REPORT TO	DATE OF MEETING	SOUTH RIBBLE
Governance Committee	29 April 2010	BOROUGH COUNCIL
	Report template revised June 2008	forward with South Ribble

SUBJECT	PORTFOLIO	AUTHOR	ITEM
Data Quality	Leader	R Heap	

SUMMARY AND LINK TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The purpose of this report is to inform members of developments following the 2008/9 Use of Resources Assessment; to strengthen data quality arrangements where data is provided by third parties.

This report impacts on all the Council's priorities but it specifically relates to 'efficient, effective and exceptional council.'

RECOMMENDATIONS

That members note the report.

BACKGROUND

The Council needs reliable, accurate and timely information in order to manage services effectively. In other words, the information used to make decisions needs to be of a high quality and able to withstand testing and scrutiny.

There are six key characteristics that can be used to describe the quality of data:

- Accuracy
- Validity
- Reliability
- Timeliness
- Relevance
- Completeness

The risk in not identifying and addressing weaknesses in data quality, or the arrangements that underpin data collection and reporting activities, is that information may be misleading, decision making may be flawed, resources may be wasted and underperforming services may not be improved.

The Council has an excellent track record in Data Quality; all previous assessments by the Audit Commission have rated us as *consistently above minimum requirements – performing well.* In the Use of Resources assessment for 2008/9, presented to the Governance Committee on 26 November 2009, auditors made one recommendation for improvement:

Ensure that arrangements are in place to:
- validate data from third parties;
- ensure that such data is fit for purpose and third parties demonstrate that it complies with the requirements set out in the third party protocol;
- provide assurance that partners have secure processes in place for providing information; and
- identify and share information on potential data quality issues and address any data sharing problems.

DETAILS AND REASONING

In response to this recommendation, the following actions have been taken:

- Data Quality Policy reviewed and updated to include partners and third parties.
- Performance Reporting Checklist created – for all externally reported performance indicators, a responsible officer must be identified, form completed with commitment given to data quality, and signed off by the relevant Director.
- Written Procedures Template created – for each externally reported performance indicator at the beginning of each financial year, a template must be completed to show how calculations are carried out, provide a sound audit trail and support the completion of the year-end data quality checklist for each indicator.
- Third Party Reporting Protocol created – where information, (e.g. statistics) is provided to the council by an outside body (e.g. Enterprise), completion of a form and sign off by a senior manager in partner organisations to confirm commitment to our Data Quality Policy.
- Data quality profile – work has begun to stress the importance and raise the profile of data quality profile with managers, via workshops and the leadership forum.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

Completion of the actions listed above will satisfy the recommendation from the Audit Commission and strengthen arrangements in-house. Internal Audit has, and continues to be, engaged in work on data quality. Staff from Policy and Audit work together to risk assess performance indicators and carry out spot checks throughout the year; further compounding the commitment to high quality data.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS

In the preparation of this report, consideration has been given to the impact of its proposals in all the areas listed below.

FINANCIAL	None directly.

LEGAL	None directly.

RISK	Robust data quality arrangements help to ensure that council officers work with accurate and reliable data. This in turn minimises risk of errors which could lead to criticism by auditors and damage to the council's reputation.

OTHER (see below)	

Asset Management	Corporate Plans and Policies	Crime and Disorder	Efficiency Savings/Value for Money
Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion	Freedom of Information/ Data Protection	Health and Safety	Health Inequalities
Human Rights Act 1998	Implementing Electronic Government	Staffing, Training and Development	Sustainability

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Data Quality Policy - accessible at
www.southribble.gov.uk/upload/public/attachments/31/Data_Quality_Policy.pdf

In the know? Audit Commission discussion paper on data quality - accessible at
In the know - Audit Commission