Charter Mark Early Re-assessment / Continuous Improvement Report

For

REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE
EDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Assessor: Nick Page

Visit Date: 2nd November 2005

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Appendix 1: -

Meeting statements (Hard copy retained by EMQC)

1. Strengths and areas of best practice

- You achieve a high level of performance against challenging targets.
- The introduction of a weekly telephone survey is giving you valuable feedback on customer service standards.
- Your ongoing consultation and working arrangements with Age Concern and Eden CAB ensure a better quality of service to customers.
- Staff are involved in service improvement; they are well trained, work in supportive teams and are rightly proud of their achievements.

2. Potential areas for development / continuous improvement.

- You could develop further the use of *Eye on Eden* and the website to publicise target and performance information, to explain dips in performance and any action planned as a result.
- Consider ways of measuring performance against customer service standards in your Charter and tell people the results.
- Consider how to quantify the success of joint working arrangements.
- Continue improvements to the quality of your written information, in response to customer and staff feedback.
- Further progress needed on publishing details of suggestions, compliments and complaints.
- Consider how you can contribute further to improving opportunities and quality of life in the wider community.

3. General findings against each Criteria of the Standard

a) Set standard and perform well

As a Charter Mark holder you need to show that you organisation continues to set clear service and performance standards by consulting customers; meet those standards; monitor and review performance against standards and publish these results; these should be put into practice and monitored with as little unnecessary paperwork and administration as possible.

- You have precise, measurable and challenging standards, both national and local. These are reviewed annually and raised where possible.
- There are sound monitoring systems in place and regular reporting of performance.
- Standards are met to a very high level, consistently one of the top performing councils.
- Staff are involved in target setting, as are co-providers who also represent customer views.
- Some publication of standards and performance is on the website and in *Eye on Eden*, though there is scope for development of this.
- Your standards and targets are meaningful and relevant.
- Action is taken on dips in performance and reported upon internally.

b) Actively engage with your customers, partners and staff

You need to show your organisation actively work with, consults and involves present and potential customers, partners and staff to make sure it delivers high-quality services. Is open and communicates clearly and effectively in plain language and in a number of different ways and provides full information about services, their cost and how well they perform.

- Consultation is ongoing through surveys, meetings and and comments cards; you have now introduced a weekly telephone survey of benefits claimants.
- Staff are involved in service planning; they are consulted and their suggestions heard. The results of consultation are recorded and analysed and you publish the results of your consultations.
- You demonstrate that consultation has a direct effect on your services.
- You have strong working arrangements with other providers, supported for the CAB and Age Concern by *Working Together* agreements.
- Information is exchanged effectively and relevant details given to customers.
- Joint working is cost-effective and of benefit to customers.

c) Be fair and accessible to everyone and promote choice

As a Charter Mark holder you need to show you continue to make services easily available to everyone who needs them, offering choice wherever you can and treat everybody fairly in access to services and service delivery, and pay particular attention to people with special needs.

- Services are easily accessible by phone, letter, e-mail or personal visit. You make good use of technology, both for information and for access.
- Staff respond promptly and politely and identify themselves appropriately.
- You offer a wide range of choices in payment method and location; you are currently developing online direct debiting.
- Access to services is affordable; you provide a free phone for reporting of fraud.
- Staff consult customers with special needs on an individual basis; regular meetings with Age Concern enable consultation about the needs of older people.
- Your public areas are fully accessible to people with disabilities; you have loop facilities for the hard of hearing.
- You ensure home visits are made where the special needs of customers require it. Customer care, equality and diversity policies are supported by appropriate staff training.

d) Continuously develop and improve

You need to show that your organisation always looks for ways to improve services and facilities, particularly when using technology; rectify things quickly and effectively; learns from and improves as a result of complaints, compliments and suggestions; and has a clear, well-publicised easy to use complaints procedure, with the opportunity for independent review wherever possible.

- You produce an annual Service Plan.
- Your service and performance continues to improve. High customer satisfaction shown in earlier surveys is supported by feedback from your current telephone surveys; you record and analyse this.
- You continue to make good use of new technology; a range of procedures and the new Financial Management System are now on the staff intranet.
- You use the Council's corporate complaints procedure. You make it clear that you welcome the comments of customers, including complaints.
- Staff are empowered to deal with customer dissatisfaction and are keen to resolve matters with customers wherever possible.
- Records are kept for complaints, compliments and other comments and you record timescales and outcomes for formal complaints.

- Although the number of formal complaints is published there is no public record of informal complaints, compliments of suggestions received.

- The complaints procedure is being reviewed at a corporate level and you have passed on relevant comments for consideration, including on the follow-up to complaints.

e) Use your resources effectively and imaginatively

For your organisation's main activities, you need to show that the organisation continues to use resources effectively and imaginative to provide best value for taxpayers and customers and your financial management is effective

- Financial targets are met and you have sound monitoring systems.

- You are able to make efficiencies and take on new work without any loss in performance.

- You demonstrate effective management of your resources, achieving optimum performance through adjustments in staff deployment and roles.

- You continue to benchmark with other providers the relative costs of your services.

- Budget management and use of resources is subject to internal audit.

- Staff are aware that their performance in collecting tax and combating fraud provides value for money for the Council and the customer.

- Improving value for money is a consideration in all service planning.

f) Contribute to improving opportunities and quality of life in the communities you serve

You need to show your organisation continues to review and is aware of its impact and potential usefulness in the local and national communities you serve and has continues to make some contribution to enriching the social or economic life of those communities, beyond the strict requirements of excellent service delivery , through positive, discretionary initiatives and imaginative use of resources.

- The Council's joint Community Strategy addresses issues of quality of life, opportunity and equality.

- You have conducted a survey of staff's contribution to the wider community.

- The Council gives corporate support and invests appropriate resources in its involvement in the wider community.

- There is a range of activity within the Council and within your service showing positive involvement in the community; this includes your contribution to sustaining rural shops and post offices and a variety of voluntary and charitable initiatives. Frequent press releases publicise these activities.

- Planning of such activities within your service could be more focused.

4. Conclusion

The Revenues and Benefits Service of Eden District Council complies with the requirement of the current version of the Charter Mark standard. I have highlighted areas of good practice, and also areas for further development.

You have given attention to areas for continuous improvement and continued to build upon those areas where you were already fully compliant with the standard.

There are no actions that require immediate attention and therefore I am pleased to pass my recommendation onto EMQC's Certification Committee for the Revenues and Benefits Service to be recognised as meeting the standard and therefore, subject to approval from the Committee, you will be awarded a Charter Mark for a further three year period, subject to ongoing surveillance.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for you kind hospitality and cooperation during this assessment.

Nick Page
Charter Mark Assessor

3rd November 2005

5. Compliance against the Standard

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Best Practice	Full Compliance	Partial Compliance	Major Non-Compliance
1	1.1	1.1.1		X		
		1.1.2		X		
	1.2	1.2.1		X		
		1.2.2		X		
		1.2.3		X		
		1.2.4		X		
	1.3	1.3.1		X		
		1.3.2		X		
		1.3.3		X		
		1.3.4		X		
		1.3.5		X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Best Practice	Full Compliance	Partial Compliance	Major Non-Compliance
2	2.1	2.1.1		X		
		2.1.2	X			
		2.1.3		X		
		2.1.4		X		
		2.1.5		X		
		2.1.6		X		
	2.2	2.2.1		X		
		2.2.2		X		
	2.3	2.3.1		X		
		2.3.2		X		
	2.4	2.4.1		X		
		2.4.2	X			
		2.4.3		X		
		2.4.4		X		
		2.4.5		X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Best Practice	Full Compliance	Partial Compliance	Major Non-Compliance
3	3.1	3.1.1		X		
		3.1.2		X		
	3.2	3.2.1		X		
		3.2.2		X		
		3.2.3		X		
		3.2.4		X		
	3.3	3.3.1		X		
		3.3.2		X		
		3.3.3		X		
		3.3.4		X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Best Practice	Full Compliance	Partial Compliance	Major Non-Compliance
4	4.1	4.1.1		X		
	4.2	4.2.1		X		
		4.2.2		X		
		4.2.3		X		
		4.2.4		X		
		4.2.5		X		
	4.3	4.3.1		X		
		4.3.2		X		
		4.3.3		X		
		4.3.4		X		
		4.3.5			X	
		4.3.6		X		
		4.3.7		X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Best Practice	Full Compliance	Partial Compliance	Major Non-Compliance
5	5.1	5.1.1		X		
		5.1.2		X		
		5.1.3		X		
		5.1.4		X		
		5.1.5		X		
	5.2	5.2.1		X		
		5.2.2		X		

Criterion	Sub-Criterion	Element	Best Practice	Full Compliance	Partial Compliance	Major Non-Compliance
6	6.1	6.1.1		X		
		6.1.2		X		
		6.1.3		X		
	6.2	6.2.1		X		
		6.2.2		X		
		6.2.3		X		
		6.2.4		X		

Appendix One

CHARTER MARK EARLY RE-ASSESSMENT / CONTINOUS IMPROVEMENT VISIT – CLOSING MEETING		
Client: Revenues and Benefits Service Eden District Council		**Ref No:05/1657**
Assessor: Nick Page	**Location: EDC offices**	**Date: 2nd November 2005**

Statement regarding the start of the visit	**Tick appropriate**
At the beginning of the visit the assessor:	
▪ Assured us of their confidentiality	**X**
▪ Explained the process and purpose of visit	**X**
▪ Asked if any significant changes had taken place since the last visit, with regards to key personnel, structural changes or changes in the delivery of the service or remit of the certificated organisation	**X**

Is Action Required	**Yes X**	**No**
If yes the action is	**Tick appropriate**	
Reduce partial compliances by next surveillance visit	**X**	
Produce action plan for non compliances with agreed action and timescales and submit to EMQC by ……		

Assessor Recommendation	**Tick appropriate**
Re-award Certification	**X**
Removal of Certification	
Action Plan to be produced to adhere to non compliances and submitted to EMQC within an agreed timescale	

Statements regarding the closing meeting	**Tick if appropriate**
At the end of the visit the assessor:	
▪ Reviewed any partial or non compliance they found and informed us of areas for further development and best practice.	**X**
▪ Verified the use of logo	
▪ Explained the appeals procedure	
▪ Reassure confidentiality	**X**
▪ Acknowledge client cooperation and hospitality	**X**
▪ Return any client documentation	
▪ Solicit Corrective Action proposals and agree timescales for closure of any non compliances	
Questions / Comments / Items to be checked at the next visit: **Action to be taken on area of partial compliance.** **Consideration to be given to areas for development and continuous improvement.** **All elements of the Charter mark criteria to be kept under review.**	

Signed by Client

D.J.Rawsthorn
(Director of Finance)

Signed by Assessor

D.N.Page

2nd November 2005