

# London Borough Council Counts on Hamilton Rentals

Responsive IT equipment  
hire service ensures  
Council has the resources  
to handle local elections  
with confidence

Hamilton Rentals enables a London Borough Council to  
handle the fast and secure processing of postal ballots.

# Background

## Managing local authority elections

Along with the other 31 London boroughs, this Council has full responsibility for handling local electoral arrangements.

In addition to the local elections which occur every four years, the Council is also tasked with managing the elections for the Mayor of London and the London Assembly, which also take place on a four-year cycle. Plus, the Council has to handle arrangements for European Parliamentary elections.

Outside of these 'predictable' electoral cycles, the Borough needs to prepare fast for by-elections that can take place should a local councillor unexpectedly step down. And these days, technology plays a vital role in enabling the smooth running of electoral operations.



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# The challenge

## The Rising Popularity of Postal Voting



In recent years, the Borough has experienced a surge in demand for postal votes. Today, around 40,000 registered voters in the Borough typically apply for a postal ballot paper and each year this number continues to grow.

Governed by strict guidelines issued by the Electoral Commission, the Borough Council has to ensure that the validation of returned ballot papers is strictly monitored and managed.

Two weeks before polling day, a specially trained 'pop-up' validation team starts working on postal returns. Based at a secure location, the team checks the unique ID number of each ballot paper, validates voter signatures, and ensure that the ballot paper is not spoiled or counterfeit.

The ballots are then scanned, recorded and processed by the returning officers and valid ballots are secured in a postal ballot box ready for counting on polling day.

"I've been supporting the electoral teams since 1988, and the process has changed dramatically with the introduction of technologies such as scanning and barcodes," explains the IT Manager tasked with enabling electoral processes.

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"Since 2001, any elector has been entitled to request a postal vote without giving a reason. As a result, it's become increasingly popular with the voting public," he continues. "This means we need to support the teams set up to handle the growing volume of postal votes – providing them with equipment such as laptops, printers and screens."

To cope with these exceptional events, the IT Manager works closely with Hamilton Rentals to secure the equipment the Council will need to process postal votes in a timely manner.

"We no longer hold sufficient spare IT resources to support short term requirements such as this," he explains. We need to source reliable IT equipment at relatively short notice, and in a cost-effective way – and renting from Hamiltons enable us to do just that."

# The solution

## Temporary office set up – at a predictable cost

Working in partnership with Hamilton Rentals ensures the Council has all the IT equipment it needs to get the postal voting team up and running well ahead of polling day.

“At least six weeks prior, I provide Hamilton’s with a detailed schedule of the equipment the Council will require – typically, this includes laptops, monitors and printers,” explains the IT Manager.

“I also request that applications such as Windows 10 and Microsoft Office are pre-loaded, before delivery to me ready for set up with scanning and electoral reporting software.”

To ensure that everything runs smoothly, the IT Manager ensures that he always orders a couple of spare items for redundancy purposes.

“From experience, I know it’s important to have stand-by kit in case more staff join the postal vote validation team – or something unforeseen occurs. I just pick up the phone and ask for what I need – and they’ll deal with it quickly and efficiently on the same day.”

Once the election is complete, everything is returned to Hamilton Rentals for decommissioning and data wipe.

“We remove any sensitive reports but have the added confidence of knowing that Hamilton Rentals will also complete a full data cleanse on our behalf,” continues the IT Manager.

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# The outcomes

## A cost-effective and responsive service

For the Council, renting IT equipment to support short-term requirements such as elections is a cost-effective way of ensuring the right resources are available for its people in a timely way.

"There's no requirement to invest in hardware that will then sit in a store-room for months or years. We only rent what we need, for as long as we need it, at a fixed and predictable cost," confirms the IT Manager.

It's an approach that's proved ideal for short term events such as elections, which create a demand for specialist kit that's surplus to every-day requirements.

Knowing that he can rely on the highly responsive team at Hamilton Rentals is also important to the IT Manager.

"Events such as elections happen within a tightly defined time-frame and there's no room for error or delay. It's a very stressful time for all concerned and my job – with the help of Hamilton Rentals – is to ensure we support the Council to carry out its electoral duties to the letter."

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## Why Hamilton Rentals?

As the electoral process continues to evolve, it's important the IT Manager can call on Hamilton Rentals to request the very latest technologies at a moment's notice.

"The requirements for each election are different, so retaining equipment on stand-by for such events is difficult to predict," he explains.

"Renting gives us the flexibility to support any demand, including requests for new technologies as the validation and checking processes become increasingly automated."

"It helps that I know the team at Hamilton Rentals are always available on the phone to discuss every last detail of the requirement. I know I can count on them to deal with any last-minute changes or requests – something that's crucial when you're responsible for handling something as critical as an election."

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