



apse direct

Association for Public Service Excellence

November/December 2017 • ISSN 16465-2493

Lessons from down under

Sharing best practice with local
government in Australia

Investing in our communities

Jim McMahon MP on urban renewal

p18

LACA opinion

Tim Blowers on why school
meals matter

p6

RAM Energy

Fighting fuel poverty

p22

APSE Facilities, Catering and Cleaning Management Seminar 2018

We mean business - surviving and thriving in local authority FM, catering and cleaning



Book your place online at
www.apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810

Thursday 25 and Friday 26 January 2018
Radisson Blu Hotel Durham

Editorial



Paul O'Brien
Chief Executive, APSE

Tidings of joy

I can scarcely believe we are nearing Christmas and another year in local government is already under the belt. And what a year it has been. The snap General Election, raised hopes of an end to austerity, quickly dashed by the Budget, and ongoing uncertainty over what Brexit will mean to UK local government all leaves me feeling just a tad 'Bah Humbug'. So I set about thinking what would make me feel a bit more cheerful?

One of the things we can perhaps celebrate is the little stocking-filler on housing; it is by no means the full giftset but we have at least begun to see a recognition that the housing crisis will not be resolved unless councils are at the heart of delivering a new generation of council housing. The big announcements in both PM Theresa May's speech to her party conference in October, and in the Chancellor's Budget in November, fell well short of the funding and freedoms needed but it is nevertheless a welcome shift in emphasis, reflecting that markets alone will not solve the need for 365,000 new units of housing to be delivered each year to meet housing need.

My second little stocking-filler is the Parks Action Group announced by Minister Marcus Jones, MP, and I am delighted to represent APSE on this new group. Parks are an amazing contributor to local communities and the local environment, not just for their aesthetic qualities but in providing places to meet, to walk, to run, to play; increasingly we see the value of parks not just to physical health but to mental well-being. The fact that a Minister is taking the future of our parks seriously enough to set up a dedicated action group is to be welcomed and places parks deservedly higher up the agenda for local government.

Finally the star at the top of the tree is YOU! Whatever is thrown at local councils it is the people delivering our frontline services that keep on going; leveraging in energy and enthusiasm even when faced with huge challenges. If we could bottle the spirit of local government resilience it would be the sell-out Christmas gift of 2017...!

Enjoy the festivities. You have earned it.

Contents

- 4 Report back**
APSE advocacy and events in November and December
- 6 Point of view**
Tim Blowers, National Chair LACA
- 7 Property investments: More than bricks and mortar**
Mo Baines, APSE
- 8 A smouldering platform: Reforming local government in Australia**
Gary Murphy, General Manager of Lismore City Council, New South Wales
- 10 The time for action on parks has arrived**
APSE reports on the development of the DCLG Parks Action Group
- 11 Budget 2017**
APSE analysis
- 12 Frontline services and public procurement post-Brexit**
Matthew Jackson, CLES
- 14 How to fix a pothole problem**
Swansea Council's 48 hour pothole initiative
- 15 Embracing a commercial mindset**
Paul O'Brien, APSE
- 16 Secrets to success**
A look at North Ayrshire, APSE overall council of the year 2017
- 18 Investing in our communities**
Jim McMahon MP, Shadow Devolution Minister
- 20 Charging ahead to achieve lower emissions**
Elizabeth Bohun, Oxford City Council
- 22 Municipal energy: How local government can fight fuel poverty**
RAM Energy
- 24 Going for gold**
APSE Apprentice and Environmental Innovation Awards
- 27 Should alarm bells be ringing on possible changes to your fire and rescue service?**
Ben Parsons, APSE Solutions

To advertise in the next edition of APSE direct, please contact Matt Paton at Spacehouse on 01625 614000 or email m.paton@spacehouse.co.uk

APSE direct is published by

Association for Public Service Excellence

2nd Floor Washbrook House, Lancastrian Office Centre

Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M32 0FP

t: 0161 772 1810

e: enquiries@apse.org.uk

w: www.apse.org.uk

Report Back

A round up of APSE advocacy and events



Paul was joined by Susan Finnegan from Culture Liverpool and David Whitehouse from Warwickshire County Council at the Public Sector Show.

Showcasing the Public Sector

The public sector show held in Manchester on 21 November was addressed by Paul O'Brien on commercialisation, with a panel of expert speakers from across the local authority sector. Paul writes a blog on commercialisation, which can be found on page 15.

On the Money Box

Head of APSE energy Phil Brennan appeared on BBC Radio 4's Money Box programme to discuss the Scottish Government's decision to set up a publicly-owned, not-for-profit energy company. You can read more about a municipal energy company in action – RAM Energy – on page 22.

Scotland

Keep Scotland Beautiful

APSE's chief executive Paul O'Brien, attended the Keep Scotland Beautiful Conference on 28 November. The conference discussed a range of issues and KSB will be attending the APSE Performance Networks Seminar in December in Blackpool.

There is an ongoing dialogue exploring performance in relation to litter and strategies to reduce its impact on the local environment.

Focus on Children's health and well-being

Elma Murray, Chief Executive, North Ayrshire Council along with John Dickie, Director of the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, came together to debate the impact of food and food poverty on the health and well-being of children in Scotland alongside the NHS Health Scotland's Organisational lead on Diet and Obesity Prevention, Claire Hislop. Speakers explored the long term impact of children's health including the valuable role of school meals at the APSE Scotland FM Seminar 2017 held at Cumbernauld.

England

Call to Parks Action

Chief Executive Paul O'Brien attended the first meeting of the newly launched Parks Action Group convened by Minister for Communities Marcus Jones, MP, on 23 November at the DCLG offices London; the aim of the group is to help England's public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future. Read more on page 10.



APSE's Paul O'Brien joins Marcus Jones MP, Drew Bannellick, Heritage Lottery Fund; Matthew Bradbury, Parks Alliance; Graham Duxbury, Groundwork; Helen Griffiths, Fields In Trust; Ian Leete, Local Government Association; Dave Morris, National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces; Ellie Robinson, National Trust and David Solly, Natural England at the first meeting of the Parks Action Group.

Serving up a debate

APSE continues to provide secretariat support to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on school meals chaired by Sharon Hodgson MP and work continues on the Holiday Hunger Campaign. APSE has also addressed a number of LACA events on schools meals with the Chief Executive Paul O'Brien taking part in a roundtable event in London on the 10

November 2017, Mo Baines addressed a LACA North East event on the 23 November in Stockton with Debbie Johns providing a performance update to a LACA event in Warwickshire on 16 November.

Housing chatter

APSE was invited to participate in a TCPA event on housing held in London on Thursday 30 November with Paul O'Brien representing APSE in the discussions. APSE is working on scoping a further report on housing with the TCPA to identify solutions to housing need.

Going round the issues for the Circular Economy

The Environment Agency's Pandora Rene addressed APSE's central region to discuss TEEP regulations. Pandora also discussed the current Circular Economy draft Directive going through the European Parliament and its likely impact on UK local authorities.

Future Forum

APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien attended the MJ Future Forum North on 30 November. This year's event looked at the key issues affecting local authorities and the public sector in the North of England. It also looked at the impact of the first autumn Budget while speakers from the Combined Authorities looked at the challenges for next year.

Grounds for optimism

The APSE refuse, streetscene, transport, parks and grounds seminar took place at Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate on 19-20 October. The event also hosted the APSE Environmental Services Apprentice of the Year awards for horticulture, and transport and vehicle maintenance, as well as the first ever Environmental Services Innovation awards. You can see details about the award winners on page 24.



Nottingham City Council's Eddie Curry discusses a suite of operations underpinning Public Parks at the Southern Parks and Open Spaces Seminar.

Park Life

80 delegates attended the APSE Southern Parks and Open Spaces Seminar in central London on 30 November. The event explored a wide range of issues, including strategic delivery models, supplier management and safety measures as well as volunteer management, public health benefits of parks and opportunities to deliver new public parks and open spaces. Speakers included Dr Matthew White, Senior Lecturer at Exeter University; James Blockley, Team Leader at Oxfordshire County Council; Chris Worman MBE, Parks and Grounds Manager, Rugby Borough Council; and Chris Welsh, Parks Operation Manager at the London Borough of Ealing.

Coming in from the cold

The APSE cemeteries and crematoria seminar took place at Crowne Plaza, Chester on 3 November. Speakers discussed how they have improved service efficiency, developed new services, increased levels of income and added value to the service whilst still being sensitive to the vulnerability of families at their times of loss. Our thanks go to Fraser & Fraser, a specialist firm of genealogists, who kindly sponsored the event.

Wales

Engagement in Wales

APSE Wales held 4 advisory groups in Llandrindod Wells in November for Renewables and Climate Change, FM Catering & Cleaning, a Waste Summit and Housing & Building Maintenance. Topics covered areas as diverse as the response to the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 in regard to provision of public toilets, the effect of Universal Credit on the social rented sector, coastal erosion and Welsh recycling targets. Sessions were supported by speakers from Welsh Government, local authorities and the Police Crime Prevention Initiative. Further meetings have been held with the Welsh Data Unit to explore the use of corporate benchmarking.

Low carbon future

On 31 October, APSE Energy held a low emission vehicles, charging and infrastructure event in Swansea. APSE members heard from speakers on a wide range of issues including building business models for low carbon vehicles, charging infrastructure and identifying opportunities from solar canopies.

Northern Ireland

Castle conversations

APSE and Nilga will host a joint event on Thursday 14 December at Belfast Castle on the theme of 'Governance and powers within the Local Government Environment' with guest speakers from APSE and NILGA.

Say Hello, Wave Goodbye



In October, we said goodbye to our Communications Officer Sophie Bannister. Sophie is embarking on a new career working within mental health, recently enrolling on a Masters course in psychology.

When asked about her time at APSE, Sophie said, "It's been a wonderful two years. Everyone has been so brilliant and supportive during my time here, and I will definitely miss being part of the amazing APSE family."

From supporting the ongoing development of our social media accounts to overseeing the publication of our bi-monthly magazine, Sophie has been an integral part of APSE and her expertise will be sorely missed. We have no doubt she will prosper in her new career and we wish her all the best for the future.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome our newest staff member and Communications Officer Matt Ellis. Matt joins

us straight from completing his Masters in public relations. He received his undergraduate degree in politics at the University of York and previously worked as a paralegal.

When asked about his new role, Matt said, "Sophie was instrumental in building APSE's social media presence and redesigning our magazine. Because of her achievements I have some big shoes to fill. However, I'm confident that with the help of the APSE team, I can build on Sophie's successes. With a busy year ahead, I am really looking forward to the challenge of amplifying APSE's voice and that of our members."

We are also delighted to welcome back Rebecca Monaghan who has just returned to the Performance Networks team. Rebecca has been on Maternity leave following the arrival of baby son Leon.

• *Matt can be contacted on mellis@apse.org.uk or alternatively call 0161 772 1810*

Point of view



Tim Blowers
National Chair, LACA and Head of County Catering Service, Derbyshire County Council

Why school meals matter

The school meals industry in the UK is massive. Thousands of people in the UK are employed in the industry, ranging from local fruit and vegetable suppliers, local taxi firms who deliver school meals, as well as regional distributors and manufacturers that supply the basic products such as potatoes, meat and dairy. In addition to the employment opportunities the industry offers, school meals are also important for improving social inclusion and learning in schools. We know by talking to schools that we have KS1 pupils who start school who have never used cutlery, never eaten a meal around a table or even used a plate! Furthermore, the school meals service makes every effort to feed all types of special diets and allergens that are all too common today.

The process of getting children to understand and accept the benefits of a healthier diet is a huge challenge. This is something that has been going on long before Jamie Oliver in 2005. If you look at the statistics, you will clearly see that with the introduction of universal infant free school meals (UIFSM) in 2014, figures are higher than they have been in a generation. We are now reaping benefits with increasing numbers of secondary school-aged

children taking healthier options in schools. The skills and knowledge children pick up eating healthy meals will be invaluable as they move into higher education and work. It is for that reason, school meals should always be at the heart of a healthy policy.

As to whether school meals should be viewed as a public service and not simply a traded part of the council offering, I believe it should. However, we have services that are delivered by schools themselves and private contractors that are good. For me, the real issue is the lack of monitoring from OFSTED around the school standards. If we continue as we are, then there will be a risk that providers will cut corners and fail to meet the required standards of the School Food Plan. This issue needs resolving urgently.

LACA is building a database, along with APSE, that shows the size and performance of the school meals industry. This will be important as Brexit looms. Questions will be asked by Ministers about productivity, use of UK products and UK suppliers. LACA will continue to lobby Parliament for improvements to the school meals service. For that reason, your continued support is essential.

Property investments: More than bricks and mortar

Local authority investment decisions have been making headlines in recent months, with some elements of the national press calling into question the role of local authorities in investing in property and assets as a means to generate income. However, as funding has decreased councils have increasingly relied upon new sources of income to plug the funding gaps. Councils investing in property and other assets is nothing new; many local authorities have historically held major assets such as retail sites, farms and residential property.

In recent years however, the emphasis on using these assets to generate a commercial yield has become much greater and this has involved out of area investment. APSE's own research with CIPFA property services found that in 2016 alone around £1 billion was invested in property and assets. Accordingly, the scaling up of investments by local councils has peaked the interests of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and they have now issued consultation in response which seeks to amend the prudential framework.

The Prudential framework includes:-

- The Prudential Code prepared by CIPFA (applying to England, Scotland and Wales)
- The Treasury Management Code prepared by CIPFA (applying to England, Scotland and Wales)
- The Statutory Guidance on Local

Authority Investments prepared by DCLG (applying to England [major authorities but also applying to parishes and other smaller authorities if the total of investments exceed set thresholds])

- The Statutory Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision prepared by DCLG (applying to England and to major authorities only)

DCLG are now seeking to strengthen the regulation and guidance as to how local councils invest, particularly in properties, because they are concerned by a number of issues. One such cause for concern is that as local authorities are increasingly reliant upon alternative sources of income and invest in property and other markets, they are exposed to macro-economic trends, which given the levels of exposure, they argue could leave councils with structural deficits in their budgets.

There is also concerns that liquidity should be assured and that liquidity and security of assets investments should be the key considerations over and above that of yield from the asset. Government has also expressed concerns that the type of investments currently being utilised by councils goes beyond their core purpose in delivering services; they have specifically referenced the need for greater transparency in investment decisions and that reporting should outline not just the 'what' but the 'why' as to investment approaches. DCLG have made it clear that councils ought not to be 'borrowing in advance of need'; this

relates to a form of 'carry trade' whereby councils are borrowing at lower levels of interest, such as through the public works loans board, in order to invest in a development where they can earn back a higher level of interest or yield, generating an income from the asset or development. Whilst this appears to be acceptable for strategies linked, for example to local regeneration, with a demonstrable benefit to the local area, it is termed as 'borrowing in advance of need' whereby this process is utilised for out of area investment where there is no obvious link to local benefit – other than a monetary one.

DCLG have said that they do not wish to restrict local authorities in using commercial structures to kick start local economic regeneration to deliver services more effectively. However, they have warned the primary duty of a local authority is to provide services to local residents, not to take on disproportionate levels of financial risk by undertaking speculative investments, especially where that is funded by additional borrowing.

APSE has produced a full briefing on this issue which is available on the APSE website and we will report further on the outcomes of the proposed revisions to the Prudential Framework through APSE's advisory groups, website and briefings service.

- Contact Mo Baines, APSE Head of Communication and Coordination at mbaines@apse.org.uk



A smouldering platform

Reforming local government in Australia

Gary Murphy, General Manager of Lismore City Council in Australia, recently visited England to see how councils are weathering the austerity storm, and whether any lessons learnt could be applied to local government in Australia.

The most recent journey towards sustainable local government in New South Wales, Australia, began in August 2011 when councils from throughout NSW came together for Destination 2036 to discuss their future direction over the next 25 years.

The NSW Government established the Independent Local Government Review Panel and a Local Government Acts Taskforce which commissioned several reports and put forward their recommendations to the government in October 2013. A year later, the government responded to the 65 recommendations and delivered a reform package called 'Fit for the Future'.

All councils had to submit either a merger proposal or an improvement plan demonstrating how they would meet seven sustainability performance measures by 2025. Since this time, much of the focus has been on forced mergers with resulting court cases and the government backing down on some Sydney mergers and totally withdrawing the regional council mergers.

However, the improvement plans are still required to be met and with the Office of the Auditor General now conducting council audits, it is likely there will be greater scrutiny and accountability placed upon councils to deliver on the promises made in their improvement plans.

One of the most pressing issues facing NSW councils is addressing their infrastructure backlogs. For many councils, they have not adequately accounted for nor funded

depreciation of their assets in the past. Having to now demonstrate that they are sustainable, councils are having to find several million dollars in extra revenue each year to adequately fund this backlog.

The improvement plan for my council required us to look first for savings and efficiencies. In our first year we found \$1.2 million through voluntary savings. This current year we are projected to save a further \$2.5 million. We are systematically reviewing all of our services to determine whether we are operating efficiently and providing the services our community wants at a level of service they expect.

Our last resort is a Special Rate Variation of \$3 million per year to be spent on our roads. Our infrastructure backlog is \$90 million. This \$3 million will go some way to tackling this but we still have a gap we need to close.

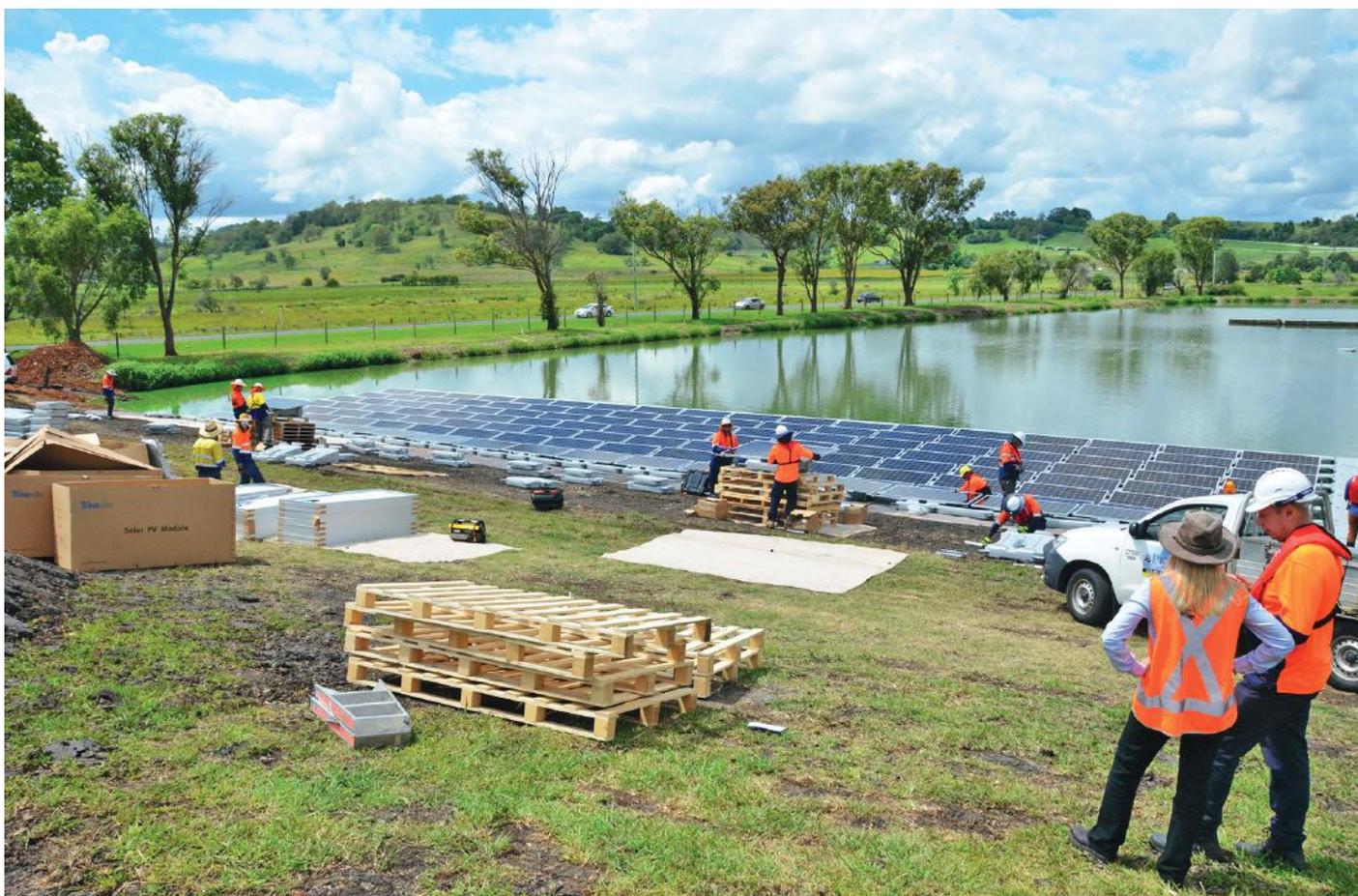
The UK austerity measures are well-known in Australia and I was keen to see how councils have responded to this challenge. With this in mind, I was grateful my council agreed to send me to the UK to see for myself how the sector is faring. I visited Coventry, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Manchester, Greater Manchester and Aylesbury councils and also had discussions with Kim Ryley (formerly CEO of Cheshire East Borough Council), Sarah Pickup (LGA), Jonathan Carr-West (LGIU) and Paul O'Brien (APSE).

Paul gave some examples of the innovative thinking councils were employing such as one council that charges cruise ships handsomely to offload their waste and then uses it as fuel for their bioenergy plant. This generated not just energy but several hundred thousand pounds in additional revenue.

This for me was the greatest learning. Councils in my view have been traditionally conservative, risk averse and very reluctant to enter the commercial realm for fear of being told to stick to their knitting or getting a backlash from competing private sector interests.

In the councils I visited, I saw first-hand some of these initiatives from housing developments to commercial ventures to professional services such as recruitment firms and legal services, and even a lottery. Councils were being smart about how they used their property portfolios. Instead of simply selling off surplus land, they were actively looking to see how they could leverage their landholding in partnership with facilitating development. Councils were also making extensive use of technology with one council using Amazon's Alexa artificial intelligence assistant to provide information and advice on council

My sojourn to the UK revealed that you cannot simply cut services nor look at different service delivery methods in order to achieve financial sustainability



services. On the people side, councils were seeking different mindsets and rewarding innovation and ideas.

So, how could these initiatives and ideas be applied in my council and NSW more broadly?

Our community has told us that they expect us to provide leadership in environmental issues, so for us recycling and renewable energy is a space where we can lead by example from both an environmental and commercial perspective, knowing we have full community support. It also makes economic sense, as our country's electricity prices skyrocket and we are generating more waste as a community than ever before.

We set ourselves the goal of self-generating all of our electricity from renewable resources by 2023. By the end of 2017, we will be generating 16% of our electricity needs, in part due to Australia's largest floating solar farm, funded by a community share offer, which we recently launched on sewage treatment overflow ponds on the outskirts of our city. We believe we can achieve 20% of our energy needs with behind-the-meter photo voltaics and we will close the remaining 80% gap by developing a mid-scale (5MW) solar farm.

We have also had a long and proud history of waste minimisation and lead the way in NSW and Australia in many recycling initiatives. We achieved 68% municipal solid waste diversion and 77% construction and demolition diversion this year. We save on exorbitant landfill fees and sell the diverted waste for profit. Our closed landfill cells are now phytocapped, which has halved the cost of traditional closure methods and provided us with a carbon sink. We were also the first council in Australia to achieve organic certification for our compost, which we make from green waste collected from household bins across the city. We are able to sell the resulting product at a premium price to nurseries, our farming community and the general public.

New initiatives that we are exploring next year are mattress recycling and improving the efficiency of our polystyrene recycling machine. With a move from China to ban the re-processing of some plastics, we are also working with our local university and keen manufacturers to find commercial uses for our recycled plastics instead of shipping them to Asia for re-processing. The possibilities are exciting; if we can develop a market for products made of these recycled plastics, we find ourselves with unlimited materials and

a product from which we can generate revenue. All the while, recycling waste in our own backyard and improving our environment.

The reality is that our population and our waste stream is growing. So instead of viewing it as a problem to get rid of, we are looking at it as an opportunity that could potentially help dig us out the financial hole we find ourselves in.

My brief sojourn to the UK revealed to me that you cannot simply cut services nor look at different service delivery methods in order to achieve financial sustainability. You have to look at revenue-generating initiatives and do this in a smart way – partner with organisations that have the commercial nous and who are willing to share the risk, and the reward.

While we do not have the burning platform of austerity in NSW that is forcing us to take drastic action and do so quickly, I would argue that our platform is smouldering and there are measures that we could and should put in place now in order to be prepared when government next fans the flames of reform.

- For more information contact Gary Murphy at Gary.Murphy@Lismore.nsw.gov.au



The time for action on parks and greenspaces has arrived

APSE reports on the development of the DCLG Parks Action Group launched by Marcus Jones, MP, Minister for Communities and Local Government.

In September, Communities and Local Government Minister, Marcus Jones MP, launched a new Parks Action Group to help England's public parks and green spaces meet the needs of communities now and in the future. The launch is against the backdrop of reducing parks budgets and follows a Government instigated public inquiry into the value of parks and impact of ongoing budget cuts; APSE produced one of almost 400 written responses to the inquiry. The Parks Action Group (PAG) was created in response to the inquiry.

The Group brings together experts from the world of horticulture, leisure, heritage and tourism, and will include, alongside APSE, a number of other related bodies including Heritage Lottery Fund, Groundwork, The Parks Alliance, LGA, The National Federation of Parks and Greenspaces, The National Trust, Natural England, and Fields In Trust. PAG will be tasked with bringing forward proposals to address some of the issues faced by public parks and other green spaces across England. To support the Group, government is providing £500,000 funding to kick start their work.

In launching the new group, the Minister stressed that the Government recognised that parks have an intrinsic value to local communities, including reducing loneliness, increasing wellbeing, and revitalising town and city centres. However,

the Minister has warned that the future of parks needs to be secured to ensure that future generations continue to enjoy their benefits.

A number of initiatives have already been announced by government including publication of the 'Sporting future: a new strategy for an active nation' paper in 2015 which set out the importance of sport and physical activity with a specific focus on the themes of central government, local government and outdoor recreation. This was followed in February 2016 with the 'Pocket Parks' initiative which provided over £1 million to transform 87 small undeveloped or derelict areas into green spaces for communities.

APSE has welcomed the news and has reiterated its view that parks are a core part of local neighbourhood services providing an accessible environment for local communities to enjoy all of the benefits which parks bring including access to safe play spaces, green exercise, community meeting points and a focus for events and activities. In recent years, APSE has also advocated parks as an effective means to deal with climate change issues and localised environmental considerations such as mitigating against damage caused to local areas by flooding, and providing much needed green canopies in urban landscapes.

APSE's work in the PAG will be fed back to APSE members and as always we would really welcome hearing your views on parks. APSE'S Chief Executive, Paul O'Brien, will be representing APSE on the PAG, ensuring that APSE continues to be a key voice in the debate on the future of parks.

We know that councils will want to see health and wellbeing boards engaged and greater emphasis placed on the skill needs of future parks managers alongside the developments in areas like accounting for natural capital. APSE's resources including our advisory groups, seminars, benchmarking and web resources will all be useful to deploy as we make the case for parks.

- *To find out more, contact Wayne Priestley, Principal Advisor for Parks and Open Spaces, at wpriestley@apse.org.uk*

APSE Analysis

Budget 2017

November's budget did not deliver the anticipated 'end of austerity' for local councils. In fact local government announcements were in short supply with no mention of social care being the most obvious talking point. Funding for adults and children's services is now accounting for around 60% of all council spending. This leaves a huge gap in funding for all other frontline services delivered by APSE member councils. Recent research with APSE and the New Policy Institute found that frontline services in England alone have lost some £3.1 billion from budgets since 2010 and this is contributing to the parlous state of local council finances. The gap in funding is expected to reach £5.6 billion within two years.

The budget did include some big ticket spends on infrastructure with an announcement of a £1.7 billion fund for intra-city transport initiatives with half to be allocated to cities through a competition process and the remainder allocated to the six Combined Authorities (on a per capita basis). In addition to this a further £45 million was added to the existing 'pothole fund' to tackle the backlog in road repairs. Further announcements on devolution were also made including the North of Tyne devolution arrangements, which, if finalised, would see around £600 million going into the region over a 30 year period. The West Midlands Combined Authority will potentially receive further sums including a £6 million boost to housing delivery through a special housing taskforce. The budget also confirmed that Government will open up a bidding process in December 2017 of up to £1 billion for local authorities to borrow against for infrastructure projects.

A major change for local councils is future reliance on council tax and business rates as Revenue Support Grant (RSG) diminishes. The Chancellor's announcements confirmed that they will press ahead with the Business Rates retention scheme with further pilots taking place in 2018-2019. However this alone does not address the concerns that councils in the most deprived areas, that have already seen disproportionate losses of funding for core services, will be settled. APSE's view is that any changes must take cognisance of the need for fair funding settlements for all councils.

Finally, the headline announcements on housing, whilst welcomed in keeping housing as a major priority for the Government's work programme, will not create the speed and volume of new homes needed. Whilst councils will be able to bid to borrow an additional £1 billion against the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) this will be conditional on need and 'high affordability' issues. APSE has called for a lifting of the HRA cap across the board. Equally the sums currently being cited by Government will not significantly dent housing need, which by the Government's own latest figures would place that at 365,000 new homes being built per annum. APSE and TCPA research suggests that council-led building initiatives could contribute around 140,000 new homes to this figure if they were given the financial freedoms to build new homes.

• Contact Mo Baines, APSE Head of Communication and Coordination at mbaines@apse.org.uk

Knowledge is Power



The More You Know, The More You Can Control.

Our sensor technology alerts collection teams when each bin needs emptying, saving time and money on unnecessary collections.

Get smart. Get connected.



t: +44 (0)1299 251333
e: enquiries@egberttaylorgroup.com
w: www.egberttaylorgroup.com



Frontline services and public procurement post-Brexit



Matthew Jackson, Deputy Chief Executive at CLES, talks in depth about their latest research exploring the opportunities for local government procurement post-Brexit

Frontline services are delivered utilising a number of mechanisms. There are those which are delivered directly and in-house by local authorities. There are those which are externalised and outsourced to often large private sector organisations. And there are those which are delivered through alternative models including Mutuals and Trusts.

What is however common regardless of the delivery model is the process of public procurement. In-house models will need to procure goods and services to enable efficient and effective delivery; and outsourced and alternative models will need to go through a procurement process to be able to deliver the service in the first place. They will also themselves need to buy goods and services to deliver.

Historically, the process of procurement has been characterised by bureaucracy, rigidity, complexity, and compliance. Procurers have often made decisions based around pre-defined criteria and with the price of the good or service the primary decision-making factor, along with a little bit of consideration of quality. What this has led to is a process which is transactional and shrouded in rules and regulations; and often due to the emphasis on price an inability to consider wider issues.

In the last five years, legislation and regulations around public procurement have started to change. In England, the Public Services (Social Value) Act was introduced in 2012, with an emphasis upon encouraging procurers of services to consider how the good or service being procured could consider and contribute towards addressing wider social and environmental challenges. This meant that cost only criteria in procurement could no longer be the norm.

In wider European legislation around procurement, the 2014 refresh of EU Procurement Directives brought three very important phrases or considerations to the fore when it came to public procurement. First, they talked around the importance of flexibility in the process and particularly reducing some of the burden associated with procurement for lower value contracts. Second, they recognised that more Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) should be delivering public contracts, given their scale and importance to the

functioning of the economy. Third, they recognised that procurement should be utilised to enable the achievement of wider social and environmental goals.

As a result of this legislation and other cultural shifts, the behaviour of procurement officers has slowly started to change. Procurers are beginning to more effectively understand the impacts of their spending choices upon local economies and are increasingly considering social value as part of the process. This is happening not only in the UK, but across Europe as the EU Directives are transposed into national level law.

In the UK however, we have Brexit on the horizon, and I believe that is an opportunity to re-think how we do procurement for social and environmental benefit. I think there are three main areas of opportunity for public procurement in a post-Brexit environment.

We need to be more cyclical in how procurement is approached post-Brexit

Area one is that there is a real opportunity for Central Government to get its house in order when it comes to public procurement. In recent years, central government have developed legislation around social value which has been implemented at the local level, but have not embedded such considerations into their own processes and practices. Additionally, there have been soundings around the importance of utilising SMEs to deliver central government contracts; however, targets have been consistently missed. I would argue that there is a need for 'beefed up' social value legislation post-Brexit which is applicable to local places AND central government.

Area two is that there is a real opportunity to think about the whole process of procurement differently. Procurement is a cycle which consists of six stages. There is strategy which identifies how procurement is undertaken. There is commissioning where good and services

are designed. There is tendering where the market responds to a requirement and decision-making where the 'winning' supplier is identified. There is delivery of the good or service. And there is monitoring. I would argue that procurement does not always consider all these stages and rushes to tendering and decision-making – we need to be more cyclical in how procurement is approached post-Brexit.

There is a real opportunity to embed social value across the entirety of the cycle

Area three is that there is a real opportunity to embed social value across the entirety of the cycle described above at the local level and across all procurements, regardless of their size or scale or nature. In any good or service commission there therefore needs to be consideration of:

- What social value outcomes can the good or service contribute towards?
- How social value can be considered as part of the design stage?
- What questions can be asked around social value in tendering?
- How social value can be weighted as part of decision-making?
- What can be done to hold suppliers to account around social value in delivery?
- How social value can be monitored and reported?

Frontline services, regardless of how they are delivered, should be thinking about how they can progress the process of procurement so that it delivers a wide array of outcomes. If we are going to get more out of procurement post-Brexit we need to change cultures and think about social value as integral to the approach and not an add-on.

- *Matthew Jackson is the Deputy Chief Executive of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES). This article has been framed by the CLES publication: Opportunities for Public Procurement Post-Brexit.*



How to fix a pothole problem

Swansea Council launched its 48-hour pothole repair pledge in August 2016 as a response to residents who said something needed to be done about pothole problems.

Despite routine work that focused on statutory duty and had a thorough risk-based approach, the Council's reputation for speedy pothole repair was at an all-time low. Previous systems had made little or no impact on customer service levels, so a radical new approach, above and beyond the existing regime, albeit with some financial investment was proposed.

The plan was to act within 48 hours of any pothole report coming through to the department - the repair would be made and photographic evidence returned to the customer to support the delivery of such a service.

A collaborative approach between Highways and the Customer Service teams, along with significant changes to working practice was critical to the project's success.

The concept was piloted a month before the launch in July 2016 to ensure the process was sound and to learn from any mistakes, ensuring the pledge could be met 100% of the time.

Bob Fenwick, Swansea Council's Highways Maintenance Group Leader said, "The success of the 48hr repair pledge is founded on a new approach that all reports from the public are classified as 'potholes' – no statutory duty, no review of size, depth, risk etc. to instigate separate teams dependent on severity – one team, one job – potholes."

The creation of a new reporting system with two points of access either via an online form or a direct phone call to the customer service centre has speeded up and unified the process. Potholes are repaired quickly and therefore repeat call demand on the customer service team has been reduced significantly.

Last year, the Council spent £1m resurfacing roads, £600k resurfacing pavements and around £2m on routine repairs like fixing pot holes, drains and kerb as well as gritting roads. Despite this there is still a backlog of resurfacing work and it would be easy to fall back on statutory work as priority, but this doesn't give the customer what they want.

Establishing two dedicated Pothole Repair Teams forms part of the additional budget of £150k.

The Pothole Initiative Teams now sit alongside the routine repair teams, PATCH (Ward based medium sized repair programme) teams and the planned road maintenance teams. The pothole repair teams have marked vans and A-Frame notices so that residents know what they're doing and why.

Bob added, "Quality engagement and interaction with the public was recognised as being critical to success. Failure to demonstrate delivery of the pledge could have damaged reputation. Hence there was and continues to be a very honest approach with the public."

"The main problem faced by the team was getting enough information to locate the pothole and when faced with this challenge the customer was contacted and asked to provide more detail. Initial demand was extremely high, but the team delivered, when others thought they would fail."

The priority task when the pledge was initiated was to ensure that the Council delivered on time, every time. A huge marketing campaign was instigated to ensure residents knew about the campaign and what the pledge meant for them.

Since the launch of the 48-hour pothole repair pledge last summer almost 3,000 holes in the road have been fixed within two days of being reported (with 93% customer satisfaction). And the commitment to the pledge has helped see the total number of road repairs over the last 12 months soar to more than 11,200.

The Council has recently approved a new budget for next year which includes a further commitment of £150k to continue with the innovative pothole repair pledge and maintain the extra funding for the service, which is a credit to all parties.

- For more information contact Jason Rogers at Jason.Rogers@Swansea.gov.uk



Embracing a commercial mindset

Paul O'Brien, APSE Chief Executive, explains why local government needs to embrace a commercial mindset to ensure best value for money.

Commercialisation strategy 1.0 was very much about trading and charging, using some surplus capacity or getting additional benefits from assets during the 1980's. Fast forward to today and version 10.0.3 of that strategy is hugely different in scope and range.

Of course, local authorities face huge financial challenges, not least an intention by Government to almost completely remove RSG by 2020, however impractical and unfeasible this may appear for many areas of the country.

In practical terms this has played out as investing in local infrastructure and supply chains to incentivise inward investment; creating wholly owned housing companies to build new homes; acquiring property portfolios; spending renewable energy projects for a return and offering services from graffiti removal to MOT's for a charge.

Future commercialisation strategies need to focus on helping close funding gaps and rebalancing budgets. This may include growing business rates, broadening your council tax base, borrowing to make investments in property and assets for a long-term return and of course a much more sophisticated approach

to trading and charging for services that you are efficient and effective at delivering.

Some have suggested that democracy often grinds slowly and that it is incompatible with operating in a fast-moving commercial environment. Whilst decision making processes can always be streamlined I think it's important to remember that we are dealing with, and potentially putting at risk, public funds and therefore good governance, scrutiny and transparency remain of fundamental importance.

Sharing a panel with a couple of Chief Executives recently I was struck by how one had restructured for the future to act more commercially. It's the classic approach identified by management gurus such as Tom Peters and applied by leaders like Jack Welch and Richard Branson of breaking operations up into individual business units within the organisation, to give them a much greater focus on their cost base and long-term viability. However, it's also important to ensure that if adopting this approach wider corporate values are retained and that there is no loss of synergy.

For the other the most important emphasis was around culture and that her staff recognised that they are now in a very different financial environment, one where everyone needs to buy into the notion of operating on a much more commercial basis. This also requires an investment of time, resources and the development of skills that without a shadow of doubt exist within local government's workforce, they just need to be teased out, nurtured and grown.

Of course with all updates and new approaches you can experience some hiccups or problems, even some of the most successful organisations in the world run into problems but what they do is analyse the problem, identify solutions, correct their strategy, refocus and go again. •

Secrets to Success

A look at North Ayrshire Council,
APSE's Overall Council of the Year 2017

A Council's transformation journey is never complete. Every time an obstacle is cleared, a fresh challenge awaits just around the corner.

But it's perhaps how North Ayrshire Council has adapted in recent years to find fresh and innovative ways to negotiate these hurdles which has set it apart.

Less than 10 years ago, the Council was a solid local authority. It provided robust services but had no burning platform for change. Not now.

A decade on, standards are high - staff are engaged and motivated; communities are excited about how they are enabled to make changes. And all of this is being recognised. Most recently in September when the Council was named APSE's 'Council of the Year' in 2017.

North Ayrshire Chief Executive Elma Murray said, "Being named APSE's Council of the Year is a tremendous accolade for all Council staff. We are a medium-sized Council but we punch well above our weight and have high ambitions."

"This achievement is the culmination of a huge amount of work from everyone. Our elected Members are ambitious for our communities and they have set us a clear challenge to be the best at what we do. Underpinning this has been investment in our staff to give them the tools, confidence and the authority to make changes happen.

"There have been cuts – what Council hasn't

had to make cuts? – but we've adapted, and found ways to do things differently and make our services better."

North Ayrshire has challenges. It is one of the most deprived areas in Scotland and the Council has faced a budget reduction of more than £73m over the last six years. A reduction of 23%.

That could have created a chasm between communities and the authority - but North Ayrshire Council has never worked harder with residents to keep them engaged.

A new locality approach – which allows local people to make decisions on the issues that matter to them - is proving successful, while participatory budgeting is giving community groups a chance to bid for cash to help them thrive.

Elma added, "These are challenging times and we constantly have to re-evaluate the type of Council we can be and what our communities can expect from us."

"One of the most important aspects is how our staff engage with people in their communities – we are in partnership with them."

"The only way we can make sustainable long-term decisions is by working with our communities, getting to know them better and learning more about what's important to them."

Donna Fitzpatrick, of Irvine-based Fullarton Community Association, has worked hand-in-hand with the Council as part of a long-term strategy to raise living standards in her community. This year saw a new community hub open in Fullarton which has also been chosen as a pilot area for increased provision of early years hours in nurseries.

Underpinning everything North Ayrshire Council does is a fundamental belief in fairness and equity.

Donna said, "We've received fantastic support from the Council. What we've achieved would have been a pipe dream not too long ago but now we are making great progress in fulfilling the potential of our community."

Underpinning everything North Ayrshire Council does is a fundamental belief in fairness and equity.

Earlier this year, the Council and its Community



Planning Partners agreed their new 'Fair for All Strategy' which provides a clear, over-arching commitment to tackle child poverty and create the conditions for inclusive growth.

Elma added, "Children, health, economy, environment and food are the five emerging themes that we consider crucial to tackling and reducing inequalities."

"We see, first-hand, every day that poverty and deprivation reduces the choices that our residents are able to make and, ultimately, the quality of their life. We want every person in North Ayrshire to have the same life opportunities."

Further initiatives such as providing free school meals during holidays and becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer are just some of the examples of how the authority is trying to combat poverty.

North Ayrshire Council led the way by becoming the first local authority in Scotland to provide free sanitary products to all secondary school pupils. Further initiatives such as providing free school meals during holidays to children and becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer are just some of the examples of how the authority is trying to combat poverty.

But the battle against poverty is fought on many fronts. An improved economy will be vital to enhancing the fortunes of North Ayrshire and its residents. The Council is a key partner in exciting proposals for a transformational £350m Ayrshire Growth Deal and last year agreed a £215m Capital Investment Programme, which includes planned investment in new schools, economic growth and the environment.

Elma added, "Across the Council we have a clear purpose to reduce inequalities, take an inclusive approach to economic growth and to do that by being ambitious and innovative."

"I'm incredibly proud of our hard-working,

skilled officers who work well with our elected members. For any Council to succeed, those relationships have to be strong and progressive. I think we have that."

"We won't stand still though. We've set the bar – and we mean to keep raising it."

- For more information contact Michele Gilmour on m.gilmour@north-ayrshire.gov.uk





People and place must be at the heart of a new bold vision for our communities, says Shadow Devolution Minister, Jim McMahon MP

Investing in our communities

The skeletal remains of Hartford Mill in Oldham are unmissable. Locally it is one of the most vivid symbols of the 'first Industrial Revolution', which gave rise to Oldham's towns. But while we now talk of living through a 'fourth Industrial Revolution' many towns across England are still struggling to find their place in this rapidly changing world.

In Oldham we feel it more than most. The borough is made up of distinct townships and villages with their

own identities, rooted communities and housing markets too. Oldham town, sitting at the heart of the borough, was built in the big bang of the industrial revolution. Hundreds of cotton mills flew up, tightly packed by terraced housing to accommodate the mill workers.

Though there are notable exceptions, for the most part practical and quick supply of housing took priority, with little thought given to good design or the quality of the local environment. The proximity of the workplace to home, and amenities for worker's families right on the doorstep, meant there was little reason to travel beyond the immediate locale.

So the decline of Oldham's traditional industry wasn't just about the loss of jobs. It tore right through a template of housing and communities that had defined our towns for over a century.

That housing legacy has been the subject of reform, with successive clearance programmes aimed at creating neighbourhoods fit for the modern world. Some have been more successful than others over the decades. The last significant attempt was the Housing Market Renewal programme, which aimed to tackle the oversupply of low quality, and low demand properties across the town.

The programme wasn't without its problems. At times tensions were high with local people. It taught me a lot about how a scheme intended to be for the benefit of the community can quickly turn public opinion if the community doesn't feel it has a voice in the process. Housing projects, whether it's investment in existing homes or something more drastic like demolition and rebuilding, is always more than bricks and mortar - it is about people and community too.

The scheme was scrapped in 2010 by the incoming coalition government, meaning that terraced housing that was earmarked for renovation, or bought for demolition to be replaced with higher quality units, was left in the air.

There is a lot to be done; the truth is that many parts of the country need investment to go further

So today the council has worked hard to see one area rebuilt by bringing together developers and using its landholding to plug the funding gap. Still today the sales office in Freehold remains locked-up since the developer walked away. As it stands in the shadow of Hartford Mill it acts as the starkest reminder, if one were needed, that if Oldham is to rebuild it must be done from the grassroots up.

But even with passion, energy and drive it comes down to money too. And it affects many other towns and cities; how can you address the high build costs, where investment is needed to remediate land and prepare it for development, when the cost of building far outweighs the value of the completed home. And it's a problem that is a live debate today, as the government press Greater Manchester to prepare its 'Mayoral plan'. The Plan sets out the strategic development for the city region. At its heart it's the right thing to do, but it has raised a fundamental question about urban renewal and bringing brownfield sites forward for development.

Councils up and down the country face the same struggle of a Government failing to invest in addressing poor quality homes. This Government lags depressingly behind on housing numbers, as first time buyers struggle to get on to the housing ladder, and families struggle in overcrowded accommodation. Public money is being thrown at private landlords in the billions for homes which don't even meet a decent standard.

This point was firmly made by Labour's housing lead John Healey as he shone a light on the whopping annual £2.5bn bill for 'non-decent' homes. In Greater Manchester alone around £150m is handed to landlords for non-decent property. It's a scandal.

As a nation we must create the housing our communities so desperately need. This has to be in quantity, quality and the standard of its environment, offering all an attractive, well cared for place to live.

There is a lot to be done; the truth is that many parts of country need investment to go further. They need continued, long term social and physical investment to make them ready to take on the changing world ahead. And towns like my own, Oldham, are still recovering from the ones which went before.

There must also be a radical new vision for the role of councils. Councils have proven they can do amazing things, even in difficult times. It's time to resource them, and allow them the freedom to do what they do best. As the Shadow Minister for Local Government and Devolution, I am determined to frame Labour's ambition for devolution beyond just talking about structures and new deals, but about giving people the power to coproduce a vision for their communities. This means a stake in a compelling vision of what an area should look like and comprise of a common endeavour in combining energy and social capital.

More than just bricks and mortar, though they are vital, it will talk about inclusive growth. For too many the only thing trickling down is the rain leaking into their damp home. For too many, they do not feel as though

they have a share of the economic growth they need to get on in life. So the country needs to realise the potential of every citizen.

Together with decent public services, acting as the foundation on which communities can thrive, we can see the development of 'Neighbourhood plans PLUS'. This would go further than development alone, so that local people have a real say in the future of their community.

We already see good councils creating that partnership in power. Transport links, early years, education and skills bringing people together with decent well paid jobs are critical to this.

So too is the fundamental work ethic – work hard and as a result be able to live a decent life. And so as much as we must invest in the next generation, we cannot accept second best for those let down by a system that hasn't worked for too many.

We can set a national ambition for the future of Britain, and we should be bold. To achieve that we can set the framework of standards, access and quality. But a new vision for neighbourhoods can't be delivered from an office in Whitehall. The truth is it needs to go further than the town hall too.

The 'Leave' vote was about so much more than membership of the European Union. People are sick and tired of being told that 'this is just the way things are going to be'. Instead, people voted for a different settlement. People are demanding change. And I hope my vision for devolution will be one of empowering people to be the change our communities need.

It is perfectly possible, to have a clear national framework of access, standards and accountability and allow for local freedom underpinned by fair funding and with community, with our councillors as convenors at its heart.

- *Jim McMahon is the MP for Oldham West and Royton and serves on the Labour Party frontbench, with responsibility for local government devolution and finance.*

Charging ahead to achieve lower emissions

We spoke to Elizabeth Bohun at Oxford City Council about their major trial of on-street electric car chargers.

Like many cities, Oxford faces transport challenges from high traffic congestion generated by a growing economy, a dense population, and high numbers of people travelling into the city for work. Diesel and petrol vehicles that travel into and around the city contribute to air pollution levels which have seen Oxford continue to breach air quality objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) within the city wide air quality management area.

Cars contribute over 50% of NO₂ emissions on some link roads within Oxford. So in its 2014 Low Emission Strategy, Oxford City council identified 'encouraging uptake of Ultra-Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEVs: such as plug-in hybrids or fully electric cars) by improving ULEV charging infrastructure' as a priority.

A particular challenge in Oxford is that around 28% of households live in terraced houses, many of whom have to park their car on the street. This is a barrier to charging an electric car at home, and hence to having an electric car at all, because these residents cannot install their own charger.

Go Ultra Low Oxford (GULO) is a major trial of on-street electric car chargers that aims to address this barrier. The trial is led by Oxford City Council, in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and the University of Oxford's Transport Studies Unit.

The GULO project has been made possible thanks to an £800,000 grant from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles' £40m Go Ultra Low Cities scheme. It is part of the Government's drive to make every new passenger vehicle sold in the UK by 2050 an ultra-low emission vehicle.



To find the best options for residents who face the problem of needing to park on Oxford's narrow streets, Oxford City Council is trialling six different charging technologies: installations are underway and due to be completed by the end of 2017.

The forty trial chargers will be used by trial volunteers living in the city. Ten of the chargers are available for the general public and ten are for CoWheels car club (who are bringing ten new electric car club cars to the city).

The chargers being trialled in Oxford were selected from bidding manufacturers on the basis of their ability to solve the particular challenges of on-street parking. They fall into three broad categories:

- Lamp column integrated chargers
- In-home chargers paired with pavement cable channels (to safely take the cable from inside the house to the car)
- Three different free-standing charging pillars in slim line single and double socket designs, with features including load management.

NewMotion – a Dutch founded company who bring a wealth of experience from the Netherlands to support the project – were selected to manage the chargers “behind the scenes” enabling them to be used by the public and managing the payments for charging. Details of charger suppliers and models can be found via the Go Ultra Low Oxford website



to be legally enforceable – making road signs relatively large and leading to local objections. The trial will help us to manage this risk when we roll out more chargers. We will evaluate the benefits of low density installations which use dedicated, signed bays to guarantee access, compared to solutions which can be installed at high density across whole streets (e.g. lamp post chargers) without dedicated bays and with a faster installation process.

Local street furniture policy can have a significant impact on both charging pillars and lamp post chargers:

- Policies requiring lighting columns to be moved to the rear of footways when replaced make many lamp columns unsuitable for an integrated charger.
- Policies requiring street furniture to be positioned 450mm from the edge of the kerb can limit suitable locations for free-standing pillars on streets with narrow footways.

Where next? Initial research is revealing that the social interactions and motivations of our participants have an impact on how chargers are used and where they should be installed. In particular negotiations on parking, access to chargers and feelings about the look and feel of chargers.

Installing chargers on-street gets complicated quickly and there are challenges to overcome

So as we plan how we will roll out at least another 100 chargers across the city, we are looking at the possibility of a whole-street approach in which we would work with the residents of a street to assess all their concerns upfront and alongside technical considerations.

The University of Oxford's Transport Studies Unit is researching the social and technical implications of the scheme and their evaluation, along with the practical lessons learned will also inform the roll out strategy. In short, this is just the starting point for Oxford to Go Ultra Low!

- *Elizabeth Bohun, Environmental Sustainability Projects Officer from Oxford City Council will be talking about this project and related work in Oxford at the 'Low emission vehicles, charging and infrastructure – the local authority role' event being held at the Council Chamber, The Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, Northants, NN17 1QG on Tuesday 30 January 2018. This is a free event for APSE Energy members.*

www.goultralow@oxford.org

Installing chargers on-street gets complicated quickly and there are challenges to overcome. The process has touch points with a wider range of other services and local concerns. These include:

- street furniture policy such as where the lamp posts are located and managing clutter;
- parking policy and restrictions; and,
- the capacity of the electricity grid to cope with the energy needs of the chargers.

Creating dedicated electric vehicle charging bays requires public consultation of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and can be a lengthy process if objections are received and proposals have to be reviewed and altered. There is a consultation process for the TROs. However, our experience is that this is not the same as fully engaging with local communities regarding the changes happening on their streets, and this needs to be done early on to smooth the way.

Indeed, local residents have a wealth of relevant knowledge that can help. Choosing locations is much easier with some knowledge of the parking behaviours on each street!

Signage for electric vehicle charging bays can be a sensitive issue, particularly in heritage conservation areas. Rules around time limits and access to bays can require extensive wording



RAM Energy is aimed at the people of Derby and the Midlands to help people save money on their energy bills and offer low rates for all. Too many people are stuck on expensive tariffs; RAM Energy aims to make it easy to switch through a simple-to-use website or by calling the UK based call centre.

Two thirds of domestic energy customers don't switch regularly, even though that means they are missing out on better deals. For anyone in that position, RAM Energy is likely to save them money. RAM Energy is a not-for-profit energy provider, there are no director bonuses or shareholders to pay, which means any profits generated will be used to keep prices down for everyone. RAM Energy is delivered through a partnership with Robin Hood Energy, a not-for-profit energy supplier.

RAM Energy ran a series of presentations to Council departments. Gill in the customer service team said, "I don't think I've switched for a while." We discovered that Gill was with one of the Big 6 energy suppliers and hadn't switched for 11 years. Gill was delighted to discover that she made a saving of £170 by switching to RAM Energy. She said, "this is a great amount of money, especially for someone living alone like myself." She continued to say, "I'm very happy with the saving I've made and switching was very easy too."

RAM Energy was launched to meet one of 50 pledges made by the Council as part of its vision to make Derby a safe, strong and ambitious city.

The venture is launched with a special introductory tariff for single and dual fuel customers signing up to the RAM Energy fixed tariff. This tariff will be offered until the end of the year to

enable people to save on their winter heating bills.

Peter from Alvaston was one of the first to switch. Being a regular switcher between the 'Big Six' energy suppliers, Peter wasn't sure how much he could save. He was pleasantly surprised when he received his quote from RAM Energy to find that he could save a massive £220 by moving so he switched right away! Peter said, "I'd recommend looking into RAM Energy as it's a local not-for-profit energy provider, especially for local people and may work out cheaper than the mainstream companies."

This will make a meaningful contribution to the quality of life in our city

Many householders have become disillusioned with the traditional big energy suppliers, with around one in six people in Derby now estimated to be living in fuel poverty.

Council Leader Ranjit Banwait said, "RAM Energy is a local brand for the people of Derby and the Midlands offering affordable tariffs which offer value for money. It is not about making big profits or paying shareholders, as is the case with the big energy suppliers."

"This will make a meaningful contribution to the quality of life in our city."

RAM Energy also aims to help prepayment (pay-as-you-go) customers, who have traditionally been poorly served by the energy market. Prepayment meter customers will have priority status for smart meter

installations to give customers more freedom for topping up and control over their bills.

RAM Energy is keen to help prepayment customers move to becoming credit customers. This change would typically offer people a higher saving on their energy bills.

For people who are not used to switching and are nervous about it, there is lots of help available. Getting a quote can take two minutes and customers are fully supported every step of the way when completing your switch to RAM Energy.

Energy bills depend on a customer's energy-using habits, the size of their home and the number of people in it.

All that is needed is a copy of a recent gas and electricity bill. If RAM Energy isn't cheaper than a customer's existing deal, then it will be made clear.

RAM Energy is being backed by some of the biggest local employers, including Rolls-Royce, Bombardier and Toyota UK, who have all agreed to promote it to their staff.

- *If your council is interested in setting up a municipal energy company, please contact Phil Brennan, Head of APSE Energy, on 0161 772 1810 or email pbrennan@apse.org.uk*



2018 Dates for your diary

11 January	Northern Region Environment Forum, Morecambe
17 January	The Local Authority Housing Company National Seminar 2018, Birmingham
23 January	APSE Southern Communications and Social Media Seminar 2018, London
25-26 January	Facilities, Catering and Cleaning Management Seminar 2018, Durham
23-26 February	APSE Scotland Building, Housing and Renewables Seminar 2018, Dunblane

For more information, visit our website at www.apse.org.uk or call 0161 772 1810

Going for gold

APSE Apprentice Awards

It was raining awards in October with our Apprentice Awards and inaugural Environmental Services Innovation Awards.

The APSE apprentice class of 2017 provided a stunning showcase to the value of apprenticeships. In our most competitive year yet, all of our winners and finalists proved themselves to be an asset to the local authorities they work for.

Vickie Hacking, APSE Principal Advisor, said, "I am delighted to be involved in this year's Awards. The Awards allow APSE to publicly recognise and honour the commitment that these apprentices show towards their work, as well as the undeniably excellent contribution they make towards local

council frontline services. The Awards also highlight councils as excellent places for young people to begin and develop their careers."

Cllr Judy Hamilton, Chair of the APSE Housing Construction and Building Maintenance Group said, "The work of these apprentices underlines how important apprenticeship schemes are and how much local councils can gain from participating in them. All of the finalists are shining examples of excellence in local government frontline services and should be extremely proud of their achievements. With the support of innovative councils who value workforce development, I have no doubt that each finalist has a bright future ahead."

Housing and Building Maintenance Awards

Non-Trade Apprentice

Finalists

Matthew Taylor	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Lauren Agnew	West Lothian Council
Stephanie Ewan	Fife Council
David Taws	Newcastle City Council
Wahid Iqbal	Birmingham City Council

Winner: Callum Gaskell, Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Mechanical and Electrical

Finalists

Christopher Jardine	Dumfries and Galloway Council
Emma Beard	Berneslai Homes
Allan Trolland	Fife Council
Craig Paterson	Aberdeen City Council

Winner: Graeme Baird, Aberdeen City Council

Building Skills

Finalists

Lyn Hovvels	City and County of Swansea
Darren Mcleod	West Dunbartonshire Council
Ryan Love	Dumfries and Galloway council
David Henderson	Dumfries and Galloway Council

Winner: Lewis McKerchar, Fife Council (pictured right)

Horticulture Apprentice Award

Finalists

Fraser Nicol	Fife Council
Russell Melville	Fife Council
Angela Burton-Giles	Gedling Borough Council
Jordan Rogers	North Lanarkshire Council
Samuel Adams	Bournemouth Borough Council
Luke Taylor	West Lothian Council

Winner: Daniel Kelly, North Lanarkshire Council

Transport/Vehicle Maintenance Award

Finalists

Ryan Band	Fife Council
Connor Brown	Leeds City Council
Andrew McClorey	Renfrewshire Council
Leigh Jane Drummond	West Lothian Council

Winner: Alex Gillan, Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council



APSE Environmental Innovation Awards

Speaking at the new Environmental Services Innovation Awards, APSE Principal advisor Wayne Priestley said, "The Awards provide local authorities with a richly deserved opportunity to showcase their expertise. More than ever, it is vital we recognise examples of environmental service innovation amongst APSE members."

APSE Chief Executive Paul O'Brien said, "We're delighted with the response to our first ever Environmental Services Innovation Awards. By holding these Awards, APSE hopes to encourage and advertise innovation in local government. As our finalists have shown, invention is essential if councils are going to maximise the value of green spaces and secure long-term economic and social benefits for their communities."

The Housing and Building Maintenance Apprentice Awards ceremony took place at the APSE Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance seminar on Thursday 5 October. The Horticulture, Transport and Vehicle Maintenance Apprentice Awards and Environmental ceremony took place on Thursday 19 October at the APSE Environmental Services seminar. •



Waste and Street scene

Finalists

- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- London Borough of Redbridge
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets

Winner: Wigan Council

Parks and Greenspaces

Finalists

- Kirklees Council
- Wakefield Council
- Hertsmere Borough Council
- Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Winner: Leicester City Council



Technology

Finalists

- Nottingham City Council
- Oxfordshire county Council
- South Gloucestershire Council
- Suffolk Coastal District Council

Winner: Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Outstanding Achievement

Winner: Orkney Islands Council



Clockwise from top: Transport/Vehicle Maintenance Apprentice winner Alex Gillan, Wakefield Borough Council; Waste and Street Scene winners Wigan Council; Horticulture Apprentice of the year Daniel Kelly, North Lanarkshire Council; and Outstanding Achievement winners, Orkney Islands Council.

Highways, Street Lighting and Winter Maintenance Seminar 2018

22- 23 March 2018
Hilton Hotel, Blackpool

4 Cameras
1 Image
0 Blind Spots



Backeye® 360
intelligent, 360° camera
monitor systems

Backeye® 360 eliminates problem blind spots; potential dangers for anyone or anything in a vehicle's path.

Digital images from four ultra wide-angle cameras are combined to create a 360°, bird's-eye view of the vehicle, delivering a clear, real-time picture on the driver's monitor, preventing accidents, saving money and lives.



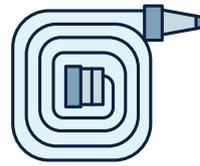
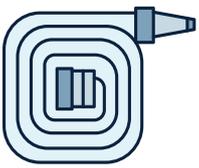
Actual Backeye® 360 image.

Driving Global Safety



brigade-electronics.com
Call 01322 420300 or visit your stockist

Book your place now online at
www.apse.org.uk or call
0161 772 1810



Should alarm bells be ringing on possible changes to the control of your Fire and Rescue Service?

APSE Solutions Senior Consultant, Ben Parsons, discusses changes in legislation that may profoundly impact fire and rescue service

Since the formation of the first municipal fire service in Edinburgh in 1824, providing a fire service has been a local authority function, except for the Second World War when the National Fire Service took over. Control and governance of fire and rescue services returned to either county or unitary councils in April 1948 when the Fire Services Act 1947 came into effect. Although 1986 saw the formation of some independent fire authorities, this status quo has essentially remained unchanged until now.

APSE Solutions, has recently been commissioned to review a Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) business case to take over the governance role of the fire and rescue service within their area. This arose from what APSE believes is a relatively little known change in legislation. The Policing and Crime Act 2017 amended the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to allow the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (SoS) to permit a Police and Crime Commissioner to become the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) for their area. Known as a section 4A Order, this power can only be exercised subsequent to a business case proposal from the PCC being submitted to the SoS.

The legislation creates a positive duty upon an applicant PCC to satisfy the SoS that:

(a) it is in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness for the

Order to be made, or
(b) it is in the interests of public safety for the Order to be made.

This may not sound especially significant at first. More significant however, is the fact that the PCC can also apply for a Section 4H Order which permits the delegation of Fire and Rescue Service functions, including the employment of staff, to the Chief Constable, effectively making the Fire and Rescue Service a subsidiary of the police force. This is completed through the same process as a 4A order, by demonstrating in a business case proposal to the SoS the same benefits of economy, efficiency, effectiveness, or safety.

Regardless of the merits of the Police taking over Fire and Rescue services, there is a real danger that this will happen without any real public debate.

This proposal can be made at the same time as part of a proposal to take over the role of the Fire and Rescue Authority (4A Order) or afterwards. However, if the PCC submitted a simultaneous proposal for both and the SoS didn't think there was sufficient merit in the delegation of Fire and Rescue Service functions to the Chief Constable (4H Order) they couldn't then just permit the PCC to assume the FRA role under 4A, a whole new proposal would need to be submitted. Making a combined proposal therefore increases the risk of not getting an Order under section 4A.

It would therefore be logical, unless the PCC felt they had an exceptionally strong proposal to make, to expect the proposals to be made separately and there should be no assumption that a proposal for a section 4H Order will not be made at some point in the future.

There are a number of these proposals out for consultation at the moment. However, what is probably less well known is that the SoS is not required by law to consider any residents objections in their own right (irrespective of how strong, or how numerous they may be). They need only be regarded by the SoS if the Local Authority whose Fire and Rescue Service is affected by the

proposal also objects in writing, within the consultation period.

Regardless of the merits of the Police taking over Fire and Rescue services there is a real danger that this will happen without any real public debate. Many might question the appropriateness of such a move and question the underlying assumptions that the two services are sufficiently similar to benefit from shared governance and/or management.

What are the similarities between these services beyond the blue lights? They clearly both have to react to an incident or a 'shout' urgently, which beyond the immediate incident generally results in an investigation. However, the proactivity of the Fire and Rescue Service in identifying the causes of that 'shout' and the subsequent campaigning for change, which is often legal, in order to prevent reoccurrence is exemplary and undisputable. This has been extraordinarily successful with changes to building regulations and an emphasis on home safety dramatically driving down the number of fires, the loss of life, and the costs of responding to them.

Whilst it would indeed be folly to say the Police is not at all proactive (knife crime would be an example here) it is often suggested that part of the success of the Fire and Rescue Service is their positive relationship with the community. The police on the other hand are still referred to as a 'force', not a service and are not always seen as working positively with every community. The police remain predominately reactive and resource hungry. Merger under the management of the police could give rise to a danger of resources being diverted from low public profile fire prevention work to the more immediate needs of responsive policing.

Is this relevant to you, is any of it important to you, or is it just obvious to you that they should be combined? The point is, your comments should be fully heard and any issues arising debated.

- For more information, please contact Ben Parsons on bp Parsons@apse.org.uk or call Ben on 0161 772 1810.

PASSIVE FIRE PROTECTION

NEEDS ACTION

Book your free CPD and build your technical understanding of Passive Fire Protection.

Promat is the industry leader in passive fire protection. We engineer solutions that are certified to protect buildings and their inhabitants from the spread of fire.

To ensure a lack of technical understanding does not compromise the critical role that engineered fire solutions have to play in high-rise refurbishments, we are hosting a series of free on-site CPD sessions.

If you would like to book a CPD session for you and your team, or to find out more, please call **01344 381300** or email: cpd@promat.co.uk

Your CPD session will cover:

- An introduction to passive fire protection
- UK legislation and regulations
- Fire statistics
- Environmental impact