

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **REPORT OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGER**

**Report prepared by Georgia Hawkes**

**Date Issued: 14 May 2009**

#### **1. Review of the Data Quality Policy**

##### **1.1 Issue for Decision**

- 1.1.1 To consider the Council's position with regard to data quality and agree changes to the Data Quality Policy.

##### **1.2 Recommendation of the Policy and Performance Team**

- 1.2.1 That the revised Data Quality Policy be agreed as set out at Appendix A including:
- Reference to particular areas of risk;
  - Reference to appropriate training for staff; and
  - A change in wording in paragraph 6 regarding performance indicators.

##### **1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 1.3.1 All businesses need information that is fit for purpose to manage services and account for performance. Service providers also need accurate information to make judgements about the efficiency, effectiveness and the responsiveness of their services. Given the decisions that the council has to make, the time that is invested on these activities and the range of systems used to collect and analyse data, it is important that this information is reliable.
- 1.3.2 Successful bodies have recognised data quality as a corporate priority and have taken action to embed effective arrangements for managing the quality of the data they collect and use.
- 1.3.3 The Council has in recent years developed a Data Quality Policy and has, in the past few months, looked at further improvements to the content.

- 1.3.4 There have also been a number of changes and improvements put in place to embed and improve data quality throughout the Council. Incorporated within the Corporate Improvement Plan is the data quality action plan, which includes recommendations made by the Audit Commission.
- 1.3.5 The Data Quality Policy was revised and strengthened in June 2007 and was approved by full Council. The policy sets out the Council's commitment to data quality, the responsibilities of the staff here at the Council and points out the importance of ensuring that data received from partners and other third parties is in line with the authority's standards. Most recently, in February 2009, the Council achieved the top rating from the Audit Commission for data quality.
- 1.3.6 All authorities in Kent are subject to the same data quality inspection regime as Maidstone. However, they all approach this differently and the Council continues to learn best practice from other authorities.
- 1.3.7 Officers have considered several other models of delivery and have made recommendations to be incorporated into the updated Data Quality Policy (the policy including the recommended amendments can be found at Appendix A).
- 1.3.8 The revised policy highlights areas of potential significant risk that Heads of Service and Section Managers need to be aware of in order to efficiently be able to manage them. These are as follows:
- Where there is a high volume of data transactions;
  - Technically complex performance information/definition guidance;
  - Problems identified in previous years;
  - Supporting inexperienced staff involved in data processing/performance information production;
  - A system being used to produce new performance information; and
  - Known gaps in the control environment.
- 1.3.9 Relevant training will continue to be provided to ensure officers are aware of how data quality relates to their work, how they fit into the overall council arrangements and what is expected of them.

1.3.10 Point 6 of the policy needed to be updated in relation to the new national indicators and retained BVPI's.

1.3.11 The revised Data Quality Policy will be published in the Best Value Performance Plan 2008/09, which details the Council's performance against target for the indicators set by central government and local indicators set by the Council.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

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

1.4.2 However, 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.

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 Data quality impacts on the efficiency of services provided by the Council and value for money.

#### 1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 If data quality is not considered effectively across the Council this will impact on the decision making process and could also result in action being taken by the Audit Commission.

1.6.2 By using inaccurate data the Council would be at risk of reducing the efficiency of services and will not be producing value for money for local residents.

#### 1.7 Other Implications

##### 1.7.1

1. Financial

x

2. Staffing

x

3. Legal

x

4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment

5. Environmental/Sustainable Development

6. Community Safety

7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management

X

#### 1.3.1 Financial

Providing quality data does have a cost to the Council. However, it is essential that the Council is clear on the information that is collected and this is used to assess performance against key priorities. In the long run accurate and focused data collection should go towards creating greater efficiency savings within services. However, the Council will continue to develop the policies and procedures on data quality where it is cost effective to do so.

#### 1.3.2 Staffing

By following the procedures and guidelines set in place for data quality less staff time should be taken up with auditing and checking the figures provided.

#### 1.3.3 Legal

Inaccurate data could raise legal issues.

#### 1.3.4 Asset Management

Good data quality will support asset management, as several measures focus in this area.

**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.]

**How to Comment**

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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