
DATA QUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress being made against the Data Quality Strategy and Data Quality Action Plan approved by this committee in July 2007.
- 1.2 The annual Internal Audit of Performance Indicators (PIs) for 2006/7 data is completed and a summary of the findings is included in this report.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 A revised Data Quality and Records Management Policy was approved by the Audit Committee in July 2007 to explicitly state the importance of the accuracy and quality of the data used by the Council.
- 2.2 The complementary Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan was developed to assist in improving the Council's performance in data collection, handling, storage, retrieval, use of information and communication.
- 2.3 A Data Quality assessment is conducted annually by our external auditors, with the following possible outcomes:
 - Level 1 – Below minimum requirements - Inadequate performance
 - Level 2 – Meeting minimum requirements - Adequate performance
 - Level 3 – Above minimum requirements - Performing well
 - Level 4 – Well above minimum requirements - Performing strongly
- 2.4 For 2005/06, the external auditors found that Rochford District Council, in common with most other councils, had achieved level 2 – adequate performance, for its data quality arrangements up to 31 March 2006.
- 2.5 The external auditor's data quality assessment for 2006/7 data is underway at the time of preparation of this report and early indications are that we have maintained a level 2 performance, but it is acknowledged that we are making progress towards "Level 3 - Consistently above minimum requirements – performing well". It is our aim to achieve this level by April 2008.

3 PROGRESS AGAINST THE DATA QUALITY ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 The Data Quality Strategy sets out how the Council will maintain and improve its ability to ensure that the data it uses to measure and demonstrate its performance is of the highest quality, consistent with the efficient and effective use of its resources.

- 3.2 The detailed actions required to achieve the improvement in our data quality arrangements are laid out in the Data Quality Action Plan.
- 3.3 Progress against the Action Plan is in line with the timetable set out in the plan and is detailed at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.4 It is proposed that a further progress report should be made to the Audit Committee in March 2008, and at six monthly intervals thereafter.

4 INTERNAL AUDIT OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 4.1 The annual Internal Audit of Performance Indicators (PIs) for 2006/7 data was completed in July and identified 41 instances (out of 134 PIs) where the data reported by departments required amendment prior to publication or submission to the Audit Commission.
- 4.2 The principal causes of error were, the misreading of PI definitions leading to the use of incorrect figures, the miscounting of items when the report is dependent on a manual count, and data entry errors.
- 4.3 We have changed the performance reporting process to prevent recurrence of these errors for the 2007/8 PIs. Each data collection sheet now performs the PI calculations automatically in accordance with rules set up by the Audit team. Any historical or standard data, such as population estimates are also pre-filled by the Audit team to ensure usage of correct figures. Additionally, those PI's that gave rise to errors in 2006/7 are being scrutinised as they are submitted on a monthly or quarterly basis for 2007/8.
- 4.4 A full listing of the errata has been supplied to managers together with the proposed corrective and preventative actions.

5 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Accuracy of data is fundamental to sound decision making and the formulation of policy. Failure to assure our data quality could therefore have significant impact on the Council's ability to correctly define its policies and strategies or deliver against its objectives.
- 5.2 The implementation of the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan will minimise data quality errors and thus mitigate any potential strategic, operational, reputational or regulatory consequences.
- 5.3 Failure to implement the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan will mean that the Council's overall score in future Data Quality assessments will be at risk.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Data Quality and Records Management Policy and the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan assist the Council in meeting its obligations under

the Data Protection Acts 1984 and 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) To note the results of the Internal Audit of 2006/7 PIs and action taken.
- (2) To review and comment on the progress made against the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan.
- (3) To agree that the next Data Quality progress report should be reported to the Audit Committee in March 2008 and at six monthly intervals thereafter.

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Background Papers: -

None

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