

THE BEACON SCHEME 2006

Assessment Form

Theme	Electoral Services
Authority	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Number	2261

Overall Score		
Outstanding (6)/Excellent (5)/ Very good (4)/ Good (3)/Fair (2)/Weak (1)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6

Summary Comments		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
<p>A well-structured application that clearly addressed the criteria in the application brochure. Displayed very good evidence of best practice across the full range of criteria, both in terms of deployment of new technologies and innovative non-technology approaches to enhancing the service.</p>	<p>The visit confirmed the conclusions from the assessment stage of the process. The authority dealt satisfactorily with the issues that were raised with them although the reluctance to embrace multi-channel methods of voting and/or undertake election pilots was not clearly explained. By way of balance, the innovation shown in all areas of the work was highly encouraging and demonstrates a commitment to deliver a service well in excess of the minimum legal requirements.</p>	<p>In addition to the initial summary, the panel commented on the reluctance to extend the use of new technology in the election process by undertaking pilots. The panel was satisfied with the explanations put forward and the mainly political reasons behind the apparent reluctance. The panel was satisfied that this does not detract from the excellence of the overall delivery of the service.</p> <p>This authority is recommended for beacon status.</p>

Score Summary Table			
	First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Leadership, Vision and Strategy	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6
Community and Customer Engagement and Empowerment	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6
Actions	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6
Partnerships	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6
Equalities and Diversity	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6
Outcomes	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6	Outstanding - 6
Sharing Best Practise		Excellent - 5	Outstanding - 6

Leadership, Vision and Strategy (Section 2.2 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6
Comments	Comments	Comments
Electoral Services appear to be embedded in the Council's corporate planning and review approach as witnessed by the various initiatives outlined in this section including the Elections Forum and the Best Value review undertaken. The addition of extra staffing resources and the use of the Customer Contact Centre also demonstrate a corporate commitment to the Council's approach to this service. The involvement of elected members in the review process is to be applauded both at a commitment level and to ensure an even-handed approach from a political viewpoint.	Both evidential requirements were displayed at the visit. There seems to be a clearly mapped out strategy flowing from the Best Value Review in the form of the April 2004 Implementation Plan, which enjoys strong support from senior officers and Members.	The vision for electoral services is contained within the council's community strategy. The election forum is a useful tool for engaging elected members and other representatives of the political spectrum.

Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	<p>What is the 'vision' for Electoral Services - or is it covered by certain elements of the council's overall vision as set out in the Community Strategy.</p> <p>Further information required about the role and status of the Elections forum including items raised by members at past meetings.</p>	None

Community and Customer Engagement and Empowerment
(Section 2.3 of the application form)

First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6
Comments	Comments	Comments
<p>The quality and breadth of the services provided to the wider community are highly impressive and demonstrate a comprehensive approach to the principles of customer service. Clearly, Electoral Services attempt to engage with all levels of the community and their stakeholder base. Innovation and continuous improvement appears to be an integral part of the overall process. This overall approach is both creative and visionary. It demonstrates good practice to which all Electoral Services teams should aspire.</p>	<p>Clear evidence in this area was provided.</p> <p>No evidence was given on how to make the voting process fit better with different people's needs and desires.</p>	<p>The presentation covered the issues of engagement and consultation.</p> <p>The panel noted a continued lack of support for (particularly at political level) or interest in multi-channel/new technologies for voting but was satisfied with the explanations given.</p>
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	<p>Some practical examples of how strategies/policies have been developed as a result of engagement and consultations with the wider community and key stakeholders.</p> <p>More information required on the lack of engagement with the 'multi-channel' aspect of voting.</p>	Multi-channel/new technologies for voting

Actions (Section 2.4 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6
Comments	Comments	Comments
<p>The use of the Council's formal service planning process which builds into the Best Value Performance Plan is a clear indication of the positive action being taken to plan, deliver, review and develop. The cyclical nature of this process fits very well the electoral timetable for both registration and elections. The added value of additional services to the citizens of the borough are to be commended as they will already make a considerable difference to the level of knowledge and involvement of all those who have an interest in the electoral and democratic process. Continuous information flow to electors, postal voters etc. is likely to have a beneficial effect in terms of engagement and involvement. The team's relationship and involvement with political parties, Government departments and the Electoral Commission is well documented and reflects actual positions. This demonstrates a commitment to play a wider part in the electoral community and to share good practice.</p>	<p>The previous comments apply. However, information about the involvement of Electoral Services in local democracy week could have been provided.</p> <p>More information is needed about what has been done (or is planned) around active working with particular community groups, e.g. targeted registration drives, recruitment of canvassers from within and for specific groups.</p> <p>The brochure criteria refer to having effective systems in place to improve the service provided to 'non-elector stakeholders'. The political parties are well served, but the brochure also refers to the administration of the return of election accounts to the Election Claims Unit (ECU): some evidence on the accountability for public money spent on the electoral process would be useful.</p>	<p>The council accepted that they were not good at returning national election accounts. However, the panel noted the underlying reasons for this and the fact that this appeared to be part of a wider national problem.</p>
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More information on - how Electoral Services was involved in local democracy week - what has been done around active working with particular community groups - accounting for public money, in particular completing and returning election accounts in a timely manner 	<p>Improve procedures for returning national election accounts.</p>

Partnerships (Section 2.5 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6
Comments	Comments	Comments
The partnerships identified in the application provide good examples of how both internal and external arrangements can enhance the delivery of services. Each of the individual partnerships appear to have been well thought out and contributes to the high level of service described elsewhere. The positive use of outsourced contracts and/or other council services demonstrate a broad approach to key activities all with the aim of providing the best possible level of service to the key stakeholders. There is also a clear desire to build on success through a regime of improving and extending the services year on year. Contributions to the work of the wider electoral community also provide good evidence of the willingness of the Electoral Services team to contribute to the "greater good".	2.5 – The work with both internal and external partners at the event forming part of the visit was clearly evident and demonstrates a firm commitment to improving services as a result of the lessons learnt. However, the team would like to hear more about any specific more formalised external partnership arrangements in delivery of the service. Working with Electoral Reform Services Ltd to deliver the internet and telephone registration service was a good example. Is there anything similar on other aspects of the service?	Evidence of external partnership arrangements was provided.
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	Evidence of external partnership arrangements.	None

Equalities and Diversity (Section 2.6 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6	Score: Outstanding - 6

Comments	Comments	Comments
<p>The Council's Electoral Services team clearly have a very firm commitment to dealing with equality and diversity issues as witnessed by the introduction of the Equalities Scheme and the Council's commitment to the Equality Standard. The particular work that has been done in terms of providing services to ethnic minorities, young people and persons with disabilities is at a high level and complies with advice and guidance issued by the Electoral Commission in respect of these matters. The extensive use of personal canvassers will play a positive part in encouraging high levels of registration within the main target groups and the wide availability of services including translation and interpretation facilities is clear evidence of a positive approach to these areas of work.</p>	<p>2.6 - Why has LBHF not been prepared to explore use of multi-channel/new technology for voting in this regard, given the physical and language obstacles that such initiatives can help to remove/minimise?</p>	<p>See section 2.3. Good support was given to all prospective candidates regardless of party affiliation.</p>
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	<p>Explanation of why the authority has not attempted multi-channel/new technologies for voting.</p>	<p>None</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Outcomes (Section 2.7 of the application form)</p>		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
<p>Score: Outstanding - 6</p>	<p>Score: Outstanding - 6</p>	<p>Score: Outstanding - 6</p>

Comments	Comments	Comments
<p>The overall application provides clear evidence of the outcomes that arise from the Council's pro-active approach in the various areas of delivering electoral services. Taken across the national scene, the outcomes produce an impressive picture of the work of the Electoral Services team within this Council. Clearly, the willingness of the Council to provide proper resources to the service has paid handsome dividends in terms of its results, its position in performance tables and its standing in the wider electoral community. This is mirrored in its approach to equality and diversity issues. Access to the service is also at a high level particularly with regard to the use of the Council's contact centre. The steps which have been taken to mitigate fraudulent voting activity reflect published good practice and demonstrate a positive and robust approach in this high profile area of work.</p>	<p>2.7 - The outcomes required in the criteria were well demonstrated at the visit. The work done by the team is over and above the basic legal requirements and it would be interesting to know the process by which these initiatives are proposed, agreed and the necessary additional funding obtained to meet the cost of their development and delivery. Additionally, there is the same question about accessibility of the service when it comes to the actual voting process, if there's a lack of willingness to trial alternative voting methods. (see 2.6 above). 2.7 -</p>	<p>The commitment from members and senior management to provide the necessary resources for these services was clearly demonstrated. The officers present well-structured business cases for their initiatives which then attract political support.</p>
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	<p>Process for initiatives. Accessibility to voting.</p>	<p>None</p>

Factors that underpin your success (Section 4.1 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Score:	Score:	Score:

Comments	Comments	Comments
	<p>The application outlines the main factor for success – that of maximum and accurate registration. Any new initiatives have to be sustainable and provide value for money before they are adopted.</p> <p>The service is supported by all political groups, money and staff. Staff – especially presiding officers, poll clerks, counting clerks and canvassers – is fully trained.</p> <p>The council is aiming for the highest level of customer service in its polling stations.</p>	<p>The council demonstrated their commitment to the importance of good quality training for election staff.</p> <p>The use of exit polls to determine customer satisfaction was highlighted.</p>
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	Are there any key messages for polling day itself?	None

Successful initiatives (Section 4.2 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Comments	Comments	Comments
	LBHF has been working to improve electoral services since the late nineties - particularly in terms of registration.	The panel noted the successful initiatives carried out by the council over a number of years.
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	What would LBHF want to share with others about polling day processes?	None

Who are the key target audiences that would benefit from hearing your key messages? (Section 4.3 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Comments	Comments	Comments
	LBHF has outlined in detail the target audience against the background of current legislation and in addition to electoral administrators, senior council staff, elected members, Electoral Commission and government departments and internal staff, LBHF would expect to support groups of councils who will have to change their methods of working.	The council believes they have a story to tell no matter who the audience is. The Cabinet Member expressed the importance of working within party structures to disseminate good practice.
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	More information on how differently the council would treat different audiences to ensure they hear the key messages.	None

Beyond the national Learning Exchange conference and Open Day, how might you work with other Beacons within your theme to maximise the impact of your learning activities? (Section 4.4 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Comments	Comments	Comments
	LBHF recognises the need to vary the methods of sharing learning and has outlined a wide range of methods for sharing learning with the production of materials, attendance at the relevant networking meetings with national bodies and working with government departments on policy.	The council expressed the need to work through the various electoral networks to disseminate good practice as well as other beacon councils and using other councils known to be good in the electoral services area.
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	More information on how LBHF would work with other beacons in the theme to share learning. In particular, how would the council propose to disseminate good practice at the political member level as well as officer level?	None

What experience does your authority have with sharing lessons with others? Give examples of where your authority has supported others to improve (Section 4.5 of the application form)		
First Sift	After visit	After presentation
Comments	Comments	Comments
	LBHF has provided a wide range of expertise to various authorities, particularly in London and to government departments. Activities have included secondments, one day visits, work shadowing, speaking at conferences.	See previous section 4.4
Areas for investigation	Areas for investigation	Outstanding issues
	Again, would like to see something about how much of this happens at member-level as well as officer level.	None