

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

## Cabinet Member for Performance and Capacity

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**Date of Meeting:** 12<sup>th</sup> March 2010  
**Report of:** Head of Policy and Performance  
**Subject/Title:** Data Quality Strategy

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### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the adoption of a Data Quality Strategy for Cheshire East Council, its wide dissemination across the Council and a programme of training to ensure high levels of awareness and compliance. The Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That
- (1) the Data Quality Strategy and supporting actions attached as an Appendix to the report be adopted for Cheshire East Council;
  - (2) the Cabinet Member for Performance and Capacity be confirmed as the Member responsible for data quality; and
  - (3) it be noted that Corporate Scrutiny Committee will take responsibility for reviewing and monitoring data quality arrangements and for overseeing the data quality standards.

### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Council is accountable for its use of resources and must ensure that it uses sound and accurate information to plan and account for its activities. The Data Quality Strategy sets out the framework for an effective and co-ordinated approach to data quality.

### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 N/A

### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 N/A

## **6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health**

- 6.1 Good data quality supports the effective delivery of all Council policies including climate change and health.

## **7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

- 7.1 None

## **8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)**

- 8.1 Financial decision making relies on sound and accurate data. Poor or incomplete information may result in inefficient use of resources, non-achievement of value for money and failure to deliver the Council's objectives.

## **9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

- 9.1 The legislation governing the handling/holding of data has remained the same for a few years now (data protection and freedom of information). However, interest in how data is held has increased and the regulator (the Information Commissioner) has become more active. This is a complex area and one where the local authorities can lose both reputationally and financially if they fail to take their obligations seriously. Breaches of legislation can involve not just civil actions, but also criminal sanctions.
- 9.2 The way that local authorities take decisions is being subjected to greater scrutiny and it is important that when taking such decisions they have the best information that can be obtained available to help inform their decision-making. The quality of the data held plays a critical part in decision-making and if a decision is made which relies upon data that is inaccurate/inadequate, it could lead to a decision being successfully challenged (whether by judicial review, or other means).
- 9.3 The delivery of services can be compromised if data quality is poor. For example, it could lead to services being delivered badly and/or to the waste of public funds. This might be highlighted in an audit, or worse still could cause a local authority to fail in its statutory duties. There are high profile instances of problems caused by poor data handling and sharing and poor quality data heightens the risks involved.

## **10.0 Risk Management**

- 10.1 Poor data quality is a risk for all services and is addressed by them in their risk assessments and risk management plans.

## **11.0 Background and Options**

11.1 The Data Quality Strategy defines how Cheshire East Council ensures that data quality is an integral part of operational, performance management and governance arrangements. The Council must ensure that all data it holds is:

- Accurate
- Valid
- Relevant
- Reliable
- Timely
- Complete

The Government and their inspectorates base their assessments of the Council on constantly updated data. Data collected by the Council therefore needs to meet quality standards from collection and entry to end use. The Strategy identifies the key aspects of ensuring data quality and sets out the roles and responsibilities of Council officers involved in entering, calculating, monitoring and reporting performance.

11.2 The Strategy identifies the following officer roles and responsibilities:

- Corporate Management Team: responsible for the strategic approach to data quality as set out, for example, in the Corporate Plan
- Heads of Service: have overall ownership and responsibility for data quality within their service areas
- Team managers: have day to day responsibility for ensuring data quality within their service delivery areas
- Performance team: Reviewing the Strategy and associated action plan
- Responsible Officers: take ownership of data collecting and reporting of specific National Indicators and assure standards
- Technical Officers: are responsible for producing information and applying data definitions
- All staff: responsible for in-putting or extracting data are responsible for quality in respect of this specific data.

11.3 The Data Quality Strategy recognises the important role of Members in delivering and assuring data quality. It places overall responsibility for data quality with the Portfolio holder for Performance and Capacity and responsibility for review of data quality with Scrutiny.

11.4 Important information is passed between the Council, partner organisations and other external agencies. The Data Quality Strategy defines responsibilities for ensuring that partners are aware of the Council's requirements and for assuring data quality.

11.5 As part of the Council's data quality assurance processes the Council has carried out a full audit of a sample of National Indicators drawn from across the National indicator Set. The findings of this audit are being used to update a Data Quality Action Plan.

## **12.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Janis Grant

Designation: Planning and Performance Manager

Tel No: 01270 685854

Email: [Janis.grant@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:Janis.grant@cheshireeast.gov.uk)