

Meeting: AUDIT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item:

Date: 8 June 2009

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DATA QUALITY AUDIT REPORT 2007/08

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1 PURPOSE

To advise Members of the Audit Commission's report on the Council's 2007/08 Data Quality Review as appended to this report at Appendix A.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Members note the Audit Commission's report on the Council's data quality for 2007/08 and resulting action plan at Appendix B.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Audit Commission developed a new approach to the audit of performance indicators from 2005/06. The approach was revised slightly in 2006/07 and comprises three stages:

1. A review of overall management arrangements to secure data quality
2. An analytical review of national performance indicator information
3. Spot checks of particular performance indicators for data quality.

- 3.2 Data quality management arrangements were assessed against key lines of enquiry over five themes:

- Governance and leadership
- Policies
- Systems and processes
- People and skills
- Data use and reporting.

- 3.3 The analytical review of data assesses whether performance results are within expected ranges and variances are substantiated by supporting evidence.

- 3.4 For 2007/08 performance indicator spot checks of data quality, the Audit Commission advised auditors that it was compulsory to review housing benefit indicators as a minimum.
- 3.5 Auditors also selected the indicator relating to average housing relet times for review. The review initially identified an issue regarding the recording of major works, but the indicator was recalculated and the results verified by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission reporting system does not reflect the change, as it was past the deadline for amendments.
- 3.6 The outcome of the audit contributes to the auditor's conclusion on arrangements to secure value for money and informed the Use of Resources assessment.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTIONS AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Audit Commission's report concludes that the Council's overall management arrangements for securing data quality are, "consistently above minimum requirements and have been further embedded compared to the previous year."
- 4.2 The report notes that the role of Data Quality Champions, a network of staff focussed on data quality throughout the organisation, is considered notable practice.
- 4.3 The auditor's review of housing benefit indicators concluded that results were fairly stated.
- 4.4 Following initial concerns outlined in paragraph 3.5, the auditor's review of the housing relet performance indicator concluded that results were fairly stated.
- 4.5 As a result of the audit, the Audit Commission identified the Council's strengths and areas for improvement.
- 4.6 An action plan addressing the recommendations in the report has been agreed with the Audit Commission and is included in the Data Quality Report at Appendix A.
- 4.7 The Council's Action Plan for 2009/10 at Appendix B includes:
- The actions agreed with the Audit Commission as a result of the 2007/08 audit
 - Any actions outstanding from recommendations made as a result of the previous year's data quality audit
 - Actions identified as a result of internal audit of performance information
 - Improvement actions identified by the Corporate Performance and Improvement Team.
- 4.8 Officers monitor the Data Quality Action Plan on a monthly basis and will report progress to Members of the Audit Committee on a six monthly basis.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications to the report recommendations.

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications to the report recommendations.

5.3 Other Corporate Implications

The Data Quality Review contributes to the Audit Commission's conclusion on arrangements for value for money and informed the Use of Resources assessment.

5.4 Other Implications

Delivery of the Data Quality Action Plan will require the commitment of all services.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Stevenage Borough Council Data Quality Policy

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Audit Commission Data Quality Report 2007/08 (attached)
- Appendix B: Stevenage Borough Council Data Quality Action Plan (attached)