



# ppma

## PUBLIC SECTOR PEOPLE MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

A PROMOTIONAL SUPPLEMENT BY THE MJ ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR PEOPLE MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION

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 ppma – the pride issue

# Holding onto *pride* in public service

**Louise Tibbert** welcomes the sector to a new era in which pride will be the new buzzword

**T**alking to someone who has been made redundant by John Lewis after 25 years in service, I was impressed that she remained committed to the brand and the organisation – and will be a loyal customer for many years.

They had treated her well and she had now made a conscious effort to move into the public sector to 'give back'. Because she was in HR (and is now in my own HR team!) she also mentioned that workforce engagement at John Lewis was at 83% – a level we can only dream of in local government, although many of us now reach engagement levels over 60%.

Many public sector organisations are now more focused on workforce than ever before – we pay attention to leadership, developing and recognising talent, reward, well-being, performance and productivity and levels of engagement. We actively listen to what people are saying and work hard at improving those things that are identified as an issue. We track factors like 'Say, Stay and Strive' as an indicator of engagement. But is this sophisticated enough? The approach is too simplistic for some sections of our workforces where the issues are complex. We need a more strategic and segmented approach for the future.

Recent CIPD research has re-confirmed that there are five key factors that can facilitate good levels of engagement:

**1. Shared purpose** – Is it clear, engaging in itself and understood by employees? How well does it link to jobs and roles.

**2. Autonomy** – Designing roles and our organisations with autonomy for employees in mind. Recognising a mix of capabilities including decision-making and responding to the immediate situation, whilst operating within broad parameters.

**3. Employee Voice** – ability to communicate,



consult, and influence decision making, as well as raise concerns and to challenge. We need to continue to find more genuine, responsive and open ways of engaging with employees and listening to them. With social media we have many different means and opportunities.

**4. Sustainability** – Employee engagement and well-being combine to provide productive and happy employees, who are likely to stay and be committed to the organisation's purpose, and do not become burnt out.

**5. Trust** – It is hard to get people to follow you, work hard for your cause, accept decisions that are hard to stomach, contribute ideas for your vision, or make change happen without trust. Many surveys have indicated falling levels of trust, including a marked decline in trust in business leaders, regulators and politicians, and a move towards a 'localisation' of trust.

UNISON, who has 1.3 million members, recently raised the issue about the amount of 'good will' across public services that mean that

workers are giving many hours of their time for no pay. If there is widespread exploitation of people, as UNISON would have us believe, this should of course be addressed. However, the contrary view is that our workforces generally understand the challenges of providing services to the public and care about going the extra mile to resolve any issues or deliver a service, even if this is in their own time. They don't generally just walk off the job when their shift or work day ends because they understand the



Louise Tibbert is new PPMA President and head of HR & OD at Hertfordshire CC

consequences for an individual or community. The strike action planned for 10th July and beyond will test this. For many workers they will just not be prepared to stay off work for long, if they strike at all, because of the impact on people who are vulnerable or need their help.

It is generally human nature for people to want to give their best and do a good job – and go that extra mile. Whether this is at work, in interests outside work or whether it is volunteering in their local area. This is the starting point for engagement and pride in public service.

Why do people continue to want to join public service organisations? Young people often make a conscious decision to forego the riches of the private sector in favour of 'making a difference' and we need to harness this commitment for the future. We will always need motivated, creative and talented people in public services whatever the future holds – and their experience, once recruited, needs to live up their expectations.

People come to work to do a good job but invariably when they leave it is because of their manager's style, lack of autonomy or feeling they are not valued. Money is important but is far from being the key factor that makes someone change jobs.

As organisations and leaders we need to be aware that everything we do can either support, dent or destroy the commitment of our workforces. 'Leading at all levels' or 'leading from the middle' are concepts that are back in vogue (did they ever go away?) as we look for better and cheaper ways of delivering public services. It is often the squeezed middle that make or break an organisation, team or service so that is one of the key areas that all senior leaders and HR directors need to focus on.

We should all ask ourselves 'what have you done today to make you feel proud'? Did you delight in your fantastic team or destroy their pride in public service?

I bet you know lots of great people going that extra mile – and having pride in their work.

## It's a funny old word!

Julie Towers, MD of Penna Recruitment Solutions, talks about why the private sector is PROUD to support the public sector

**T**he dictionary says that Proud means: *Feeling deep pleasure or satisfaction as a result of one's own achievements, qualities, or possessions or those of someone with whom one is closely associated.*

But to me when I think of what I and Penna are proud of its

best summarised by the feeling that our work is powerful and purposeful. Powerful because partnering with organisations around people-based issues means that all of our work has a really direct human impact, one that you see and feel immediately – and whether that's impacting on how people enter an organisation,

are developed and coached, or are supported with their transition the power of our interventions and support is quite simply life changing.

Whether public or private sector, the individual and organisational influence that effective attraction, selection and recruitment; on boarding;

leadership and management development; coaching and career development have on improving the performance and often attitude of an individual or team is reward in itself and makes us proud of the work we do to help an organisation improve its performance through its people.

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# Take pride in our people

**Barry Pirie** discusses his career to date, huge changes at Wiltshire Council and the future role of HR/OD in aiding authorities to keep producing quality services

I am privileged and proud to be the vice president for 2014-15 and look forward to working with all our members, listening to your ideas in order to make things happen. As an organisation, PPMA is not short of ideas and I aim to support our president, Louise Tibbert, galvanise our collective energy translating it into tangible deliverables behind our core objectives. The quality of public service provision sits at the heart of all our communities and I believe Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR/OD) has a key role to play in helping our organisations deliver this.

My career to date is a blend of experience in the public, private and charity sectors. This has been great for my overall development management/leadership and also technical knowledge. Some people ask me 'so what in the sector has been the most challenging and why?' Easy answer is the private sector was easy! Well easy in terms of quick and focussed decision making, all decisions were made linked directly to the bottom line, profitability or share holder return! No stakeholder involvement as such. The voluntary or charitable sector was trickier as you had no bottom line but more and more stakeholders to consider and engage with in making policy and strategic decisions. Public sector and particularly local government far more stakeholder involvement and obviously we work in a political environment therefore far more challenging in terms of decision making.

I chose to work back in local government and currently would not want to work anywhere else as the public services sector and local government continues to be a challenging yet inspiring and exciting place to work and I for one am proud to be a small part of it.

As vice president I will have the opportunity to build on my previous experience of voluntary



contribution – for example as a member of the Society of Personnel Directors Scotland (SPDS); deputy policy lead of PPMA/HR transformation, CIPD external moderator and local councillor (elected member of Angus Council). All these roles have been personally rewarding in many ways and I value the opportunity to continue giving back and sharing my experience to help in further building our professional community.

I am particularly proud of my HR/OD teams and colleagues at Wiltshire Council. I have always been continually impressed and inspired by all the diverse, experienced, skilled and motivated teams I lead, and the team's successes were recently recognised at the PPMA Annual Seminar in Leeds when they won the Award for Excellence in Change Management.

Since Wiltshire Council was created in

2009 the aim has been to transform service delivery to achieve savings and a vision to create stronger and more resilient communities. This vision highlighted a need to re-organise and transform our services to focus on improving the customer experience and develop a culture where staff are willing to go the extra mile.

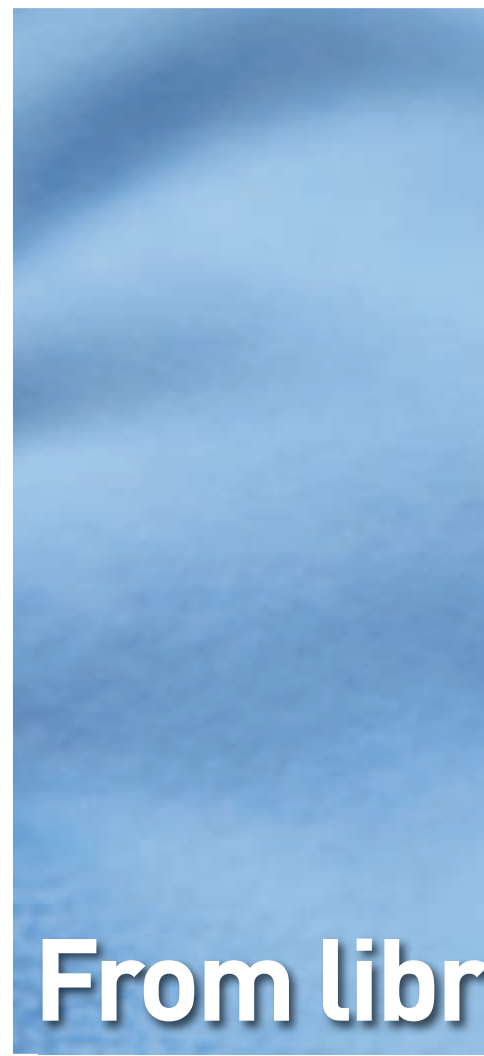
HR/OD has led, facilitated and continues to support the transformation taking place to develop and embed culture change, providing a firm foundation for future leadership. The strategy was to develop tools to enable effective management of the impact of change on staff, and to embed a culture aligned to the council's vision and values.

Positive results in our most recent staff survey have demonstrated that we are getting it right and in a recently published report the results of a Peer Review Challenge in autumn 2013 concluded that the council has a strong vision and the key strengths identified included a highly engaged workforce with a real sense of pride in the organisation.

It was extremely positive to have external assurance and affirmation that staff are aware and focused on the council's vision and that they visibly demonstrate a can-do attitude and commitment to making Wiltshire a better place. The HR initiatives that have taken place to achieve this have clearly had the impact needed to support the management of a major period of change.



Barry Pirie is PPMA vice president and director of people and business services at Wiltshire Council



# From libr

There's no more rewarding environment than the public sector, and **Carolyn Downs** reveals her pride at working within it

**M**y public sector story starts 32 years ago, in 1982. I had just left university to the beat of the UB40s and the last big recession was raging – four million were unemployed. I spent many long hours feeling worthless, looking for a job at what was then known as the 'Dole Office'. But when I did find a job, I landed on my feet.

I worked for Bolton Council in the library

## Tell us your views



If you have any views about the contents of this focus or ideas

for future articles or would like to contribute please email the Editor Dilys Wynn at

**Dilys.WYNN@gloucestershire.gov.uk**

# Proud to work in the public sector

**Anastasia Simpson** explains why she still works in Public Sector HR after more than two decades

**T**here comes a time in all our lives when we sit back and reflect on our careers, and Peer Into The Future has given me the ideal opportunity to do just that! I am proud to say that I have worked within public sector HR for more than 20 years and I am still thoroughly enjoying it as much as ever. I have been very fortunate to work alongside many talented colleagues and professionals over that period.

I started out all those years ago with Essex CC as an administrative trainee and as an 18 year old I wasn't too sure about what career or profession I actually wanted to pursue. I was told to try as many placements as I wanted – each could be between 3-6 months – and at the same time I had to achieve my degree in public administration and then I

had to undertake a professional qualification. No pressure there then.

What a fantastic opportunity it was and one that I am pleased to say still exists for our apprentices at Tendring DC (TDC), who apply for a specific role within the council or a local business and can use this to access many opportunities within the public sector at the same time as gaining their qualification.

Over the past year 25 of our TDC apprentices have secured permanent roles following their apprenticeship and many others have gone on to university.

Following a few placements at Essex CC, I asked for a placement in HR and my experience in this field working with the industrial relations team at the time of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (and

when relationships with the many different unions could be intense) gave me an insight into that area of work where I have decided to remain my whole career.

There is never a dull moment in HR; like all my colleagues I can be involved in



Anastasia Simpson is HRD at Tendring DC



# ...aries to local government...

in Westhoughton and loved every minute of it, especially meeting the public.

I'd caught the public sector bug. I moved onto the London Borough of Haringey library service whilst doing a Master's in librarianship at University College London.



**Carolyn Downs is chief executive of the Local Government Association**

And soon I was working for the policy unit on inner city regeneration. I was sad to leave Haringey when I had my first son, but just 12 months later I was back in local government – spending six years in Stevenage as assistant director. I might have fallen into the public sector seemingly by accident, but once I'd fallen for it, I couldn't seem to get enough!

I went on to work for Calderdale Council and Shropshire CC, where I became chief executive. I've done different types of work, in different roles, for different councils but, for me, the attraction has always been the same. Seeing the day to day impact of your work on both people and places has always given me great satisfaction.

That's why when people ask me 'why local government?' I am almost tempted to reply 'what else?' I have been asked

to join the private sector, but never even been slightly tempted. I spent three years in the civil service but seeing residents as numbers on a spreadsheet instead of people on the high street was a bit of a turn off for me.

One story perhaps best sums up my affection for the public sector in general, and local government in particular. When I left Shropshire I received a letter from a member of the public, with whom I had been in regular correspondence, who had two daughters with special needs. In the letter she thanked me for the positive impact I'd had on her and her family's life. That made me feel so humble and I cried.

A letter like that is what keeps you in the public sector and that's why being a council employee – at whatever level – is the best job in the world.

recruitment, union negotiations, writing a strategy and sorting out an employee/manager dispute in one day. Where else could you be employed and have such diversity and meaningful work?

After 10 years of working with Essex I went on to work at Southend Unitary Council, at the time that the unitary was being set up and I remember walking into a completely bare office; no desks or chairs – just carpet – and being told 'this is what you are starting with, you decide what you want to end up with'. It was a fantastic opportunity to set up and start a service totally from scratch.

Joanna Ruffle (East of England, PPMA) now leads the very successful HR team at Southend and I was very fortunate to work for Joanne when she was part of Essex CC.

Following this, Waltham Forest and an intervention contract beckoned and I was part of the HR team trying to turn around schools within the authority. The public sector offers so many ways you can truly make a difference to the lives of people in an area.

After Waltham Forest, I decided to move

away from London and now work for TDC, which is a beautiful part of the East of England with coastal towns and many rural villages and never a dull moment leading the HR function. My key challenges to date include supporting Ian Davidson, chief executive in making £5.4m savings through a fundamental restructuring programme. At the same time as the council pushes the boundaries of its normal role and acts as a community leader, undertaking projects such as families with complex needs, education projects, health and wellbeing with its various partners, there is also the challenge of how to transform public sector services within the district.

So what's next? Making the public sector great into the future.

The majority of HRDs have now delivered their major restructuring programmes; many discussions are now about transforming the public sector and looking at new way of delivering services. Most of us are either delivering or considering different service delivery models or different ways of work such

as social enterprises, commissioning, and outsourcing. There is a wealth of expertise within the public sector HR profession and we shouldn't keep re-inventing the wheel but collaborate by looking at good practice and sharing the understanding of the HR implications for each of the different models.

As an HRD I see myself as an architect of change, working closely with my chief executive, rather than a 'fixer' and it is these HR skills we will need to keep the public sector at the forefront of meeting the needs of our communities during these difficult times.

I am just starting a piece of research myself over the next 12 months looking at the different service delivery models in the public sector and the HR implications. If anyone has a service delivery model that they would like to talk to me about I would be delighted to hear from you. Between us we should start sharing our wealth of knowledge regarding service delivery models so that we can all play a key role in public sector transformation.

## It's a funny old word!

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However there is something rather special about being able to work in partnership with public and third sector organisations, where the people challenges are actually very similar to those in the private sector, but the democratic context, organisational purpose and moral purpose add a unique dimension.

Being able to say our work has turned around children's services departments, improved outcomes for citizens, protected the community or supported the vulnerable gives a different meaning and value to our work. As exemplified recently where we were privileged to partner the Metropolitan Police in launching their first direct entry superintendent recruitment programme. Standing recently at one of two 'Meet the Met' events designed and delivered by the Penna team, listening to the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe speak to prospective candidates about the opportunity to join the force knowing that our attraction strategy and campaign, our candidate management and support had led to this very event was a very proud moment indeed. Adding social and moral purpose to the work you do, knowing it is leading to something greater than the sum of its parts is extremely motivating for any individual and business, and here at Penna where we hold corporate social responsibility in great regard. We know that the mixed economy of work we do helps us attract and retain high quality employees and provides the interest and challenge they need to engage them in their work and at Penna. We know this as our employee engagement survey tells us – in 2013 'doing challenging and valuable work' was one of the highest scored reasons for why they chose to work at Penna.

We've also recently been shortlisted for our partnership work with Haringey Council in the CIPD best HR consultancy category. We're naturally proud of this achievement (win or not) because it comes as a recognition of months of hard work and partnership from the Haringey and Penna team. Working for the public sector means you have a stake in the outcomes, we are all citizens, and we all either have children, family or support needs that mean somewhere in our life the public sector is going to feature. So through our work we feel we are contributing not only to a specific project but to a bigger cause.

Don't get me wrong, delivering people solutions for our valued private sector clients, the big brands such as John Lewis, KPMG, Aldi and Santander as well as the lesser known makes you just as proud, and the outcomes of our work are also as significant. The difference is when you can also see the value of your work in the community, indeed in society.

At Penna we're proud of all of our work, but it's great to know that this year, we've helped:

- The Metropolitan Police Service to attract the right number of recruits to protect us
- Recruit social workers to protect and support vulnerable children and young people
- Attract investigators to carry out the vital review of the Hillsborough Tragedy
- Ensure that inspections of Schools and Hospitals were carried out
- Hospital wards be staffed to care for patients

In 2012, like many organisations, we were proud to work for the Olympic Delivery Authority and in thanking the Penna team for their work; our client said we had played a role in ensuring that the 2012 Olympics were the fantastic spectacle that they were. If that doesn't make you proud nothing will.



**Julie Towers is managing director (recruitment solutions) at Penna**



# A star performer

Adam Feather, PPMA Rising Star for 2014, looks to the future for himself and Wiltshire Council

In 2009, after graduating from Nottingham University with a degree in Biomedical Materials Science, having spent the previous year rubbing bits of metal together to simulate an in-situ artificial hip joint and analysing the wear debris, I set about trying to find a job. I eventually found a job through an agency as a finance assistant in the domiciliary finance team in business services finance at Wiltshire Council.

It was from there that I applied for a position in HR as a workforce analyst in 2011.

The idea of analysing workforce data and presenting statistics to managers across the organisation appealed to me as it linked back to some of the techniques that I used whilst studying for my degree.



I have really enjoyed the time that I have spent working as an analyst and the challenge of trying to present large amounts of complex data in ways that are as simple and easy to understand as possible.

I feel proud to be able to play a part in helping the organisation to achieve its current business plan and to deliver vital services to the communities of Wiltshire. I also enjoy the flexible ways of working and

positive work-life balance that working for Wiltshire Council offers.

My proudest achievement to date in my career has definitely been winning the PPMA Rising Stars 2014 competition. It has certainly given me a confidence boost and has helped with my presenting skills, especially when put under pressure. I believe that



it is important for up and coming professionals in all service areas to be given an opportunity to prove their talent and it is beneficial for organisations to realise the potential of their workforce. These opportunities need to continue to be available for the advantage of both the individual taking part and the organisations for which they work. Those that have already taken part in development programmes or competitions need to encourage and support others to share a similar

experience to keep the momentum going and to embed a sense of pride into public sector roles.

Parts of the business case that I put forward for the Rising Stars competition in March 2014 are already being worked on and implemented, some of it by myself. We are looking at introducing a self-selection questionnaire to our careers website to encourage applications from stronger candidates who possess the behaviours that we need to create an agile workforce. We are

also introducing an employer value proposition to create a shift in how we market ourselves to attract strong applications to jobs and to reinforce the vision of an agile workforce.

The forward-thinking nature of working with Wiltshire Council is one of the aspects of work that I value most. We need to continue being innovative in order to maintain a sense of pride in public sector work and to attract strong employees that might otherwise only consider private sector employers.

# Private or public sector – does it m

Dilys Wynn looks at the relationship between the public and private sectors, and asks key firms about the value of partnership working when serving our communities



Increasingly we in the public sector are working with colleagues from private sector companies to meet the needs of our communities. Private sector companies don't work with public sector organisations simply for business reasons – there are much easier and more lucrative ways of making a living. But do they have the same sense of public sector ethos as us, the same pride and convictions? It would seem that they do and importantly share some of our passions and indignation about the way that the public sector is portrayed in the media.

Indira Das, client relationship manager of the Development Company, observes that it is all too easy to allow a wealth of stereotypes to float to mind when you hear 'the public sector' (and let's be honest not all of them are flattering), and yes, as with all sectors, there are doubtless improvements which could and should be made.

However working with the sector to sponsor and deliver the PPMA Apprentice of the Year 2014 has also allowed us to witness first hand in our public sector colleagues

the strength of their determination and true commitment to do the best job possible; a dogged tenacity to strive for continual improvement (and not just pay lip service to the concept), and a wonderful embodiment of 'service with a smile' – everyone we have worked with has sported a genuine warm smile, and from what we have seen there are plenty of good things for them to be smiling about.

***'Everyone we have worked with has sported a genuine warm smile, and from what we have seen there are plenty of good things for them to be smiling about'***

In these times of change and challenge, the individuals that we meet who form the public sector, seem equipped and eager to adapt.

Gareth Moss, strategic partnerships director, BPO Business, at Serco, is also impressed by the people he meets and their enthusiasm for the work they do. He says: 'It's great to see people who are proud of the work they do – especially when there's a sprinkling of humility. Pride is infectious and enthusing as it conveys enjoyment and presents the sense of fulfilment that only comes when someone knows they are working to the best of their ability.'

What is clear is that colleagues working



for private companies delivering to the public sector share with the public sector a real sense of pride in working for our communities. Gareth at Serco comments: 'Although I've worked in local government for more than two decades, the job satisfaction that comes from providing important public services for local communities is undiminished. The sense of pride and enjoyment that comes from delivering great outcomes is, as I know from my own experience, the same whether you are employed directly or as an outsourced service partner. This is demonstrably visible to me from our innovative work with Hertfordshire Council on social care – a

truly vital service we are proud to be leading working with partners such as the British Red Cross.'

Gareth's sentiment is reflected in the views of Nick Heckscher, sector director at Manpower Group: 'We reached out to our public sector teams to draw out what it meant to them to support the public sector'. Jack Cathcart captured the mood with the concise observation: 'We are contributing to the function of society' and Louise Stephens Saunders amplified the sentiment, observing: 'We know that we are making a significant positive difference to many thousands of peoples of lives'. Nick goes on to say: 'It is

## Meet the apprentice

**Aiden Shannon** reveals his rapid and rewarding development so far with Nottingham City Council

In May 2013, I was recruited to be an apprentice at Nottingham City Council's Parks & Open Spaces service. During my apprenticeship, I have been encouraged to develop my skills and broaden my future goals within the authority. I feel very fortunate as I get to work with a great team in a service that gives me a unique opportunity to give something back to the community in which I've lived in all my life.

I've always wanted to work for Nottingham City Council as I had heard many good things about how they motivate and inspire their workforce. I have always had a desire to do something that helps people and gives something back to the community I live in, and when the opportunity of an



Aiden Shannon

apprenticeship came up, it seemed like a perfect opportunity, too perfect to pass up!

The public sector is a challenging

environment to work in, now we are being tasked to do more with less, but it is a positive time where we can do things differently. What

motivates and inspires me to keep working and enjoying work is seeing the positive impacts of my work and how it benefits the

local community. The council put citizens at the heart of what we do, and this is a value I share.

I would recommend the public sector world to young people as it is easier to see how the hard work you put in benefit those who use and depend on the services we provide. I also benefit from a positive work environment where (in my experience) you also have great, friendly and supportive colleagues.

I am very proud of the city I live and work in as I get to see the hopes and aspirations of Nottingham's community reflected in the work we undertake. I feel valued as a public sector worker, I get support, the opportunity of nominations for awards and recognition from my management team for my efforts and contributions. This goes a long way to make me raise the bar of the service I provide.

I am proud to serve the people of Nottingham, and nothing gives me more pleasure than giving something back to the community I live and now have the opportunity to serve in. I now have a job with Nottingham City Council after completing my apprenticeship and I am looking forward to developing my career within the public sector.

## make a difference?



great to know that all of us irrespective of whether we work in a public sector role or for shareholders get a sense of pride in what we do for the communities we serve'.

Daniel Hibbert at Mercer gives a view of the sector from the vantage point of having spent his entire career in the private sector, doing advisory work which covers both private and public sector clients. He has strong views: 'The cliché that the public sector is poorly managed has become so pervasive that many who work in the sector have come to believe it, and this leads to a lack of confidence. The public sector has much to be proud of; in most places it continues to deliver effective

public service in the face of budget cuts and increasing demand and scrutiny. There is a need for the public sector to be bolder in promoting its achievements and to place this "pride" at the heart of the engagement model for its workforce.'

And finally, good advice from Gareth at Serco: 'Every now and again, we should stand back and take note of great achievements in the provision of public services. Indeed, we should more readily celebrate exceptional work and outstanding results and show pride in what we are achieving. All too often, we lose sight of triumphs within our day-to-day activities'.



## The good times are on the way

**Dan Gascoyne** reveals his pride – and continued optimism – in the public sector, and looks to the future in his new role

I 'fell into' the public sector when I responded to an opportunity to take a 12 month 'sandwich' year from university. During my studies I had become increasingly aware of the importance of work experience to any future prospects to deliver the improvements I knew society needed, but I'll admit that I hadn't considered a career in local government.

Appointed to drive forward some innovative 'Local Agenda 21' activity (a pre-World Cup legacy of Rio as hosts for the 1992 Earth Summit) at Breckland in Norfolk I realised there was a whole world of big and small-p 'politics' for me to navigate in order to get on with my pretty idealistic aspirations for the residents of rural Norfolk in the mid-nineties!

I remain a bit of an idealist if I'm honest, but without a strong sense of eternal optimism about how much better things can be; I wouldn't get such a strong sense of pride when things go well.

For the last few years I've been working for Essex CC, where I've led programmes delivering real improvements in the way the whole public sector collaborates. This has led to better outcomes for people across issues as diverse as coastal protection, domestic abuse, families with complex need and integrated

health and social care, to name a few.

On reflection, I get most satisfaction and pride being an 'enabler'. Helping others to help themselves sounds clichéd but is how I work and, more importantly, holds the secret to surviving deficit reduction, to the public sector redefining commissioning and delivery approaches that transcend silos across the whole system, and to our aspirations for a more nuanced, and better balanced, relationship between citizen and state. Most importantly, I'm convinced that this collaborative approach holds the key to achieving sustainable, locally-led economic growth and avoiding a repetition of the challenges of the last six years.

So this month, as I begin my new role as West London Alliance director, I have much to be proud of and much to look forward to as well. After just one week the sense of pride, capability and determination to achieve better outcomes is as palpable in West London as it is in Essex. So, approaching a general election and Spending Review in 2015, we have a great opportunity to decide what we want to be proud of next.

*Dan Gascoyne is director of the West London Alliance*



# The road well travelled

**Ros Penny** reflects on a long career that has seen her switch between the private and public sectors



Ros Penny is a senior HR and OD specialist working in UK and internationally

global engineering companies to learn what skills were needed in the private sector. I loved every minute of those 15 years but what I found was the values and experiences of the public sector were to serve me well. I found that I quickly understood the need for profit and it taught me about innovation.

On the people agenda though, it was what I had learned in the public sector that made the difference – consultation, good process, strong leadership delivered with a coaching style rather than command and control, and most importantly, the need to build teams based on common purpose and shared values.

I learned the meaning of fast pace, of driving waste out of the system, of reducing cost without affecting quality – all skills which I took back into the public sector shortly after the millennium having been drawn back to where I felt I should be.

The public sector faces unprecedented challenges and I believe has had to cope with, and will continue to cope with, enormous amounts of change. We should be proud of our ability to find creative ways to meet needs, the investment we make in having qualified staff, the fact that the public remain at the heart of what we do.

We need to shout more about what we do well and never, ever be complacent. Put pride back into the public sector.



I'm Ros, FCIPD and a senior HR & OD practitioner in the final chapters of a long career.

Reflecting on my career, I wonder how I arrived at where I am now. Was it a well planned journey? 'No'.

Did I have a strategy? 'No'.

What have been the threads then that run through my career?

I write this as I am about to leave my senior management role within policing to take up a new role within education. I have spent many years in both the private and public sector. A question I always contemplate is whether there is a difference between sectors, and why have I always been drawn back to the public sector?

I chose the public sector post-university. I studied law and I wanted to 'put away the baddies', knowing I would never make a private sector lawyer as I had a deep rooted belief about being a seeker of the truth and finding justice for the people – a flawed concept as it turned out, yet it was an early

indication that the values of my upbringing would influence my career – values such as inclusivity, equality, people centricity and fairness.

I moved from my role in the Lord Chancellor's department after a few years when I found that my values were not matched. That was, however, the 1970s and it is much different today.

I requalified to become a lecturer in business management and leadership and found that teaching the next generations of workers was in accord with my values and both a privilege and a responsibility. However, it did not give me an insight into the private sector or any knowledge of entrepreneurship.

What followed was a 15 year sojourn into

# It's a vocation, not a job...

**Rob Whiteman** believes the fiscal challenges for public service are unique, but should be embraced – and successes celebrated with pride

There is much less talk than there used to be about following a vocation. The conversation in the media and in organisational development strategies concerning people's working lives is often one that focuses on the opposite of vocation with concepts such as flexible working, zero hour contracts or agile working dominating.

Although it may therefore sound a little unfashionable, I think that professional vocations are due a comeback and indeed we have certainly seen a rise in vocational apprenticeships in skilled jobs under this and previous governments. And perhaps the success of projects such as Teach First show a rise in public service as a vocational calling.

Speaking personally, when I trained as an accountant, and specifically a public sector accountant with CIPFA, I saw it as a vocation. I wouldn't say it was a calling to accountancy, but I chose to train in public finance knowing that this would lead me on to a career working in and around public services and delivery.

I have now spent over 25 years in the field and found it incredibly satisfying to work within large complex organisations that deliver real and meaningful services to people in hugely diverse communities.

For me, the challenges faced working



in the public sector cannot be found anywhere else, they are unique both in their scope and in their reward and I'm sure many readers will feel the same. And perhaps, especially in England where public service expertise is not as respected by government as the rest of the UK, we should say this a bit more.

But it's challenging. Fiscal austerity is only around half way done and is set to continue to the end of the decade

whatever political settlement the public decide upon in May next year.

Finance officers across public services have helped their organisations deal with the impact of austerity with integrity, ingenuity and dedication. Like all involved across front line and support service we should commend their work in the face of such difficult circumstances.

Going forward I believe we now need to move beyond treating our financial

position as a new phenomenon because the paradigms have shifted and this financial environment is very likely to be our new normal.

So together we need to work out how, as those tasked with managing public resources and delivering services, we make the best use of every tax pound to ensure we work effectively and productively.

Improving data, analytics, productivity, innovation, modelling, digital design, demand management, lean process, commissioning for outcomes, new forms of delivery and economies of scale are key to the finance professional's vocation. But my career has taught me that technical skills are secondary to personal qualities of communication, collaboration, energy, resilience, optimism and leadership as the professional's most vital skills.

So as we continue to work to secure the long term financial future of public bodies, I believe we should be proud of those working in public services, their values, skills and commitment; although their pride is often expressed in the success of the communities, client groups and organisations it's their vocation to serve.

**Rob Whiteman is the chief executive of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)**



## Taking a lead – with pride

Every day is an opportunity to take stock and reflect on public sector achievement – as Jim McManus explains



Jim McManus is director of public health at Hertfordshire CC

I kind of fell into public sector working after university and a year as a volunteer in an area of high deprivation and need. And although I've worked in the private sector and in a consultancy, and in the third sector, the public sector remains my first love. Ok, there are problems and challenges, but at its best working in this sector gives you variety and challenge. I've done jobs as varied as reducing homophobic hate crime, tackling domestic violence and commissioning home care.

I like the 'bus ride home test' – if a taxpayer asked me on the bus home on a Friday night what value I'd added for them that week, the day I couldn't tell them at least one thing would be the day I'd feel I wasn't worth my job. That's never happened. That's one of the things which has kept me in the sector. The opportunity to keep people happy and healthy keeps me in the sector.

I have a lot to be proud of. Pride can be a constructive feeling. I lead a team which has been through a lot of change, including moving from NHS into local government, and has risen to the challenge. I am grateful for my partner agencies. I think it's important to

***'The opportunity to keep people happy and healthy keeps me in the sector'***

approach everything with a spirit of generosity – recognise and believe we are all in this for the best of motives. And see each other as a gift.

I have three achievements I am really proud of. My first is taking 20 people off benefits, training them up to do health improvement jobs and seeing them all go on to other jobs in health and social care or fitness. My second is when a fellow public health colleague I hadn't seen for over ten years, and who's career has really developed, came up to me and said 'you were my first public health mentor. You've been a part of me believing I could do

this.'

My third is beating cancer. I discovered a very aggressive lymphoma. My clinicians were wonderful and I learned a lot about being ill and vulnerable and truly dependent on others. And my employer was simply fantastic. Much more good has come than bad out of this – good friends, better health, a new attitude on life, massive gratitude and a deeper faith. I'm proud to be a Catholic. It's an essential part of who I am.

Good leaders create other leaders, not followers. And I've been lucky to see leaders I once led, lead me in return.

## Passionate about public service?

The public sector is the true gateway to community, and Stephen Moir loves being a big part of it



Stephen Moir is director of people, NHS England, and head of profession for HR in the NHS

Being a public servant and providing services to the public has always been a matter of immense pride for me and is something I've been passionate about for years.

For me, public service does, in many ways, come from my parents. My dad worked in the private sector (financial services) for his whole working life and couldn't wait to escape. My mum, on the other hand, spent some time in the private sector and then joined the police service as a 'civilian'. She remained there for the rest of her working life – upon retirement she almost had to be dragged out of the building, so committed was she to her work and her work colleagues. I learned a lot from them both and my views were clearly shaped by them.

I then had the chance to test this out for myself. I first worked in the private sector for a short time, whilst at university, and I simply

hated it. I was not remotely interested in creating value for shareholders or improving the profit margin for the company. I just couldn't see the line of sight between what I did and what the organisation stood for, there were no organisational values and my sense was that it was only ever a job to the people in that organisation.

By contrast, upon joining the public sector I found that there was a real and immediate connection between what I did and what the organisation stood for. I took pride in the success of the organisation and took pride in being able to contribute to that success and, more importantly, had a real and abiding sense of giving something back to the community. I had benefited from public service my whole life – for example, I attended state schools and was supported through university by state funding.

I felt it was only right that I gave something back and, I suppose in that sense, this drives me still. I believe in people paying their own way in life and helping those less fortunate than themselves, I believe in community and I am deeply committed to creating a fair, just, tolerant and inclusive society, for all. I also firmly believe that public service and being a public servant is the best way to achieve this.

Finally, working in organisations and with likeminded people who share my values and are equally passionate about achieving wellbeing and creating a better future – what could be more inspiring than that?

***'I believe in people paying their own way in life and helping those less fortunate than themselves'***



# Proud to work with members

Penna's **Jonathan Swain** and **David Weir** share their insights into the unique working environment of officers and members in local government

**T**he most unique element of working in local government is working with members and within the democratic process. No other leadership challenge offers quite the same dynamics and it's probably why there are those that do, and those that don't work within it.

But for those that do it's not surprising that 'political acumen' remains the key competence needed. In a recent Penna survey political acumen came in the top three of the attributes identified by local government chief executives (just pipped by resilience and energy). And in the most recent SOLACE research it was identified as one of the five key attributes any current or future chief executive needed.

Our chief executive respondents were all very clear that the uniqueness of working in the political arena for them is most definitely a positive and for many the reason they had chosen to be a chief executive of a local authority rather than 'a.n.other' organisation.

So as we attend this week's LGA conference and see officers and members come together around the key issues of the day we should perhaps take a little time to be proud of the great work they do, and how unique the environment they work in and the roles they carry out are.

During our recruitment work for both interim and permanent senior executives and non-executives we are always mindful of the context and utilise interviews, role play and assessment to 'test' candidates ability to remain objective, impartial and politically neutral during senior



**Penna sponsored the MJ Awards Senior Management Team category this year**

management decision making challenges. Understanding values and career drivers is important too as philosophical views and opinions for officers will emerge when under pressure and if they fail to remain impartial their leadership judgement and abilities to work cross party may be challenged. Some great advice given by one of our serving chief executives in the recent survey, whilst obvious, is worth remembering: 'Remember that by statute you work for all members of the council, not just the administration – and make sure you

demonstrate that fact'.

There is no doubt that the success of a local authority and its operating performance is hugely influenced by the strength and partnership of the member and officer leadership team. And when it breaks down it does so with spectacular consequences, usually for the officer that is!

Interestingly, in the entries made by over 25 authorities for the Senior Management Team of the Year category at this year's MJ Awards (which was sponsored and judged by Penna along with a panel of local authority senior players), there

were still a few who didn't naturally identify the politicians as part of the management team. However those that did were able to evidence really significant outcomes achieved through close managerial partnership and real clarity on the roles of politician and officer. But clear partnership around joint setting of strategy and members and officers working physically together in the same offices were becoming the norm.

There is no doubt therefore that when it works well, it works really well, and most high performing authorities cite member and officer relations as professional and good. But in our survey some chief executives identified some of the key challenges as 'managing poor local political behaviour' or 'dealing with the conduct of some elected members towards staff' which is perhaps not surprising (although hopefully quite rare) when you think about the diverse and dynamic context and the breadth of issues and interactions that local government brings together.

So perhaps knowing this those working in it during the conference should take some time out to be proud of the fact that local government even with these challenges and unique dynamics has delivered such significant change, savings and outcomes.

**Jonathan Swain is a practice director of public sector executive search, and David Weir is a practice director of the executive interim businesses at Penna**

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