

Appendix C – Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council’s ‘Innovation Framework’ – 8 self assessment questions

1. Citizen and service user focus – key questions

- Are citizens’ and service users’ priorities and aspirations central to your approach to innovation?
- What would most improve the lives of your local residents and service users, at the same time as saving costs?
- How well do you understand your citizens’ and service users’ diverse and changing aspirations, needs and priorities? (Are operational managers ‘walking in service users’ shoes’, and engaging ‘leading edge’ service users in innovations? Do you have online mechanisms and/or regular events to capture the changing views/needs of citizens and service users?)
- How effectively are you developing innovations with citizens and service users, helping to change local expectations and behaviours?
- How effectively are you unlocking and developing the capacity for innovation within local communities?

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1	Managers go out of their way to understand service users’ and local residents’ concerns so that they can work out how best to innovate, while saving costs.	Elected members proactively represent the issues and concern of their local communities. Managers involve service users to create innovations that both meet their needs and save costs.	Elected members, managers and employees work with local residents to create innovations that meet their needs and save costs.

2. Vision and clear priorities for innovation – key questions

- Is the political vision, and priorities, clear?
- Is the vision ambitious and inspiring, but attainable, in the unfolding strategic context?
- Are elected members clear about the most important areas for innovation in the medium and long-term?
- Are elected members prepared for experimentation, considered risk taking and necessary failures in these areas?
- Do elected members / senior managers share their ambitions with a wider (external) audience?

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
2	Elected members and senior managers are very clear about where the key innovations need to happen.	Elected members’ and senior managers’ ambitions for innovations are inspiring, but achievable.	Elected members and senior managers share their ambitions via local government journals and local media.

		Organisational structures are flexible to support innovation.	
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3. Elected members and managers drive innovations – key questions

- Are elected members and managers effectively driving innovation and doing all they can to make innovations happen?
- Is the top team of elected members and managers focusing enough time and effort on innovation?
- Are they setting a sufficient, but sustainable, pace? Are leaders and managers bold, forward-looking and united?
- Are they convincing communicators? (Do they listen and respond to feedback, including from critics and mavericks?) Is decision-making appropriately devolved?
- Do leaders and managers fully understand and operate innovation processes and techniques? Do they persist until innovations work?

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
3	Elected members and managers are convincing and inspiring when they explain why innovations are needed.	Elected members and senior managers are determined to achieve innovations. Elected members and senior managers are united in doing all they can to ensure innovations are successful.	Managers persist, despite the difficulties and barriers, until an innovation works.

4. Innovation project support – key questions

- Are senior managers providing the right support for key innovation projects?
- Is there a strategic approach to innovation?
- Are there clear plans and accountability for innovations?
- Is there sufficient resources and time devoted to innovations?
- Are there effective innovation project leaders?
- Are major innovation processes protected from organisational norms and pressures?
- Are relevant innovation processes operating in each service?
- Do you have policies that support intelligent, well-managed, appropriate risk taking?
- Is there the flexibility to seize new opportunities, and to adapt when experiments fail?
- Do you have the expertise to fully exploit the latest new technologies (for use by employees, citizens and service users)?
- Do you apply for Pathfinder funding sources from central government departments?

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
4	<p>People working on key innovation projects have the time, support and money they need to succeed.</p> <p>Risks are identified and managed.</p> <p>Elected members and management acknowledge that errors/failures are part of the innovative process.</p>	<p>The organisation makes the most of the latest new technologies to achieve innovations.</p> <p>Barriers are overcome.</p>	<p>The organisation participates in central government Pathfinder schemes to develop innovative new approaches to service delivery.</p>

5. Working practices promote innovation – key questions

- Does your organisational culture (including day to day working practices) promote innovation?
- Is innovation demonstrated through leaders' and managers' everyday behaviours, practices and stories?
- Is innovation demonstrated through values, norms and working practices?
- Is there the safeguarding of time for reflection and creative thinking?
- Is innovation demonstrated through involving people with challenging and diverse views?
- Do you encourage fresh approaches and healthy debates, challenging and testing accepted assumptions?
- Do you pro-actively look elsewhere for fresh ideas (e.g. from regional / national conferences, other sectors and internationally)?
- Do you celebrate innovations?
- Do you submit successful innovations for national recognition and awards? (Do you maintain an awards database for PR purposes?)
- Is there a no-blame approach, when well-planned experiments fail?
- Is the organisation recognised as an example of best practice in any areas? (Do you present at regional / national conferences or submit best practice articles to local government journals?)

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
5	<p>Day to day working practices encourage everyone to come up with ideas for innovations.</p> <p>If you successfully innovate, everyone celebrates and praises your achievement.</p>	<p>Elected members proactively represent the issues and concern of their local communities.</p> <p>Managers and employees look for innovative ideas outside of the council.</p>	<p>Elected members and managers encourage debate and listen to people with different views, including critics and people with very different ideas and opinions.</p> <p>The organisation acts as a</p>

	<p>Successful innovations achieve the final stages of national awards.</p> <p>National award successes shared with residents and services users via local media.</p> <p>When carefully planned experiments go wrong, everyone tries to learn from the failure.</p>	<p>good practice reference site for aspects of service delivery / development of working practices.</p> <p>Managers / key officers are invited to present at regional / national conferences to share their best practice approaches.</p> <p>Managers / key officers submit articles on good practice to local government journals.</p>
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6. Cross organisational innovations – key questions

- Does the organisation work across services and across organisational boundaries to achieve innovations, e.g. shared service provision?
- Are cross-boundary approaches generating significant innovations?
- Are you successfully delivering innovations through cross-council working?
- Are you successfully delivering innovations through positive partnerships with external organisations?
- Are you successfully delivering innovations through your commissioning, procurement and contract management arrangements?
- Are you selling your innovative products/services to other organisations?
- Do elected members support managers in seeking opportunities for shared service provision or selling products/services?

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
6	Managers and employees work with people from other council services to achieve innovations.	Managers and employees work with people from external organisations to achieve innovations.	<p>The organisation is a leading authority for shared service provision.</p> <p>The organisation capitalises on its innovative strengths by selling products/services developed in-house to other organisations.</p>

7. Employee support for innovation – key questions

- Are your employees motivated and skilled for innovation?
- Do you have enough employees, in the right positions, with:
 - a commitment to achieve the council’s vision and priorities?
 - fresh perspectives and ideas?
 - the determination and drive to make innovations happen?
- Do you encourage all employees to come up with and develop better ways of doing things?
- Is there a central point for ideas submission that is accessible to employees?
- Do you involve frontline employees in innovation processes?
- Do you recognise and reward employees for innovating?
- Do you respond to employees’ concerns about innovations?
- Do you deal with job losses or role changes fairly?

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
7	Processes in place to encourage, capture, review and recognise employee ideas.	Managers listen to and respond to employees’ concerns about the impact of proposed innovations.	Managers involve employees in planning and implementing innovations.

8. Tracking the delivery of key innovations – key questions

- Do you have effective, disciplined delivery mechanisms for innovations?
- Do you have effective ways of tracking and delivering innovations (such as programme and project management)? (Do you share these via established networks?)
- Do you have sufficient innovation process experts to support delivery of major innovations?
- Do you have significant innovations being achieved in all services?
- Do you have a systematic approach to evaluating and learning from both successful and unsuccessful innovations?

	Bronze	Silver	Gold
8	Operational project and programme management in place for the consistent delivery of projects.	Elected members and senior managers have effective ways of tracking the progress of key innovation projects to make sure they happen.	Innovative monitoring mechanisms / toolkits are shared via best practice networks.