



AGENDA ITEM: 8

**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE:
25 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Report of: Transformation Manager

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Director (Transformation)

**Contact for further information: Alison Grimes (Extn. 5409)
(E-mail: alison.grimes@westlancs.gov.uk)**

SUBJECT: DATA QUALITY PROTOCOL

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update members regarding issues at a national level affecting data quality management within the council and to approve a local Data Quality Protocol.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Data Quality Protocol attached be endorsed as a replacement for the Data Quality Strategy.

2.2 That regular reports relating to the superseded Data Quality Strategy be removed from the Audit and Governance Committee work programme.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Members will recall that in April 2011 a report was brought to Audit & Governance detailing progress on the Action Plan arising from the Data Quality Strategy and highlighting several key changes pending in terms of data reporting, inspection and assessment, namely:

- the establishment of a single data list cataloguing all the information local authorities must make available to central government.

- the disbanding of any centrally-imposed performance management regime from April 2011 and with it the requirement to publish performance against the National Indicator Set.
 - the disbanding of the Audit Commission in particular in relation to its role in assessing the council's data quality arrangements through its Use of Resources assessments.
- 3.2 The April 2011 report detailed reasons for delaying the scheduled update of the strategy, given the ongoing changes both at a local and national level.
- 3.3 Pending further developments, the Council's existing data quality management arrangements continued:
- the Data Quality Strategy remained in force
 - the Council's External Auditors continued to examine data quality arrangements in relation to the Council's Financial Statements as part of their audit work.
 - Internal Audit continued to carry out a risk based programme relating to the procedures for the production of PIs and other work designed to attest the accuracy of other data available internally for the management of the authority.

4.0 CURRENT SITUATION

- 4.1 The picture at a national level is now clearer and local arrangements more certain. The Single Data List was published in April 2011 and details all data that local government needs to report to central government, but there is currently no requirement to publish this data and no targets are assigned to the data. Individual areas report this data directly to government.
- 4.2 WLBC adopts its own performance indicators and assigns its own targets on an annual basis. The key performance indicators are reported quarterly to members and the full suite annually.
- 4.2 Given the cessation of Use of Resources assessment and national indicator sets, and taking into account existing staff resources, the previous Strategy and Action Plan is no longer an appropriate mechanism to apply to the Council's aim of providing data that is fit for purpose. It is therefore proposed to maintain a Data Quality Protocol as a statement of required standards for data management practices within the council, to be updated as appropriate rather than on a scheduled basis.
- 4.3 Guidance for appropriate data management is contained within the new protocol and is based on the guidelines contained within the previous strategy document. The most recent external audit of the council and internal audit Annual Report did not raise any serious issues in relation to data quality. Evidence therefore points to the adequacy of existing arrangements to secure data quality being continued through the protocol.
- 4.4 The new Data Quality Protocol applies to all areas and systems of the council and will help support staff in providing worthwhile data that is sufficiently accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant and complete. This will assist in

delivering the government's aim of increasing transparency and openness about how council's conduct their business.

- 4.5 As the government pursues its transparency agenda, developments will continue to impact on the way data is used and its management throughout the council. It will be necessary for the council to keep abreast of transparency requirements as they are implemented at a national level and apply them locally.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 It is essential to have effective data quality management arrangements in place to ensure the information on which services rely and management decisions are made is sound.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 6.1 There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report and, in particular, no significant impact on crime and disorder. The report has no significant links with the Sustainable Community Strategy.

7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 All activity associated with this report will be achieved from existing resources.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 This report highlights the requirement to produce and where applicable, publish, data that is fit for purpose and acknowledges the likely increase in access of data by the public in the future. The risk to the organisation is in use of unreliable data and non-compliance with national guidelines. Adherence to the Data Quality Protocol and implementation of national guidance regarding public access to data should ensure that the risk to the organisation is minimised.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Data Quality Protocol