
DATA QUALITY PROGRESS REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress being made against the Council's Data Quality Strategy and Action Plans.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council aims, through its Data Quality Strategy and Action Plans, 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 data quality arrangements are assessed for each financial year by its External Auditors. In previous years this has resulted in a Data Quality Report giving an overall assessment of our data quality arrangements, a statement of their key findings, and a suggested action plan to address any areas for improvement.
- 2.3 For 2008/9 and subsequent financial years the External Auditor's Data Quality findings are incorporated in the much wider ranging Use of Resources Assessment.
- 2.4 In addition to the External Data Quality Assessment, the Council undertakes its own programme of Internal Audit of performance data to ensure its accuracy prior to submission to central government.
- 2.5 The 2008/9 Use of Resources Assessment Report for Rochford District Council is currently in draft form and is due for formal release later in December. However, the Committee will recall that the External Auditor's Annual Statement of Governance, reported to the last meeting of the Audit Committee, included a summary of the Use of Resources Assessment and those aspects relating to data quality are reported on in the next section.

3 KEY FINDINGS OF EXTERNAL DATA QUALITY ASSESSMENT AS REPORTED IN THE USE OF RESOURCES SECTION OF THE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 The Use of Resources Assessment covers Data Quality under a Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE), which reads, "The organisation produces relevant and reliable data and information to support decision making and manage performance".
- 3.2 The External Auditor's overall assessment of Rochford against this KLOE is that our arrangements were "consistently above minimum requirements" and so we were "performing well", scoring a 3 on the assessment rating framework.
- 3.3 Our Internal Audit findings may therefore be viewed in the context of this assessment by the External Auditors.

- 3.4 A further report will be made to the Audit Committee in respect of the full set of findings of the Use of Resources Assessment once that report is formally published.

4 KEY FINDINGS OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT OF DATA QUALITY

- 4.1 The Internal Audit team conduct an annual audit of all the key performance indicators to verify their accuracy and completeness. Additionally, some indicators are verified prior to submission to central government on a quarterly basis.
- 4.2 Spot checks are also undertaken by Internal Audit, either on a one-off basis, or as an integral part of the audits being conducted under the Audit Plan.
- 4.3 For 2008/9 annual audit we checked 87 key indicators, involving review of over 700 data items. From these checks we found that 18 of the indicators were not correctly calculated, which is a reduction on 22 such errors in 2007/8. None of the errors discovered were material and in most cases the errors resulted from either single transcription or data entry errors; or manual miscounting.
- 4.4 There were no systematic errors in the entry or use of data and this is the result of a process using pre-prepared data capture spreadsheets to minimise calculation errors.
- 4.5 Where errors were discovered this has been reported back to Heads of Service to ensure the relevant staff are reminded to correctly include or exclude qualifying and non-qualifying items as appropriate to the statistics.

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 has minimised data quality errors and thus mitigated any potential strategic, operational, reputational or regulatory consequences.
- 5.3 Failure to continue with the procedures implemented under the Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan could create the potential for inaccurate data and could put the Council's overall score in future Use of Resources Assessments at risk.
- 5.4 The data quality findings in the Use of Resources Assessment support the performance data used for the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA) and thus poor data quality findings would have negative implications for our assessments under the CAA process.

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** to note and accept the findings of the Council's Internal Audit of the 2008/9 performance data.

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Background Papers: -

None

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