

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

PRIORITY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - DATA QUALITY UPDATE

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 priority performance indicators.
- 1.2 Key points are:
- The council's priority performance indicators were refreshed in May 2012. Data quality audits have been scheduled against this new basket of priority Indicators.
 - 51% of priority performance indicators have now been audited
 - Findings from the audits indicate that data quality is robust

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 continually support directorates in striving for robust data quality arrangements.

- 2.5 The Corporate Performance Team has developed a set of web pages which contribute to meeting the requirements of the government's transparency agenda. The transparency agenda states we must publish service performance data and related information in a format suitable for citizens. As data will be made available to the public it is vital we ensure that our data quality arrangements are robust.
- 2.6 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.
- 2.7 It was agreed at the Strategic Improvement and Value for Money group that the council would aim to carry out a Data Quality audit on at least 50% of the priority Indicators by the end of December 2012. All three directorates provided a schedule identifying the KPI's which would be subject to audit in order to achieve the 50% target.
- 2.8 As at December 2012 51% of the 95 priority performance indicators have been audited. This may appear to be a small improvement on the 48% reported in June 2012; however this represents a significant achievement as the basket of priority indicators changed significantly following the implementation of the North Lincolnshire Council Strategy 2012-16. Of the current list of 95 priority performance indicators, 49 (52%) have remained from 2011-2 and 46 (48%) are new.
- 2.9 Directorates have been asked to complete audits on a further 25% of their priority indicators by the end of the financial year 2012-3.

Directorate	Total Priority PIs	Audited	
		No.	%
POLICY & REOURCES	35	18	50%
PLACES	36	19	53%
PEOPLE	24	11	48%
	95	48	51%

- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 Based on the audits of the priority indicators where a data quality rating has been allocated, the current average rating is 4.27 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. In the main, there have been only minimal recommendations identified. None of which would have a detrimental impact on the quality of the data being produced. These improvements are actively being addressed by services.
- 2.12 Only one significant issue was found where the results reported in the Performance Management System could not be reconciled with working papers so at this point we are unable to verify that the results are accurate. This is currently being addressed by the directorate.

2.13 A further update will be provided to the Audit Committee in June 2013.

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 priority performance indicators.

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

4.1 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.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

5.1 Poor quality data may lead to misleading information, decision making may be flawed, poor services may not be improved, and policy may be ill-founded. There is also a danger that good performance may not be recognised and rewarded.

5.2 An integrated impact assessment is not required for this report.

6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

6.1 Data quality issues form a standing agenda item on the cross-council Strategic Performance & Improvement Group. The findings of this report will be discussed at the next meeting scheduled for 29 January 2013.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 The Audit Committee should consider whether the report provides sufficient assurance of the adequacy of the council's data quality arrangements for priority performance indicators.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY & RESOURCES

Civic Centre
Ashby Road,
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB

Author: Jo Busby
Date: 5th January 2012

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Improving information to support decision-making: Standards for better quality data (Audit Commission)
- North Lincolnshire Council Data Quality Policy