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**SUMMARY REPORT**

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**DATA QUALITY STRATEGY**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Stephen Harker,  
Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director - Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Cabinet's approval for the Data Quality Strategy (DQS) appended in **Appendix 1**.

**Summary**

2. The DQS is designed to improve further the quality of the data that the Council produces. It has been produced partly as a response to the requirements of the Audit Commission, although mainly as recognised good practice. The strategy recognises that good data is necessary to ensure that the Council can assess how well its services are performing, that it knows the characteristics of the community it serves and that the financial data it uses is accurate.
3. The DQS consists of three components: the Strategy itself, a Technical Annex and an Action Plan. The Strategy sets the broad parameters of what we aim to deliver, the Technical Annex deals with the details of systems, roles and responsibilities, etc.; whilst the Action Plan sets out the detailed workload over the next year.

**Recommendation**

4. a) It is recommended that the Data Quality Strategy be approved by Cabinet;  
b) Resources Scrutiny Committee be requested to monitor the implementation of the action plan.

**Reasons**

5. The recommendations are supported in order to meet the requirements of good practice as identified in the Audit Commission's Data Management Arrangements for Data Quality Key Lines of Enquiry and to further enhance the Council's already good data quality management arrangements.

**Lorraine O'Donnell**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**

## Background Papers

PricewaterhouseCoopers, November 2007, *Data Quality Reviews*

Audit Commission, 2008, *Management Arrangements for Data Quality Key Lines of Enquiry*

Audit Commission, 2007, *Management Arrangements for Data Quality Key Lines of Enquiry*

Audit Commission, 2006, *Management Arrangements for Data Quality Key Lines of Enquiry*

Various PMF documentation including the 'Roles and Responsibilities' document

David Goodchild : Extension 2015

DJG

S17 Crime and Disorder	It is not considered that the contents of this report have any effect.
Health and Well Being	There is no specific health and well-being impact.
Sustainability	There is no specific sustainability impact.
Diversity	There is no specific diversity impact.
Wards Affected	All wards are affected equally.
Groups Affected	All groups are affected equally.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is classed as a key decision and has been included in the forward plan.
Urgent Decision	For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	There is no specific relevance to the strategy beyond improving the quality of data that is used in assessing its delivery.

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

6. The DQS was originally envisaged to meet the requirements of the 2006 Management Arrangements for Data Quality Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) produced by the Audit Commission. Although a formal DQS was subsequently dropped as a requirement for attainment of Level 4 in the 2007 KLOE it is still felt to be good practice. In addition PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) the Council's external auditors have also recommended that we produce a DQS. In 2007 PwC rated the Council as performing well in delivering the management arrangement for data quality, which is effectively 3 out of 4. The DQS has been put together with widespread involvement of appropriate officers in the Council led by Information Governance and the Policy Unit. To date there has been limited involvement of partners although more widespread discussions will take place at the first annual review. Involvement of partners is featured as a significant element of the 2008 KLOE.
7. It is important to note that the DQS incorporates much good practice that already exists within the Council and consolidates this within a single document. This will facilitate the continuation of high quality data production irrespective of any changes in personnel. The DQS has three components: the Strategy itself, a Technical Annex and an Action Plan (**Appendix 1**). The Strategy sets out in broad terms what we wish to achieve, the Technical Annex has the detailed information whilst the Action Plan sets out what we aim to achieve in the next year. It is important to note that the DQS is proportionate in terms of what it aims to deliver, so for example protocols need to be fit for purpose and not excessive. The Action Plan is especially challenging in some areas, particularly around training and establishing protocols with partners. Discussions have been held with PwC regarding what these might include and further discussions are planned.
8. The Strategy commences with a high level commitment from the responsible Cabinet Member and the Data Quality Champion. Next it sets out the characteristics of good data quality and that it covers all data including service performance, financial and statistics. The link to the Council's vision is articulated followed by reference to governance, policies/procedures and the importance of people and engaging with partners. Indicators which will be used to gauge the success of the strategy have been developed and are to be monitored in 2008/09. The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and revised as necessary.
9. The second component of the strategy is the Technical Annex which considers governance arrangements and the need to review and revise the Performance Management Framework to ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose. The roles and responsibilities of the corporate centre, departments and others are set down and contact names are provided. Systems and processes are considered and the various standards are referenced. Training is an important component of the strategy and this is outlined in the Annex as is the need to engage with partners.
10. The third component of the DQS is the Action Plan which sets down in some detail what we aim to do in the next year. Lead officers are identified and 'Partners' are those who will be actively involved in delivering the action. Specific dates are identified and achievement is shown by *PerformancePlus* alert symbols, principally blue circle and red triangle.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

11. Consultation has taken place with all Council departments and a number of groups within the Council (Corporate Information Governance Group, Performance Management Coordination Group, Finance Practitioners Group and the Information Uses Group) and PwC. Initial discussions have been held with some partners, especially around the need for protocols and this will be progressed further during 2008/09. The DQS has incorporated the results of this consultation as appropriate.
12. Resources Scrutiny Committee received the DQS at their meeting on 12 May 2008 and a number of improvements were suggested the main one being that Resources Scrutiny Committee should monitor the implementation of the action plan. It was also usefully suggested that Members be offered the awareness and training sessions.

## **Conclusion**

13. The DQS provides a sound basis for further improving the already high level of data quality that exists within the Council.