

The Government's Efficiency Programme – How Ready is My Council? Key Questions for Elected Members

The LGA asked the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to produce this checklist of 10 questions for elected members on the efficiency review. They are questions that members could ask officers to gain a full picture of how their authority has responded to the efficiency agenda and in particular, how likely their authority is to achieve efficiency gains.

These questions are intended to be 'living' and will be updated as the efficiency agenda moves on. They will be placed on the LGA website and sent to members.

The Government's Efficiency Programme – How Ready is My Council?

Key Questions for Elected Members

1. When **CPA 2005** comes into force, how well will the council score on efficiency (the "**use of resources**" block)? Will we be able to maintain or improve our score once efficiency has this new higher weighting?
2. What arrangements will we make for **political leadership** of this new agenda – **executive and scrutiny**? How will this fit with arrangements we have in place for finance, performance management, best value, e-government and procurement?
3. Where will **responsibility** lie **at officer level**, including corporate management team? Which team will lead and co-ordinate our response to the new agenda including the preparation of the first Annual Efficiency Statement due in April 2005? How will this fit with officer arrangements for financial management, procurement etc?
4. Are we actively contributing to the work of the **Regional Centre of Excellence** and participating in the efficiency projects it is developing? Are we clear how the RCE and the support programmes of national agencies can help us meet our efficiency targets?
5. Will our **budget for 2005/06 deliver the first year target of 1.25% cash savings** (half of the 2.5% overall efficiency gains required)? Are we confident that the savings will count as efficiencies and not as service "cuts"? If not, what are we planning to do about it? Do our medium term financial strategy and capital investment strategy build in cashable efficiency savings of at least 1.25% in each of the next three financial years? To what extent do other corporate strategies (asset management strategy, IEG4, procurement strategy etc) and service strategies and business plans already target efficiencies?
6. Into which **frontline services** will we **redirect resources** released through efficiency savings? How will decisions about redirection be made? Will any proportion of the savings be used to keep Council Tax down?
7. What more can we do to **improve the productivity of our staff**, particularly the amount of time spent providing services to the public? Do we support them with technology, new ways of working, the reduction of red-tape etc. and as well as managing sickness absence?
8. Do we have a clear picture of the **efficiency of our corporate support services** (finance, HR, ICT, property, procurement, legal, communications etc.) and transactional services (revenues and benefits, planning) in relation to similar councils, the national average and "world class" organisations? Do we measure

their performance? Have best value or similar strategic reviews been carried out or are they underway?

9. What scope is there for efficiencies through **joint procurement of goods, works and services with other councils** (and public bodies)? Are we members of a procurement consortium? Do we make use of public sector wide contracts where these represent best value for money?

10. Through our **LSP and other partnerships** have we created a vision for the future shape of public services in the area? Does it address improvements in efficiency and effectiveness that might be achieved if public bodies collaborate (e.g. sharing customer services, accommodation, support services, joint procurement)? Are we looking beyond our boundaries to collaboration across the sub-region and region?