

L.O.C.A.L AUDIT

A high-level assessment framework to determine how strategic your Council is.

RATING SCALE This diagnostic uses a five-point Likert scale for each criterion:

1 = Never 2 = Not very often 3 = Some of the time 4 = Most of the time 5 = Always

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

PERSPECTIVE

RATING

The average payoff period of decisions made at the Council table is over 10 years.

Council and executive team meetings focus on strategically significant decisions and opportunities.

Risks and consequences are discussed at a multi-generational and multi-stakeholder level.

PERSPECTIVE SCORE

RELATIONSHIPS

There is demonstrable collegiality and warmth between the elected and executive.

Councillors respectfully disagree in private and public forums without personal conflict and regularly reach consensus.

Executive managers give free and frank advice without fear or defensiveness.

RELATIONSHIPS SCORE

DECISIONS

The criteria and process for how to make a strategic decision is well understood by Councillors and officers. Councillors are involved in the scoping and design stage of significant decisions and policy reviews.

Council papers and reports are brief, clear, and focused on trends, options, and outcomes. All recommendations are clearly linked to strategic priorities, true options are provided, and relevant risks are detailed. Uncertainty is exposed and workings are shown.

Contentious decisions are accepted once made and not relitigated in Chambers or the media.

DECISIONS SCORE

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

SYSTEMS

RATING

Managers have the resources, support, and capabilities needed to deliver their work programme or there is a roadmap to address gaps.

Executive team meetings focus on enterprise-wide concerns, opportunities for collaboration, or removal of organisational barriers to performance.

Staff broadly agree with the statement that 'they are empowered to do their job'.

SYSTEMS SCORE

ALIGNMENT

The relative importance of medium-term and short-term priorities is clear across the organisation.

Departmental and individual performance objectives are linked to the achievement of broad strategic goals.

Core IT systems, project management frameworks, and policy approaches prioritise collaboration and integration.

ALIGNMENT SCORE

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Total score

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Total score

THEME SCORE KEY

3-5

6-8

9-11

12-14

15

Very low.
Immediate
action is
required.

Low.
Priority for
change.

Moderate.
Needs
work.

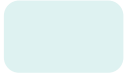
High.
Doing well.

Very high.
Nailing it!

YOUR L.O.C.A.L RESULT

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP & STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP COMBINED

Total score



COMBINED SCORE KEY

15–27

28–39

40–50

51–63

64–75

Lagging. Very low strategic capability.

Overwhelmed. Low strategic capability.

Compliant. Moderate strategic capability.

Ambitious. High strategic capability.

Legendary. Very high strategic capability.

THE L.O.C.A.L COUNCILS MODEL

STRATEGIC CAPABILITY	KEY CHALLENGES	DEVELOPMENT AREA	PUBLIC VALUE
L egendary	Fear	Risk	100x
A mbitious	Focus	Decisions	10x
C ompliant	Speed	Relationships	5x
O verwhelmed	Volume	Perspective	2x
L agging	Dysfunction	Trust	1x



THE L.O.C.A.L COUNCILS MODEL

LAGGING COUNCILS

Lagging Councils are often dysfunctional. Politicians and officers pursue separate goals and agendas, leading to widespread frustration. People disagree about who should do what, and governance and organisational processes and policies are applied inconsistently. Councillors are mistrusting and suspicious, and Council managers are defensive and condescending. Stories about Council incompetence and dysfunction are in the news and on social media.

The prescription for overcoming dysfunction in a Lagging Council is to build trust, particularly within and between Councillors and staff.

OVERWHELMED COUNCILS

Overwhelmed Councils are busy and reactive, just keeping their heads above water. They spend lots of time answering emails, attending meetings, and dealing with emergencies. Staff feel 'overwhelmed but underutilised'. The community is at its wits' end with the state of local infrastructure – though it tends to be the same people complaining. Councillors don't understand why the Council can't get the basics right and often take on the mantle of constituent frustration.

The prescription for an Overwhelmed Council to manage volume is a more diverse and longer-term perspective.

COMPLIANT COUNCILS

Compliant Councils are keen to make things happen. This is often a 'Council of change', with a mandate to operate differently – perhaps after a failed project or a period of administration. Trust is low but rising, and people want to get things right. The signs are bright, but miscommunication and frustration still occur between Councillors and managers. There are too many papers to read, meetings run too long, and decisions get stuck.

The prescription for a Compliant Council to pick up the pace is to collaborate more productively.

AMBITIOUS COUNCILS

Ambitious Councils have big dreams and a long wish list, and they're making great progress. Councillors work together respectfully, use meeting time well, and stay (mostly) out of the weeds. There is a trusting relationship between the Council and the executive, but managers still tend to over-inform. Trust in policy and process is high, and staff and politicians freely suggest ideas for improvement. However, staff engagement levels can plateau, and burnout is a risk.

The prescription for an Ambitious Council to find focus is to make more strategic decisions.

LEGENDARY COUNCILS

Legendary Councils have a shared vision and alignment on priorities. Unnecessary bureaucracy is stripped away, and project delivery rates soar. There is high trust and demonstrable collegiality between elected members and executive managers. Councillors disagree without personal conflict and regularly reach a consensus. Executive managers give free and frank advice without fear or defensiveness. Decisions, once made, are accepted and not re-litigated. The Council's community reputation is solid, and councillors help maintain an active and positive relationship with the media and stakeholders.

The prescription for a Legendary Council to move beyond fear is to take strategic risks.

