

Police

Other Bodies/Individuals Greta Neeham

FINAL DECISION Yes

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee

To Council

To Cabinet

To an O & S Committee

To an Area Committee

Further Consultation

Audit and Standards Committee - 24th February 2009.

Data Quality Audit Report

**Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and
Development**

Recommendation

The Audit and Standards Committee is recommended to:

- Note the findings in the Data Quality Report
- Approve the response to the recommendations made by the Audit Commission

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Published performance indicators are used as a means of reducing the burden of regulation and awarding freedoms and flexibilities. This has made reliable performance information, and the quality of the underlying data, significantly more important.
- 1.2 Regulators and government departments need to be assured that reported information reflects actual performance. This will provide confidence that they are focusing on the key areas for improvement.
- 1.3 Auditors work on data quality and performance information supports the Audit Commission's reliance on performance indicators in its service assessments for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

2.0 Approach

- 2.1 The Audit Commission undertook an audit of our Data Quality arrangements took place between July – October 2008. The purpose of this was to review the practices and procedures we have in place (Appendix A).
- 2.2 The review of data quality was undertaken as a three stage process, as follows:
 - **Management arrangements** – to review the corporate management arrangements for data quality in place and whether these are being applied in practice. The findings contribute to the Auditor's conclusion under the Code of Audit Practice on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money (the VFM conclusion).

- **Analytical review** – Sampling 2007/08 BVPI and non-BVPI data, based on risk assessment.
- **Data quality spot checks** – In-depth review of a sample of 2007/08 PIs all of which come from a list of specified BVPIs and non-BVPIs used in CPA, to determine whether arrangements to secure data quality are delivering accurate, timely and accessible information in practice.

3.0 Key Findings

3.1 The Data Quality Audit found that overall:

- The Council's corporate management arrangements for data quality remain at minimum requirements. The Council has reiterated its commitment to securing good data quality and work has been carried out to ensure that this is communicated internally. However awareness of the policy continues to vary. The introduction of the corporate report card has given additional focus to the use of council and partner data to monitor and manage performance.
- The analytical review of sampling 2007/08 BVPI and non-BVPI data, based on risk assessment identified that the PI values tested either fell within expected ranges or were substantiated by evidence.
- The data quality spot checks of PIs found that two of the three indicators (BV82a and BV82b) were fairly stated. However, one indicator (IPF Cost per library visit) was understated by 2.6% and required amendment.

3.2 The feedback on the management arrangements identified the following:

- **Governance and leadership** – progress on ensuring that processes within directorates effectively deliver data quality is mixed. The revised performance management framework includes data quality as a key element and the Corporate Planning and Performance team have ensured that directorate contacts are updated on the contents of the policy.
- **Policies** – although the corporate data quality policy has been in operation for over a year and its contents reiterated, its profile and awareness across directorates continues to be inconsistent. There is a risk that if the policy is not seen to be relevant within directorates, it may not be adhered to and opportunities to identify and pass on good practice will be missed.
- **Systems and processes** – the Council has made progress on establishing systems to record, analyse and report performance data although there is a recognition that scope for improvement remains.
- **People and skills** – progress continues to be made on specifying responsibility for the data quality responsibilities of individual staff but this continues to be directorate rather than corporately led.
- **Data use and reporting** - data on performance information is increasingly used to monitor and manage performance. The new corporate report card

provides councillors with clear and comprehensive information on progress towards corporate and partnership targets.

4.0 Action Plan

4.1 As a result of the findings in the Data Quality Audit Report, the Auditor has produced an action plan outlining five recommendations for the Authority to address:

- **R1** Corporate Centre and Performance Forum to discuss approaches being adopted in directorates to provide specific guidance on implementation of data quality, identify examples of good practice and provide support where necessary.
- **R2** Linked to recommendation R1, Corporate Centre to work with Performance Forum to develop practical advice for directorates on highlighting the corporate data quality policy, and its relevance to the work of directorates.
- **R3** Ensure that, as the corporate performance management system develops further, its ability to produce information that is right first time is prioritised, in order to reduce the need for data cleansing exercises
- **R4** Develop corporate approaches to link targets set for staff to the achievement of data quality outcomes.
- **R5** Ensure that the Library visit numerator is calculated on a FRS17 basis as required by the guidance.

5.0 Recommendations

The Audit and Standards Committee is recommended to:

- Note the findings in the Data Quality Report
- Approve the response to the recommendations made by the Audit Commission

DAVID CARTER
Strategic Director of
Performance and
Development

Shire Hall
Warwick

23rd January 2009

Data Quality

Warwickshire County Council

Audit 2008/09

December 2008



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Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
 - any third party.
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Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings from our work on data quality for 2008/09.
- 2 Auditors' work on data quality and performance information supports the Commission's reliance on performance indicators (PI) in its service assessments for comprehensive performance assessment (CPA).
- 3 Our work on data quality is complemented by the Audit Commission's paper, 'Improving information to support decision making: standards for better quality data'. This paper sets out standards, for adoption on a voluntary basis, to support improvement in data quality. The expected impact of the Audit Commission's work on data quality is that it will drive improvement in the quality of local government performance information, leading to greater confidence in the supporting data on which performance assessments are based.

Scope of our work

- 4 We have followed the Audit Commission's three-stage approach to the review of data quality as set out in Table 1.

Table 1 Data quality approach

Stage 1	Management arrangements A review using key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to determine whether proper corporate management arrangements for data quality are in place, and whether these are being applied in practice. The findings contribute to the auditor's conclusion under the Code of Audit Practice on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money (the VFM conclusion).
Stage 2	Analytical review An analytical review of 2007/08 BVPI and non-BVPI data and selection of a sample for testing based on risk assessment.
Stage 3	Data quality spot checks In-depth review of a sample of 2007/08 PIs all of which come from a list of specified BVPIs and non-BVPIs used in CPA, to determine whether arrangements to secure data quality are delivering accurate, timely and accessible information in practice.

Summary conclusions

Stage 1 – Management arrangements

- 5 The Council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality remain at minimum requirements.
- 6 The Council has reiterated its commitment to securing good quality data and work has been carried out to ensure that this is communicated internally. However awareness of the policy continues to vary. Progress has been made on establishing systems to record, analyse and report data used to manage performance although the Council acknowledges that more work remains to be done, for example to ensure that systems to produce data that is right first time are in place.
- 7 Further progress has been made to specify staff responsibility for individual staff and to provide training. There is scope for target setting to be linked more closely to the achievement of data quality outcomes.
- 8 The introduction of the corporate report card has given additional focus to the use of council and partner data to monitor and manage performance.

Stage 2 – Analytical review

- 9 Our analytical review work at Stage 2 identified that the PI values reviewed either fell within expected ranges or were substantiated by evidence.

Stage 3 – Data quality spot checks

- 10 Our review and spot checks of PIs BV82a and BV82b concluded that they were fairly stated. However, the IPF Cost per Library Visit indicator was understated by 2.6 per cent and required amendment.
- 11 An action plan has been agreed with the council (see Appendix 1) to address the issues arising from this review.

Detailed findings

Management arrangements (Stage 1)

12 Overall, the Council's corporate arrangements for data quality remain at minimum requirements. The Council's self assessment identified some improvements in arrangements since last year's review but concluded that the overall arrangements remained at the same level. Because our assessment agrees with this we have kept the number of additional recommendations to a minimum as the ongoing effective implementation of those from previous years should help the Council respond to the areas that remain to be improved.

Governance and leadership

13 The Council has reiterated its corporate commitment to data quality. The revised performance management framework includes data quality as a key element and the Corporate Planning and Performance team have ensured that directorate contacts are updated on the contents of the policy.

14 Progress on ensuring that processes within directorates effectively deliver quality data is mixed. Some directorates (eg Environment and Economy) have produced and are implementing specific information on directorate responsibilities and roles. But in other areas (eg Adult Health and Community Services where a strategy and action plan to further embed systems has been planned for the last two years) progress is slower.

15 The Council is starting to embed regular review of data quality issues but an Internal Audit review has noted the need to improve data quality checks. The Technical Officers Group (TOG) has been replaced by a Performance Forum. It has considered the lessons learnt from an exercise to identify issues and concerns around the collection of information to feed the corporate report card. Involvement in exercises of this type help the Forum to establish a role in identification and dissemination of good practice that was originally planned to be part of the TOG's remit.

Recommendation

R1 Corporate Centre and Performance Forum to discuss approaches being adopted in directorates to provide specific guidance on implementation of data quality, identify examples of good practice and provide support where necessary.

Policies

- 16** Although the corporate data quality policy has now been in operation for over a year and its contents reiterated as noted in section one, its profile and awareness across directorates of it continues to be inconsistent. Officers from across directorates commented that following initial publicity, further communication on its contents and expected impact on the work of directorates had been limited until recent work by the Corporate Performance Team. There is a risk that if the policy is not seen to be relevant within directorates, it may not be adhered to and opportunities to identify and pass on good practice will be missed.
- 17** Work continues to be carried out in directorates to ensure that the corporate policy is publicised although progress varies. Within Adult Health and Community services for example the situation remains the same as for last year in that there are policies on the browser but not a systematic approach to ensuring they are used by all staff.

Recommendation

- R2** Linked to recommendation 1, Corporate Centre to work with Performance Forum to develop practical advice for directorates on highlighting the corporate data quality policy, and its relevance to the work of directorates

Systems and processes

- 18** The Council has made progress on establishing systems to record, analyse and report performance data although there is a recognition that scope for improvement remains. At the time of the audit delayed roll out of the upgraded Performance Plus software has limited the ability of some areas to get the maximum benefit from the system although the Council has been able to successfully implement the use of the corporate report card.
- 19** There are controls to ensure that information systems produce accurate information although the Council has identified that these need to be adhered to more closely. An Internal Audit report on performance management noted the need to ensure that reviews of data quality should be undertaken annually by leads in directorates.
- 20** Systems for producing data that is right first time are not yet fully developed. There are still a number of exercises in data cleansing that take place across directorates before it is signed off.
- 21** Work to ensure that performance information systems are secure is developing and gaining a higher profile across the Council. The appointment of a Corporate Risk Manager has helped to raise awareness of the issues and the introduction of the Business Continuity Management Strategy provides a framework for delivering the corporate business continuity policy. Although the impact of these initiatives has not been fully felt yet they do help embed the corporate message about the importance of ensuring that business critical information systems are secure.

Detailed findings

Recommendation

- R3** Ensure that as the corporate performance management system develops further, its ability to produce information that is right first time is prioritised in order to reduce the need for data cleansing exercises

People and skills

- 22** Progress continues to be made on specifying responsibility for the data quality responsibilities of individual staff but this continues to be directorate rather than corporately led. Our review found examples of work carried out in Environment and Economy and Adult Health and Community to ensure that relevant job descriptions contain information on data quality responsibilities. The response to last year's report indicates that a corporate event was planned to address our recommendation on spreading good practice in this area. The event had not taken place at the time that our work was carried out and we reiterate the importance of ensuring that there is a corporate 'stock take' of progress on the issue to ensure that good practice is captured and duplication of effort is avoided. The Council could also build on the work being carried out in directorates by developing corporate approaches linking staff targets to the achievement of data quality outcomes.
- 23** Directorates continue to develop methods to train staff with data quality responsibilities. As we commented last year this does ensure that the training provided is relevant and focused but there remains a risk that without some degree of corporate involvement or review, key messages and good practice may be missed. The Performance Forum has assumed responsibility for this work and as with the above issue, rather than making a new recommendation we reiterate the importance of last year's being implemented.

Recommendation

- R4** Develop corporate approaches to link targets set for staff to the achievement of data quality outcomes.

Data use and reporting

- 24** The Council is ensuring that data supporting performance information is used to manage and improve service delivery and that its relevance is reviewed. An internal report on the development of the corporate report card has been carried out and changes made in the light of the transition to the national indicator set and the introduction of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

- 25** Data on performance information is increasingly used to monitor and manage performance. The new corporate report card provides councillors with clear and comprehensive information on progress towards corporate and partnership targets.
- 26** Directorates have validation processes in place to ensure the accuracy of data. In Resources for example all PIs have a named owner and in Adult Health and Community and in Community Protection the importance of effective verification is consistently stressed.

Analytical review (Stage 2)

- 27** An analytical review of the following BVPIs and non-BVPIs was carried out. The findings, subject to the validation of a sample of PIs in stage 3 spot checks, are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Analytical review findings

2007/08 Performance indicator	Assessment
BVPI 165	Variance from 2006/07 and value within Audit Commission parameters.
BVPI 82a	Real performance improvement.
BVPI 82b	Real performance improvement.
Non-BVPI: Cost Per Library Visit	Variance from 2006/07 and value within Audit Commission parameters.

Data quality spot checks (Stage 3)

- 28** A number of PIs were reviewed using a series of detailed spot checks and audit tests. Our findings are shown in Table 3 overleaf.

Detailed findings

Table 3 Spot check findings

Performance indicator	Assessment	Comment
Environment BVPI 82a Recycling Performance	The PI @ 17.5 per cent is considered to be fairly stated.	Testing confirmed the PI was calculated as per the definition.
Environment BVPI 82b Composting Performance	The PI @ 17.9 per cent is considered to be fairly stated.	Testing confirmed the PI was calculated as per the definition.
Culture Cost Per Library Visit (IPF)	The draft PI at £3.79 was understated by 2.6 per cent. As a result the PI was amended to £3.89	The numerator had not been completed on a FRS17 basis (including pension costs) as required by the guidance.

Recommendation

R5 Ensure that the Library visit numerator is calculated on a FRS17 basis as required by the guidance.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
5	R1 Corporate Centre and Performance Forum to discuss approaches being adopted in directorates to provide specific guidance on implementation of data quality, identify examples of good practice and provide support where necessary.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The existing Corporate Data Quality Policy will be reviewed and if necessary updated in consultation with the performance Forum to ensure it reflects examples of good practice from across Directorates as well as external peers in terms of implementing and embedding data quality across the organisation. Implementation of the policy will be the responsibility of the performance leads within each directorate and formal support and guidance and steer to be provided by the Corporate Centre. A mini data quality audit will be carried out through the Performance Forum by the Corporate Centre in order to ensure a more consistent approach throughout the Council. 	<p>March 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p>

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
6	R2 Linked to recommendation 1, Corporate Centre to work with Performance Forum to develop practical advice for directorates on highlighting the corporate data quality policy, and its relevance to the work of directorates.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A formal training programme to be introduced for Officers and Members to ensure that data quality is incorporated into their day to day roles • A framework to be introduced building in the requirements of each directorate in support of the Corporate Data Quality Policy which meets specific service requirements. • Performance Leads to take a proactive role in taking the messages forward into their own directorates. • An online tutorial to be developed and be used as part of staff induction especially for those whose data quality is a core component of their job description. 	<p>June 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>July 2009</p>
7	R3 Ensure that as the corporate performance management system develops further, its ability to produce information that is right first time is prioritised in order to reduce the need for data cleansing exercises.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of the Technical Appendix to include more robust data quality arrangements will be taken forward into 2009/10. • The information will be challenged and reviewed at the year end to ensure that the process and methods of calculation are accurately stated. • We will investigate the use of data quality control on Performance Plus for all users including our LAA Partners. 	<p>March 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>May 2009</p>

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
7	R4 Develop corporate approaches to link targets set for staff to the achievement of data quality outcomes.	3	Monica Fogarty		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of our on going timetable of reviewing the Corporate Performance Management Framework, we will work collaboratively with Directorate Performance leads to ensure that clear links are made between targets set for staff and reinforcing the importance of ensuring that information is produced that is right first time and meets business requirements. The review of the Technical Appendix for 2009/10 will include more robust data quality arrangements including the signing off of all officers responsible for producing the information as well as the agreed outturn. Further reinforcing the need for all staff to embed data quality in to their every day role. 	<p>July 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p>
9	R5 Ensure that the Library visit numerator is calculated on a FRS17 basis as required by the guidance.	3	Simon Robson		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will ensure that CIPFA guidelines for calculating the cost per library visit indicator are adhered to by those producing the nominator and denominator for the calculation. The guidelines will be circulated to the staff involved in the data submission process and we will ensure that all staff are clear as to what is required from them. Prior to submission the data will be checked and signed by the Strategic Head of the Library and Information Service to confirm that the data has been produced according to the guidance provided. 	March 2009

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