

# Data Quality Report

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Audit 2007/08

January 2009



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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Detailed findings</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Action Plan</b>	<b>18</b>

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## Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
  - any third party.
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# Introduction

- 1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the findings from our work on data quality for 2007/08.
- 2 Auditors' work on data quality and performance information supports the Audit Commission's reliance on performance indicators (PI) in its service assessments for comprehensive performance assessment (CPA).
- 3 Our work on data quality is complemented by the Audit Commission's paper, 'Improving information to support decision making: standards for better quality data'. This paper sets out standards, for adoption on a voluntary basis, to support improvement in data quality. The expected impact of the Audit Commission's work on data quality is that it will drive improvement in the quality of local government performance information, leading to greater confidence in the supporting data on which performance assessments are based.

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## Scope of our work

- 4 We have followed the Audit Commission's three-stage approach to the review of data quality as set out in Table 1.

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**Table 1      Data quality approach**

<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Management arrangements</b> A review using key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to determine whether proper corporate management arrangements for data quality are in place, and whether these are being applied in practice. The findings contribute to the auditor's conclusion under the Code of Audit Practice on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money (the VFM conclusion).
<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Analytical review</b> An analytical review of 2007/08 BVPI and non-BVPI data and selection of a sample for testing based on risk assessment.
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Data quality spot checks</b> In-depth review of a sample of 2007/08 PIs most of which come from a list of specified BVPIs and non-BVPIs used in CPA, to determine whether arrangements to secure data quality are delivering accurate, timely and accessible information in practice. For 2007/08 PI spot checks, the Audit Commission specified that it is compulsory to review two housing benefits PIs at all single tier and district councils as a minimum.

- 5 In addition to the specified indicators we selected for review one non-specified performance indicator - BVPI 8.

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## Summary conclusions

### Stage 1 – Management arrangements

- 6 The Council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality are adequate.
- 7 Some action has been taken since last year to strengthen arrangements for data quality. Most notably, the Council has implemented a formal policy which now provides a sound foundation for promoting greater corporate ownership of data quality. Like all new policies, this now needs time to become properly established within the organisation in order for the Council to fully realise the benefits. Nevertheless, the Council could progress this by, for example, strengthening its approach to following up issues arising from internal reviews through action planning and training. Our review has also indicated that there may be scope for more effective use to be made of information technology in calculating indicators. This, in turn, may help the Council to improve the timeliness of its performance reports to Cabinet and overview and scrutiny committees. More work also needs to be done to establish data quality arrangements to support partnership working.

### Stage 2 – Analytical review

- 8 Our analytical review work at Stage 2 identified that most of the PI values reviewed either fell within expected ranges or were substantiated by evidence. One PI, BVPI 8, could not be substantiated by evidence and was therefore selected for a more detailed review at Stage 3.
- 9 We have listed the PIs selected for analytical review in table 2.

### Stage 3 – Data quality spot checks

- 10 We reviewed and spot checked the following PIs.
  - BVPI 78a - Time taken to process new claims.
  - BVPI 78b - Time taken to process change of circumstances.
  - BVPI 82a - Recycling performance.
  - HIP HSSA - Private sector homes vacant.
  - HIP HSSA - Repeat homelessness.
  - BVPI 8 - Percentages of invoices paid on time.
- 11 With the exception of BVPI 8, we found that the PIs were fairly stated.

## Introduction

- 12** In our review of BVPI 8, we found that the Council had not followed the correct definition of the indicator. As a result, some data which should have been included in the calculation was not, and vice versa. The Council has re-run the data but have not been able to identify and remove all of the data which should not be included in the calculation, or to identify data which should be included. We are therefore unable to certify that the PI was fairly stated.
- 13** Last year we found a number of issues in the collection and validation of source data for HIP HSSA private sector homes vacant which meant that the PI had to be recalculated and amended following our review. We included a spot-check of this PI in this year's audit to assess progress. We found that, although no amendment was required, there remains scope for improving the way in which the indicator is calculated. In particular, more effective use could be made of existing information systems which would significantly reduce the amount of time officers spend on manipulating the data to perform the calculation.
- 14** An action plan has been agreed with the Council to address the issues arising from this review. This is set out at Appendix 1 of this report.

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# Detailed findings

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## Management arrangements (Stage 1)

- 15 We review the management arrangements to determine whether corporate management arrangements for data quality are in place and whether there is evidence that they are being applied in practice.
- 16 The scope of the review is to focus on corporate arrangements across five themes.
- 17 Overall, we have assessed that the Council's corporate arrangements for data quality as adequate.

## Governance and leadership

- 18 The Council is committed to improving the quality of its data, and this is supported by clear leadership at a very senior level in the organisation. Over the last year, the Council has rolled out a corporate data quality policy with the result that the roles and responsibilities of relevant staff at an operational level are also now more clearly defined.
- 19 There is scope for the Council to build on its arrangements for providing governance and leadership on data quality. This could be achieved by:
  - Establishing a more corporate approach to action planning and setting specific targets for improvement:
    - Action plans are produced by individual service areas to address opportunities for improvement highlighted by internal audit reviews. The Council's Performance Management Group (PMG) could help support this process by developing action plans and overall targets which address the common themes and issues arising from service reviews, and regularly reviewing progress against these plans and targets.
  - Strengthening communication between the various groups and individuals with responsibility for data quality:
    - Both the PMG and the Corporate Improvement Group (CIG) have a role in championing data quality at the Council. Clarifying what this role specifically means for the two groups and establishing more formal lines of reporting between them would improve the capacity of the two groups for providing leadership. These actions, in turn, would also help raise the profile of data quality issues at departmental management team level.
    - Members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee have a role in overseeing and providing scrutiny for data quality at the Council. Producing more frequent reports on key issues and the actions being taken to improve data quality for this Committee would help to discharge this role effectively.

## Detailed findings

### Recommendation

**R1** Strengthen arrangements for providing leadership and governance on data quality by:

- clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of the CIG and PMG specifically for championing data quality;
- developing an action plan which addresses common themes from service based reviews of data quality and includes measurable targets for improvement, and keeping progress against the plans and targets under regular review within the forum of the PMG;
- producing regular reports for the CIG on progress against the action plan and targets, and ensuring that key messages are being communicated back to departmental management teams through both the CIG and PMG; and
- producing an annual report on progress against the action plan and targets for the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Implementing this recommendation will help the Council to further develop its corporate approach to ensuring the quality of its data. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.

### Policies

**20** As noted above, the Council has rolled out a formal data quality policy in the last year. This provides a good framework for promoting greater corporate ownership and collective responsibility for data quality because the expected roles of all relevant staff are now clearly defined.

**21** The value of the data quality policy in facilitating improvements could be further increased by clarifying:

- the respective roles and responsibilities of CIG and PMG specifically for championing data quality (as raised in the previous section);
- the respective roles and responsibilities of internal audit and of PMG in reviewing data quality at service level;
- requirements for validating third party data; and
- arrangements for data sharing to support partnership working.

**22** Although the Council took particular steps to ensuring that all relevant staff received and understood the data quality policy, our review found that the policy is not yet being consistently implemented. New policies inevitably take some time to become properly established within any organisation but addressing the recommendation we have made in the previous section will help the Council to quicken this process.

**Recommendation**

**R2** Refine the corporate data quality policy by:

- documenting the respective roles and responsibilities of CIG and PMG for championing data quality (see also recommendation 1);
- clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of internal audit and of PMG in reviewing data quality at service level; and
- defining the requirements for validating third party data and arrangements for data sharing to support partnership working.

Implementing this recommendation will help the Council realise the full potential of the data quality policy in supporting and facilitating improvements. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.

**Systems and processes**

- 23** As part of its overall commitment to data quality, the Council is striving to produce performance information which is 'right first time', and the action which it has taken over the last year has established a good foundation for achieving this. The data quality policy now provides an explicit statement of the Council's expectations of all relevant staff, and a programme of peer reviews by the PMG has been introduced to run alongside the work of internal audit in assessing data processes at service level. These developments reinforce the message that data quality is 'everybody's business' and complement existing arrangements for ensuring business continuity and data security.
- 24** As previously stated, the Council now needs to ensure that these developments become properly established within the organisation, and the recommendations we have made in the previous sections will facilitate this.
- 25** Nevertheless, there is scope for the Council to make more effective use of information systems to calculate performance indicators. Our stage three work found a number of instances where the raw data needed was being provided by information systems, but this then required considerable manual manipulation to calculate the indicator. This not only increases the risk of error in the calculation but is also a time-consuming process which diverts officers from service delivery.

**Recommendation**

**R3** Within each service area, evaluate how information systems are being used to calculate performance indicators and take appropriate action to address any opportunities for improvement identified by this review.

Implementing this recommendation will help the Council ensure that performance indicators are being calculated in the most efficient and effective way. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.



## Detailed findings

### People and skills

- 26** The Council is committed to ensuring that relevant staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities for data quality, and the production of the new data quality policy supports this.
- 27** To calculate a performance indicator for a particular service, the processes and procedures which need to be followed will be very specific to that service. The Council's data quality policy therefore rightly places a requirement on individual departments to provide training for staff on these procedures.
- 28** Action now needs to be taken to better integrate data quality within arrangements for staff training and development. Although all relevant staff were required to confirm their understanding of the data quality policy when it was issued and to agree to implement it within their service area, their performance against data quality standards and targets is not consistently covered in appraisals. As such, some development needs may not be addressed.
- 29** Some work also needs to be done at a more corporate level to complement and reinforce this. For example, periodic updates, briefings or training sessions could be provided for staff to address common issues arising from the data quality reviews undertaken by internal audit and PMG.

### Recommendations

**R4** Put arrangements in place to ensure that performance against data quality standards and targets is consistently covered in appraisals for staff with specific responsibilities for data quality, and that action is taken to address any development needs identified by these appraisals.

**R5** Put arrangements in place to ensure that common issues and opportunities for improvement arising from data quality reviews undertaken by internal audit and PMG are communicated to all relevant staff.

Implementing these recommendations will help the Council ensure that all relevant staff are sufficiently skilled and appropriately supported to deliver the requirements of the corporate data quality policy. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.

### Data use and reporting

- 30** The Council may not yet be making optimal use of performance information to manage services. As we would expect, performance reports to senior officers and members highlight areas of under-performance and include a commentary on the action being taken to improve performance. However, we note that the reports made to Cabinet and the various overview and scrutiny committees are frequently some three months after the quarter end. This makes it difficult for members to provide effective challenge.

**Recommendation**

**R6** Investigate the factors which impact on the timeliness of performance reports to Cabinet and the overview and scrutiny committees, and take action to address any issues identified by this review.

Implementing this recommendation will help the Council to improve the capacity of its members for providing effective scrutiny and challenge to performance. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.

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**Analytical review (Stage 2)**

**31** An analytical review of the following BVPIs and non-BVPIs was carried out. The findings, subject to the validation of a sample of PIs in stage 3 spot checks, are shown below.

## Detailed findings

**Table 2 Analytical review findings**

<b>2007/08 Performance indicator</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Comment</b>
BVPI 100 Temporary road closure	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Less work than anticipated was carried out therefore leading to less road closures.
BVPI 11B Percentage of top 5 per cent earners from black and minority ethnic communities	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Change in value due to additional employment of staff.
BVPI 11c Top 5 per cent of earners that have a disability	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources.
BVPI 12 Number of working days lost due to sickness absence	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Real decrease in performance.
BVPI 126 Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Improvement due to a combination of initiatives. Information to monitor this target is produced by Merseyside Police.
BVPI 127a Violent crime per 1,000 population	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Improvement due to a revised approach to tackling crime lead by the Joint Community Safety team.
BVPI 127b Robberies per 1,000 population	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Improvement due to CCTV operations, marketing advice to potential victims and high visibility patrolling. Information to monitor this target is produced by Merseyside Police.
BVPI 128 Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Information to monitor this target is produced by Merseyside Police.
BVPI 14 Percentage of early retirements	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Decease due to change in the retirement's rules and changes.

2007/08 Performance indicator	Assessment	Comment
BVPI 15 Percentage of ill health retirements	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Decrease due to changes in the rules on ill health retirements.
BVPI 17a Percentage of black and ethnic minority employees	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources in this area.
BVPI 199 a, b and c Cleanliness of public places	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources in this area.
BVPI 218b Number of abandoned vehicles (non-specified)	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources in this area.
BVPI 221b Participation in and outcomes from youth work	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources in this area.
BVPI 223 Condition of principal roads	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Results produced in accordance with DFT 'Further Guidance for Surveys for BV223 & 224a in 2007/08' using revised set of thresholds and weightings, resulting in significantly lower figure.
BVPI 224 a and b Condition of Principal and non principal roads	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Results produced in accordance with DFT 'Further Guidance for Surveys for BV223 & 224a in 2007/08' using revised set of thresholds and weightings, resulting in significantly lower figure.
BVPI 45 Absence in secondary schools	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources in this area.
BVPI 46 Absence in primary schools	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources in this area.

## Detailed findings

2007/08 Performance indicator	Assessment	Comment
BVPI 76b Number of housing benefit investigations per 1,000 caseload	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Decrease due to a vacancy in post
BVPI 76d Number of housing benefit prosecutions and sanctions per 1,000 caseload	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Increase due to Council investing resources in this area.
BVPI 79b (iii) HB overpayments written off as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the year, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the year.	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Reduction in write offs enabling attempts and ability to recover more overpayment debt.
BVPI 8 Invoices paid on time (non-specified)	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Selected for stage 3 testing.
BVPI 82 a and b Household waste management	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Selected for stage 3 testing.
BVPI 99 a, b and c Road accident casualties	Value outside Audit Commission parameters	Improvements due to targeted activities in this area.

**32** All other PIs reviewed were found to be complete and within plausible and permissible values.

### Data quality spot checks (Stage 3)

**33** A number of PIs were reviewed using a series of detailed spot checks and audit tests. Our findings are shown below.

**Table 3** Spot check findings

<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Outturn PI value</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>Housing Benefits</b> BVPI 78a Number of days processing new claims	22.4	Fairly stated.	One of the 30 cases tested within the initial sample was not accurately calculated, requiring extending our sample by 40 cases. The overall results were that the PI was 4.86 per cent misstated. However, as this error level is within the 10 per cent materiality threshold the PI was assessed as fairly stated.
<b>Housing Benefits</b> BVPI 78b Number of days processing change of circumstances	9.4	Fairly stated.	Three of the 30 cases in our initial sample were not accurately calculated. We extended our testing by a further 40 cases. The overall results were that the PI was 4.29 per cent misstated. However, as this error level is within 10 per cent materiality threshold the PI was assessed as fairly stated.
<b>Environment</b> 82a Recycling performance	21.1 (percentage)  28653.73 (tonnage)	Fairly stated	Our testing concluded that controls are operating effectively and the correct definition is being used for the calculation of this PI.

## Detailed findings

Performance indicator	Outturn PI value	Assessment	Comment
<b>Housing</b> HIP HSSA Private sector homes vacant	1.71	Fairly stated	Out testing concluded that the PI is fairly stated. The empty properties team has addressed the opportunities for improvement identified following last year's review. However, the team is continuing to experience considerable difficulties in compiling the indicator which could be easily remedied by setting up queries (SQLs) to interrogate the Council Tax system (Academy). More effective use could also be made of officer time in validating the data on empty properties, again through improved working with staff within the Council Tax section. The empty properties team is already taking action to try and address this.
<b>Housing</b> HIP HSSA Repeat homelessness	5	Fairly stated	Our spot check testing found that the PI was fairly stated. However, we found that the corporate DQ policy has not yet been fully implemented. Guidance/procedures for calculating the indicator are not yet documented in all service areas.  There is also scope to make more effective use of IT in the calculation of indicators. Data has required some manual manipulation which has demanded officer time and increased the risk of error. In addition there is scope to extend corporate training/briefing on common DQ issues.

Performance indicator	Outturn PI value	Assessment	Comment
<b>Corporate Health</b> BVPI 8 Percentage of Undisputed Invoices Paid on Time	72.83	Unfairly stated	<p>The Council had not applied the correct definition in the calculation of BVPI 8. As a result some data which should have been included in the calculation was not, and vice versa. The Council has re-run the data but were unable to fully identify and remove incorrect data, and were unable to generate source data from their systems which has been incorrectly excluded. We were therefore unable to certify that the PI was fairly stated.</p> <p>Internal audit has carried out a specific review of BVPI 8 in 2007/08 which was reported to the Council in October 2007. It concluded that overall the control environment for the calculation of PI is less than satisfactory, and identified specifically that <i>'currently the calculation of the PI does not appear to be in accordance with the formula prescribed by the Audit Commission'</i>, and recommended that the calculation of the PI should be revisited to reflect the guidance provided by the Audit Commission.</p> <p>It is evident that these recommendations have not been implemented.</p>

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- 34** From April 2008 Councils are to collect data in line with the new national indication set (NIS). In total there are 198 indicators in this set which will be reported in for every Local Strategic Partnership.



## Detailed findings

- 35** Data for many of these indicators (just under 50 per cent) are already being collected, and many of the existing indicators are subsumed into revised indicators from the new NIS. It is therefore crucial that the Council fully revisits its management arrangements in order to ensure that they are correctly collecting and reporting data in line with the new requirements of the NIS.
- 36** Whilst we concluded that BVPIs 78a and 78b were within material limits, our testing identified a number of errors of recording within the system of the date that claims or change in circumstances were received. The Council should review its compliance testing arrangements to ensure that data collected and reported for these PIs is robust. These two indicators are being reported via NI 181 from 2008/09.
- 37** In the case of BVPI 8, this indicator is being ceased in its current format from 2008/09 within the new NI set. However invoice processing and payments is now seen as part of the process of providing some of the services listed within other indicators, for example NI 14. In compiling these indicators it is assumed that the Council has robust processes in place to collect, monitor and report on the source data. We would urge Corporate Services to revisit the recommendations made in the internal audit report to ensure that they are equipped to report on the new national indicators.

### Recommendations

**R7** The Council should review its compliance testing arrangements to ensure that data collected and reported for Housing Benefits PIs is robust.

**R8** The Council have improved in their reporting of HIP HSSA - Private sector homes vacant; however they are continuing to experience considerable difficulties in compiling the indicator which could be easily remedied by setting up queries (SQLs) to interrogate the Council Tax system (Academy). More effective use could also be made of officer time in validating the data on empty properties, again through improved working with staff within the Council Tax section.

**R9** Our spot check testing found HIP HSSA repeat homelessness indicator was fairly stated. However, we found that the corporate DQ policy has not yet been fully implemented. Guidance/procedures for calculating the indicator are not yet documented in all service areas.

There is further scope to make more effective use of IT in the calculation of indicators. Data has required some manual manipulation which has demanded officer time and increased the risk of error.

In addition there is scope to extend corporate training/briefing on common DQ issues.

**R10** The Council should carry out a review of its management arrangements in order to ensure that they are correctly collecting and reporting data in line with the new requirements of the NIS.

**R11** We would urge Corporate Services to revisit the recommendations made in the internal audit report to ensure that they are equipped to report on the new national indicators.

# Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
7	<p>R1 Strengthen arrangements for providing leadership and governance on data quality by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of the CIG and PMG specifically for championing data quality;</li> <li>developing an action plan which addresses common themes from service based reviews of data quality and includes measurable targets for improvement, and keeping progress against the plans and targets under regular review within the forum of the PMG;</li> <li>producing regular reports for the CIG on progress against the action plan and targets, and ensuring that key messages are being communicated back to departmental management teams through both the CIG and PMG; and</li> <li>producing an annual report on progress against the action plan and targets for the Audit and Risk Management Committee.</li> </ul>	3	Head of Policy / Corporate Performance Manager	Yes	To be developed by performance management group and corporate improvement group	By 31 March 2009

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
	Implementing this recommendation will help the Council to further develop its corporate approach to ensuring the quality of its data. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.					
8	<p>R2 Refine the corporate data quality policy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>documenting the respective roles and responsibilities of CIG and PMG for championing data quality (see also recommendation 1);</li> <li>clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of internal audit and of PMG in reviewing data quality at service level; and</li> <li>defining the requirements for validating third party data and arrangements for data sharing to support partnership working.</li> </ul> <p>Implementing this recommendation will help the Council realise the full potential of the data quality policy in supporting and facilitating improvements. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.</p>	3	Head of Policy / Corporate Performance Manager	Yes in part	The third bullet will require a significant amount of effort to establish all requirements for data sharing between partners. This may well bring a significant cost implication and individual partners have their own regulatory frameworks regarding data sharing and audit. It is not practical to assume that the authority's DQP will define all requirements for partners. We would look for the Commission to agree with the combined inspectorates how it wishes to tackle auditing data quality and provide further guidance on this to the local authority.	By 31 March 2009

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
8	<p>R3 Within each service area, evaluate how information systems are being used to calculate performance indicators and take appropriate action to address any opportunities for improvement identified by this review.</p> <p>Implementing this recommendation will help the Council ensure that performance indicators are being calculated in the most efficient and effective way. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.</p>	2	Head of Policy for overall process. Relevant heads of service for all indicators.	Yes	Any system changes must be cost effective and it is not clear that they will not incur significant cost.	By 31 March 2009
9	<p>R4 Put arrangements in place to ensure that performance against data quality standards and targets is consistently covered in appraisals for staff with specific responsibilities for data quality, and that action is taken to address any development needs identified by these appraisals.</p>			No as worded	<p>The KIE framework is currently under review and this will provide an opportunity to incorporate a council policy to address this recommendation.</p> <p>Ultimate responsibility will be for the chief officer of the relevant department to ensure this is implemented. Auditing this to ensure it happens would be prohibitively expensive and would not generate sufficient benefit to justify the cost.</p>	

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
9	<p>R5 Put arrangements in place to ensure that common issues and opportunities for improvement arising from data quality reviews undertaken by internal audit and PMG are communicated to all relevant staff.</p> <p>Implementing these recommendations will help the Council ensure that all relevant staff are sufficiently skilled and appropriately supported to deliver the requirements of the corporate data quality policy. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.</p>	2	Corporate Performance Manager	Yes	Performance management group will lead on circulating information within their departments.	By 31 March 2009
10	<p>R6 Investigate the factors which impact on the timeliness of performance reports to Cabinet and the overview and scrutiny committees, and take action to address any issues identified by this review.</p> <p>Implementing this recommendation will help the Council to improve the capacity of its members for providing effective scrutiny and challenge to performance. We do not anticipate that implementing this recommendation will incur significant cost.</p>	2	Head of Policy / Corporate Performance Manager	Yes	<p>This has already been improved during 2008/9, particularly for chief officers and cabinet.</p> <p>The number of meetings contained within the Council timetable makes it difficult to provide timely reports to Overview &amp; Scrutiny committees. However, in the light of the adoption of the new Corporate Plan, Cabinet is minded therefore to consider recommending to Council a system where five Overview and Scrutiny Committees mirror instead the five agreed Corporate Objectives in order to allow those committees to play a real part in delivering the Council's agreed agenda.</p>	By 31 March 2009

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
					However, Cabinet realises that this is an issue that will need substantial consultation and debate with all those concerned and therefore agrees to review the position with the object of taking new proposals, with detailed terms of reference, to the appropriate Council to take effect from the next Council AGM.	
17	R7 The Council should review its compliance testing arrangements to ensure that data collected and reported for Housing Benefits PIs is robust.	2	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Service / Housing benefit section	Yes	Performance indicators have been replaced by just 2 National Indicators for 2008/09 and specific tests are in place to identify errors in recording of data which may impact on those indicators.	By 31 March 2009
17	R8 The Council have improved in their reporting of HIP HSSA - Private sector homes vacant; however they are continuing to experience considerable difficulties in compiling the indicator which could be easily remedied by setting up queries (SQLs) to interrogate the Council Tax system (Academy). More effective use could also be made of officer time in validating the data on empty properties, again through improved working with staff within the Council Tax section.	2	Head of Housing / Head of Benefits, Revenues and Customer Services	Yes	Communication has been established between the relevant sections to address this recommendation.  Work is also underway to reference other best practice authorities to address this recommendation	July 2009

## Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
17	<p>R9 Our spot check testing found HIP HSSA repeat homelessness indicator was fairly stated. However, we found that the corporate DQ policy has not yet been fully implemented. Guidance/procedures for calculating the indicator are not yet documented in all service areas.</p> <p>There is further scope to make more effective use of IT in the calculation of indicators. Data has required some manual manipulation which has demanded officer time and increased the risk of error.</p> <p>In addition there is scope to extend corporate training/briefing on common DQ issues.</p>	3	Corporate Performance Manager / Head of Housing	Yes	<p>Data collection will now be fully aided the recent installation of a homelessness IT system.</p> <p>Wirral's data quality policy was circulated by the Chief Executive to all relevant staff. Further training will be provided regarding data quality and Wirral's data quality policy to ensure full implementation.</p> <p>Guidance and procedure notes for calculation will be documented in all areas and will be checked through spot checks coordinated by the corporate performance team.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>March 2009</p>
17	R10 The Council should carry out a review of its management arrangements in order to ensure that they are correctly collecting and reporting data in line with the new requirements of the NIS.	2	Head of Policy	Yes	This is already underway, however many of the arrangements are either set by central government or have not yet been clarified by government departments.	By 31 March 09
17	R11 We would urge Corporate services to revisit the recommendations made in the internal audit report to ensure that they are equipped to report on the new national indicators.	2	Head of Policy	Yes	We have already reviewed the NIS and refer to R7 above.	By 31 March 09

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# The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

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