

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET

Decision Made: 14 September 2011

DATA QUALITY POLICY

Issue for Decision

To consider the updated Data Quality Policy for the Council.

Decision Made

1. That the updated Data Quality Policy at Appendix A to the report of the Head of Change and Scrutiny and the accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix B of the report of the Head of Change and Scrutiny be agreed.
2. That Data Quality Actions for the inclusion in the Corporate Improvement Plan at Appendix C to the report of the Head of Change and Scrutiny be agreed.

Reasons for Decision

Public services need information that is fit for purpose with which to manage services and performance. For example, service providers need good information to make judgements about the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of their services. At the same time there must be a balance between the use and importance of the information and the cost of collecting the required data to the necessary level of accuracy and reliability.

Successful bodies have recognised data quality as a corporate priority and have taken action to embed arrangements for managing the quality of the data they collect and use.

The Government is committed to increasing transparency and accountability at a local level. At a national level the localism bill and ethos of the national localism agenda aims to enable local people to hold politicians and public bodies to account over how their council tax is being spent and decisions made on their behalf. By reviewing Data Quality arrangements and carrying out checks on a regular basis should ensure that the data provided to decision makers and residents is reliable, accurate, valid, timely, relevant and complete.

Updates to Maidstone's Data Quality Policy

The Data Quality Policy was last updated in March 2009 within the inclusion of risk management. Although the current policy is in line with the current best practice when comparing our policy to other local authorities it was apparent that the inclusion of additional elements for example a definition of data and the key principles of data quality would aid understanding.

Updates to this version of the policy include:

- A definition of 'data';
- An outline of the key principles of data quality to enhance understanding;
- Changes to the procedures around Service Planning and providing supporting documents; and
- Sections on partners, contracts and monitoring, reviewing and reporting have been added.

Consultation on the revised policy has been undertaken. The policy was emailed to a sample of data managers and data entry officers, who were asked to read it and respond to consultation. A total of 29 people responded to the consultation and some minor changes were made as a result.

As set out in action plan at Appendix C to the report of the Head of Change and Scrutiny and page 8 of the revised Data Quality Policy, the policy will be fully reviewed every two years and any updates to the policy presented to Cabinet for approval.

Data Quality Actions

Appendix C to the report of the head of Change and Scrutiny sets out actions identified as part of the review of Data Quality. The areas which were identified for improvement as part of the review were training and raising awareness. It is recommended that these actions be integrated into the Corporate Improvement Plan and reported through this mechanism.

Alternatives considered and why rejected

Not reviewing the Data Quality Policy is not thought appropriate, as failing to take this seriously could mean the reliance that the Council can place on various information as part of the decision making process will be significantly reduced.

The Council needs to be mindful that the systems that are put in place are not overly bureaucratic, complicated or confusing for the officers who are involved

Background Papers

Third Party Data Sharing Protocol
Data Quality Responsibility Statement
Data Quality Audit Template

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Change and Scrutiny by: 22 September 2011
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