

**Report to: Finance and Performance
Management Scrutiny Standing
Panel**

Date of meeting: 15 August 2006



Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services

Subject: Data Quality Audit and Value For Money Strategy

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Committee Secretary: A. Hendry (Ext 4246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Council's self-assessment submission in respect of the 'Data Quality' assessment to be undertaken by the Audit Commission, be endorsed;**
- (2) That the Scrutiny Panel consider the Council's draft Data Quality and Value For Money Strategies; and**
- (3) That, subject to recommendation (2) above, the Cabinet be recommended that the draft Data Quality and Value For Money Strategies be adopted.**

Data Quality

1. (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management) As the first stage of the audit of Best Value performance Indicators (BVPIs) for 2005/06, the Audit Commission is undertaking an assessment of the overall management arrangements of all local authorities to secure data quality. Although part of this assessment relates to the quality of performance information, the audit relates to corporate data quality arrangements, and is therefore a much wider issue than the BVPI audit.
2. The audit is to be based on a self-assessment exercise and through on-site validation by the Commission. The audit will result in a scored judgement, as a result of a review of the following five themes and areas for audit focus:

Review theme	Audit focus
Governance and leadership	Is there a corporate framework of management and accountability for data quality, with a commitment to securing a culture of data quality throughout the organisation?
Policies and procedures	Are there appropriate policies and procedures in place to secure the quality of data recorded and reported by the organisation?
Systems and processes	Has the organisation put in place systems and processes that secure the quality of data as part of the normal business

Review theme	Audit focus
	activity of the organisation?
People and skills	Has the organisation put in place arrangements to ensure that all staff have the appropriate knowledge, competencies and capacity for their roles in relation to data quality?
Data use	Has the body put in place arrangements that are focused on ensuring that data supporting performance information is also used to manage and improve the delivery of services?

3. For each theme area, the Commission has specified a number of Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) as a basis for councils to undertake a voluntary self-assessment of their current position with regard to data quality. Although the completion of a self-assessment was not a mandatory requirement for the purposes of the audit, the Commission considered that this exercise would be helpful for both the audit and for the Council to understand its current position. Management Board therefore determined that the Council should complete the voluntary self-assessment in relation to the Data Quality audit, and agree arrangements for undertaking the self-assessment process through a special meeting of all Heads of Service. If the Council had chosen not to participate in the self-assessment exercise, it is likely that the Audit Commission would have assessed the authority's management arrangements for data quality on the basis of previous audit work undertaken and existing perceptions of the authority.
4. The draft self-assessment for the data Quality audit is attached as Appendix 1 to this report, and also sets out the audit KLOEs in detail. The timescale for the submission of the self-assessment element of this work is tight, and the completed self-assessment is required to be submitted to the Audit Commission following the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel. The results of the Data Quality audit will feed into the Council's next Value for Money assessment, and also inform the second round of district council Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The results of the audit will also have a bearing on the BVPI audit, in that the sample of performance indicators to be subject of in-depth review will be determined partly by the risks elicited from the Data Quality audit.
5. As a result of the audit, it is considered important for the Council to formalise its management arrangements in this area. The completion of the self-assessment has provided an opportunity to set out an overall corporate approach to ensuring data quality, through the development of a Data Quality Strategy, a draft version of which is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. As performance information is increasingly being used for the external assessment of the authority's performance, the strategy sets out a commitment to ensuring that arrangements for securing the quality of key data meet the highest standards, as consistent, accurate, timely and comprehensive information is vital to support effective decision-making and enhanced service provision.

Value For Money

6. In preparation for the forthcoming Value for Money assessment referred to in paragraph 4 of this report, a need has been identified to bring together the various elements of the Council's current approach to providing value for money services into a single comprehensive document. This has been achieved through the development of a corporate Value for Money Strategy, a draft version of which is attached as Appendix 3 to this report for consideration by the Scrutiny Panel. The draft Strategy sets out authority's overall approach to achieving value for money and allocates appropriate responsibilities at both member and officer level.

7. The self-assessment element of the Value for Money exercise is required to be submitted to the Audit Commission by 30 September 2006, In view of this timescale, the Panel is asked to note that, once completed, the self-assessment will be presented to the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee for endorsement at its meeting on 25 September 2006, as there is no other scheduled meeting of the Scrutiny Panel before the submission deadline.
8. The Scrutiny Panel is requested to endorse the content of the Council's draft self-assessment submission in respect of the Data Quality assessment, and to recommend to the Cabinet that the draft Data Quality and Value For Money Strategies be adopted. The results of the Data Quality assessment will be reported to a future meeting.

Reason for decision:

9. To ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate management arrangements to secure data quality and value for money.

Options considered and rejected:

10. To decline to complete the self-assessment, as a result of which the Audit Commission would have assessed the authority's management arrangements for data quality on the basis of previous audit work undertaken and existing perceptions of the authority.

Consultation undertaken:

11. Management Board and Senior Management Team.

Resource implications:

Budget/Personnel/Land: None.

Council Plan/Best Value Performance Plan reference: None

Relevant statutory powers: None

Background papers: None

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None

Key Decision reference: (if required) None