

Plenary session speakers



Julie Eeckhoudt, Association of Cities for Urban Cleanliness (AVPU), France

I have nearly 15 years of experience in public cleanliness. I began my career in Belgium at Fost Plus, the national packaging recycling organisation, and then at Be WaPP, supporting municipalities in tackling litter. After several years in Belgium, I moved to France, where I am now General Delegate of AVPU, the national association for urban cleanliness.



Frank Gmitrowicz, Wing Commander, RAF

Wg Cdr Frank Gmitrowicz is a Royal Air Force Engineer Officer with extensive experience in operational support and aviation engineering. He has held senior roles including Executive Officer for Operations Support at the RAF's primary air transport hub and the Senior Engineer Officer on 18(B) Squadron, responsible for CH47 Chinook battlefield support helicopters.

Since July 2025, he has served at HQ Air Command as Performance and Risk Lead within the Insights and Analytics Team, driving data-informed decision-making and improving operational readiness reporting across the enterprise.



Steve Spreckley, Insights and Analytics (I&A) team, RAF

Sqn Ldr Steve Spreckley is a Royal Air Force People Operations Officer who has been employed within a wide range of operational support and HR specialisms. Recent roles include Deputy Chief of Staff of the RAF College and Officer Commanding Personnel Management Flight RAF Digby.

Since August 2024 he has served as one of HQ Air Command's Performance & Risk Managers within the Insights and Analytics Team where he is responsible for supporting data-informed decision making and driving accurate performance and risk reporting across the organisation.



Debbie Johns, Head of Performance Networks, APSE

Debbie Johns is the Head of Performance Networks, APSE's UK-wide local government benchmarking service. She has been with APSE since 2000 and previous to this role, was a Principal Advisor for 9 years with responsibility for environmental services; including waste, refuse collection, street cleansing, parks and grounds maintenance and transport. Debbie was the Data and Projects Co-ordinator for the APSE Performance Networks service from 2000-2005. Prior to her employment with APSE, Debbie worked as a Research Officer for Cheshire Constabulary. Debbie

graduated in 1997 from the University of Manchester with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours Degree in Economics and Social Studies. She successfully completed her Master's Degree in Management at Manchester Metropolitan University in 2004.



Damian Lyons-Lowe, Chief Executive, Survation

Damian Lyons Lowe is the founder & Chief Executive of Survation Ltd, a leading political and social market research company. Damian works with organisations and campaigns across the political and commercial spectrum to help better understand what the public really think.

Survation have been working with APSE since 2017 providing a detailed annual tracker of public attitudes to local government, and their trust and confidence in Council services, providing a benchmark for service delivery and public priority.

Thematic Forum Speakers



Iain Varah, Chief Executive Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure

Iain started his Leisure and Culture career in the early 80s and secured a Chief Officer role in his mid 30s in the City of Newport, he is proud of his role in bringing the Ryder cup to Newport, securing city status and developing a number of facilities. In 2004 Iain moved to the London Borough of Redbridge where he set up Vision from a client perspective in 2007 and in 2011 TUPE transferred along with 400 staff from his role of Operational Director to the Chief Executive of Vision. Vision although only working in partnership with Redbridge run some of the most diverse services of any Culture and Leisure Trust. Vision now has a turnover of 23 million and 700 staff.

Iain is an ex-chair and honorary member of the Chief Culture and Leisure Officers association and the current Vice Chair of Community Leisure UK.



John Atkinson, Climate and Energy Manager, Tameside MBC

John Atkinson is the Climate & Energy Manager at Tameside Council in Greater Manchester, where he develops and implements solutions for sustainability and energy management. He brings experience from his previous position at Kirklees Council in a similar role and has spent many years developing climate plans and energy projects including heat networks. He enjoys the great outdoors and good coffee. As a committed environmentalist, he sports a beard but draws the line at wearing sandals outside of summer.



Laura C McHugh, Partner, Forbes Solicitors

Laura McHugh is a Partner at Forbes Solicitors with over fifteen years of experience in employment law. She advises Schools, Academy Trusts, Colleges, Local Authorities and Housing Associations, offering pragmatic, commercially focused guidance across all areas of employment law. With expertise in complex discrimination and whistleblowing claims, safeguarding issues, restructures, TUPE and investigations, Laura is known for her clarity, sector insight and practical approach. She regularly delivers training and speaks at events, trusted for her straightforward and solutions-driven advice.



Glynn Humphries, APSE associate

I manage a wide range of Environmental Services and Property FM including asset management . This includes being the lead officer on the Councils Waste PFI and Property Services contracts. I am also responsible for key operational aspects of the Council, including a Climate change ,Street Scene, Enforcement, Environmental health, Transport services, Bereavement and Building cleaning and catering. I am an accomplished negotiator of significant contracts and can create clear strategic direction. I am a qualified green belt in Lean Six Sigma and can create cultural change within a large organisation.



Jack Purchase, Head of Local Accountability, Local Government

Accountability and Outcomes Framework Team, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG)

Jack Purchase is the Head of Local Accountability and Outcomes Framework in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. He has been in the department working on local government issues since 2023, covering topics like LG support, early intervention and outcomes. Previously he ran the Government's Cabinet Committee on Brexit and worked in the Prime Minister's Implementation Unit.



Cllr Mark Pengelly, North Northamptonshire Council

Mark was first elected onto Corby Borough Council in 1995 and has held several roles at the council from Chair of Environmental committee for many years, deputy Leader and acting Leader at the Borough plus Leader of the newly formed town council and Chair of finance scrutiny on the unitary. In 2023 he was a finalist for councillor of the year at NALC. Mark currently leads the Labour Group on the North Northants Unitary.

He has sat on USDAW national political committee for the last ten years and is chair of the APSE Central region and past Chair of Apse.

He goes on a run three times a day and will enjoy a morning swim in the sea while in Blackpool and hopefully some skiing on the

afternoon.

Panel Speakers



Ben Cheetham, Deputy Director, Local Digital, MHCLG

Ben Cheetham is an experienced digital leader focused on driving innovation and transformation in local government services. As Deputy Director for Local Digital, Ben works at the intersection of technology, policy, and service design to deliver user-centred solutions that improve outcomes for communities.

With a strong background in digital strategy and programme delivery, Ben has led initiatives that modernise public services, enhance cyber resilience, and foster collaboration across local authorities. Ben is passionate about leveraging data and technology to create more efficient, transparent, and accessible services, ensuring that digital transformation benefits everyone.



Mo Baines, Chief Executive, APSE

Mo's career in local government began in 1989 working for Manchester City Council's City Solicitors division. In 1993 Mo moved to the Council's Tendering Unit providing operational, employment and strategic support to in-house teams subject to competitive tendering processes. Mo helped implement a number of service reviews and service improvement plans, with regular involvement across a range of local authorities and trade unions. Following a move to the Association for Public Service Excellence in 2004 Mo was Principal Advisor for the North of England, followed by Head of Communication and Coordination working on the Association's many research projects and is responsible for APSE press and media activities, and coordinating the work of the membership resources team. Mo is now the Association's Chief Executive.



Patrick Allcorn, Head of Local Net Zero Delivery and Demonstration, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)

Patrick joined the local energy team in 2015 with a remit for supporting local energy and climate change projects. This includes chairing the National sub-committee on growth covering ERDF funding on low carbon, city deals and local devolution on energy issues and Community Energy. Since the Clean Growth strategy in 2017, his team has set up the Local Energy Programme for England which has created local energy hubs, energy strategies for every LEP and re-opened and devolved the Rural Community Energy Fund. Prior to that he led the development and delivery of the

Domestic RHI and a member of the heat strategy team for the 2012 heat strategy and responsible for developing community energy. He set up the LEAF project that enabled over 400 communities to organise local energy schemes in 2012. Before joining DECC, Patrick worked for Transport for London and the London Borough of Croydon, as well as time working as a journalist and a sustainability consultant.



Lynne Morris, Regional Secretary North West Region, UNISON

Lynne Morris joined NALGO in 1979 and in the following year became a steward.

After 25 years of lay activity and holding various Branch and Regional positions in the lay structures, including Deputy Regional Convenor, Lynne joined UNISON staff. In March 2002 Lynne was elected as the Vice Chair of the North West TUC and in 2017 became the Chair, until she stepped down in 2022.

Prior to working for UNISON Lynne was employed in various posts in Education and Children Services Departments. Her final job was as Principal Education Welfare Officer and Lead Officer for Child Protection in Education in Halton.

Lynne joined UNISON's full time staff in March 2006 as Operational Manager (Development). In 2009 Lynne then became the Regional Manager for the Cheshire and Merseyside Team and in 2015, following a reorganisation in the Region, she became the West Team Manager and lead on UNISON's Objective 3 work, which included Campaigning, Communications and Political work. In 2013 Lynne was elected as Chair of TULO North West a position she still holds today. In 2023 Lynne was appointed UNISON North West Regional Secretary



Simon Allsop CPFA, Managing Consultant, CIPFA

Simon Allsop is a CIPFA qualified accountant and a Senior Consultant with CIPFA. He was previously the joint Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) for both Derbyshire Police and Fire. He has 30 years of experience working with and in a range of public-sector bodies mainly local government, fire and police. He has extensive experience of audit and advisory work as a former senior manager in KPMG's public sector audit and advisory team working with the NAO and Audit Commission, including supporting the development of medium term financial strategies, budget and financial management review methodologies and corporate services value for money benchmarking tools.

Other past advisory roles have included secondments to Birmingham City Council to provide support on the Council's Estates Development programme and the Home Office to help review proposals for Police mergers.



Freddy Farias Arias, Economist and Lead Analyst at the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Freddy has almost a decade of experience in economic statistics, having previously worked on measuring Monthly UK GDP, Trade and Investment, business insights surveys, and Sector Accounts. Currently, he leads a team producing and developing Public Service Productivity (PSP) estimates at the ONS, in collaboration with experts across government and academia. He led the development of annual Tax Administration and Social Security Administration estimates during the recent 'PSP Review', and is currently further developing the more timely Quarterly PSP estimates.