

	
<b>Audit and Governance Committee</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2009
Report of the Assistant Director (Customer Service & Governance)	

## **Data Quality Policy and Progress Report**

### **Summary**

1. The report presents a draft corporate Data Quality Policy for the Committee's consideration and outlines the progress made towards implementing the Audit Commission's recommendations from January 2008.

### **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. Last year the council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality were assessed by the Audit Commission at Level 2 (adequate) and an action plan was developed to move to Level 3 (good) by addressing the Audit Commission's recommendations. There were key areas 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.
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. Data Quality is also a theme picked up in the Single Improvement Plan.

## Audit Commission Recommendations

- 5 Below are the recommendations provided by the Audit Commission to improve the quality of data across the council:

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.

## Data Quality Policy

- 6 Key to the council's response was the development of a 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 set out at Annex A, aims to address all of the recommendations set out above and provides a framework within which officers can work in. 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:
- outline a corporate vision including governance and leadership;
  - embed the fundamental principles of data quality across the organisation;
  - embed the three stage data quality process including roles and responsibilities;
  - identify current knowledge and training needs;
  - set out the council's data quality standards;
  - 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:
- who would take the lead;
  - which indicators they would like to assess;
  - which information systems they would like to look at that hold data relating to key indicators; and
  - 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 Regular progress reports will be discussed at either DMT or a designated forum in the directorates to continuously improve their approach data quality.

## Data Quality Self Assessment – LAA and Local Indicators

- 11 Assessment of the 35 LAA and 13 local indicators began in November 2008 with the Performance Officer Group. Annex B shows the scores for each indicator using a template based on the Data Quality Self Assessment Matrix found at the back to the draft Data Quality Policy.
- 12 Initial Data Quality Scores (5 being good) for LAA and Local Indicators were as follows:

	Accuracy	Validity	Timeliness	Accessibility
LAA Indicators Average	<b>3.97</b>	<b>4.07</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>3.55</b>
Local Indicator Average	<b>4.00</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>3.25</b>
LAA scoring 1-3 (of 35)	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>
Local scoring 1-3 (of 13)	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

- 13 Analysis of where there is reliance on external data or a local partner:

Reliance on:	External Data	Local Partner
LAA Indicators (of 35)	<b>25 (71%)</b>	<b>13 (37%)</b>
Local Indicator (of 13)	<b>8 (62%)</b>	<b>4 (31%)</b>

- 14 Below is a summary of some of the key data quality issues arising from this early work:

14.1 Accuracy:

- Some survey data is voluntary therefore low participation can distort figures.
- Limited data sharing agreements set up with local partners.
- Data has to be “cleaned up” due to complicated collection arrangements.
- Assumptions or human judgement that rely on different people cause fluctuation.
- Seasonal variations not being addressed.

14.2 Validity

- Counting rules not being released or being too complicated.
- Limited knowledge within service about indicators and how they are calculated.

14.3 Timeliness

- LAA information that relates to surveys or those only supplied on an annual basis.
- Many figures are not released until finalised and verified which can cause delays to directorate and corporate performance reporting.
- Sometimes data is up to two years out of date due to the way they are counted.
- Limited trend data due to indicators being new or limited supply from external source.

14.4 Accessibility:

- External data supplied by partners or government agencies either does not come with enough detail or is difficult to get a hold of.
- Information which is available on request limits access or causes delay.
- Licences on software products either not provided or too expensive.
- Websites with limited access.

14.5 External and Local partners:

- A high proportion of indicators rely on external information (70%).
- Over a third of information comes through partners and the relationship with partners needs to be continuously improved.
- A major problem with partner data is that it will only be available once national information is verified and uploaded to the data exchange hub. Whilst this is currently not being , it is planned for the future.

15. Some actions are in place to combat some of these problems and each DMT (or a designated forum) will have to look into these assessments in more detail to take further action where needed. Below are some of the areas they will need to consider:

- improve data sharing with partners to improve timeliness and accessibility to data, eg. have more data sharing arrangements recorded;

- decide for which indicators the frequency of reporting needs to change due to changes in directorate priority or strategic importance;
- improve the amount of trend data available;
- improve the release of provisional data (e.g. estimate year end figures);
- improve short term data when information is only available annually. Carry out local surveys or analysis to identify potential problems;
- improve the level of knowledge within service and directorate about the indicators.

### **Further planned improvements**

- 16 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 will commence in 2009. 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.
- 17 Other planned improvements include:
- assessment of other indicators including NPIs and key information;
  - roles and responsibilities review of officers who deal with performance data to develop greater understanding of how performance data produced across the different directorates;
  - review of additional recommendations recently received by the Audit Commission for 2008/09 which include:
    - incorporating data quality into appraisals and job descriptions;
    - design and deliver training to performance officers;
    - strengthen partner arrangements;
    - incorporate risk in collection arrangements.

### **Consultation**

- 18 The draft Data Quality Policy has been written in consultation with:
- the Performance Officer Group,
  - the Internal Audit team,
  - the Data Quality Champion (Terry Collins, Director of Neighbourhood Services),
  - the Corporate Management Team, and
  - the Audit Commission.

## **Options**

- 19 The Committee can choose to:
- accept the draft Data Quality Policy as presented for onward approval by Executive;
  - suggest amendments to the draft Policy for onward approval by Executive;
  - reject the draft Data Quality Policy taking into account the risk implications outlined in paragraph 22 below.

## **Corporate Priorities**

- 20 Since 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**

- 21 (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**

- 22 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.

## Recommendations

23 The Committee are asked to agree the following:

(a) to endorse the draft Data Quality Policy for onward approval by Executive.

*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 to monitor progress through annual reports.

*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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		<b>Report Approved</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<b>Date</b>	Insert Date
<b>Specialist Implications Officer(s)</b> <i>Not applicable</i>			
<b>Wards Affected:</b>			<b>All</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>			

### Annexes

Annex A: Draft Data Quality Policy

Annex B: LAA self Assessment Scores.

### Background Information

Review of Data Quality Arrangements 2007/08 – Audit Commission