

Audit & Governance Committee

Report of Assistant Director of Resources (Customer Service & Governance)

Audit Commission Data Quality Report 2008

Summary

- 1 To provide members with the Audit Commission's 2008 Data Quality audit report (attached as Annex 1 to this report) and show how the findings are being addressed through the council's data quality action plan.

Background

- 2 In 2006 the Audit Commission changed their approach to inspecting the statutory indicators the council reports and publishes each year. The audit covers a much wider remit, incorporating indicator inspections with an audit of the council's data quality arrangements.
- 3 The new approach places much more responsibility on the council to check and evidence performance data quality at different levels of the organisation. It examines varied levels of quality assurance:
 - data collection & input (including IT system integrity checks);
 - accuracy of indicator calculations (in this case for 2007/08 outturns);
 - performance analysis and reporting.
- 4 These audit results feed into a number of formal assessments, including the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and the Annual Audit Letter. The Audit Commission have made it clear that they view data quality as crucial given that much of what the council decides to improve, and how well the council says it is performing, is dependent on the foundations of accurate data and information. Much of this is assessed under Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) 2.2 of the Use of Resources (UoR) assessment process.

Headlines from the audit report

- 5 The auditor's existing formal judgement under CPA for data quality in the council is 'adequate', equating to a score of 2 out of 4. This score is common across most councils as it is recognised that the change to the new data quality arrangements will take time to adopt and put in place. The audit report acknowledges that the council has made significant progress on improving its data quality arrangements and has taken *"effective action to address key challenges identified in previous audit reports, particularly relating to the lack of corporate profile and commitment to data quality."*
- 6 This relates to the successful implementation of a data quality policy and key elements of the council's corporate data quality action plan. These were delivered as part of the

council's Single Improvement Plan, supported by the active engagement of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, which:

- provided a renewed focus on the quality of underlying performance data; and
- helped to address longstanding weaknesses in the council's corporate arrangements, in particular a lack of consistency in practice between individual directorates.

- 7 The council's Data Quality Policy has now been formally agreed by the Executive and the Performance & Business Assurance Team has been working with Directorate Management Teams (DMTs) to help implement this policy and other data quality improvements across the council in a consistent way.
- 8 The data quality audit report also includes detailed inspection findings on 2007/08 BVPI outturns, which show that the majority of indicators were fairly stated and found to be satisfactory reported. They found improvements in the compilation arrangements of several indicators which had been highlighted as a problem in past audits, including BV102 (local bus journeys) and BV215a (Local Authority controlled street lighting repairs). This is consistent with the largely positive findings from the Internal Audit spot check review of performance indicators, which was carried out prior to the commencement of the 2008 audit.
- 9 There were however, a few indicators that required further work to be undertaken. In particular, inaccuracies were found in one indicator - BV215b (repairs carried out on network operator controlled street lighting) which was reserved (or qualified). This means that York's result could not be formally reported and automatically places the council in the bottom quartile when compared to other authorities. Action has since taken place to address the problems with this indicator.
- 10 Despite the qualification of BV215b, the 2008 audit identified the smallest number of qualifications and recalculations since the data quality inspection process began in 2000. Annex 2 shows that all indicator-specific recommendations made by the Audit Commission have now been addressed or are in the process of being reviewed .

Priority areas for improvement

- 11 A number of data quality improvements have now been implemented across the council and the Audit Commission has acknowledged this. However, six areas of improvement are being progressed as a matter of priority:
 - a) *Complete the implementation of the PMF:* a new Performance Management Framework for 2009/10 has been adopted by CMT, which incorporates revised data quality arrangements within it. Further work is underway to implement the PMF across directorates including training on key elements of the framework.
 - b) *Review roles and responsibilities:* the review of roles and responsibilities of officers involved with producing data has been delayed since the Audit Commission first recommended it in 2008/09. This was to allow for the outcomes of the Efficiency Review so possible links could be identified with that stream of work.
 - c) *Deliver further training:* Ongoing training is being planned in a group and online format which will help those involved understand their role with regards to data quality and performance information through the production of the council's Business Model

handbook, performance officer group sessions and bespoke sessions within directorates.

- d) *Develop Information Sharing Protocols*: further work is planned with partners to strengthen information sharing arrangements. This is particularly important for the Use of Resources KLOEs and to improve the timeliness of performance reporting at partnership level.
- e) *Progress systems integrity checking*: A toolkit has been established and piloted to check systems integrity. However, further work is needed to implement these checks across all directorates.
- f) *Self Assessment Matrix*: The 44 LAA indicators were assessed in 2008 and reported on to CMT and A&G in January 2009 with scores for each indicator. It is now crucial that all the remaining national indicators are assessed using the data quality matrix to help identify any areas that can be addressed within directorates.

Action plan and timetable

- 12 Annex 3 provides members with a revised data quality action plan, which has been updated to take account of the Audit Commission's recommendations, and the priority actions mentioned in paragraph 11 above. As a result, the timescales for each of the actions have changed slightly to reflect what can be achieved over the short term.

Consultation

- 13 Extensive consultation took place with directorate performance officers across the council throughout the duration of the data quality audit (July – September 2008). The Audit Commission also provided directorates with a draft audit report for a 4 week period and amendments/changes were made to the attached report.

Options

- 14 Not applicable to this report.

Analysis

- 15 Not applicable to this report.

Corporate priorities

- 16 It is important to ensure that the council reports improvements accurately for corporate priorities and the Local Area Agreement, as these will be used more for CAA, additional government funding and to demonstrate to citizens that progress is being made to improve areas that they have identified as important.
- 17 Last year extensive data quality work was carried out on priority performance indicators to ensure they were collected, measured and reported in a timely and accurate way. Further improvements will be made to the systems and processes that support these indicators throughout 2009/10.

Implications

- a) **Financial** – There are no implications.
- b) **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no implications.
- c) **Equalities** - There are no implications.
- d) **Legal** - There are no implications.
- e) **Crime and Disorder** - There are no implications.
- f) **Information Technology (IT)** - There are no implications at present. However, the council is about to procure a new IT based performance management system which
- g) **Property** - There are no implications.

Risk Management

18 Not applicable to this report.

Recommendations

19 Members are asked to approve the revised data quality action plan set out in Annex 3. As previously agreed, progress on the improvements set out in the action plan will be reported to A&G every 6 months.

Reason: To ensure continual improvement is made to the council's data quality arrangements, which will also help support CAA.

Contact Details

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Wards Affected Not applicable

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annexes

Annex 1 – Audit Commission's report – Review of data quality arrangements (2007/08).

Annex 2 – Actions taken to address qualification and recalculations from 2007/08 BVPI inspection.

Annex 3 – Revised CYC data quality action plan.