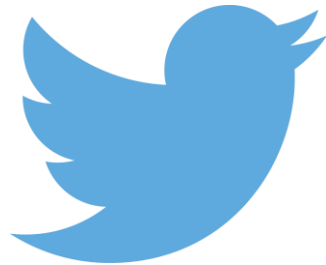




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Excellence**



# APSE Scotland AGM & Summit

Friday 12 July 2024

Recital Room, City Halls & Old Fruit Market  
Glasgow



# Strive to thrive

Mo Baines, Chief Executive, APSE



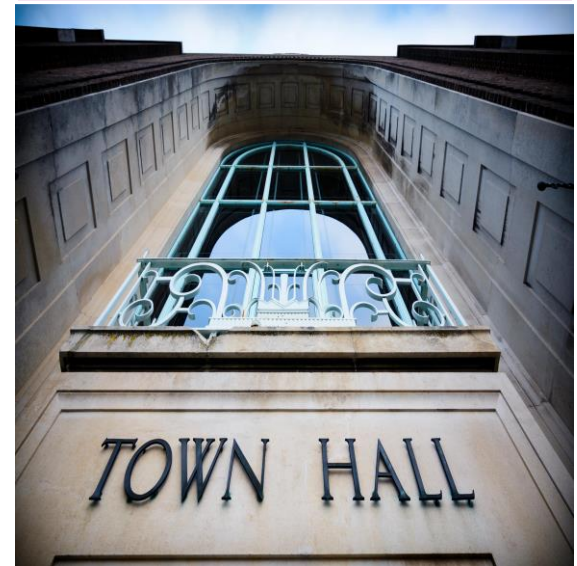
# Striving to thrive Councillors' reflections on local democracy

Neil Barnett (Leeds Beckett University)  
Steven Griggs (Staffordshire University)  
David Howarth (University of Essex)  
Jonathan Rose (De Montfort University)



**Striving to thrive**

*Councillors' reflections on local democracy*





# National survey of elected members

- Focus on the day-to-day ‘reality’ of what it means to be a councillor.
- What we looked at:
  - demographics; roles and responsibilities; local political structures; service improvement; governance, partnership working, and centre-local relations; standards and behaviour.
- Third in series of APSE survey, going back to 2014 and 2003.



# 1. Who are councillors?

## Stable demography

- Councillors below 50 in the minority – average age was a little over 60.
- 42% of councillors are women.
- 93.67 % of councillors described themselves as ‘white British’, ‘white European Union’ or ‘white other’.
- 53.6%, did not undertake any paid employment in addition to their work as a councillor.

# Headlines

- Councillors remain unrepresentative of the broader population. Women and ethnic minorities continue to be under-represented, as do younger people and those in work.
- The impact of measures undertaken in recent years to attract different social groups to stand for election as councillors are either not working or not working quick enough.





## **2. What councillors do?**

## Established roles and responsibilities

Stability of activities

Prioritisation of matching community needs with services; scrutinising council services; communicating and explaining council decisions; acting as a first point of call for constituents; and feeding community views into council policies.

High Proportion of Time by Mechanism	% of Councillors
Ensuring that services match community needs	52.9
Scrutinising council policies	43.8
Communicating and explaining council decisions	42.5
Acting as a first point of call for local people	42.0
Feeding the community views into council policies	39.4
Acting as a source of ideas/proposals for wards	38.7
Dealing with complaints	34.4
Working with area/neighbourhood committees	32.3
Working in partnership with other agencies	27.2
Giving advice to council officials	23.9
Representing the authority on other public bodies	14.2
Communicating with the local media	12.2
Representing sections of the community	9.7
Working with regional/national government bodies	6.6

## Headlines

- Certain tasks appear to divide elected members into distinct camps: for example, dealing with complaints and working with area/neighbourhood committees.
- Second, certain activities are best characterised as a ‘minority sport’: for example, external-facing activities.
- Change since 2014 survey, the proportion of time spent by councillors on certain activities associated with local governance appears to have declined, be it working with communities or working in partnership.

## Table 7. Elected members and Low Proportion of Time Spent on Activities (2023-2014)

Mechanisms by area of activity/by order of relative increase, 2023-14	% of Councillors Spending a Low Proportion of Time on...	
	2023	2014
Acting as a source of ideas/proposals for wards	29.0	14.8
Ensuring that services match community needs	14.5	8.9
Feeding the community views into council policies	25.4	16.1
Communicating and explaining council decisions	24.4	15.7
Working in partnership with other agencies	46.1	32.3
Working with area/neighbourhood committees	37.7	26.5
Communicating with the local media	67.9	50.9
Scrutinising council policies	29.5	22.3
Giving advice to council officials	51.4	40.2
Acting as a first point of call	26.2	21.0
Representing the authority on other public bodies	69.7	58.1
Representing sections of the community	67.4	65.5
Working with regional/national government bodies	80.2	79.8
Dealing with complaints	31.6	32.1



# 3. Mechanisms and attitudes towards service improvement



## Councillors and mechanisms of service improvement

- Councillors value activities linked to working with constituents as the most effective mechanisms to improve services. Approximately six in ten councillors, 61.1%, acknowledged that acting as a first port of call for their constituents was an effective mechanism of service improvement.
- Core roles and responsibilities associated with the coordination of local governance tended to be viewed as less effective mechanisms of service change. 62.8% of councillors doubted the effectiveness of working with regional and national bodies as means of improving services.
- Interestingly, working in partnership with other agencies divided councillors: 34.6% viewed it as an effective mechanism to improve services, while 29.0% did not.

# Headlines

- Time devoted by councillors to specific mechanisms of service improvement does not always match the presumed effectiveness of such activities.
- Ranking by councillors of the effectiveness of different mechanisms of service improvement has remained relatively stable since 2014.

Mechanisms/High proportion of time	% of Councillors	
	Effective	High Proportion
Acting as a first point of call	61.1	42.0
Dealing with complaints	54.2	34.4
Communicating and explaining council decisions	45.3	42.5
Feeding the community views into council policies	45.3	39.4
Scrutinising council policies	42.5	43.8
Acting as a source of ideas/proposals for wards	38.9	38.7
Ensuring that services match community needs	38.4	52.9
Working with area/neighbourhood committees	35.6	32.3
Working in partnership with other agencies	34.6	27.2
Representing sections of the community	25.7	9.7
Giving advice to council officials	25.2	23.9
Representing the authority on other public bodies	25.2	14.2
Communicating with local media	18.1	12.2
Working with regional/national government bodies	12.0	6.6

## Service Improvement

- Just under two-thirds of councillors, 64.6%, believed that their authorities were committed to service improvement.
- 58.5% agreed that their authority had a clear action plan to maintain services and 57.5% expected such plans to maintain or improve services in practice.
- Over seven in ten councillors agreed that their authorities were often prevented by its financial position from improving services.
- Less than half, 46.8%, agreed that they would personally be able to contribute to service improvement.





# Elected Members and Service Improvement, 2023-2014

	% of Councillors agreeing with statement	
	2023	2014
My authority is strongly committed to improving the services it is responsible for.	64.6	73.1
My authority has a clear action plan to maintain services in the face of the current situation.	58.5	63.0
I expect plans in place at my authority to allow it to maintain or improve the quality of services it is responsible for.	57.5	51.0
As an elected member I will personally be able to contribute to efforts to maintain and improve council services in the foreseeable future.	46.8	53.2



# 4. Attitudes towards political structures, partnerships and centre-local relations



# 4. Attitudes towards political structures, partnerships and centre-local relations

# Local political structures

- Councillors remain divided over the effectiveness of local political structures:
  - Less than half of our respondents, 44.3%, agreed that decision-making is transparent.
  - Only 31.6% agreed that their council structures supported the engagement of non-executive or so-called 'backbench' councillors.
  - Only 34.4% agreed that scrutiny committees are effective at holding the council leadership to account.

## Partnership working

- 26.7% of councillors did not expect partnership working to lead to their council being able to maintain or improve council services.
- 53.7% of elected members agreed that public-private partnership working was driven by the need to address financial issues.
- Four in ten councillors, 41.2%, asserted that public-private partnerships weaken public accountability.

# Increasing reservations over partnership working

% of Councillors	2023	2014
	Agree	Agree
Partnership working between my authority and other bodies has increased recently.	41.2	63.9
I expect there to be more partnership working between my authority and other bodies in the foreseeable future.	55.7	75.6
Increased public-private partnership working leads to a decrease in public accountability.	41.2	44.2
Public-private partnership working is motivated mainly by the need for councils to address financial issues.	53.4	59.4
I expect partnership working to lead to my authority being able to maintain or improve the services it is responsible for.	37.7	56.3

# Perceptions of growing centralisation

Localism in England and devolution in Scotland and Wales, as it has been delivered, has increased central control of local priorities rather than reduced it.	% of councillors	
	Agree	Disagree
England	50.0	14.7
Scotland	57.1	31.4
Wales	48.8	19.5

# Doubts over local collaboration

	% of Councillors	
	Agree	Disagree
<b>Councillors in England</b>		
I expect integrated health boards to lead to a greater voice for local government in the definition of health care priorities.	34.3	28.4
Partnership working leads to a decrease in public accountability.	25.5	41.2
<b>Councillors in Scotland</b>		
Health and social care partnerships have led to a greater voice for local government in the definition of health care priorities.	22.9	31.4
Community empowerment initiatives have complicated lines of local accountability between councillors and their electorates.	45.7	20.0
<b>Councillors in Wales</b>		
Public service boards have led to a greater voice for local government in the definition of local priorities.	17.1	43.9
The Future Generations Act has changed how councillors perform their role.	46.3	22.0





# 5. Standards and behaviour

## Behavioural issues and intimidation

- Demands of being a councillor are being navigated by far too many in an environment of challenging behaviour, bullying, harassment and intimidation.
- 79% of our respondents reported that their council had experienced behavioural issues from councillors, officers or other staff in the last four years.
- 81.2% of our respondents reported that their council had experienced in the last four years issues related to intimidation and harassment from members of the public towards councillors, officers, or other staff.

# Councillors, officers or other staff

In the last 4 years, has your council experienced serious issues from councillors, officers, or other staff, such as bullying and disrespect?	
Yes, at least one incident so serious that the council or its officers were unable to carry out some or all of their proper functions.	15.2%
Yes, at least one serious incident but which did not prevent the council or its officers from carrying out their proper functions.	23.0%
There have been behavioural issues, but these have not been serious.	40.8%
There have not been notable behavioural issues.	20.9%

# Councillors, officers or other staff

In the last 4 years, has your council experienced serious issues related to intimidation and harassment from members of the public towards councillors, officers, or other staff?	
Yes, at least one incident so serious that the council had to put in place a specific action plan to ensure the safety of councillors or officers.	21.9%
Yes, at least one serious incident but which did not require modifying normal practice.	23.5%
There have been issues, but these have not been serious.	35.8%
There have not been notable issues.	18.8%



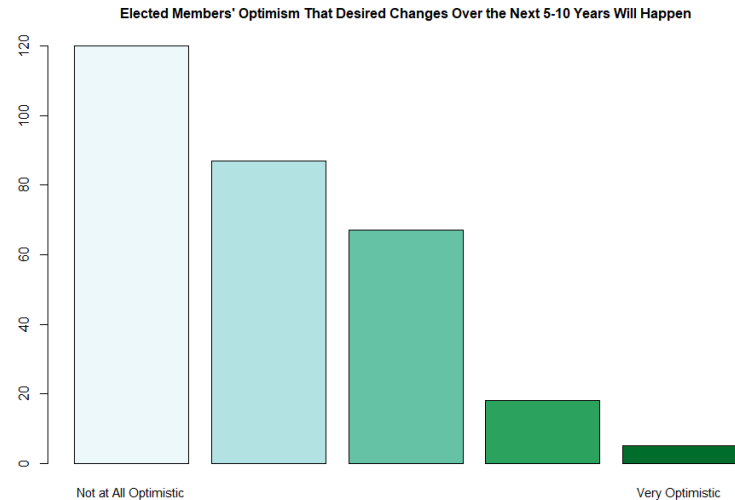
# Conclusions and recommendations

## Policy stagnation or the 'same old same as'

- Efforts to widen access are still not working.
- Local political structures continue to divide councillors.
- More needs to be done to challenge unacceptable behaviour and intimidation.
- Less time spent by councillors working with communities.
- Partnership working is increasingly contested.
- Devolution and localism are increasing centralisation.

# A growing pessimism?

- Councillors are far from optimistic that what they see as the necessary changes to local government will take place over the next five to ten years.
- But increasingly pessimistic: elected members increasingly doubt the effectiveness of all available mechanisms of service improvement (compared to 2014).
- And over seven in ten councillors agreed that their authority was often prevented by its financial position from improving services.



## Widening access

- The remuneration of councillors, as well as pension, maternity and paternity rights, should be standardised across the UK and brought further in line with that of MPs. Remuneration practices in England and Wales should be brought in line with those of Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- UK Governments must take all necessary statutory measures to enable local councils to conduct council business through hybrid models as means of encouraging fairer representation and participation, particularly for people with a disability, those with carer and/or parental responsibilities and those in employment.
- Councils should publish and report on plans to ensure access to political office for people of all backgrounds. This should include concrete measures to address the unsociable timing of meetings, childcare provision, maternity and paternity leave, and the possibility for online meetings.
- Political Parties across the UK should create councillor development strategies that commit to the development and support of the next generation of councillors, reflecting their vital contribution to the future of vibrant local and national democracy and democratic participation.



## Standards, intimidation and political behaviour

- UK Governments must take all necessary statutory measures to ensure the safety of councillors including a legal right to withhold home addresses from ballot papers, council websites and, if necessary, declarations of interest.
- UK Governments should consider enhanced protections for local councillors from abuse both in person and on social media platforms. This may include consideration of a specific crime of aggravated assault where assault takes place during the course of a councillor's duty, local dedicated police support and named contacts, as well as specific recognition by social media companies of the impact of online abuse on local democracy.
- Councils in England should be given the power to suspend councillors for up to six months if they are found to have breached the code of conduct, and the Independent Person agrees this would be an appropriate sanction.



## Local decision-making and accountability

- Councillors should have the right to be consulted and fully engaged in any decisions or negotiations impacting on their wards.
- Councils should review existing reporting mechanisms for councillors, ensuring that there are clear protocols and mechanisms in place to enable the scrutiny and accountability of decision-making within local authorities and across external bodies, partnerships and the multiple tiers of government.
- Councils should ensure that the representation of councillors on partnership boards and external bodies reflects the body of councillors in the authority.



## Future of elected members

- Government should evaluate the democratic decision-making processes and outcomes of the return to committee systems and experiments with alternative political structures across authorities, with particular reference to how different systems engage non-executive councillors.
- Governments across the UK should introduce independent and representative councillor commissions of inquiry to deliver proposals on the future role of councillors and local political leadership.
- National associations and local government sector leads across the UK should undertake a collective assessment of good practice in relation to support for, and engagement of, councillors within local authorities. This should include practices of induction and training for elected members and protection from and reporting of abuse.



**Thank you. Questions?**

## **APSE PRESENTATION**

# **Fife Council – Waste Operations**

**Promoting a mentally healthy  
workplace for frontline operatives**

# Today's Presentation

- 1. The importance of a mentally healthy workplace
- 2. What has driven this service to change
- 3. What steps the service is taking to promote mental health and change attitudes

## Fife Waste Operations Overview

- Every week around 187,000 properties receive a bin collection service, (4 x waste streams: Landfill, Cans & Plastics, Food & Garden Waste and Paper & Cardboard)
- 27 x 26t front line RCVs and 3 x 16.5t RCVs– Rural & Hard to Access – Approx 240 employees
- Twin shift system (Day shift 06:00 – 13:42 & Back shift 13:18 – 21:00)
- 21 Ward based Street cleansing teams working 07.45-16.00 (Approx 200 employees)
- Service over 13 million bins and sweep 16500 streets each year

# The importance of a mentally healthy workplace

## Legal Duty

- All Employees are covered by the HSWA 1974 – Employers have a “duty of care” to protect the health, safety and welfare of all employees. Employers are also required to carry out risk assessments(including stress risk assessments) to ensure the workplace is not likely to cause injury or illness to employees.
- Employees also have a duty to work in a safe and considerate manner so as not to put themselves or colleagues at risk.
- The equality Act 2010 that exists to ensure that employees are not discriminated against on grounds of age, sex, gender reassignment, disability, race, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.



# The importance of a mentally healthy workplace

## The Moral argument

- We have a moral duty to protect from harm those for whom we are responsible.
- We live in a country that prides itself on social justice and a climate that is strong on inclusion.
- Taking a holistic approach to mental health not only benefits employees and organisations but also in its wider context benefits the wider economy and society as a whole.
- Mental Health illness currently costs Scottish employers £2bn a year
- In 2018/19 stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 44% of all work-related ill health cases and 57% of all working days lost through ill health.

# The importance of a mentally healthy workplace

## Current workplace attitudes

- A survey by the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) found that 79% of people with serious long term mental health problem are not in employment.
- The same survey found that less than 40% of employers would employ someone with a mental health problem.
- Many employees with mental health problems are reluctant to disclose their condition to their employer. A report by SAMH indicated that of those who disclosed the condition only 40% felt satisfied with the support they received.

# The importance of a mentally healthy workplace

## **Benefits to your organisation**

- Your reputation and profile will be enhanced as a responsible and well managed organisation helping to attract and retain employees.
- Employment or other valued activity has a key role in maintaining positive mental health
- Staff will feel supported and valued and this will result in a healthier more motivated and productive workforce
- Low cost interventions for staff can increase the return on investment for staff.
- Providing support at an early stage can prevent escalation of a condition.

## What drives this service forward?

- Fife Council has over 15,000 employees
- Waste Operations has 440 employees of which 435 are male
- Focus over the last 2 years on Mental Health

## Employees we have lost since January 2021

- Justin – Chargehand Driver
- Robert – Street cleansing chargehand
- Ian – Driver/waste collector
- Richie – Waste Collector
- David – Street Cleaner
- Kenny – Box van driver
- Steven - Waste collector
- John – Waste collector
- Scott – Driver/waste collector
- Kevin – Waste collector
- Ross – Waste collector
- Stan – Street Cleaner

## Suicide Statistics Scotland

- In 2022 there were 762 probable suicides in Scotland.
- The suicide rate is more than 3 times higher in the most deprived 10% of the population compared to the least deprived 10%.
- The suicide rate for males is 3 times higher than that for females.
- Suicide rates are highest between the ages of 25 and 64
- Suicide is a leading cause of death among under 40's in Scotland.
- Scotland's suicide rate is higher than rates in the rest of the UK.
- In surveys around 77% of those who contemplated suicide were in employment.

## What can we do?

# Fife Council and Waste Operations Initiatives

## Mentally Healthy Workplace Training Programme

- Fife Council Initiative being rolled out to whole Waste Operations Management Team
- Designed to identify the key factors that contribute to a mentally healthy workplace.
- Gives employers and line managers a broad understanding of mental health in the workplace
- Ensure managers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to health and wellbeing
- Improve managers skills and confidence in dealing with mental health in the workplace



## Mental Health First Aid

- Fife Council Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) are trained employees who have volunteered to offer a confidential listening ear, over the phone, in person or via a voice or video call on Microsoft Teams.
- 14 MHFA for directorate – 1 dedicated to Waste Operations + 2 in training
- Only available during working hours

## Employee Wellbeing Roadshows

- Series of Roadshows across Fife
- 3 dedicated Waste Operations drop in sessions in Depots
- Informal events designed as brief drop ins.
- Around 20 representatives from diverse organisations
  - Andysmanclub, HR, samaritans, Fife Leisure

## Able Futures Pilot

- Partnered with DWP
- Support employee and apprentice mental health
- Employee not management led
- Nine months personalised advice and guidance and regular appointments with a mental health professional.
- A plan to support your mental health by making adjustments, developing coping strategies and learning ways to look after your wellbeing.
- Confidential, no cost support with no waiting list and no need for a mental health diagnosis. Refer yourself whatever is on your mind.
- [www.able-futures.co.uk](http://www.able-futures.co.uk)

## Fife Waste Academy

- Designed for candidates with known barriers to employment
- Gaining new skills for future employment
- Opportunity for permanent employment
- Receiving training that's recognised within other companies.
- Gaining confidence and higher self esteem

## Hi viz Polo Pilot

- Initial run of 300 Polo Shirts
- Spread across all Depots
- Predicted cost additional £0.67 per unit
- Rolled out as standard PPE item now across service and potentially across all services.
- Unison paid £1000 towards cost of polo shirts

# Hi Viz Polo Pilot



## Hi Viz Polo Pilot



## Refuse vehicle Vinyl Display

- Cost approximately £400 per vinyl
- To be Rolled out on 3 refuse collection vehicles
- Scope to roll out on more RCV's as well Box Vans
- Trade Unions have covered cost of Vinyls
- First vinyl was fitted on 11 May 2023
- First emails to andysmanclub on 12 May 2023



## Refuse vehicle Vinyl Display



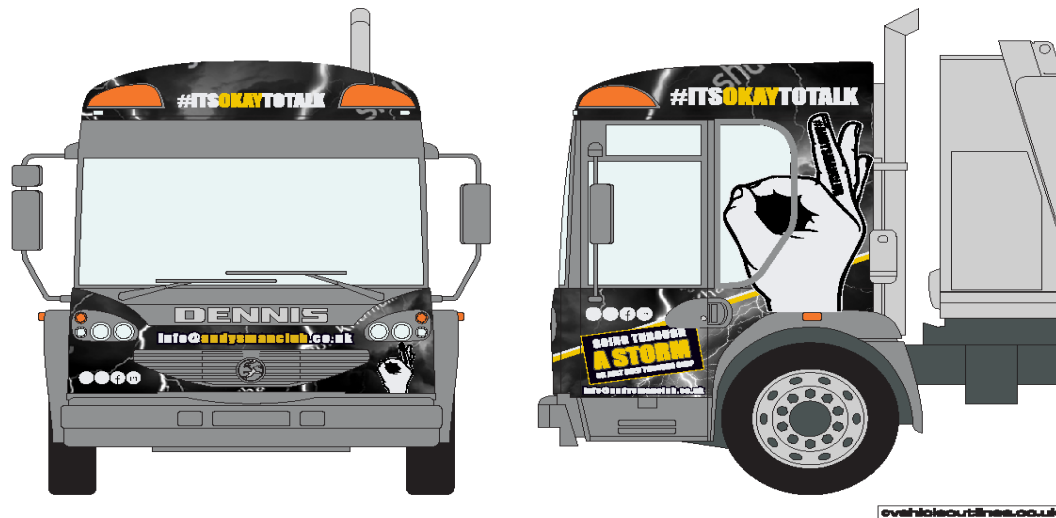
## Refuse Vehicle Vinyl Display



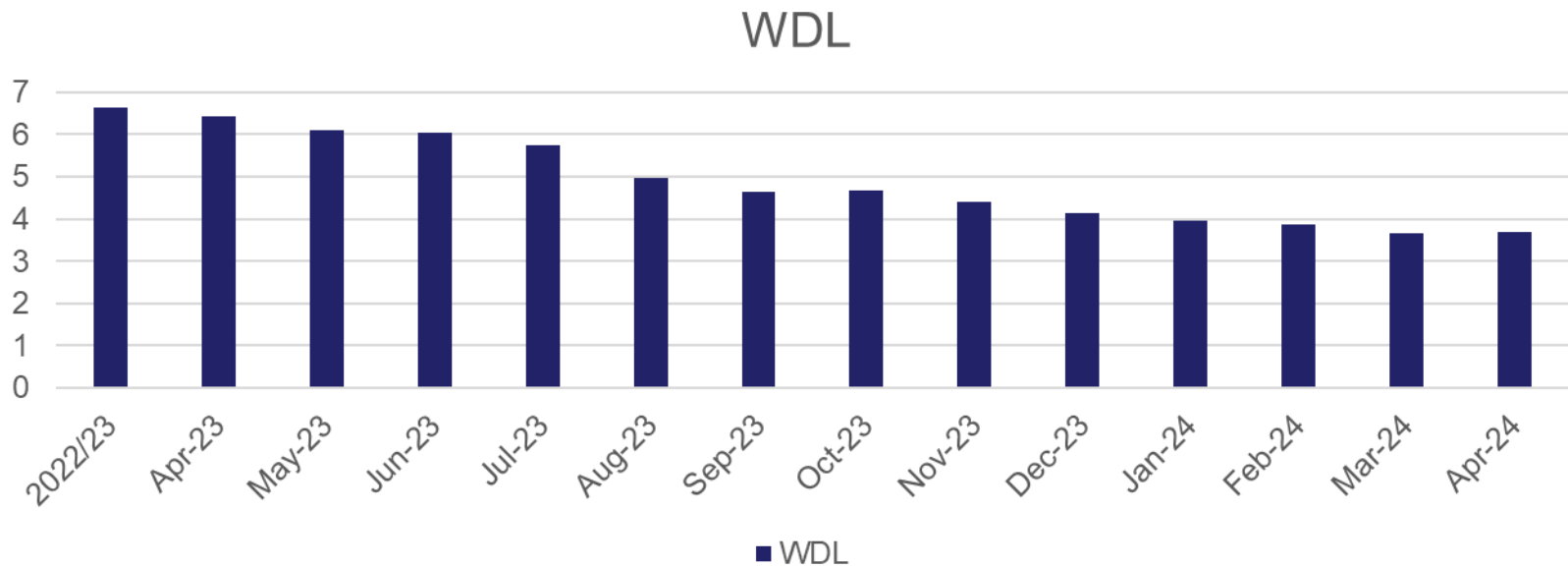
# Refuse Vehicle Vinyl Display



## Next Stage – August/September



## Waste Operations WDL per FTE - Mental Health & Stress related Absences



## Final Thought

When a flashlight grows dim or stops working, do you throw it away? Of course not. You change the batteries.

When a person messes up or finds themselves in a dark place, do you cast them aside? Of course not! You help them change their batteries.

Some need AA - attention and affection; some AAA - attention, affection and acceptance; some need C - compassion, or D - direction.

And if they still don't shine, simply sit with them quietly and share your light.



## Thank you

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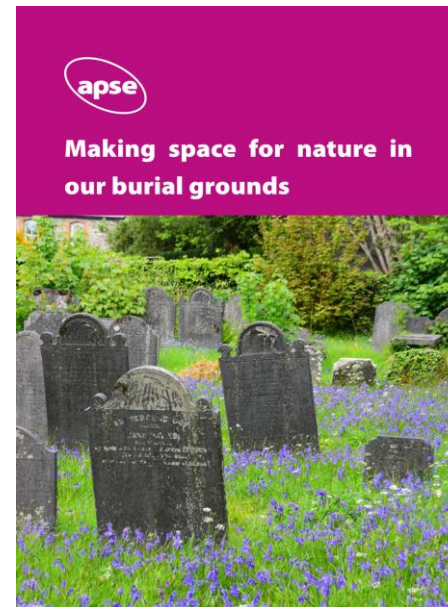
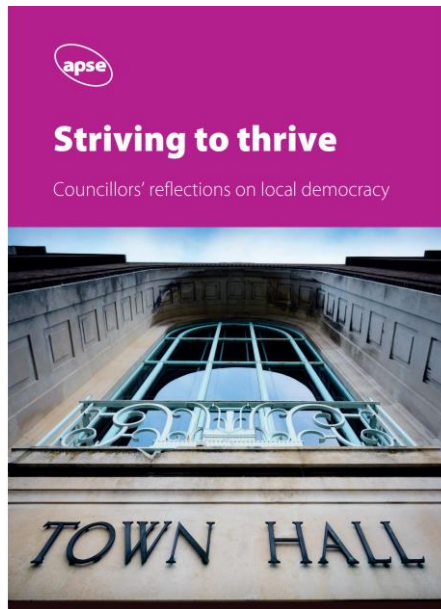


# APSE Update

- Business plan
- Finances
- Organisational platforms
- Business resilience
- Policy and advocacy work



# Latest research



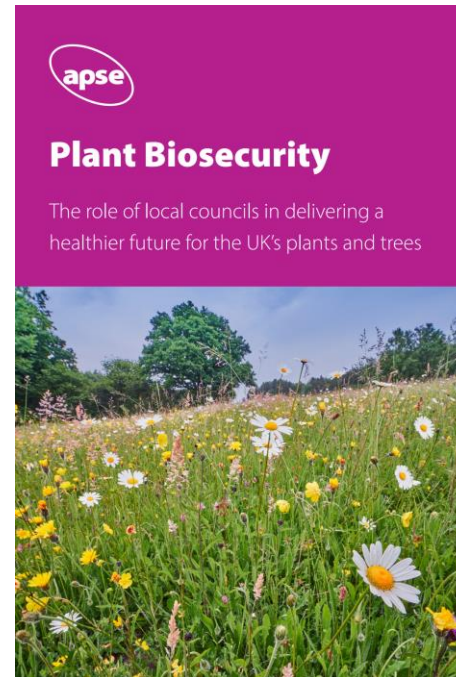


# Latest research



## Planning guidance that gets results

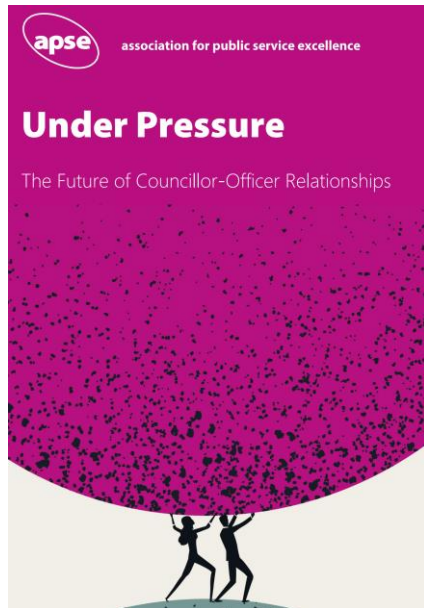
A guide for councillors and local government officers



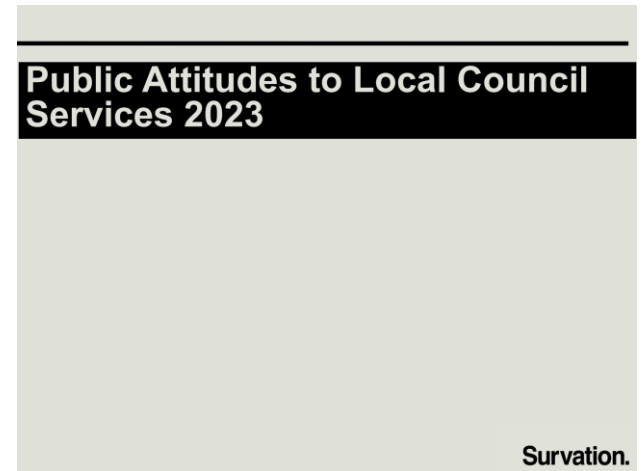
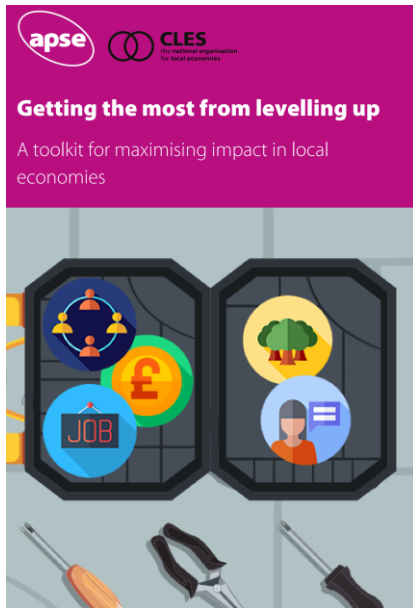
## Plant Biosecurity

The role of local councils in delivering a healthier future for the UK's plants and trees

# Latest research



# Latest research



# Climate change benchmarking

- New service – FREE for 2024
- Looks at fleet and vehicles, assets and buildings, energy efficiency.
- Measures decarbonisation and current emissions
- Climate change plans, geographic and socio-economic factors
- Groups similar authority types.



# Ethical services for you!

- APSE Solutions consultancy support
- APSE Solutions interim managers
- APSE Training
- APSE Performance networks for your benchmarking needs
- APSE Energy
- APSE Membership Resources



# Scotland Update

- Successful calendar of events with good attendee figures and continuing strong relationships with key organisations including Scottish Housing Regulator, Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, SEPA, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Zero Waste Scotland, Greenspace Scotland, DVSA and ASSIST FM etc)
- Excellent engagement from the membership at our:-
  - advisory groups (as outlined within our advisory group report – item 4 of the agenda)
  - sub-groups including Fleet & Transport (Drug and Alcohol Policies & Fleet Procurement), Parks & Grounds (Biodiversity & Grasslands Management), Building officers process mapping as well as secretariat for the Litter Managers Network
- APSE representative on the SWITCH Forum, Scottish Housing Regulator tenant safety and ARC indicators group, SOLACE/ Improvement Service Transformation project within the fleet procurement sub-group.
- APSE has also been invited by Scottish Government to quote for work on designing, delivering and providing a report on workshops relating to Scottish Allotments
- APSE represented at Scottish Political Conferences with great engagement from attendees and the latest on being the SNP event in Edinburgh on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August



**Any questions**



# **NEW MUNICIPALISM**

Delivering for local people and local economies



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