Data Quality Policy

As an Excellent Council, the Council uses data to inform, to help it measure its services to the public, to benchmark cost and performance and to set targets to improve performance, reduce cost and improve customer care. The Leader of the Council will lead and champion data quality issues.

To be effective, it is vital that data is produced in a timely fashion, accurately and that it is fit for its intended purpose. To this end, the Council has agreed a procedure for gathering data and an action plan for ensuring that systems are in place for assuring data quality.

The Council works in partnership with other organisations therefore it is important that data provided by partners and other third parties is accurate. Managers will make arrangements to ensure that third party data is in line with authority standards where appropriate.

As the authority's strategic commitment to data quality, this updated policy has been approved by the Leader of the Council and applies to all business areas in relation to data collection, recording, analysis and reporting. National standards for data quality will be taken account of as part of the process of securing data quality.

Data Quality Assurance Procedure

As part of the Council's Data Quality Policy the Council has adopted the following assurance procedure relating to systems and the production of performance data:

Assuring systems

1. Overall responsibility for data quality at a strategic level lies with the Chief Executive; however, operational responsibility has been assigned to heads of service and section managers on their behalf.

2. Within service plans, each section manager will produce a statement on how they will assure data quality and publicise expectations to staff. Where appropriate this will cascade into performance appraisals.

3. Heads of service and section managers will ensure that appropriate systems are in place to collate performance data ('right first time'), that they are fit for purpose and that procedure notes/manuals are in place for business-critical systems and that these are reviewed and updated as appropriate.

4. Heads of service and section managers will provide the relevant training to staff where appropriate to ensure they are aware of how data quality relates to their work and what the requirements for assuring data quality are including, where appropriate, the appointment of data champions and producing national, key and local performance indicator out-turn data where appropriate.

5. Heads of service and section managers will ensure that appropriate risk management and business continuity management arrangements are in place, paying particular attention to the areas highlighted below:

- Where there is a high volume of data transactions;

- Technically complex performance information/definition guidance;

- Problems identified in previous years;

- 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.

6. Each performance indicator including national indicators (NI's), retained BVPI's, KPI's or other) will have a designated officer ('the responsible officer') who is responsible for regularly monitoring progress against any targets that have been set, for managing risks associated with the indicator and for verifying the accuracy of published outturns.

7. Outturn data will be produced as soon as is practicable after the required timescale has elapsed.

8. The responsible officer will ensure that calculations are checked by a colleague to reduce the potential for mistakes.

9. Working papers for audit inspection will be forwarded to the Policy and Performance Team and copies will also be maintained locally.

10. The responsible officer will sign a confirmation checklist to confirm that data has been produced accurately.

11. Heads of service will complete and sign a checklist to confirm that all data within their area of responsibility is correct.

12. The Council will work to ensure that financial and activity data collected as part of partnership working, particularly in the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership is checked and validated, as part of business cases and ongoing monitoring.