



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

The Beacon Council Scheme

How to apply 2004



*Excellence in
Local Government*



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Deputy Prime Minister
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How to apply

Application Brochure
2004



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Scheme

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Local Government*

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	5
Introduction	7
Part 1: Should you apply?	9
Part 2: How the Scheme works	11
Part 3: How to Apply	17
Part 4: Themes	23
Affordable Housing	24
Asset Management	26
Effective Environmental Health	28
Getting Closer to Communities	30
Healthy Communities	32
Integrated Children's Services	34
Promoting Racial Equality	36
Supporting Carers	38
Supporting New Businesses	40
Sustainable Energy	42
Part 5: General Performance	45
Part 6: Dissemination of good practice	47
Annex A: Membership of the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils	51
Annex B: Best Value Performance Indicators (2003/04) relevant to themes	53

Foreword

Local government has a crucial role in creating sustainable communities. How we plan for future development, how we create an attractive and welcoming public realm, how we foster jobs and growth – all these depend on the skills and leadership of local government.

Local authorities deliver key public services which lie at the heart of sustainable communities. So it's vital to share experience and expertise across local government, so that the rest can be as good as the best.

The Beacon Council Scheme contributes to sustainable communities by identifying a wealth of good practice, so that local government as a whole can improve. The scheme raises standards and the quality of services by sharing what works well.

The Scheme is now entering its sixth round. Since it began we have awarded Beacon status to 231 authorities and Round Five saw a 34% increase in applications from the previous year.

This shows that the scheme is popular and valued. The number of authorities being recognised for excellence in providing better public services is encouraging. We must continue to find innovative ways to build on this success.

From this September, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) will take on an increased role in the scheme. This means IDeA will co-ordinate applications and also enable the promotion of good practice. This will allow more continuity in the process of identifying and sharing excellence across local government.

The Government's themes for Round Six focus on specific areas which are especially relevant to people today, such as increasing the supply of affordable housing and promoting racial equality so that local authorities are more representative of the areas and people they serve. Other themes, including Healthy Communities and Effective Environmental Health, reflect the key role local government plays in improving the quality of life in all our communities.

If your authority provides an excellent service in one of this round's themes, performs well overall and would be willing to share your experiences with others, then apply for Beacon status.

This is your opportunity to help create more sustainable communities and provide the best quality public services to people wherever they live.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Prescott".

John Prescott



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sir Jeremy Beecham".

Sir Jeremy Beecham



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colin Barrow".

Colin Barrow CBE

Introduction

Building a culture of continuous improvement

This application brochure describes the application and assessment process for the sixth round of the Beacon Council Scheme. The Scheme aims to identify the best performing authorities who can act as centres of excellence from which other authorities can learn.

The Beacon Scheme is open to all English county and district councils, including unitary councils and metropolitan district councils, London boroughs and all other Best Value authorities (National Park authorities, police authorities, fire authorities, waste disposal authorities, metropolitan county passenger transport authorities, and Parish Councils that are subject to the Best Value regime.)

Applications may be submitted by a single authority or by two or more authorities who are working in partnership to deliver their services.

The themes for Round 6 of the Scheme were announced by the Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP on 25 February 2004. The themes are listed below.

- Affordable Housing
- Asset Management
- Effective Environmental Health
- Getting Closer to Communities
- Healthy Communities
- Integrated Children's Services
- Promoting Racial Equality
- Supporting Carers
- Supporting New Businesses
- Sustainable Energy.

This brochure provides information on applying for Beacon status and is divided into six parts.

Part 1 explains why you should apply;

Part 2 tells you how the Scheme works;

Part 3 tells you how to apply;

Part 4 lists the themes and selection criteria in detail and sets out what is required from authorities to demonstrate excellence in a theme;

Part 5 discusses the general performance requirements for best value authorities;

Part 6 explains what applicants need to do regarding dissemination of good practice.

What's new

Assessment Process

The main change to the Scheme is that the IDeA will be co-ordinating the assessment process. This means authorities should submit their applications to the IDeA instead of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Assessments will continue to be carried out by the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils who will be supported by departmental policy officials. Authorities should liaise directly with the IDeA about queries on the assessment process and dissemination.

Visits

The visit team will now consist of the Specialist Panel member, a representative from the relevant Government department, and the IDeA. In some cases officials from the Government Offices may also attend as observers.

General Performance

Those authorities subject to Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA) will no longer need to submit general performance annexes to support their application. Authorities rated 'Poor' are not eligible to apply. Should an authority receive a 'Poor' CPA rating in a CPA refresh during the assessment process, it will need to withdraw its application.

Those authorities not subject to CPA will need to submit some general performance information. Further details on general performance can be found on pages 41-42.



Part 1 *Should You Apply?*

This section explains the benefits of applying for Beacon status in Round 6.



Should You Apply?

Play a key role in delivering excellent local services

The Beacon Council Scheme is central to both central and local governments' drive towards delivering high quality public services in England by identifying and recognising excellence in local government. The Scheme also enables good practice to be shared with others aspiring towards excellence.

Benefits of applying:

- Be recognised nationally for the quality of your service
- Be acknowledged amongst peer authorities and help others deliver improved services
- Be awarded for the delivery of an excellent service
- Be financially rewarded.

Beacon status also provides authorities and its employees with the opportunity to:

- Benchmark and network with other authorities
- Boost morale of officers, members and the organisation
- Raise the profile of the authority locally and nationally
- Enhance staff recruitment, retention and development
- Undergo a free 360° health-check for the authority.

Independent research indicates that the application process delivers organisational learning and significant service improvement.

"The Scheme is clearly growing in popularity and it is heartening to see the extent of this commitment by so many people who are keen to participate and to help others improve their performance".

***Rt Hon Nick Raynsford, Minister of State for Local and Regional Government
Beacons Award Ceremony, 6 April 2004***



Part 2

How the Scheme works

This section contains information on the application process, who is involved in assessing applications and how to apply.



How the Scheme works

Ministers expect to make between 40-50 Beacon awards in the sixth round of the Beacon Council Scheme.

Beacon status will, where possible, be awarded to authorities that represent the diversity of local government – urban and rural, unitary and two-tier, and from different parts of the country. Joint applications – from authorities working in partnership – are very much encouraged. As far as possible, Ministers aim to award Beacon status evenly across the ten themes.

Timetable for Round Six

The Intention to Apply Form (see How to Apply) should be submitted by **Wednesday 25 August 2004**.

Applications should be submitted by **Thursday 9 September 2004**.

A shortlist of candidates will be announced in **November 2004**.

Assessment visits to shortlisted authorities will take place between the end of **November 2004 and January 2005**.

Shortlisted authorities will give presentations on their applications in **January/February 2005**.

Successful applicants will be announced in **April 2005**.

Successful applicants will hold Beacon status from **April 2005 to June 2006**.

Who is involved?

This section explains the different roles of the Advisory Panel, the Government and the IDeA.

Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils

The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body supported by the IDeA on behalf of the ODPM. The Panel provides advice to Ministers on:

- the selection of themes under which Beacon status is awarded;
- the criteria to be used when selecting Beacons;
- which authorities should be given Beacon status.

The Panel consists of a Chair, Marianne Hood, and nine core members, who have been recruited by open competition to serve on the Panel for three years. In addition to the core membership, specialist members with expertise in each of the themes are co-opted for each round.

The current list of core and specialist members for Round 6 is at Annex A.

The Government

The Beacon Council Scheme is a cross-government initiative. Ministers collectively select themes and which authorities should be awarded Beacon status. Government departments provide policy advice on each of the themes, award Beacon grants and provide financial support for Beacons.

The Improvement and Development Agency

From this September the Beacon Team in the IDeA will co-ordinate the application process, and provide the Secretariat to the Advisory Panel. The IDeA will also continue to support successful Beacons with their dissemination activities. Further information on dissemination and the IDeA can be found on pages 43-46.

The Assessment Process

The closing date for applications is Thursday 9 September 2004. Successful authorities will be announced in April 2005. The assessment process involves five stages which are listed below.

Stage 1: Shortlisting

Applications are initially assessed by the Advisory Panel theme specialist, relevant Government department, and Government Offices in the regions. The full Panel will agree a shortlist in November 2004. All applicants will be advised shortly afterwards whether they have been shortlisted. Authorities that have not been shortlisted will receive detailed feedback. The Panel will also issue a press notice announcing the shortlist.

Stage 2: Visits

Shortlisted applicants will be visited by the Specialist Panel member, an official from the relevant Government Department and the IDeA. These visits are expected to take place from the end of November 2004 through to January 2005. The visits will provide an opportunity to confirm key elements of the application and to look closely at any aspects which the Advisory Panel believes to be critical. Shortlisted authorities will be given advance notice of the issues to be examined further during visits. The visits provide shortlisted applicants with an opportunity to 'bring their applications to life'.

Stage 3: Presentations

Following the visits, shortlisted applicants will be invited to make presentations to members of the Advisory Panel in January/February 2005. These should focus on the

best practice for which Beacon status is being sought. The authority should also be prepared to answer questions on dissemination.

Stage 4: Panel recommendations

After the visits and presentations, the Advisory Panel will meet in March 2005 to consider the assessments and decide which authorities to recommend to Ministers for Beacon status. The Panel's recommendations will be published with a summary of their assessment for each applicant.

Stage 5: Ministers' decisions

Ministers will consider the Panel's recommendations together with any relevant information that may subsequently become available. Ministers aim to announce their selection of Beacons in April 2005.

After their decisions have been made, the Minister for Local and Regional Government will write to all shortlisted authorities informing them of the outcome. Successful authorities will be invited to attend an award ceremony to receive their certificates and meet the other Beacons.

Becoming a Beacon

In order to be selected as a Beacon, authorities must be able to show:

- excellence in a Beacon theme;
- good general performance;
- plans for effective dissemination.

To show excellence in a theme, applicants for Beacon status should aim to demonstrate why they should be a Beacon and provide evidence of:

- outcomes;
- user and community satisfaction;
- vision and strategy;
- consultation with the public and stakeholders;
- partnerships;
- actions.

Authorities may be involved in up to three applications on an individual or joint basis. However, authorities should not submit both joint and individual applications for the same theme. Many applications will involve partnership with non-authority public, voluntary or private sector bodies. In such cases, Beacon status will be awarded to the authority(ies) only.

Further details about the themes, including criteria and issues to cover in applications, can be found in Parts 4 – 6 of this brochure.

Feedback

Applicants will receive copies of all the information used by the Panel in their assessment. This information will be sent either after shortlisting if the application falls at that stage or after the final announcement of Beacons. Authorities should find that this feedback provides a valuable summary of performance and a basis for planning future improvements.

Beacon Award Payments

Successful Beacons will receive a payment as a reward for their achievement and to support the cost of dissemination. A total of £3 million has been set aside for this purpose. The Government expects to share most of this equally among the successful applicants, while allowing some extra resources for joint applications.

The Beacon Logo

Authorities appointed as Beacons may use the Beacon logo with a strapline referring to the service or cross-cutting service area and the year in which they received Beacon status. The strapline includes the year as well as the theme for which the authority is awarded Beacon status. The Beacon logo may be used both during and after the year in which it was awarded. Authorities may use this logo in full on their letterhead or other authority promotional material. A booklet, *How to use your logo*, *The Beacon Council Scheme* gives additional guidance on how to use the logo and can be obtained from the ODPM and the IDeA.



Beacons – Helping to share good practice

Once selected, Beacons have a duty to promote their good practice, knowledge and expertise, for the benefit of service-specific audiences. They will work with the IDeA, Government departments, other national and regional organisations and specific best value authorities.

Beacons will be expected to make a positive contribution to theme-specific service improvement and policy development that will benefit not only themselves, but the wider theme-specific target audience.

Part 6 provides further details of how dissemination will be treated in the application and assessment process. Part 6 also outlines the roles of the Beacons and the IDeA once Beacon status has been announced.

Sources of further information

Previous applicants

The Beacon application process may seem daunting at first. An excellent source of information and guidance are authorities who have previously submitted an application.

Authorities who have been through the selection process will have advice on how best to co-ordinate with colleagues in different departments to ensure you present the best picture of your authority and the work it does for the community.

In addition many Beacons have put their application forms onto their websites. Details of who the Beacons are can be found on the IDeA website at www.idea.gov.uk/beacons.



Part 3

How to apply

This section explains how to apply for Beacon status and covers the selection timetable, guidance on submitting application forms and lists the contacts in IDeA and ODPM.



How to apply

To assist with your application, the checklist at the end of the brochure suggests further sources of information and provides a step by step guide to submitting your application.

An Intention to Apply Form should be submitted by e-mail to the IDeA by Wednesday 25 August 2004. This assists the Beacon Team in preparing for the submission of Application Forms.

Authorities are required to submit their Application Forms by e-mail to the IDeA by Thursday 9 September.

WHAT TO SEND	HOW TO SEND IT	DEADLINE
Intention to Apply Form	Via email to: beacons@idea.gov.uk	Wednesday 25 August 2004
Application Form	Via email to: beacons@idea.gov.uk	Thursday 9 September 2004
1 copy of User Satisfaction Annex	To be sent in hard copy to: Beacon Council User Satisfaction Data Nicholas Gilby Senior Research Executive MORI Social Research Institute 79-81 Borough Road London SE1 1FY	To be postmarked on or before Thursday 9 September 2004.

Intention to Apply Form – Guidelines

The Intention to Apply Form must be downloaded from the IDeA website www.idea.gov.uk/beacons completed, and e-mailed to the application address beacons@idea.gov.uk by Wednesday 25 August 2004.

The e-mail title should be the name of the authority followed by the government office region and the theme under which you are applying, for example *Applesborough DC, GOSW, Affordable Housing*. There is no need to insert any text in the message box.

Please do not submit any other information with the Intention to Apply Form.

Multiple applications by one authority

Applicants should submit a separate form for each theme under which they intend to apply, and these should be e-mailed separately.

Joint applications by more than one authority

Joint applicants should submit a single form listing the partner authorities in the joint application. A single contact at one of the applicant authorities should be nominated, and this contact authority name should be used in the e-mail title.

Application Form – Guidelines

The Application Form comprises a cover page and 3 parts:

Part 1 – Contact details, indication of confidential material, and statistical information

Part 2 – Theme specific criteria

Part 3 – Dissemination questions

Applicants are required to submit the application form by e-mail and all applications must be made on the Beacon Council Scheme application form. The form can be downloaded from the IDeA website at: www.idea.gov.uk/beacons.

The Application Form is the key text used by the Advisory Panel to assess performance in the themes.

Authorities should ensure that the Part 2 of their Application Form contains all relevant information.

- The application form when printed must not exceed 15 A4 sides in Arial 12 point;
- Authorities should complete the form with text only. Simple tables may be used if necessary for illustration, but applicants should not include any other graphics;
- The form must be submitted as a single Word document attached to an email;
- The title of the document should include the name of the authority and the theme under which the application is being made, or some clear abbreviation if necessary;
- The e-mail title should be the name of the authority, followed by government office region, and the theme under which the application is being made. For example: *Appleborough, GOSW, Affordable Housing*. There is no need to enter any text in the message box;
- Do not include any annexes with the Application Form.

Multiple applications by one authority

A completely separate application must be submitted for each theme under which the authority wishes to apply.

Joint applications by more than one authority

For joint applications each part should be drafted jointly.

Submission of User Satisfaction Data – Guidelines

User and community satisfaction is included among the selection criteria for each of the themes, and will also be relevant to general performance. Part 5 of this brochure includes advice on what best value authorities need to provide for the general performance assessment.

Applicants are invited to include survey results on the **theme** for which they are applying. This information is optional and should be provided by authorities which have conducted recent and relevant research (either quantitative or qualitative) to match the focus of the theme. The Annex, which should be clearly labelled, should include:

1) A short precis of the rationale for including the survey data and how it relates to the focus of the application as a whole.

This should also cover:

- How the authority actively tries to find out the views of key stakeholders in relation to the theme under which they are applying;
- How such evidence is used by the authority to tailor services and adapt policies;
- Whether and how the authority attempts to benchmark itself against other local, regional or national baselines, for example via benchmarking clubs;
- Relevant trend data.

2) Results and methodology.

If quantitative

- The results from the survey including relevant trend data;
- Questionnaire used;
- Methodological details, ie dates, approach taken, sampling information and data collection method.

If qualitative

- Qualitative report;
- Discussion guide;
- Methodological details; approach taken, structure of the research programme, how participants were recruited.

If applicants have more than one piece of survey research, they should include what they consider to be most relevant to the scope of their application. They may also include a summary of their research programme if relevant to the theme.

Independent consultants (MORI) have been commissioned to evaluate these surveys and provide advice to the Panel on what they reveal. One copy of the User Satisfaction Data should be sent direct to MORI at the address below.

MORI have drawn together existing national information on surveys relevant to each of the themes, and constructed performance baselines. This has been possible for some themes, and not for others. The information gathered by MORI can be seen on the IDeA website www.idea.gov.uk/beacons. Where possible, survey evidence submitted by applicants will be compared to these national baselines.

However, authorities should not refrain from submitting survey data if this is not directly comparable with national baselines. If it is not possible to make comparisons with a national baseline, MORI's assessment will focus on the results of individual authorities.

Beacon Council User Satisfaction Data
Nicholas Gilby
Senior Research Executive
MORI Social Research Institute
79-81 Borough Road
London SE1 1FY

Confidential material

If there is any material within the bid which applicants would not wish to be made public, please complete the *confidential material* section of the Application Form, and clearly mark the relevant pages of the application form/attachments with the header CONFIDENTIAL.

BEFORE SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION PLEASE COMPLETE THE CHECKLIST AT THE END OF THIS BROCHURE.

Contact Details

The IDeA website contains a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page on the Beacon Council Scheme at: www.idea.gov.uk/beacons

Copies of all documents including the application form can also be downloaded from the ODPM website: www.odpm.gov.uk/beaconcouncils

IDeA Contacts

All enquiries regarding the assessment process should be made to:

Beacon Services

IDeA

Layden House

76-86 Turnmill Street

London EC1M 5LG

Tel: Beacons Enquiry Line 020 7296 6587

beacons@idea.gov.uk

ODPM Contacts

General enquiries about the Beacon Scheme should be made to:

Beacon Enquiry Lines

Tel: 020 7944 4759

Tel: 020 7944 4104

beaconsinfo@odpm.gsi.gov.uk



Part 4

Themes

The following pages contain further information about each of the themes under which authorities can apply. The criteria which appear on the application form are duplicated here, although please note that the applications forms must be downloaded from the IDeA website at www.idea.gov.uk/beacons completed and e-mailed to beacons@idea.gov.uk by Thursday 9 September 2004.

Applicants will need to set out their application form under the six broad criteria taking account of specific points where these are mentioned below. Relevant Best Value Performance Indicators listed in Annex B will also be taken into account.



Affordable Housing



"Our aim is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of good quality, affordable housing. This requires that the supply of affordable housing be increased, and local authorities have a crucial role to play in this working together with other stakeholders and their communities to make this happen. I am pleased that affordable housing has been chosen as a theme for the Beacon scheme."

Rt Hon Nick Raynsford, Minister of State for Local and Regional Government

In many communities people are facing difficulties securing good quality housing at an affordable price. The *Sustainable Communities Plan* launched by the Deputy Prime Minister on 5 February 2003 set out a programme of action to increase the supply of market and affordable housing. This included improving the responsiveness of the planning system, the establishment of four growth areas to alleviate overall housing pressures in London and surrounding areas and improvements in the effectiveness and value for money of the mechanisms for delivering new housing.

Local authorities have a crucial role to play in tackling the problem and devising solutions through their strategic housing function, their planning powers, utilising the resources over which they have control, and through working with others.

Beacon authorities in rural as well as urban and inner city areas will have developed a comprehensive and strategic approach to the provision of affordable housing. This will be based on sound analysis and understanding of the housing requirements in their area, as well as the wider housing market and will set out the actions the authority will take to address shortages of provision across all tenures in both the short and the long term.

Beacon authorities will have considered affordable housing in terms of the relationship between local income levels and house prices or rents for different types and sizes of housing. They will also have considered provision in terms of a range of affordable housing solutions and meeting the demands and needs of people with support and housing needs. Overall they will support and encourage provision that will contribute to the delivery of mixed sustainable communities in urban and rural areas.

Beacons will have developed and implemented effective resident consultation and involvement. They will have policies and strategies in place to secure and maintain delivery of affordable housing through a range of innovative and effective solutions, while working collaboratively with a full range of stakeholders, both inside and outside the authority.

Affordable Housing

Outcomes

- An increase in the supply of market and affordable housing to meet identified local needs;
- Households assisted to gain access to affordable housing in all tenures;
- Provision of affordable housing has contributed social, economic and environmental benefits to the local community;
- Key stakeholders have been brought together and are working collaboratively to develop and sustain the provision of affordable housing across all tenures.

User and Community Satisfaction

- Evidence of community involvement in strategy development and delivery of affordable housing;
- Residents of the affordable housing consider that it meets their needs in terms of location, cost and design;
- Evidence that other stakeholders have valued the contribution that the local authority has made to working with them and helping to achieve joint objectives.

Vision and Strategy

A strategic approach to the delivery of affordable housing is one:

- which is based on a robust understanding of sub regional housing markets and an assessment of housing requirements, including the size, type and affordability of housing;
- where the local housing strategy sets clear priorities in the long and short term to make provision for a range of housing needs including the intermediate/key worker market and those with housing and support needs;
- where the local housing strategy includes an action plan which identifies the resources available and those responsible for the delivery of the strategy, including external partners;
- where the strategy is kept under review through regular monitoring of its implementation and action is taken when the strategy is not meeting its objectives;
- that demonstrates a range of innovative and effective approaches to meeting housing needs and tackling shortages of affordable housing;
- where the strategy is one that covers a mixture of rural and urban areas.

Consultation

- Where the strategy is developed through the involvement of the full range of stakeholders, both inside and outside the authority, including housing associations, developers and community representatives.

Partnerships

- Effective partnerships with relevant stakeholders to ensure that issues and priorities identified in the strategy are successfully addressed.

Actions

- Can show action taken to try and remove barriers to improving the supply of affordable housing;
- Has organised an effective system to monitor implementation of the strategy and the process for keeping the strategy up-to-date in the light of this evidence.

Asset Management



"The performance of a wide range of local services is directly affected by the way in which local authorities provide, use and manage their assets. Housing a service in a suitable building in the right location can make the difference between users experiencing a good or a poor service. Developing new and better ways of managing assets is crucial in delivering continuous service improvements, as well as in making best and most cost effective use of the authorities' resources. The Beacon Council Scheme will provide a valuable opportunity for local authorities to share their expertise in this area with others."

Rt Hon Nick Raynsford, Minister of State for Local and Regional Government

Local authorities' assets are used to deliver many of the services that are most valued by their communities. The type of assets held ranges from those most visible to their communities such as schools, libraries and community centres to less obvious holdings such as farms and investment properties. The local authority property portfolio is valued in excess of £80bn. Owning and using these assets is a major expense to local authorities – after staff, property is their most costly resource.

The drive towards efficiency, effectiveness and economy has accelerated the pace of change in the way that authorities organise service delivery. Alongside people, finance and information, property plays a key role in delivering better services. Integration of property into resources management is important. Being housed in a suitable building in the right location can make the difference between a good and a poor service. Put succinctly, successful asset management seeks *"The right space at the right time, in the right place, at the right cost"*.

The role of property in the drive to improve services underlines the need for excellence in asset management. Successful asset management will embrace a corporate and strategic approach and its benefits will include:

- ensuring assets' fitness for purpose;
- enhanced satisfaction of service users;
- improved health, safety, accessibility and environmental performance;
- optimised return on investment;
- the ability to demonstrate best value for money within a constrained funding regime;
- improved risk management and corporate governance;
- improved corporate image;
- sustainability.

Over recent years, most local authorities have put in place the systems and processes needed for good asset management. Reform of the capital finance system has seen the introduction of a prudential system where local authorities decide their own borrowing limits for capital projects and has further emphasised the need for good asset management and capital planning.

Beacons will be at the forefront in using asset management systems and processes and the new flexibilities provided by the prudential system to support delivery of strategic objectives, improve customer services and increase cost efficiency. They will treat property as a corporate resource and will be able to demonstrate a high level of user satisfaction with the location and quality of buildings.

Asset Management

Outcomes

- The council is developing new and better ways in which property assets support continuous improvement in the delivery of its services;
- The council has implemented the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (CIPFA) to ensure, with a clear framework, that;
 - the council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable;
 - management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice; and;
 - local strategic planning, asset management planning and proper option appraisal are supported;
- The council has improved health, safety, accessibility and environmental performance through the implementation of good asset management;
- The council is able to demonstrate that sustainability is actively considered as part of asset provision, use and management;
- The council has reduced its property maintenance backlog in both absolute terms and relative to the total value of its property portfolio and has reduced its holdings of surplus assets;
- The council's property holdings demonstrate best value for money within a constrained funding regime.

User and Community Satisfaction

- The implementation of the council's property strategy has resulted in the enhanced satisfaction of residents, service users, staff and partners.

Vision and Strategy

- Asset management is strongly oriented towards achieving the corporate vision for its services to the community and property is treated as a corporate resource;
- The council gives a high priority to asset management and property, with high level 'champions' and members involvement;
- The council has developed a strategic approach to asset management within an integrated approach to resources and service management.

Consultation

- The council has consulted stakeholders both inside and outside the authority, including residents, service users, service providers and council staff, and this consultation has informed the asset management plan.

Partnerships

- The council makes effective use of its assets by actively undertaking partnership initiatives with external service providers, such as other councils, government departments, voluntary groups, and the private sector;
- The council has a clear strategic approach to co-location with partners and other stakeholders.

Actions

- The council has prepared, and keeps under review, an effective asset management plan;
- The council's asset management plan is informed and underpinned by effective processes for linking to services planning, such as through service asset management plans;
- The council takes actions regarding property assets based on an analysis of an appropriate suite of local property performance indicators;
- The council's investment decisions are based on a clear business case resulting from the use of a formal corporate approach to option appraisal and whole-life costing;
- The contributions to the services provided to the community made by improvements in the council's property assets are targeted, measured, managed and kept under review.

Effective Environmental Health



“Environmental health issues impact on every aspect of life – from safe food, protection from pollution, safe workplaces, decent housing and prevention of infectious diseases. As the foundation function of modern local government, environmental health is the most cross-cutting function for which local authorities have responsibility. A Beacon theme will enable all local authorities to raise their performance”.

***Rt Hon Alun Michael, Minister of State for Rural Affairs,
Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs***

The relationship between environment and health is a complex one. People cannot insulate themselves from their surroundings – the air they breathe, the water they drink, the food they eat, the buildings and landscapes they inhabit. Over the period of one generation, attitudes to the environment and to the illness or health it may generate have undergone a revolution. People do not simply expect their environment not to damage their health; they increasingly expect social and environmental policies to actively promote their health and wellbeing. The environmental health functions of a local authority are therefore focussed on people, and a Beacon Authority will be able to clearly demonstrate the positive impact of its environmental health activities on local citizens.

A Beacon, in addition to demonstrating excellence, will not be failing in any area of environmental health provision. Beacons will have clear policies, strategies and resources for ensuring that all statutory duties are properly undertaken. Despite the statutory nature of many of the environmental health duties, stakeholder consultation and involvement is an essential element of effective environmental health interventions. Beacon Councils will operate services within the context of published good practice and established concordats.

For the purposes of the Beacon theme, the following core elements are considered to be the foundation of the environmental health service:

Food Safety, Health and Safety at Work, Housing, Environmental Protection and Health Promotion

In addition to performance in these ‘traditional’ core areas of environmental health, liveability and quality of life are repeatedly referred to by communities as the most important to them. Issues such as noise pollution, waste management and environments safe from anti-social behaviour are of great concern. Therefore effective partnership working with other local and regional bodies, community groups and local commerce will be a key feature of a Beacon Council’s approach to ensuring and sustaining the environmental health of its communities.

Beacon Councils will show innovation in the way resources are brought to bear on local environmental health issues, whilst ensuring that environmental health issues of regional or national importance are adequately resourced. Beacon Councils will have effective mechanisms in place to ensure that new responsibilities are effectively managed and delivered.

Effective Environmental Health

Outcomes

- Evidence that actions taken to address environmental health issues in the local community are achieving success. For example, priorities assessed in the planning process to address local environmental health issues are being actioned;
- Able to demonstrate that all national targets and statutory duties are being fully delivered. Local authority contributions to national policy targets are subject to evaluation against input of resources. For example, evidence to support reduction in workplace slips, trips and falls in local businesses as a result of environmental health interventions in accordance with revitalising health and safety strategy;
- Evidence of excellence and innovation in at least 2 of the core areas of environmental health. The remaining 3 areas must, as a minimum, not be failing and should be able to demonstrate realistic plans for improvement.

User & Community Satisfaction

- Evidence of satisfaction with the service received from key stakeholders including local citizens, businesses and audit reports received from external bodies.

Vision & Strategy

- Policies and strategies across the full spectrum of local authority activity show positive consideration and action on environmental health issues;
- A published public and environmental health strategy is in place that identifies key environmental health stresses and sets out national and local priorities, and identifies the resources available and actions necessary to address them;
- Appreciation of the importance of the local authority's role in public and environmental health protection.

Consultation

- Stakeholders are clearly identified, ie residents, communities, businesses, voluntary organisations, other statutory bodies, Primary Care Trusts;
- All local authority's strategies that impact on environmental health are subject to consultation and input from stakeholders.

Partnerships

- Can demonstrate effective partnership working with all relevant stakeholders. All partnerships within the authority will have an active environmental health contribution.

Actions

- Promotes sustainable communities and prioritises the protection and improvement of public and environmental health as a corporate objective;
- Has effective engagement with elected members on public and environmental health issues;
- Has clear policies and procedures for the use of enforcement powers, in line with guidance from relevant government departments, agencies and local government bodies;
- Has effective resource planning processes, including the recruitment and retention of appropriately qualified staff;
- Has satisfied all external audit criteria of government agencies and can provide evidence of adequate service provision in all areas of environmental health.

Getting Closer to Communities



"Change driven from the centre has its limits. It is vital that service reform is to be driven from the bottom, as well as enabled by the centre . . . The priority for reform . . . is to put the public at the heart of public services, making 'Power to the people' the guiding principle of public sector improvement and reform . . . Along with choice we must also provide the public with a louder and clearer voice . . . New forms of engagement are not an attempt to supplant local government, but to enhance it".

Rt Hon Tony Blair – The Prime Minister

Authorities getting closer to local communities, and enabling communities both to do more amongst themselves and to help to shape public services, is at the heart of the debate about how to strengthen communities, build civil renewal, reform public services, regenerate disadvantaged areas and invigorate local governance. Active citizenship is an essential complement to government action in all these spheres, in tackling discrimination and building cohesive communities.

A dynamic relationship between authorities and communities requires that, on the one hand, authorities deliver services in an effective and integrated way at a local level, and on the other, that they support the development of the communities' own role.

Engaging citizens in these processes requires support and capacity building to develop the skills and knowledge of local people; structures that are open and responsive to input and feedback; inclusive consultation procedures; a shared commitment to participation amongst all partners; and joint ownership of outcomes.

A successful Beacon on this issue will display a creative interaction between the different and complementary roles of the authority and its communities. The authority will have a strategy for invigorating communities' efforts to add their own characteristic forms of productivity and value to local society. There will also be widely devolved structures and participatory opportunities.

All of the above is likely to demand a local voluntary and community sector (VCS) with extensive and inclusive networks, which is constructively involved in dialogue with the authority – but there will be a high level of awareness of these developments not only in the organisations of the VCS but amongst the bulk of local residents.

Getting Closer to Communities

Outcomes

- Increased quality and degree of citizen participation, with an increasing number of residents being active in the community and building up social capital. Also greater opportunities for people to be involved in delegated structures and in public decision making, and being supported up the 'ladder of engagement';
- An increasing proportion of citizens, including hitherto excluded people, taking part in the voluntary and community sector; and greater community cohesion in the sense of confidence that people from different backgrounds and cultures can get on well together in the locality;
- Evidence that community engagement in designing and reviewing services has significantly improved the quality of life for local people;
- A co-ordinated approach between different partners, agencies and departments regarding their impact on local communities;
- Increased support for the effectiveness of the local VCS both as individual organisations and as a sector, including their role in providing services, with particular attention to community-led organisations.

User & Community Satisfaction

- Evidence that individual citizens and VCS organisations are aware of and satisfied with the ways that the authority is seeking to get closer to its communities;
- Evidence that individual citizens and VCS organisations are aware that they have the opportunity and capacity both to participate and influence services; and that they are satisfied with the opportunities to be involved in the design and review of services.

Vision & Strategy

- Cultural changes at all levels within the authority, so that mechanisms for creating stronger communities are championed and supported;
- Community choice over the way that services are delivered from a broad range of alternatives;
- Co-ordination of community development and capacity building across all departments and other local agencies;
- Indicators, targets and demonstrated outcomes for strengthening the local VCS and the participation in it of formerly excluded sections of the population;
- A recognition that getting closer to communities is likely to involve confronting difficulties and tensions, and evidence of creative approaches to overcoming these.

Consultation

- Evidence that the authority consults effectively all members of the community, including traditionally hard to reach client groups, feeds back its findings both internally, to other partners and to the community, and acts on the findings.

Partnership

This theme looks for genuine partnership at three levels:

- between the authority and its communities, with the communities' own agendas being valued and supported, not submerged in the authorities' processes;
- between departments across the authority, such that their different inputs to communities achieve synergy;
- between the authority and other local agencies, again to achieve synergy in the their impact on the community.

Actions

- Beacon authorities will have developed a coherent package suiting their circumstances. Methods may well be innovative, and clear baselines, targets and indicators should be in place.

Healthy Communities



"The Government has set out plans to tackle the stubborn, persistent and difficult to change health inequalities that exist across the country and improve the health of the most disadvantaged in our society. The involvement of local authorities will be vital to our success. We want to see local authorities leading, alongside primary care trusts, engagement with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and encouraging local partners to contribute to local plans, whilst also setting an example through leadership and its own activity."

Melanie Johnson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health

There are striking health inequalities between groups and areas despite increased national prosperity, wider opportunity and improving health over the last twenty years. The gap in life expectancy between and within local authority areas, and infant mortality between different social groups, continues to widen.

The reasons for these differences in health outcomes are complex. They are linked to peoples' social circumstances, such as the area in which they live, the quality and tenure of their accommodation (or lack of it), job, parental income, poverty in childhood, educational attainment, age, race, gender, and whether they are a member of a vulnerable group or have special needs. Such factors impact on personal behaviour affecting health such as smoking, alcohol consumption, physical activity and nutrition. Access to services, and the effectiveness with which people use them, is a key element.

A major challenge is to break the cycle by which poor health is passed down from one generation to the next. To increase the number of people from disadvantaged groups and areas adopting healthier lifestyles; and to provide a range of key services relative to need, in order to meet individuals' needs (including needs arising from culture, religion, race and language).

In July 2003, the Government set out the strategy to meet this challenge in *Tackling Health Inequalities: A Programme for Action*. Local authorities have a vital role to play in supporting the Government's strategy. Beacons will have accepted this role and will be leading and implementing a range of activity to promote healthier communities and reduce inequalities in health. Beacons will have identified and understood the health issues that effect their area and the causes of poor health and inequality.

Beacons will be providing high profile community leadership for improving the health outcomes of their area and will be working in close partnership with primary care trusts, other local partners and communities. Mainstream services and programmes will support health improvement and tackle inequality, particularly for the most disadvantaged. Key services, such as housing and transport, will be accessible and targeted to focus on disadvantaged areas and groups. Effective use will be made of the Health Scrutiny roles.

Healthy Communities

Outcomes

- Rapid and sustained progress towards government targets for reducing inequality, local key health indicators, and local priorities and actions;
- Substantial increases in the numbers of people from disadvantaged areas and groups accessing on a regular basis a broad range of services;
- Increasing levels of people adopting healthier lifestyles measured through reduction in smoking, improved diet and nutrition and increased physical activity.

User & Community Satisfaction

- Demonstrable response to identified local community health needs and inequalities;
- Evidence of increased satisfaction with health status and measures to improve local health outcomes.

Vision & Strategy

- A clear vision, strategy and commitment to promote healthier communities and reduce inequalities that is based on an assessment and understanding of the health needs of the area and the drivers of poor health and inequality; with activity based on evidence of what works;
- Health inequalities understood across the authority and all services and programmes take account of the impact on health inequalities through proactive measures such as impact assessment or proofing.

Consultation

- Strategies and policies developed through active engagement with communities and through working with the NHS and other partners, to understand and respond to the wider determinants of health locally;
- Local people and the voluntary and community sector involved in service planning and delivery.

Partnership

- Effective partnership working with the primary care trust, local strategic partnership and other local partners, to identify and agree local priorities for action and local targets, and to develop local plans;
- Effective LSP and District Partnerships bringing together a range of stakeholders from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to focus on healthier communities. Taking many of the major decisions about priorities and funding for their local area, and working in partnership to achieve priorities.

Actions

- Identification of key actions to tackle local drivers of poor health and inequality, including the key interventions for life expectancy such as:
 - reducing smoking in manual social groups through smoking cessation services and other tobacco control programmes, and preventing and managing other risk factors such as poor diet and obesity, physical inactivity and high blood pressure;
 - improving environmental health, including housing conditions and reducing the risk of accidents.

and those for infant mortality:

- improving the quality and accessibility of antenatal care and early years support in disadvantaged areas – building on the lessons of Sure Start – and improving housing conditions, especially for children in disadvantaged areas;
- reducing smoking and improving nutrition in pregnancy and early years, including increasing the number of mothers who breastfeed, and preventing teenage pregnancy and supporting teenage parents.

Integrated Children's Services



"Our vision is one of every child having the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and no child slipping through the net. We want a system where key services are integrated around the needs of children, young people and their families. Better outcomes require a whole system approach and a clear assessment of the contribution different specialisms make individually and together. Developing more effective and accessible services requires a cultural transformation in the relationship between frontline professionals – doctors, nurses, teachers, police and social workers. All too often in the past children have been let down by the different agencies not working as an integrated whole despite all working for a common goal. Integrated services are already being delivered through, for example, Sure Start Children's Centres, extended schools and multi-disciplinary teams. We are aiming to build on these foundations to promote and enable change based on a common understanding of how services can achieve better outcomes for children and young people; on commonly accepted principles; and on a shared understanding of effective practice."

Rt Hon Margaret Hodge, Minister of State for Children, Young People and Families

Currently the responsibility for the delivery of children's services is spread over a number of different agencies such as education, health, social and criminal justice services. This can lead to children coming into contact with several different agencies. While some areas have worked hard to improve co-ordination of services and to improve the experience of children and young people, there is in some cases evidence of a lack of effective co-ordination of service delivery and a poor experience by service users.

Every Child Matters published in September 2003 and the Children Bill and Next Steps document published in March 2004 laid out the Government's vision for the integration of key services in a single child-focused organisation. The Children Bill, currently before Parliament, creates the statutory basis for this vision to be made reality. We expect that by 2008 all Local Authorities will have a Director of Children's Services, a Lead Council Member responsible for Children's Services, and a Children's Trust to pool budgets and commission children's services.

The Government is not being prescriptive about how this is achieved and recognises the wealth of expertise and good practice that already exists. Local authorities have a huge role to play in establishing and sustaining integrated services. Councils need not necessarily integrate all the agencies involved in children's services but must demonstrate a systematic approach to joining up services and the ability to deliver a coherent experience for families.

Integrated Children's Services

Outcomes

- The authority will be able to demonstrate that they are having a clear positive impact on the life chances of children and young people, with less need for social services intervention, reduced crime, better child health and improved educational attainment.

User & Community Satisfaction

- Evidence should demonstrate that the children's services reflect the needs of the local communities and evidence to show how the users value the service.

Vision & Strategy

- The authority should have a clear commitment at strategic and operational levels to delivering integrated services for children, young people and families. It should be committed to integrating key services for children within a single organisational focus under a director of children's services; to involving the full range of partners that can contribute to improving children's lives; to creating a Children's Trust to commission services; and, at the level of service delivery, to multi-agency working to get effective and prompt help to children in a coherent way.

Consultation

- The authority should demonstrate that local strategies have been based on thorough consultation with relevant partners including young people and its own staff, and that consultees' views have been taken into account.

Partnerships

The authority should demonstrate that partnerships with local providers and others are effective in:

- reviewing impact and refining strategies;
- developing and supporting effective programmes and procedures; and,
- commissioning and delivering integrated services at the point of need.

Actions

Authorities should be working towards, or have achieved:

- commissioning and delivery of effective integrated universal, targeted and specialist services for children and families;
- development of cross-agency assessment and information sharing systems;
- breaking down professional barriers to multi-agency working;
- clear and robust lines of accountability and communication;
- effective team working and protocols identifying lead professionals;
- strategies for early intervention and prevention of problems;
- accessible child-focused services, using methods such as co-location of services in extended schools and/or multi-disciplinary teams;
- careful planning and management of necessary changes.

Promoting Racial Equality



"Our aim is to build strong, integrated and confident communities. This requires that people from all ethnic backgrounds have access to opportunities and that public services treat people fairly irrespective of their ethnic or religious differences. All public bodies are now under a positive duty to promote good race relations and, if we are serious about bringing about real and lasting change, we need to work together and with people in communities to make that duty a reality. That is why I am so pleased that race equality and community cohesion has been chosen as a theme for the Beacon scheme"

Fiona Mactaggart, Home Office Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for race equality, community policy and civil renewal

Britain has a long tradition of successful migration and integration that has brought, and continues to bring, real economic and social benefits. Black and minority ethnic communities make up 9% of the population in England and whilst it is true that many of our cities have higher proportions, all local authority areas have a minority ethnic population. Significantly, six Councils, including a rural District and a Best Value Fire Authority, were awarded Beacon status for the theme of community cohesion in Round 4. Successful integration in Britain does not mean assimilation into a single established culture. The great diversity within and between all ethnic groups is a source of strength. Ensuring that people are able to access the same opportunities and life chances and knowing that their public services will treat them equally irrespective of ethnicity or faith are essential principles of our diverse society. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a positive duty on public authorities to actively promote race equality and good relations between different ethnic groups. The RR (A) A is the most progressive anti-discrimination legislation in Europe. To achieve this the Act requires public authorities to publish a race equality scheme, which sets out priorities and how they will be tackled, with a three year action plan covering 2002/05. Those plans should now be bringing about real change in race equality outcomes. It is important that Beacons will be able to demonstrate and share through best practise the following areas:

- identifying and closing disproportionality gaps in service delivery outcomes in education, housing and homelessness, social care, regeneration;
- local authority services are provided in ways which meet the needs of different ethnic and faith groups;
- employment, progression and retention rates are representative of the local communities that the local authority serves;
- all communities feel that they are consulted and involved in setting the strategic and operational priorities of local services and have confidence in the local authorities community engagement strategies;
- local authority planning and services positively encourages good relations between different racial and faith communities including groups such as gypsies and travellers that are often ignored;
- they will have effective systems for carrying out impact assessments of proposed authorities.

To achieve Beacon status, authorities will need to demonstrate that they have a clear overarching vision of race equality and good relations between different racial and faith communities. They will have identified how they are using consultation and community engagement strategies to create and build ownership of the approach to tackling inequalities and ensuring good relations. They will have successful multi-agency partnerships that properly reflect the communities that they serve. They will have in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that they are constantly learning and refining their strategy.

Promoting Racial Equality

Outcomes

- The authority should provide evidence that actions taken to address the issues and priorities identified in the race equality scheme are achieving success;
- measurables such as BVPI performance, attitude survey results and local indicators such as income and employment statistics are relevant.

User & Community satisfaction

- Authorities will have in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that they are constantly learning and refining their race equality schemes. These must include active engagement with local communities.

Vision & Strategy

- There will be an overarching equality and cohesion strategy that explicitly links to the mainstream operational business of the authority; or specific community cohesion and equality objectives in the overarching community strategy; or race and cohesion forms an explicit part of the overall strategy;
- the strategy should set out how it intends to identify and close disproportionality gaps in service and employment gaps. The Political leadership has a clearly defined role as champion for equality and cohesion.

Consultation

- Engage with local agencies and communities in developing sustainable and innovative approaches to promoting race equality and good relations between different racial and faith communities.

Partnerships

The authority should demonstrate that the partnerships with local providers, its communities and others are effective in:

- reviewing and refining the overall strategies;
- developing and providing effective programmes in support of the theme; and,
- supporting the integration of these approaches into the authority's services more widely.

The authority should also consider how it could use procurement to further the outcomes set by the strategy, particularly the development of minority businesses as part of the supply chain.

Actions

Local authorities should have delivery arrangements that ensure:

- disproportionality gaps in service delivery outcomes in education, housing and homelessness, social care, regeneration are being actively identified and closed;
- services are provided in ways which meet the needs of different ethnic and faith groups;
- employment, progression and retention rates are representative of the local communities that the local authority serves;
- all communities feel that they are consulted and involved in setting the strategic and operational priorities of local services and have confidence in the local authority's community engagement strategies;
- planning and provision of services positively encourages good relations between different racial and faith communities.

Supporting Carers



"Carers are vital to our communities. They enable people to stay in their own homes and remain independent for as long as they wish. In recognition of this role carers have a right to expect high quality flexible services not only to support them in caring but also to enable them to make choices about their own lives. I am delighted that supporting carers has been selected as one of the themes for Round 6 of the Beacon Council Scheme. It means that the best councils will have the opportunity to share their ideas and show just how innovative services for carers can be."

Dr Stephen Ladyman, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health

The 2001 Census shows that of the 5.2 million people providing informal care in England and Wales, just over 1 million provide over 50 hours of care per week. This is a large number of people providing significant levels of care and enabling people to live longer in the community, which is what over three quarters of people say they want.

Studies suggest that caring is likely to be associated with inequalities in mental and emotional health including fatigue and physical health problems, which can result in social exclusion. Carers providing substantial amounts of care are statistically more likely to be working part-time or be out of work. With appropriate support, carers are less likely to become marginalised while they care for someone and will be more able to return to work when their caring role ceases.

Services for carers have tended to focus on supporting the relatively small group of people who need high levels of support and that reduce the demand on the carer. This may be appropriate in some cases, but well-timed sign-posting often ensures that carers and those they care for do not need such significant interventions. By providing services, which promote independence and choice, and by providing flexible, responsive support for carers the sustainable caring situation can be maintained.

Social services have been seen as the primary, and often sole, provider of this support but it is recognised that because carers are a diverse group of people services to support them, must be appropriate for their individual needs. This includes the NHS, in particular primary care, which carers say is often their first point of contact.

Beacons will:

- take a strategic approach to developing services that reflect local carer and national priorities;
- be able to demonstrate that their services promote independence and choice for carers and those that they care for;
- promote active citizenship by establishing effective channels for communicating directly with all groups of carers and show that the resulting views are taken into account in future service planning;
- demonstrate commitment to delivering excellent services to carers by communicating their vision and aims to the staff and public;
- be working in partnership with a range of local statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations to ensure that services are comprehensive, co-ordinated and avoid duplication;
- provide high quality information on the services they offer to carers in a range of accessible formats. Information will make clear the choices available and the main eligibility criteria for services. It will also signpost customers to the other partners involved in supporting carers.

Supporting Carers

Outcomes

- Services are delivered to those who need them and their carers strategically to maximise the well being of the community, particularly the socially excluded who are most likely to benefit from support;
- Carers receive an appropriate level of support to enable them and those they care for, as far as possible, how and where they choose.

User & Community Satisfaction

- Carers and partners are involved in the development and delivery of services and feel that their issues and concerns are acknowledged and acted upon;
- Services are supported by all sections of the community and there is public confidence in the appropriateness, fairness and responsiveness of services to support carers.

Vision & Strategy

- A local carers' strategy, or evidence of strategic planning for carers is in place covering all services, that carers use or might use such as housing, education, transport and leisure;
- Evidence that this strategic planning has been developed in consultation with carers themselves as well as other statutory and voluntary sector providers;
- Local objectives and performance measures reflect local carers' priorities, as well as national priorities as set out in the Delivery and Improvement Statement.

Consultation

- Appropriate mechanisms for direct communication are established with the full range of carers including those who are harder to engage with, such as black and ethnic minority or rural carers;
- Evidence that the council is making efforts to reach out to carers who are not known to them (hidden carers) through a variety of means;
- Evidence that the contribution of carers who have been involved in the consultation process is acknowledged and their views informed future service planning.

Partnerships

- Good working relationships are established with partners providing services for carers and those they support from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors;
- Specifically evidence of partnership working with the health services;
- Partners are involved in developing co-ordinated services both formally, for example through Local Delivery Plans and on a more informal basis.

Actions

- The council demonstrates its commitment to delivering carer-focused services by communicating its vision to the staff and public. Staff programmes to promote commitment to the principles of carer-focused services are in place;
- Services are planned in a co-ordinated way across the council and;
 - actively promote independence and choice;
 - treat carers with dignity, respecting individual cultures and lifestyles;
 - are fair and consistent;
 - are accessible to all carers and address the issues of social exclusion;
 - are sufficiently flexible to meet individual needs;
 - are capable of adapting quickly to changing circumstances.

Supporting New Businesses



"Small businesses are the modern dynamos of our economy. And Beacon Councils have a proven track record of delivering key government objectives – acting as exemplars and pioneers. My Vision is for Britain to be the best place to start and grow a business, and last year 465,000 new businesses were started – a leap of almost 1/5th on 2003. We are enlisting the support of experienced local authorities who share our objectives and want to develop best practice to encourage more people to start local businesses. The work they do as a result of this initiative will help lay the foundations of future prosperity for every community."

***Nigel Griffiths, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business,
Department of Trade and Industry***

Start-up businesses are important. They help create jobs, and the 'churn' of more effective and innovative firms replacing the less efficient ones is an important contributor to productivity growth and a competitive economy. However, research shows that the UK's entrepreneurial performance lags behind that of the United States.

'Encouraging a Dynamic Start-up market' is one of the seven core strategic themes for increasing UK productivity in the Government's Action plan for helping small businesses (www.sbs.gov.uk).

Encouraging more people to think about starting a business or to become self-employed will increase the levels of entrepreneurial activity. It is also important to ensure that people receive the help and advice that they need in order to maximise the chances of them starting businesses that are successful and grow.

All people should be able to realise their potential. Research suggests that start-up performance varies between different social groups. An effective start-ups strategy will therefore also be one that seeks to address imbalances by providing services tailored to meet specific needs.

With their local knowledge and infra-structural responsibilities, councils are uniquely positioned to play a key role in helping Britain to be a place where new businesses can thrive.

Supporting New Businesses

Outcomes

- Project work must show that strategies are having a positive impact on problems identified locally and that there is an increase in the numbers of people starting a business within all community groups.

User and Community Satisfaction

- As part of project monitoring, feedback from users on their use of the start-up services provided should reflect satisfaction levels, with such feedback forming an integral part of the process of reviewing the start-ups strategy.

Vision and Strategy

- The authority must have a demonstrable commitment at strategic and operational levels – linked to and supportive of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) of their Regional Development Agency – to encouraging and helping more people to start businesses, or to become self-employed.

Consultation

- Within the framework set by the RES and local economic development plans, the authority's strategy to show proper understanding of the issues involved in encouraging and helping local people to start businesses, and that proposed interventions are not being met by other providers in the locality.

Partnerships

- Partners, including Business Links, will have been consulted to identify the local factors inhibiting people from starting a business, and develop practical proposals for overcoming perceived problems.

Actions

- There are a variety of ways in which local authorities can encourage and help more people to think about starting a business. Some suggested areas are;
 - Web site signposting people to sources of help, eg the Business Link;
 - Events supported which promote running a business as a viable option;
 - Encourage provision of low cost units for start-ups and micro-businesses and of business incubation facilities;
 - Provide advice on local regulations applying to their proposed business.

Sustainable Energy



"The UK Energy White Paper made clear that there was a key role for local authorities in helping to deliver our objectives, including the take up of energy efficiency, renewables and other low carbon technologies. Consistent with their role as community leaders, a number of local authorities are already taking innovative approaches to promote sustainable energy, using a range of powers and working through wide partnerships. We therefore committed through the Energy White Paper, to establish this beacon councils theme to give these authorities an opportunity to disseminate their good practice

and show others what is possible."

**Stephen Timms, Minister of State for E-Commerce and Competitiveness Lord Whitty,
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Food, Farming and Sustainable Energy**

The Government's Energy White Paper commits the UK to putting itself on a path towards delivering 60% reductions in CO₂ emissions by 2050, with 'real progress' by 2020. This builds on the Government's existing domestic goal to move towards a 20% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions on 1990 levels by 2010, and its target, under the Kyoto Protocol, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 12.5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12. Energy efficiency, renewable energy and a shift towards new, low carbon vehicles and fuels will be the focus of attempts to deliver these challenging carbon reductions.

Local authorities, working alone or with other local and regional partners, already have a potentially crucial impact on the development of energy efficiency, renewable energy and other low carbon technologies. For example, through the use of planning and development control; the way in which they approach local housing, regeneration, economic development and skills; and through the management of their own operational property and their procurement practices. Local authorities also have a critically important role in promoting domestic energy efficiency because of the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995 and through galvanising action by local communities, businesses and other key local stakeholders, consistent with their role in providing community leadership.

Beacons will have taken a strategic overview of the opportunities for promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy and other low carbon technologies in their local community or economy. This overview will take account of both the contribution to national and (where they exist) regional carbon reduction objectives, but will also define clear priorities based on the needs of and benefits for the local area (for example, economic opportunities, an urban or rural setting etc).

Beacons will have defined objectives for their local area and have developed strategic partnerships (with energy generators, supply companies, network operators, R&D centres, community groups, Non Government Organisation (NGO) and other public sector bodies) to achieve them. These partnerships will draw together a range of existing functions, strategies and funding sources to drive action.

Beacons will also be taking a lead in reflecting sustainable energy objectives in the management of their own operational property and their own procurement.

Sustainable Energy

Outcomes

- A clear and measurable contribution to the achievement of national carbon targets.
- Clear benefits for the local community, in terms of cost savings, economic benefits, reductions in fuel poverty, improved quality of life etc.

User & Community Satisfaction

- Evidence that the vision for sustainable energy reflects local needs and delivers benefits for the local community, including positive feedback from those benefiting from projects promoting energy efficiency and low carbon technologies.

Vision and Strategy

- Community leaders, businesses and other key local partners engaged to champion sustainable energy at the highest level and brought together in a partnership to agree a long-term, viable vision for sustainable energy, based both on a contribution to national objectives and identified opportunities in their areas.
- Specific, measurable local objectives defined, a plan of action drawn up and clear monitoring arrangements put in place to track progress.

Consultation

- Works through a strategic partnership with those with a strong interest or role in sustainable energy to engage local communities and business and encourage the take up of energy efficiency or low carbon technology by these groups.

Partnerships

- Local activity co-ordinated with a range of public and private partners including other local authorities and regional partners, as part of a wider regional or sub-regional approach.

Actions

- Demonstrates new and innovative approaches and technologies (eg renewables), and/or effective use of proven measures (eg insulation) and/or combines different approaches (eg low carbon generation and energy efficiency measures). Also looks for ways of achieving other energy policy objectives (such as reductions in fuel poverty) through low carbon initiatives;
- Clearly integrates achievement of sustainable energy objectives into both action in a range of local functions and strategies, including planning and housing and also into the management of local authority operations and procurement. Looks for innovative ways to use powers to promote the economic, social and environmental well being;
- Effective at identifying, accessing and utilising existing or new forms of funding for local sustainable energy initiatives, both public and private.



Part 5

General Performance

The following pages provide guidance on how the general performance of those authorities not subject to CPA will be assessed, and what information applicants need to supply.

The questions which appear on the Application Form are duplicated here, but please note that application forms must be downloaded from the IDEa website at www.idea.gov.uk/beacons, completed and e-mailed to beacons@idea.gov.uk by Thursday 9 September 2004.



General Performance

The Beacon Council Scheme uses CPA as the main method for determining general performance. All authorities subject to CPA will not be required to submit any general performance data.

Only authorities with a Weak or above rating will be considered for Beacon status.

Authorities rated Poor are **not** eligible to apply and an authority that receives a Poor CPA rating in a CPA refresh during the assessment process will need to withdraw its application.

What you need to do

For other authorities the assessment of general performance in the sixth round of the scheme will be based on a cross-section of evidence from a range of sources.

To ensure the necessary information for the general performance assessment, these authorities must:

- Provide a copy of their most recent Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and the Audit Report on the plan;

The Panel will look for evidence of a positive approach to best value, with clear plans for performance improvement and well thought-out review programmes. The clarity of BVPPs will also be taken into account.

- Provide a copy of their most recent District Audit Management Letter.

If the letter suggests that there are significant problems, the authority should include a note explaining how it has addressed those problems.



Part 6

Dissemination of Good Practice

The following page features the questions that appear in Part 3 of the application form.

The questions which appear on the application form are duplicated here, but please note that application forms must be downloaded from the IDeA website at www.idea.gov.uk/beacons, completed and e-mailed to beacons@idea.gov.uk by Thursday 9 September 2004.



Beacons – Helping to share expertise, ideas and practice

The strength of the Beacon Scheme is its ability to identify and share the wealth of examples of good practice that exists so that local government as a whole can learn and improve services and standards. By disseminating what works well, the Beacon Scheme as a whole achieves its objective of having a positive impact on service improvement. Effective dissemination is therefore the foundation on which the beacon application and assessment process rests.

In becoming a Beacon, the authority enters into a commitment with the ODPM to share their good practice, experience in service delivery excellence and innovation, and lessons learnt, with the wider best value authority community and theme partners. This is achieved through a national programme of activities co-ordinated and supported by the IDeA, together with local activities co-ordinated by Beacons themselves.

Beacons are expected to offer formal and informal learning opportunities. These are designed to share information more widely and help share experiences and behaviour that result in improvement in services and standards elsewhere.

Initially, Round 6 Beacons will take part in a series of national Learning Exchange Events that are co-ordinated by the IDeA, during June/July 2005.

Beacons will also host at least one open day between October and December 2005. Both the Learning Exchanges and Open Days will provide the beacons with an opportunity to publicise their excellent practice, and provide delegates with the chance to hear about a diverse and innovative range of activities that will stimulate thought within the delegates' own authorities.

The IDeA will market and host the Learning Exchanges, and will market the Open Days and will retain income from the open days to fund the national marketing campaign.

Following the open days, the Beacons will be encouraged to provide a range of learning activities that improve the capacity of delegates to support and deliver service improvement. These initiatives may include:

- Promoting partnerships and twinning arrangements to share scarce knowledge and skills;
- Setting up learning networks and support groups (existing or new) for service managers and councilors to share experiences, learn and focus on what matters; and

- Providing opportunities and resources to enable mentoring, secondments, shadowing.

The IDeA will liaise with national partners to ensure that key learning points from Beacons are brought to the attention of all that would benefit from them. The IDeA will also be identifying partners with whom the Beacons will work to influence policy development.

Together, Beacons and the IDeA will develop a theme-specific learning activities calendar that reflects a range and mix of learning activities.



Fees for events and activities

The delegate fee for attending each learning exchange and initial open day will be £80 + VAT.

Following the learning exchange event and initial open day, Beacons will be able to charge for subsequent learning activities and events to offset the cost. These fees do not need to be accounted for in the audit information provided to ODPM/Audit Commission after the end of the financial year. Further guidance can be obtained from the IDeA Beacon Team.

Dissemination and the application and assessment process

The Beacon application form provides applying authorities with the opportunity to convince the Advisory Panel for Beacon Councils that they have taken the question of dissemination seriously.

Application Questions

The following three questions that appear within Part 3 of the application form are intended to encourage best value authorities to begin thinking about how good practice will be shared.

1. On the basis of the practice you have described in Part 2 of the application form, what are the key messages you have to share and who do you see as the audience for these?
2. Beyond the national Learning Exchange event and initial Open Day, what are your ideas on how you might share and make your practice accessible to others?
3. What resources or expertise will you be able to commit to the sharing and spread of good practice to other authorities?

Assessment of dissemination

If your application for Beacon status is short-listed, an IDeA representative will attend your authority as part of the visit team. You will also be sent a learning activities calendar proforma to complete and return to the IDeA. (Once beacon status has been announced, learning activities calendars will be combined into a theme-specific learning activities calendar).

Within your learning activities calendar, you will need to demonstrate that you have given thought to:

- The probable programme of learning activities you want to deliver (and how this relates to your key messages and target audiences) and your experience of such activities to share good practice;
- The level of co-ordination and administrative support that will be made available;
- Ideas and resources for your own marketing activities;
- An outline timetable of how you would gear-up for your year as a Beacon;
- Names of officers and members that you would make available on a strictly limited basis as peers for the specific Beacon theme.

Following dialogue with yourselves on your answers within Part 3 of the application form, your learning activities calendar and your assessment visit, the IDeA will brief the Advisory Panel on whether your application demonstrates an appropriate commitment to sharing your experiences.

Visit the IDeA www.idea.gov.uk/beacons to find out further information about the Beacon Scheme and dissemination of good practice.

Contact IDeA Beacon enquiry line (020 7296 6587).

Annex A

Membership of the Panel 2004

Core Members

Marianne Hood (Chair)

Independent Adviser and Housing Consultant

Susan Angoy

Managing Director of the Angoy Consultancy

Dr Mohammed P Aslam

Chief Executive of Worcestershire Racial Equality Council

Angela Cornforth

Councillor, London Borough of Greenwich

Clive Grace

Director-General, Audit Commission Wales

Mark Greenburgh

Solicitor, Wragge & Co

Olu Olasode

Public Service Productivity and Strategic Finance Consultant

Linda Phipps

Independent Consultant on Local Government Improvement

Neil Wightman

Local Government Officer, London Borough of Camden

Alan Woods

Chief Executive of ENCAMS

Specialist Members

Steve Wilcox

Professor at the Centre of Housing Policy at the University of York
Affordable Housing

Jo Lavis

Investment Manager for the East Midlands Housing Corporation
Affordable Housing

Robert Lee

Chair of the RICS Local Government Panel
Asset Management

Ian Foulkes

Director of Policy at the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
Effective Environmental Health

Gabriel Chanan

Director of Research and Policy at the Community Development Foundation
Getting Closer to Communities

Dame Yves Buckland

Chair of the Health Development Agency
Healthy Communities

Ros Clayton

Independent Adviser on Education and Children's Services
Integrated Children's Services

Gerald Lemos

Partner, Lemos & Crane
Promoting Racial Equality

Alison Ryan

Chief Executive, Dorset Hospice and Cancer Care Services
Supporting Carers

Martyn Robertson

Head of Business Start-Up at Leeds Metropolitan University
Supporting New Business

Professor John Chesshire OBE

Economist and Policy Adviser
Sustainable Energy

Annex B

Best Value Performance Indicators (2003/2004) relevant to themes

Performance indicators have been identified for only the following three themes in this Round:

Environmental Health

BV166 – checklist of enforcement best practice for environmental health/trading standards.

BV199 – street cleanliness indicator.

Promoting Racial Equality

BV2 (b) – the duty to promote race equality.

Sustainable Energy

BV63 – improving SAP ratings for social housing.

BV180 (a) – the energy consumption of local authority operational property, compared with comparable buildings in the UK as a whole.

Submitting an Application – Checklist

The aim of this checklist is to help you complete your application easily and correctly. By completing it, it will ensure all stages of the process have been covered and that all the necessary documentation is supplied.

Before submitting an application you may wish to:

1. Visit the IDeA www.idea.gov.uk and ODPM www.odpm.gov.uk/beamcouncils websites to find out further information about the Beacon Scheme (including possible links to websites relevant to your theme)
2. Brainstorm with key people in the authority (including front-line staff) to ensure all aspects of your good practice are identified
3. Look at past applications on the the IDeA Website www.idea.gov.uk/beacons
4. Speak to authorities who have applied for Beacon status in the past, both successfully and unsuccessfully. (The IDeA can help find contacts if necessary)
5. Attend one of the regional briefings in July organised by ODPM and IDeA to explain the Scheme, the focus of the themes and the process itself
6. Contact ODPM and IDeA Beacons Teams with any further queries.

IDeA Beacons Enquiry Line: 020 7296 6587

ODPM Beacons Enquiry Line: 020 7944 4104

**NOW TURN OVER TO SEE THE STEPS TO FOLLOW FOR
COMPLETING YOUR APPLICATION**

Completing the Application Form

All the points below must be completed to ensure you submit an application in full.

1. Complete a downloadable intention to apply form and return it to IDeA by **Wednesday 25 August 2004**.
The form is available at www.idea.gov.uk/beacons and should be returned by e-mail to beacons@idea.gov.uk
2. Complete parts 1 to 3 of the downloadable application form. The form is available at www.idea.gov.uk/beacons
3. Return the application form by e-mail to beacons@idea.gov.uk by **Thursday 9 September 2004**. The e-mail should be titled with the name of your authority, followed by your Government office region and the theme under which the application is being made.
4. One copy of any User Satisfaction Data should be sent direct to MORI at

Beacon Council User Satisfaction Data
Nicholas Gilby Senior Research Executive
MORI Social Research Institute
79-81 Borough Road
London SE1 1FY
5. Applications made jointly by one or more authorities should include:
 - One intention to apply form (with lead authority as the main contact)
 - One application form (with lead authority as the main contact)

