

Back to front: Efficiency of back office functions in local government

Self-assessment checklist for officers and councillors

Reviewing your council's back office efficiency performance in SR04

What were the total SR04 efficiency gains?

- How will you use the experience of SR04 to plan your approach to CSR07?

What was the level of back office contribution?

- How will you maintain/increase that contribution in CSR07?

How did your performance compare with other councils?

- How could other councils' performance during SR04 help you to choose future actions?

How did you ensure that back office efficiency gains:

- Were used to support local priorities?
- Were sustainable?

What lessons from SR04 will you take forward to develop your CSR07 strategy?

What were the main internal and external efficiency pressures on your council during SR04?

- How well did you respond to them?
- What are the lessons for your council's approach to CSR07 pressures?

What are the likely efficiency pressures on your council during CSR07?

- How robust is your assessment of these pressures?

What were the barriers you had to overcome during SR04?

- What lessons have you learned?
- What are your plans to deal with remaining barriers or new ones that might appear during CSR07?

How would you characterise your council's broad approach to back office efficiency in SR04:

- Transactional?
- Transitional?
- Transformational?

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What were the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?

- How will they change in CSR07?

What lessons have you learned from your own experience?

What lessons can you learn from others?

What approach do you aspire to in the future?

- How are you going to achieve it?

How will you ensure sustainability of efficiency gains?

How can you strengthen your council's approach to back office efficiency?

What was your council's balance of internal, mutual and external methods for achieving back office efficiency gains in SR04?

- Which methods were most successful?
- How did each method contribute to your overall efficiency gains?
- What did you learn about the effectiveness of different methods – and how will that learning be sustained in CSR07?
- How will you ensure success is sustained?
- How will you build on that success?
- How can experience of SR04 help you choose future actions?

What obstacles prevented you from using a wider range of methods?

- What future obstacles might you have to deal with?
- How can you effectively challenge those obstacles?

How do you ensure that there is capacity and capability to deliver efficiencies?

- How will you develop it to meet the challenges of CSR07?

How did you compare your performance during SR04?

- How will you use comparisons in CSR07?

What role did senior managers and elected members play in the SR04 back office efficiency programme?

- How could that role be strengthened for CSR07 back office efficiencies?

How effective was your council's management and leadership of back office efficiency programmes in SR04?

- What are the main lessons for CSR07?

How can your council strengthen the management and leadership of efficiency programmes?

- How do councillor and officer development programmes support the management and leadership of efficiency?
- How does your council make the most of links between back office efficiency programmes and its other efficiency activity?

How well does your council match up to the four elements of an effective back

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office efficiency programme:

- Are efficiency gains agreed as a means to meeting local priorities, not externally imposed targets?
- Is there a consensus in support of efficiencies?
- Are there robust approaches to challenge and delivery?
- Is there a commitment to chosen techniques?

Copies of the full report *Back to front: Efficiency of back office functions in local government* are available at: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/backoffice>

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