

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

17 FEBRUARY 2009

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Report prepared by Anna Collier

1. Data Quality 2008

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 The Audit Committee are asked to consider and comment on 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 Environmental Services

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

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 In February 2009 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 well above minimum requirements" which equates to a level 4. This was an improvement from a level 3 in 2008.

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 Data Quality Assessment looked at the management arrangements that are in place to secure data quality together with checks on a several 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 This positive result ensures that the Council is in a strong position for the future Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Key strengths highlighted in the report include:

- The Council's robust procedures for collecting and validating performance data;
- Data quality improvement arrangements;
- The effective use of performance information through the Kent Price Book and the Business Transformation programme and
- A strong understanding by staff of data quality issues.

1.3.4 Within stage three of the assessment a small number of minor errors were identified however these were not material and all performance indicators (PIs) have been assessed as 'Fairly Stated'.

1.3.5 There were no specific recommendations made on the authority's data quality arrangements in the report. However it was noted that the main challenge for the council is to continue to establish high standards of data quality in its partnerships. Officers are currently looking at where further improvement can be made and also the arrangements in relation to the Local Strategic Partnership in particular. This will include further details on data quality as part of the Strategic Plan and Corporate Improvement Plan.

1.3.6 This now means that the Council has top marks on all three of the external inspections, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Use of Resources Assessment and Data Quality with an improvement on Use of Resources and Data Quality in the past year.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

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

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

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 Risk Management

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

1.7 Other Implications [Insert an 'X' in the boxes below to indicate if the recommendations will have any implications in the specified area]

1.7.1

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Financial | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Staffing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Community Safety | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Human Rights Act | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Procurement | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Asset Management | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1.7.2 There are none arising from this report.

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes No

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes No

Reason for Urgency

[State why the decision is urgent and cannot wait until the next issue of the forward plan.]