste collection, along with cleaner, safer streets that, in turn, could boost the attractiveness of the area to potential customers. The public would no longer need to negotiate their way past piles of rubbish waiting to be collected and there would be a much reduced need for street cleansing to deal with the inevitable spillage of rubbish onto the streets. Extending the scheme to include, for example, public toilet provision could add additional value and further reduce the clean-up costs associated with the increasingly heavy night time usage of our towns and cities.

*If you are interested in this idea or would like to explore how APSE Solutions could help you to meet the many challenges of the current local government operating environment we would love to hear from you. Please contact Andy Mudd, Head of APSE Solutions [amudd@apse.org.uk](mailto:amudd@apse.org.uk) or call 0161 772 1810.*

CONTENUR



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# Serving up a pioneering deal

*We spoke to North Ayrshire Council about how their award-winning catering service is branching out into the private sector.*

**N**orth Ayrshire Council's catering services are used to breaking new ground - whether it's winning awards for innovative projects or ensuring school children are fed during the holidays.

But its latest pioneering move will take the service in a completely new direction – providing catering for one of the area's largest private employers.

The Council's Facilities Management team were awarded the contract to operate the catering at DSM Nutritional Products, a cutting edge site in Dalry producing high-quality vitamin C.

From September, in addition to running the on-site café, the Council will also be responsible for providing catering for hospitality and vending services for DSM.

According to Craig Hatton, Executive Director (Place) at North Ayrshire Council, it's a match made in heaven. He said: "We see ourselves as partners with DSM, rather than solely caterers. We will work with DSM to exceed their aims and to create a service that supports the customer and community alike.

"As well as offering best value for money, this will help secure local jobs with both parties supporting Modern Apprenticeships – while our own sustainable and ethical vision links into DSM's own commitment to the environment, community and wellbeing.

"Scotland is well known for the quality of the food and drink that we produce.

"Here in North Ayrshire, we will always source high-quality, local fresh produce when available. So as well as producing fresh and great tasting meals, we are supporting local producers and the local economy.

"We aim to ensure that 100% of fresh produce is procured using this strategy. We also try to ensure that where possible our dried produce is procured through ethical sources and organic or Fair Trade, supporting our commitment to make North Ayrshire a Fair Trade zone."

Increasingly, as local authorities across the UK seek to protect valuable frontline services and ensure positive outcomes for local communities, many councils are considering a more commercial approach to their activities.

These innovative councils – by demonstrating best value and improving the wellbeing of local residents - are using



their assets to enter partnerships with both the public and private sectors, exploring previously untapped opportunities.

The partnership deal with DSM will signal the first major external catering service agreement for North Ayrshire Council and it is perhaps natural that the authority's catering team is pioneering the new opportunity.

The catering staff pride themselves on their quality of service and have been recognised by industry peers as award-winning catering providers.

They picked up the APSE Catering Innovation of the Year 2016 for their fresh-thinking approach to dishing up school meals. That was one of a number of awards including ASSIST Scottish National FM Catering Team Winner 2016, LACA Roger Davis award for services to industry 2016, and Herald Society Service Team of the Year 2015.

North Ayrshire Council continues to lead the way in public sector catering after achieving the Soil Association's Gold Food for Life Catering Mark for the third year running. Gold is the highest level of achievement within the Catering Mark scheme, and North Ayrshire is one of only three Gold award holders in Scotland – and the only gold award for a high school across the whole of Scotland.

More and more, people want to know where their food comes from and how it has been made. The Gold Food for Life Catering Mark guarantees nutrition, animal welfare,

the environment and staff well-being are considered in all decisions.

The Council's catering service produces on average almost 10,000 freshly prepared meals per day across North Ayrshire and retaining the gold mark gives customers confidence in the quality of the ingredients used in their recipes.

Staff also create superb menus for small and large scale catering events, and run an award-winning Fair Trade café in Eglinton Country Park. Catering services have also recently been appointed the catering service provider working with partner KA Leisure at the new £20million Portal Leisure Centre in Irvine and Garnock Community Campus Cafe, which opened in January 2017.

They have also developed important partnerships with Taste Ayrshire, The Cook School Scotland, and with various local suppliers such as Taste of Arran. This means the catering services team have built up the knowledge, skills and tools required to deliver the catering service at DSM Dalry, which employs around 300 people.

As well as being a true supporter of local provenance and champions of Scottish food and drink suppliers, the Council has been equally determined to ensure that all of North Ayrshire benefits, and that local residents are supported wherever possible. The Council led the way in offering meals to schoolchildren during holiday periods to ensure that those living in poorer households always had a nutritious meal.

In addition, a Modern Apprenticeship Scheme was created for the Catering Service to nurture talent for the future and to create real opportunities for young people. After an initial intake of six apprentices, all between the ages of 16-17 years, the scheme has progressed and the Council is now committed to providing at least 20 Modern Apprenticeships each year – the first and only Council in Scotland to have Catering Modern Apprentices.

For more information, contact John Hutcheson, Corporate Communications for North Ayrshire Council on 01294 324121 or on [johhutcheson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:johhutcheson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk).



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# Creating an environmentally sustainable legacy

*We spoke to Mark Graham, Public Spaces Officer at Stroud District Council, who explained what natural burial grounds are and why the Council has chosen to invest in them.*

Since the first Natural Burial ground opened in Carlisle in 1993, interest in natural burial has grown at a phenomenal rate. There are now over 250 green, woodland, nature reserve, or natural burial grounds in the UK.

There are however many shades of green burial. Cemeteries which are described as green, woodland, nature reserve or natural – which, although there can be nuances of difference, are, to some extent, interchangeable terms – can be privately or publically owned. They can be extensions of conventional cemeteries, or agricultural fields grazed by sheep. They can be established in orchards or existing woodland or meadows, and can accept cremated remains, coffin burials or both.

In their publication, *Natural Burial Grounds, Guidance for Operators*, The Ministry of Justice describes natural burial as ‘the burial of human remains where the burial area creates habitat for wildlife or preserves existing habitats (woodland, species rich meadows, orchards, etc.), sustainably managed farmland, in-situ or adjacent aquatic habitats or improves and creates new habitats which are rich in wildlife (flora and fauna). Where a funeral precedes such burial, it would typically seek to minimise environmental impact.’

As a result of these differences, some natural burial grounds are very formal in appearance; others are little more than fields. Irrespective of their approach, all are places where bodies are buried in a natural setting, in a manner that creates the least impact on the environment.

Natural burial grounds can provide a range of benefits including the provision of additional burial space, meeting a growing demand for environmentally friendly burials and providing more amenity green space.

Because of their less formal nature, natural burial grounds can often be created at a lower cost than would be the case with a new, conventional, cemetery. For example mown grass paths may be appropriate in a natural burial ground, where a conventional cemetery may require a surfaced path. Natural burial grounds require a different grounds maintenance regime than is the case with conventional cemeteries, which can be less expensive. Because of the wildlife interest of the site it is also possible to recruit volunteers to take part in events such as hay raking and



tree planting at a natural burial ground.

As well as providing a more wildlife friendly, sustainable, landscape, natural burial grounds can also help to address issues relating to the wider use of resources in relation to burial. Most natural burial grounds will have regulations in respect of the type of coffins they will accept, the embalming of bodies, the memorialisation of graves, the use of plastics in conjunction with floral tributes etc. Many people who have lived their lives as sustainably as possible wish to make the end of their journey equally as ‘green’.

The demand for natural burial is likely to continue to grow as the 'baby boomer' generation, who have a greater interest in sustainability, reach the end of their lives. Most natural burial grounds do not allow memorial stones (which are often made from stone shipped considerable distances from overseas quarries) or other memorial markers. Where trees are planted on graves, simple, unobtrusive, plaques may be permitted in association with the tree, but it is the developing nature reserve itself which should be seen as the memorial to those buried there, not the individual trees which will have a limited life.

As well as providing a space for burial, a natural burial ground can also be a place for quiet reflection; an informal setting where wildlife can be encountered; an educational resource and an emotionally healing environment where the bereaved can find comfort in a natural setting. In the long term, a natural burial ground can become valuable ecological resource and wildlife haven.

The growing trend towards natural burial looks likely to continue. Natural burial grounds can offer a range of benefits for wildlife and enhance the burial provision available to local communities. Local Authorities can create natural burial grounds as adjuncts to existing, conventional cemeteries, or as separate sites. Natural burial grounds can offer a range of burial options (woodland areas, meadow or grassland areas, parkland trees etc.) which can help to create a mosaic of wildlife habitats. Water features, bird feeding stations, habitat piles etc. can also be developed to further enhance the wildlife value of the site. Development and management costs can often be minimised by enhancing existing wildlife features (hedgerows, scrub etc.) and through the use of volunteers working with organisations such as The Conservation Volunteers or local Wildlife Trusts. Once a natural burial ground becomes full, and no longer generating revenue from the sale of graves, maintenance can be far less intense and therefore less expensive than would be the case for a conventional cemetery. There are no issues with memorial maintenance and safety, and access to all areas of the burial ground is not necessary as the woodland and scrub etc. develop.

With the wide range of benefits it confers, and the growing movement towards sustainability, natural burial can represent a positive, cost effective alternative to conventional burial grounds.

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*For more information, contact Mark Graham, Public Spaces Officer for Stroud District Council, on [mark.graham@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:mark.graham@stroud.gov.uk).*

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# Report back

## A round up of APSE advocacy and events

### England

#### LGA Conference 2017

APSE once again supported the LGA conference 2017 with an exhibition stand at the event held in Birmingham on the 4-7 July. We showcased APSE's latest research and services to delegates, with record numbers visiting the stand.

#### Bricks - Mortar - Money

The LGA was also used to launch APSE's latest research with CIPFA Property Services. 'Bricks- Mortar-Money', which explores the role of councils investing in property and assets to generate new sources of revenue, was debated at a packed launch event with speakers including APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien and report author David Bentley with questions from delegates. More details can be found on page 4-5 of this edition of *direct news*.

#### House about that then?

APSE's strategic forum chair Cllr Mark Pengelly hosted a strategic forum event on housing using APSE's latest research with the TCPA 'Building Homes: Creating Communities' to discuss the pressure on affordable homes for rent. Delegates contributed to the debate with their thoughts on maximising the flexibilities for councils to utilise local authority housing companies as an option for council to deliver desperately needed new homes. The full report is available to download on the APSE website at [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) then click on 'research'.

#### Devolution Revolution?

Cllr Robin Brown, Cabinet member on Northamptonshire Council and a strategic forum chair for APSE, introduced a special event on devolution for LGA delegates on the 5 July with guest speaker Cllr Simon Letts, Leader of Southampton Council. The event explored the context and complexities of devolution, the potential opportunities and the uncertainties now being felt in the light of local government finance changes post the General Election.

#### UNISON Local Government Conference 2017

The UNISON Local Government Conference 2017 took place in Brighton in June, with APSE speaking at a fringe event on social care and the future viability of the service. Mo Baines also addressed the main conference, presenting on local government finance and the future viability of councils given the on-going austerity measures. Mo called for the findings of APSE's latest finance research to be fully considered by Government, including fair funding for council services and a recognition of the value of local government services in supporting all public services, including the NHS.

#### Lib Dems in Local Gov

APSE's Head of Communication and Coordination, Mo Baines addressed the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors about APSE and NPI research on local government finance, highlighting the disparity in funding pressures and the remaining questions on business rate retention and redistribution. The conference took place on the 7-9 July in Stone, Staffordshire.

#### APPG

APSE continues to provide secretariat support to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on school meals. The last meeting took place post the election on the 27 June with speakers including Dr Katie Wilson who presented details of initiatives in place in America to provide school food, and there was detailed discussions on Universal Infant Free School Meals and Holiday Hunger. The next meeting is scheduled for the 24 October 2017.

#### APSE Central

APSE's Central region hosted its Annual General Meeting and free forum for its members in Gedling, with a focus on devolution and the opportunities for Local Government, which included the implications of devolution being outlined by Professor Colin Copus. Sharon Palmer from Regional Action West Midlands presented an overview of the role of the voluntary sector, and a frontline service context was provided by Melvyn Cryer, Gedling Borough Council, and Chris Barr, Solihull Metropolitan Brough Council. Councillor Pengelly was re-elected as APSE

Central Chair and Dela Moreland was elected as Secretary for the region. Thanks was expressed to the previous secretary, Caroline McKenzie for her support, hard work and the time that she dedicated to the role.

## Welcome to Stockport

APSE Northern Region is pleased to welcome back Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council to its membership, who joined in July of this year.

## The future is yours!

Currently Wayne Priestley and the Regional representatives are developing the Northern Forum agenda for the next twelve months. If members have any ideas or topics they would like speak about or hear discussed, then please let Wayne know.

Cllr John Kerr Brown, Warrington Borough Council, who is currently the Regional Chair of Northern region, has been nominated as APSE National Chair elect for 2017/18. All our best wishes go with him alongside National Secretary elect Anita Brown of Stockton-on-Tees Council.

## Scotland

### New APSE Scotland research – Doing local politics

The latest research publication from our collaboration with University of Edinburgh, De Montfort University and Leeds Beckett University on what it takes to do local politics is now complete and will be released shortly. You can read more about this on page 9 of this edition of *direct news*.

### New staff

Garry Lee has been appointed to the role of Principal Advisor to cover Louise Melville's maternity leave. We wish Garry every success in his new role. In further staffing news, Iain Scherr has joined the APSE Scotland office on a temporary basis as a Research and Coordination Officer. Welcome, Iain!

## Wales

### When Dragons Collaborate

APSE Wales' Annual General Meeting took place on the 28 June at Llandrindod Wells. Speakers explored shared services and delivery models in a Welsh context. Cllr Arwyn Woolcock was confirmed as the APSE Wales Chair

and Karen Armstrong as secretary. Presentations from the event are now on the APSE website. For more details about future APSE events in Wales, contact Rob Bailey on [rbailey@apse.org.uk](mailto:rbailey@apse.org.uk)

## Northern Ireland

### The Mossley Mill Debate!

The APSE Northern Ireland Annual General Meeting and a free member event, Transformation and Efficiency, took place at Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey on the 28 June 2017. Speakers included Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Nichola Hughes, Sustainability Officer of Sustainable NI, and Douglas Gardiner, Head of Recycling Services, East Ayrshire Council. Alderman Tommy Nicholl MBE of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council was confirmed as the new APSE Northern Ireland Chair for 2017-2019. For more details about future APSE events in Northern Ireland, contact Mo Baines on [mbaines@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbaines@apse.org.uk).



*Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, speaking at the APSE Northern Ireland Transformation and Efficiency event.*

### The Northern Ireland Awards 2017 are back!

The Northern Ireland Awards 2017 are now closed and the judges are busy exploring over 50 submission showcasing excellence in local government in Northern Ireland. The award winners will be announced by TV presenter and newsreader Sara Travers at the NILGA Annual Conference 2017 on the 12 October. For details see the Northern Ireland pages on the APSE website [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) or NILGA on [www.nilga.org](http://www.nilga.org).

# Neighbourhoods and local economic success: Beyond austerity

*On 30 June, APSE hosted its Policy Seminar in Manchester. We heard from a number of high-profile local government speakers who looked at innovative ways to improve local economic success.*

It is no secret that APSE believes neighbourhood services are vital for communities. They are the public services that people experience as soon as they step out of their own front door, yet they require the appropriate funding to continue to support thriving communities.

Residents still depend on good local services, despite a downturn in economic circumstances. Businesses, of course, demand that the places where they invest meet their needs. The role of local authorities has never been more critical to creating sustainable local economies and local neighbourhoods where people thrive; however, it is one of the most challenging agendas that councils have ever faced.

This year's June Policy Seminar focused on many of the issues that local government have been battling with recently, including hard-hitting topics like austerity, Brexit, and ensuring the future of our neighbourhood services. The seminar offered local authority officers, managers, and directors an opportunity to air their own concerns whilst also gaining some valuable insight into how others have coped in similar situations and, with a plethora of excellent speakers, there was no shortage of innovative ideas and impressive best practice examples.



One such example came from Donna Hall, Chief Executive of Wigan Council. Donna spoke to delegates about The Deal, Wigan Council's plan to save money whilst also delivering growth and reform. The idea is to work alongside the public to ensure that the Council works for them, rather than against. However, The Deal has two sides; whilst the Council agrees to deliver quality services that are appropriate for the community, the citizens must agree to do their part, from recycling their rubbish properly and getting involved in the community, to being active and believing in the borough. Donna believes that a different kind of leadership is required in local government – and she intends for Wigan Council to lead the way.

Southampton City Council's unique investment approach was the subject of a very interesting presentation from Mark Bradbury, Head of Capital Assets, who discussed approaches to using investment to enhance the local economy, including the aesthetic aspects of the City Centre. Southampton is also developing a natural link between the centre and the port to attract the cruise ship footfall to the City Centre, utilising its assets and public realm.

Laura Church, Corporate Director of Place and Infrastructure for Luton Borough Council, discussed the work that Luton have done to develop their USP and



boost their long term financial situation, by launching the Luton Investment Framework (LIF). This new 20-year plan is designed to generate income and improve future local economic success. It includes trading their services in a financially viable way and investing in property, including expanding London Luton Airport, which is owned by the Council. This investment has provided excellent opportunities for the Council by driving its portfolio forward and allowing them to invest in the community. Further, Laura explains that this bold and ambitious plan will transform Luton Borough Council, and ensure that it is financially equipped to deal with future challenges.

Wakefield District Council's Glynn Humphries, Service Director of Environment and Street Scene, explained that they have moved towards driving an efficient service culture throughout their Environmental Services. With huge financial obstacles to overcome, their 3-year budget strategy ensures that their services remain excellent value for money and, most importantly, work for the community that needs them. Glynn describes a workplace that has carefully considered its systems and components, moulding them to support their staff. They now run apprenticeships and opportunities for hard to reach young people, making a big difference to

the Wakefield community.

Paul Naylor, Direct Services Manager, Eastleigh Borough Council, describes how they have been generating new sources of income. They have been offering their frontline services – including waste services, street cleansing, grounds maintenance, technical services, and fleet and workshops – as a business to customers outside of the Council in order to raise money. Paul believes that local authorities are best placed to do this, as many will already have the skills, equipment and workforce to offer a high-quality service for a reasonable price. In fact, Eastleigh's services have been hugely popular – and the figures show their success. Paul shows that this entrepreneurship has not only been successful, but is also a sustainable source of income for the Council.

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To find out more about APSE's Policy Seminars, contact Mo Baines on [mbaines@apse.org.uk](mailto:mbaines@apse.org.uk) or call 0161 772 1810.

All of the presentations from 'Neighbourhoods and local economic success: Beyond Austerity?' are available to download on the APSE website. Go to Events, select Previous Seminars, then 2017 Seminars.

## Staff news

### *Introducing the youngest members of the APSE team*

We are delighted to introduce the newest member of the APSE team – Isaac (Zac) Robert David Melville. Louise Melville, APSE Principal Advisor for Scotland, and her husband Craig welcomed Zac on Saturday 29th July. Although Zac arrived 2 weeks earlier than planned, both mum and baby are doing very well.



We also managed to snap a picture of our youngest *direct news* reader! Rebecca Monaghan, Performance Networks Data Processing and Analysis Officer, visited the APSE office in Manchester recently with 7-month old Leon. He's not quite old enough to work for APSE yet, but Leon is making sure he does his background research and was spotted reading our May/June issue of *direct news*.

**apse** annual seminar 2017

# **Beyond austerity?**

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