
DATA QUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents our External Auditor's (PKF) Data Quality Report for 2008 and the consequent action plan for 2009 and provides an update on the progress being made against the Data Quality Strategy previously approved by this Committee in 2007.
- 1.2 The Data Quality Report for 2008 and action plan for 2009/10 are included at Appendix 1.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council aims, through its Data Quality Strategy and action plans, to maintain and improve its ability to ensure that the data it uses to measure its performance is of the highest quality, consistent with the efficient and effective use of its resources.
- 2.2 The Council's arrangements for assuring data quality are assessed for each financial year by its external auditors, who give an overall assessment of our data quality arrangements and produce a Data Quality Report stating their key findings, together with an action plan for the coming financial year to address any areas for improvement.

3 KEY FINDINGS OF THE EXTERNAL DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 The external auditors' overall assessment of Rochford's Data Quality for 2007/8 is that our arrangements were "consistently above minimum requirements and embedded" and so we were "performing well".
- 3.2 This is a significant improvement on previous assessments for 2005/06 and 2006/07, which found that we maintained an "adequate performance". It was our aim to achieve the "performing well" level in 2008 and it is therefore pleasing to note that this goal has been achieved.
- 3.3 Spot checks conducted by the external auditors as part of the 2008 assessment revealed that a performance indicator for the time taken to process changes of circumstances for benefit claimants could not be proved as being fairly stated because of the inclusion of non-qualifying cases. The relevant staff have been reminded of the process to exclude non-qualifying cases from the statistics. (It is understood that some other Authorities had similar issues.)
- 3.4 A further round of data quality awareness training is planned for 2009 to reinforce the importance of accurate and quality data.
- 3.5 The actions arising from the 2007 Data Quality Audit have been substantially completed or have been carried forward into the new action plan shown in the attached report.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Accuracy of data is fundamental to sound decision making and the formulation of policy. Failure to assure our data quality could therefore have a significant impact on the Council's ability to correctly define its policies and strategies or deliver against its objectives.
- 4.2 The continued 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.
- 4.3 Failure to implement the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan will create the potential for inaccurate data and could put the Council's overall score in future Data Quality and Use of Resources assessments at risk.
- 4.4 Results of external Data Quality reviews will be used to support the reported performance data for the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA) and thus a poor Data Quality review would have negative implications for our assessments under the CAA process.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 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.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the findings contained in the Data Quality Report 2008 be noted and accepted.
 - (2) That a further Data Quality progress report should be reported for consideration by the Audit Committee, when the results of the 2009 Data Quality Audit are available.

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Background Papers: -

None.

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Accountants &
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Data Quality Report - 2008 Performance Indicators

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Appendix

Action plan

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission contains an explanation of the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body and no responsibility is taken by auditors to any Member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party.

