

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 20th March 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director (Corporate & Policy)

SUBJECT: Corporate Data Quality Strategy

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring to the attention of Executive Board the development of a Draft Corporate Data Quality Strategy and provide the opportunity for the consideration of its content.
- 1.2 The strategy has been developed in response to recommendations made by the Audit Commission, following their most recent review of the authority's data quality management arrangements.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

That the Data Quality Strategy is adopted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Audit Commission have, for the past two years, undertaken a review of the authority's management arrangements for securing data quality using the following three-staged approach.

Stage 1	<p>Management arrangements.</p> <p>A review using Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) to determine whether proper corporate management arrangements for data quality are in place and whether these are being applied in practice. The findings contribute to the auditors conclusion under the Code of audit Practice on the council's arrangements to secure value for money (the VFM conclusion)</p>
Stage 2	<p>An analytical review and selection of a sample of national and other performance indicators based upon risk-assessment.</p>
Stage 3	<p>In-depth review of a sample of PI's used in CPA to determine whether arrangements to secure data quality are delivering accurate, timely and accessible information in practice.</p>

3.2 The first stage of this review concentrated upon the authority's management for securing data quality from the following perspectives: -

- Governance and Leadership
- Policies and Procedures
- Systems and Processes
- People and Skills and
- Data use and reporting

3.3 As a result of the Commission's most recent review, in 2007, they concluded that: -

- The authority's management arrangements for securing data quality were adequate and;
- The performance indicator values that were reviewed fell into expected ranges and;
- That detailed spot checks, with one exception, found that reported levels of performance were fairly stated.

3.4 The review recognised that there were a number of demonstrable strengths within the present arrangements, although opportunities existed for further developing and strengthening some aspects of our approach. The main findings of the review are summarised within Appendix 1 of this report.

3.5 As a result of the review, and the recommendations that flowed from it, an Action Plan was developed and endorsed by Management Team on 04th December 2007.

3.6 From 2008 arrangements to secure data quality are explicitly referenced within the Value for Money Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) that are used by the Commission to form a judgement concerning the authority's Use Of Resources as detailed below.

Level 2	The council has adequate arrangements to produce reliable data
Level 3	The council has good arrangements to produce reliable data.
Level 4	The council has exemplary arrangements to produce reliable data. It has an agreed approach with partners to produce reliable data.

- 3.7 This development is reflective of the government's view that the quality of data being used by authorities is fundamental to its success in managing claims on competing resources to provide and plan the delivery of services and its ability to properly account for its activities to service users, partners, and central government departments and regulators.
- 3.8 In addition the implementation of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment framework, and the further development of Local Area Agreements, will also bring greater responsibilities to, and expectations of, local agencies and partnerships to ensure that good quality data is acquired, used and shared in a timely and effective manner.
- 3.9 As a result of this changing landscape, and recommendations made by the Audit Commission, both Officer (Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy) and Member (Portfolio Holder for Quality and Performance) Leads have now been identified to take the data quality agenda forward.
- 3.10 The draft Data Quality Strategy, enclosed as Appendix 2, has been developed as a part of the Action Plan referred to earlier. Its primary purpose is to: -
- Provide a foundation for taking the authority's data quality managements arrangements forward;
 - Identify and communicate key corporate data quality objectives and standards;
 - Clarify and communicate key roles and responsibilities
 - Provide a vehicle by which the delivery of key actions can be communicated to relevant audiences.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 In order to secure improvement in our present arrangements there is a clear need to develop appropriate polices and procedures at a corporate level for the future management of data quality and information.
- 4.2 It is acknowledged that a Corporate Data Quality Strategy would form part of a wider suite of polices that the authority may adopt in relation to the governance of information.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Given the differing structural arrangements and associated roles and responsibilities that presently exist across directorates, and the need for a strengthened corporate approach in driving this agenda forward, consideration will need to be given the availability and allocation of resources in supporting the Data Quality Lead Officer Group.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Good quality data is a prerequisite to both understanding and improving performance at all levels of the organisation and is therefore equally significant to each of the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The principal risks of failing to adequately address the issues concerning data quality that have been highlighted by the commission are:

- Damage to the authority's reputation and credibility arising from the use and reporting of poor quality or inaccurate data.
- Community perceptions are adversely affected as a result of communicating poor quality or inaccurate performance data
- The authority's score in its value for money aspect of the corporate performance assessment would be limited to 2 by a failure to advance its data quality management arrangements from the present adequate judgment. The existence of a corporate data quality strategy is explicitly referenced within the KLOE's for level 3.
- The quality of the authority's decision-making, in both an organisational and partnership context, is impaired by the use of poor quality or inaccurate data.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues arising from the recommendation.

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

Summary of Findings of Audit Commission Review (2007).

Corporate governance

- The importance of data quality is recognised at and across the corporate level with a specific member portfolio for Quality and Performance.
- Strategic Directors were responsible for the accuracy of data input used in their services and there is evidence of specific data quality objectives within the Council's Corporate Plan.
- The arrangements for the collection and review of data in relation to BVPI performance has been strengthened and a review of key indicator outturns are carried out as part of internal audit work.

Opportunities for improvement

- *Whilst there were examples of good practice within directorate's data quality objectives were not being driven corporately and were not consistent across the Council, and that Departmental Service Plans contained no reference to data quality.*

Policies and Procedures

- Overall the Council is performing well and there are some relevant policies and procedures in place that have the authority of senior management and Data quality Champions have been appointed within some Directorates.
- Practical and accessible support is provided to appropriate staff and the Council is proactive in updating them on changes to policies and procedures.

Opportunities for improvement

- *With the exception of the Best Value Performance Plan policies were departmental specific and being driven locally within service directorates without a visible corporate lead.*
- *Examples of good practice, such as the identification of data quality champions, could be rolled out to all directorates and their role enhanced further by including the monitoring of compliance with directorate data policies.*

Systems and Processes

- There are arrangements in place for collecting, recording and reporting data are in place and there is good evidence that performance data is incorporated into the wider management of Council services as a whole.

- Arrangements are now in place in some areas to test the effectiveness of the 'right first time' approach to data quality, although this is a recent development.
- Appropriate security arrangements are in place concerning access to systems and the handling and use of data and business continuity arrangements have focussed upon the needs of the user.

Opportunities for improvement

- *There is a need for the Council to ensure that business continuity planning addresses the risk of the loss of performance data and to prioritise such risks.*

People and Skills

- Officers in performance management and monitoring roles have clearly defined responsibilities for data quality and training and support requirements are being effectively determined within some directorates.

Opportunities for improvement

- *Good practice should be rolled out at an organisational level with the Council adopting a consistent approach to data quality training and support across all directorates.*

Data use and reporting

- This is the Council's area of major strength with effective validation procedures being in place to ensure the accuracy of data used in reported performance indicators. Additionally performance information is routinely derived from and used to support the day-to-day management of services.

Opportunities for improvement

- *To improve further in this area it would be necessary to demonstrate that the data used for performance reporting also drives decisions about the allocation of resources throughout the year.*