

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

DATA QUALITY

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Audit Committee with a position statement on the current status of data quality audits of the council's priority performance indicators.
- 1.2 To provide the Audit Committee with an overview of the further developments planned to improve data quality across the council.
- 1.3 Key points are:
- The target of auditing 75% of the current priority performance indicators has been achieved
 - Findings from the audits indicate that data quality is robust
 - Internal Audit has assessed our data quality arrangements as adequate
 - A plan has been put in place to further develop data quality across the council

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Public bodies are accountable for the money they spend. The financial and performance information they use to account for their activities, both internally and externally to their citizens, partners, commissioners, and to government departments and regulators, must be based on good quality data.
- 2.2 Historically, the council was subject to an audit of its data quality arrangements by the Audit Commission. From May 2010, under the new coalition government, there has been a reduction in demand by central government for data and a re-emphasis on local performance and regulation, coupled with less external inspection of the council's systems and procedures.
- 2.3 The council is committed to data quality and continues to support the standards set out by the Audit Commission. It is vital that the authority does not allow the focus on the quality of local data to decline. Better managed authorities will continue to place an emphasis on ensuring that the data they need for their own decision making and for external accountability remains of high quality. As there is likely to be less benchmarking to identify errors in future, it is important that our local priority indicators have the same high levels of data quality.
- 2.4 Over the past three years a significant amount of work has been carried out to ensure that our data quality arrangements are robust. A Data Quality policy and protocol have been developed and are continually reviewed and refreshed ensuring that they align with new and emerging government initiatives and internal council priorities were appropriate. Data quality has been included in workforce competencies and training sessions have been carried out. The performance & Value for Money team has historically supported directorates in striving for robust data quality arrangements.

- 2.5 A key element to ensure data quality arrangements are robust is to carry out audits/reviews on our priority performance indicators to check compliance to the Data Quality Policy and Protocol.
- 2.6 It was agreed at the corporate Information, Improvement and Value for Money group and reported to the Audit Committee in January that the council would aim to carry out a Data Quality audit on at least 75% of the priority Indicators by the end of March. All three directorates provided a schedule identifying the KPI's which would be subject to audit in order to achieve this level.
- 2.7 As at March 2013, 75% of the 95 priority performance indicators have been audited.

Directorate	Total Priority PIs	Audited	
		No.	%
POLICY & RECOURCES	35	27	75%
PLACES	36	28	78%
PEOPLE	24	16	70%
	95	71	75%

- 2.8 Audits are awarded a rating based on the number of recommendations identified within each of the 5 sections of the audit checklist. A maximum of 5 stars is awarded where no recommendations are identified and all expected data quality controls are in place.
- 2.9 Based on the audits of the priority indicators where a data quality rating has been allocated, the current average rating is 4.5 out of 5, which indicates robust data quality arrangements are in place. This figure has remained consistently high since this method of rating data quality audits was introduced.
- 2.10 The majority of indicators measured score between 4 and 5. At 31 March there were six indicators whose data quality scored less than four. This was due to process maps not being available or up-to-date, indicators definitions not being available or working papers not being provided. In all cases the calculation of the result was correct.
- 2.11 An Internal Audit of our data quality arrangements was undertaken in early 2013 and was assessed as being adequate. No data errors were found during the audit.
- 2.12 The data quality of our key performance measures has been our main focus over the past few years but as these are nearing completion we are looking to undertake further developments to improve data quality. This will be carried out using a risk-based approach and will include:-
- Assuring data quality of customer standards and activity Data
 - Assuring the data quality of Public Health data included in the council's performance management framework
 - Producing a prioritised risk-based the list of system data for further data quality checks
 - Utilise software to check all the data entry systems to identify data quality errors and quantify into percentage compliance
 - Merge the current data quality policy and protocol into the information management policy aligning clear linkages and removing overlaps.
 - Consider training requirements for staff – in particular data input staff to ensure they understand the implications of data entry errors

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The Audit Committee should consider whether the current progress and planned developments provides sufficient assurance of the adequacy of the council's data quality arrangements for the council's data.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 **Option1:** That the Audit Committee considers that the current progress and further recommended developments provide sufficient assurance of the adequacy of the council's data quality arrangements

Option 2: That the Audit Committee considers the current progress and further recommended developments are not sufficient and requests additional work to be undertaken.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 The risk in not identifying and addressing weaknesses in data quality is the consequences of decisions based on inaccurate data that relate to resource allocation.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.2 An integrated impact assessment is not required for this report.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 7.1 In determining the further developments for improving data quality we have consulted with the Information, Improvement & Value for Money group.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The Audit Committee should consider whether the report provides sufficient assurance of the adequacy of the council's data quality arrangements for the council's data quality.

- 8.2 The Audit Committee notes the planned developments to improve data quality as detailed in paragraph 2.12.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & RESOURCES

Civic Centre
Ashby Road,
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB

Author: Nigel Manders

Date: 3rd June 2013