

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

DATA QUALITY UPDATE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Audit Committee a position statement on the current status of Data Quality Audits of the priority PI's.
- 1.2 Key points are:
- 48% of priority performance indicators have now been audited
 - Findings from the audits indicate that data quality is robust
 - The data quality action plan was updated in November 2011 and is regularly monitored
 - The council's priority performance indicators are being refreshed

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 users, 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 arrangement 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, 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 KPIs have the same high levels of Data Quality.
- 2.4 Over the past two years significant amount of work has been carried out to ensure our data quality arrangements are robust. A Data Quality policy and protocol have been developed and are continually reviewed and refreshed ensuring they align with new and emerging government initiatives and internal council agenda's were appropriate. Data quality has been included in staff competencies and training sessions have been carried out.

- 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. Recommendations identified are monitored by the corporate performance team to ensure they are being addressed. As at March 2012 48% of the priority indicator basket of 83 indicators have been audited.
- 2.6 This basket of priority indicators is currently under review to align with the new North Lincolnshire strategy.
- 2.7 Both Adults Social Services and Children and Young People Services have stated that their performance indicators are subject to the national regime of data quality checking through their inspection processes and this ensures the accuracy of their data, therefore these have been classed as audited.

| Directorate | Total Priority PIs | Audited | | Remaining | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % |
| Strategic Regeneration | 4 | 3 | 75% | 1 | 25% |
| Neighbourhood & Environment | 11 | 2 | 18% | 9 | 82% |
| Finance | 7 | 2 | 29% | 5 | 71% |
| Children and Young People's | 14 | 14 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| Infrastructure | 14 | 5 | 36% | 9 | 64% |
| Corporate & Community Services | 20 | 1 | 5% | 19 | 95% |
| Adult Social Services | 13 | 13 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| | 83 | 40 | 48% | 43 | 52% |

- 2.8 **Based on the audits of the priority indicators where a data quality rating has been allocated, the current average rating is 4.25 out of 5, which is at an acceptable level and indicates robust data quality arrangements are in place. There have been no significant issues raised by the audit with only minimal recommendations identified.**
- 2.9 **The recommendations that have been made form an action plan with expected dates for implementation. The corporate performance team monitor these action plans to ensure that all recommendations have been implemented. This will result in improvement in the data quality rating.**
- 2.10 Most services provided a schedule of audits planned on the priority indicators for the 2012/2013 financial year. As the priority indicators are currently under review this timetable will need to be revisited with services once the basket has been agreed.
- 2.11 The Corporate Performance Team are also developing a set of web pages which will contribute to meeting the requirements of the government's transparency agenda, which states we must publish service performance data and related information in a format suitable for citizens. As this will make data available to the public we need to ensure that our data quality arrangements are robust.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

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

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

- 4.1 The risk in not identifying and addressing weaknesses in data quality is decisions based on inaccurate data may lead to inappropriate allocation of resources.

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

6. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Data quality issues are a standing agenda item on the cross-council Strategic Performance & Improvement Group.

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.

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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