Maidstone Borough Council

Audit Committee

3 March 2008

Report of the Director of Change and Support Services

Report prepared by: Alex Sharman

1   Data Quality 2007

1.1   Issue for decision

1.1.1   The Audit Committee is asked to endorse the results of the Audit Commission's latest inspection of the authority's Data Quality arrangements.

1.2   Recommendation of the Director of Change and Support Services

1.2.1   **It is recommended** that the Audit Committee endorse the inspection outcome and note the action being taken.

1.3   Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1   In February 2007 the Council received the latest Audit Commission inspection findings in relation to data quality. In terms of key findings, the assessment established that "The Council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality are performing well." Key strengths highlighted in the report include the responsiveness of the authority to data quality issues, linkages in key documents and underpinning arrangements and action to embed data quality. This report for 2007-08 is the third Data Quality Assessment and, with recent findings in relation to direction of travel and use of resources, the result means that the Council in a strong position to do well in the future.

1.3.2   Producing, managing and reporting good quality data is essential in ensuring that council decision making is sound. It is therefore a key element of corporate governance arrangements. The Council has a Data Quality Policy and a series of actions have been identified in order to secure improvements; the actions in this report will be incorporated into existing action plans.   The Data Quality Assessment looks at the management arrangements that are in place to secure data quality together with checks based on a limited number of performance indicators. There are five key review themes that are used as part of the assessment:

- Governance and Leadership;
- Policies and Procedures;
- Systems and Processes;
- People and skills; and

- Data Use.

1.3.3 Detailed checking showed that there were some miscalculations as outlined in the report but these were not material. Lead officers have been identified for addressing the issues raised in the report. In terms of action being taken in relation to data quality, the authority is looking at the development of data quality in the service planning process and at end of year reporting and this has been raised in various staff forums. The Council has implemented a new performance management system (excelsis) and innovative ways of presenting the information are being explored. The competency framework covers all management and incorporates data quality.

1.4 <u>Alternative Action and why not Recommended</u>

1.4.1 The Data Quality judgement is produced under requirements governing External Audit.

1.5 <u>Impact on Corporate Objectives</u>

1.5.1 The Data Quality assessment covers the corporate wellbeing of the authority and is an integral part of the Corporate Governance arrangements of the authority.

1.6 <u>Risk Management</u>

1.6.1 The work of the External Audit is an essential element of the Corporate Governance arrangements of the authority.

1.7 <u>Other Implications</u>

Financial

Staffing

Legal

Social Inclusion

Environmental/sustainable development

Community safety

Human Rights Act

Procurement

1.7.1   None arising from consideration of this report.

1.8   <u>Background Documents</u>

1.8.1   None