

Executive

26 May 2009

Report of the Assistant Director of Resources (Customer and Governance)

Data Quality Policy

Summary

1. The report presents a draft corporate Data Quality Policy for Executive Member consideration and approval.

Background

- 2 In recent years there has been an increasing requirement for councils to have robust, clear and effective data quality policies in place to ensure data quality is considered every time key decisions are made and to drive performance improvement.
- 3 Currently the council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality are assessed by the Audit Commission at Level 2 (adequate) and an action plan was developed last year to improve this position by addressing the Audit Commission's recommendations. Key areas were identified for improvement in terms of organisational ownership and accountability for data quality and the need to strengthen the Council's senior level commitment to the importance of data quality. This was embedded in the Single Improvement Plan for 2008/09 and the related milestones substantially completed resulting in the production of the draft Policy attached at Annex A to this report. Outcomes and actions arising from annual Data Quality external audits are monitored by the Audit & Governance Committee.
- 4 The Audit Commission have made it clear that they view data quality as important given that much of what the council decides to improve, and how well it says it is performing, is dependent on the foundations of accurate data and information. This affects all aspects of performance management including the CPA/CAA assessments, achieving the corporate priorities and the Local Area Agreement.

Key Audit Commission Recommendations

- 5 Below are the key recommendations provided by the Audit Commission in 2007/08 to improve the quality of data across the council which are specifically addressed by the draft Data Quality Policy:

R1	Raise the profile of data quality and develop a high level commitment to improving data quality.
R2	Integrate data quality guidance and procedures within the performance management framework.
R3a	Develop corporate arrangements for assuring the quality of data for in-year reporting.
R3b	Implement arrangements for assuring the quality of data for in-year data.
R4	Review and specify lead officer roles and responsibilities for corporate and directorate performance collection and reporting.
R5a	Establish a system to monitor the consistency of application of existing data quality procedures.
R5b	Implement a system to monitor the consistency of application of existing data quality procedures.
R6	Strengthen data quality review and reporting arrangements and in particular reporting of outcomes to senior officers.
R7	Identify third party information sources and formalise arrangements for specifying, collecting and validating data from external third party sources.

Development of the Policy

- 6 Key to the council's response was the development of the draft corporate Data Quality Policy to embed existing good data quality arrangements and to emphasise the importance of ownership of data quality at all levels across the organisation in particular at a senior level.
- 7 The draft Policy aims to address all of the recommendations set out above and provides a framework within which officers can work. The council needs to have the right data, at the right time, at the right cost. It has many good working practices in place but to get a consistent approach across directorates, the Policy aims to:
- a) outline a corporate vision including governance and leadership;
 - b) embed the fundamental principles of data quality across the organisation;
 - c) embed a three stage data quality process including roles and responsibilities;
 - d) identify current knowledge and training needs;
 - e) set out the council's data quality standards;
 - f) develop a systems integrity framework.

Progress made to date

- 8 The draft Policy was taken to Directorate Management Teams (DMTs) between September and October 2008 to introduce the key elements and to agree a way forward for each directorate in terms of:
 - a) who would take the lead;
 - b) which indicators they considered necessary to assess;
 - c) which information systems that hold data relating to key indicators need to be reviewed; and
 - d) how the policy will be reported back.
- 9 DMTs generally agreed with the key principles of the Policy but more work is needed to answer some of those questions above. All DMTs agreed to self assess their Local Area Agreement (LAA) indicators first, then look at the National Performance Indicators (NPIs) and other key internal indicators.
- 10 A programme of regular progress reports will be discussed at either DMT or a designated forum in the directorates to continuously improve their approach to data quality.
- 11 Group discussion with the Performance Officer Group and Internal Audit between October and November 2008 led to the creation of an 'information systems integrity check framework' which is now available for directorates to work with. The aim is to ensure that all relevant information systems are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure collection and recording of data within such systems is of appropriate quality.
12. Other planned improvements include:
 - a) assessment of other indicators including NPIs and key information;
 - b) roles and responsibilities review of officers who deal with performance data to develop greater understanding of how performance data produced across the different directorates;
 - c) review of additional recommendations recently received by the Audit Commission for 2008/09 which include:
 - i. incorporating data quality into appraisals and job descriptions;
 - ii. design and deliver training to performance officers;
 - iii. strengthen partner arrangements;
 - iv. incorporate risk in collection arrangements.

Consultation

- 13 The draft Data Quality Policy has been written in consultation with:
 - a) the Performance Officer Group,
 - b) the Internal Audit team,
 - c) the Data Quality Champion (Director of Neighbourhood Services),
 - d) the Corporate Management Team,
 - e) the Audit Commission,
 - f) the Executive member for Corporate Services, and

- g) the Audit & Governance Committee (endorsed the draft Policy at its meeting on 13 January 2009).

Options

- 14 Members can choose to:
- a) accept the draft Data Quality Policy as presented;
 - b) suggest amendments to the draft Policy.

Corporate Priorities

- 15 Since the achievement of all corporate priorities are assessed through key performance indicators then it is vital that the Data Quality Policy is followed to produce reliable, accurate, timely and accessible data.

Implications

- 16 (a) Financial – there may be some financial implications due to actions required to solve data quality problems identified through use of data quality toolkits.
- (b) Human Resources (HR) – there are no HR implications.
- (c) Equalities – there are no equalities implications.
- (d) Legal – there are no legal implications.
- (e) Crime and Disorder – there are no crime and disorder implications.
- (f) Information Technology (IT) – there maybe some IT implications depending on the results of systems integrity checks.
- (g) Property – there are no property implications.
- (h) Other – the implications of not addressing data quality issues are widespread and could lead to a poor Corporate Assessment in CAA and unreliable data which crucial decisions are based.

Risk Management

- 17 The Audit Commission has identified the following risks of not addressing weaknesses in data quality:
- information could be misleading;
 - decisions may be flawed;
 - resources may be wasted;
 - poor services may not be improved; and
 - policy may be ill-founded.

The corporate implications for City of York Council is that these could result in incorrect decisions being made which could impact adversely on service provision to the community.

Recommendations

18 Members are asked to agree the following:

(a) approve the draft Data Quality Policy.

Reason: To raise the profile of data quality, develop a high level commitment to improving data quality and ensure a consistent approach.

(b) to agree that progress in achieving the requirements of the Policy is reported annually to Audit & Governance Committee and Executive.

Reason: To strengthen data quality review and reporting arrangements and in particular reporting of outcomes to senior officers and members.

Contact Details

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	Report Approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Date 11 th May 2009
	Chief Officer's name: Ian Floyd Title: Director of Resources		
	Report Approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Date 12 May 2009
Specialist Implications Officer(s) <i>Not applicable</i>			
Wards Affected:			All <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Annexes

Annex A: Draft Data Quality Policy

Background Information

Review of Data Quality Arrangements 2007/08 and 2008/09 – Audit Commission