

**DATA QUALITY: AUDITORS REPORT 2006/ 07
(Report by the Head of Policy and Strategic Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to present to the Panel an Auditor's Report on the Council's Data Quality arrangements.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The quality of data is an important factor in the accuracy of judgments about the Council's systems of governance and performance management. This is recognized both by the Council, which has adopted a strategy to maintain and improve the quality of data, and by external assessors such as the Audit Commission.

- 2.2** The Council's Data Quality Strategy has a number of purposes and the following objectives:

- Ensure that information in use is of high quality, consistent, timely, comprehensive and held securely and confidentially.
- Put in place arrangements at senior level to secure the quality of data that we use to manage our service and demonstrate our performance.
- Make clear what is expected from employees and contractors in terms of the standards of data quality.
- Put in place systems, policies and procedures to enable the highest possible data quality, particularly where information is shared with partners.
- Ensure that we put in place the right resources, and in particular, have the right people with the right skills, to ensure we have timely and accurate performance information.
- Ensure that we have the right controls to ensure that the Council meets what is expected of us.

- 2.3** Data quality is one of the key lines of enquiry (KLOE) in the Use of Resources Assessment which is undertaken by our external auditors – Grant Thornton – on behalf of the Audit Commission. This part of the assessment focuses on the national performance indicators, which are used to judge our relative performance under the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment and will become a key feature of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.

- 2.4** Currently considerable weight is attached to published performance indicators, for example, in the Direction of Travel Statement which forms part of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter to be considered as a separate item on the Panel's agenda.
- 2.5** The Auditor's work on data quality and performance information supports this reliance on performance indicators in a variety of assessments and this is the second year in which work on data quality has been undertaken. The attached report has been prepared by the Auditor following extensive discussion with Officers of the Council. The recommendations, management response and allocation of responsibility for actions under the plan have been jointly agreed. Monitoring of achievement against this plan will be reported both through the Council's Comprehensive Performance Monitoring Framework and in specific reports to the Panel, in accordance with the 'Assurance Framework' which the Council has adopted to support governance arrangements.
- 2.6** A representative of the Council's Auditor will be available at the meeting to present their report and comment on any issues raised by members of the Panel.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1** The panel is requested to note the Auditor's report on data quality for 2006/07 and endorse the management action set out in response to it.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

HDC Data Quality Strategy
Report by Grant Thornton, Data Quality Audit Report 2006/07 March 2008

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