Report to: **Audit Committee**

Date: **19th July 2008**

Report of: **Senior Corporate Development Officer**

Subject: **2007/8 BVPI Data Quality Audit programme**

Ward: **All**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present the outcomes from the programme of data quality audits carried out on a selection of Best Value Performance Indicators during 2007/8.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 The audits are completed in conjunction with Officers responsible for the collation and reporting of the BVPI's

3.0 Background

3.1 Good data quality is a key component of performance information and management, as in order to manage services and make decisions around the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of service delivery, we need to ensure that the performance data is reliable, accurate and timely. It is therefore important that we ensure that the Council and its partners have in place strong arrangements for managing the quality of the data we collect and use. The Audit Commission refer to 6 key characteristics of good quality data. These characteristics focus on:
- Accuracy
- Validity
- Reliability
- Timeliness
- Relevance
- Completeness

3.2 Since the Audit Commission's move towards strategic regulation, there has been an expectation that Local Authorities will strengthen their own Data Quality arrangements to enable less reliance on the annual programme of detailed audits of the performance indicators carried out by specialist inspectors. The Council's arrangements for ensuring data quality are annually tested and assessed as part of the "Use of Resources" Judgement.

4.0 Audit of Indicators programme

4.1 The agreed programme of audits focussed on a selection of the council's performance indicators. The criteria for selection of these indicators was as follows:
- o BVPI's audited during 2006/2007 where non compliances had been identified,
- o Indicators within the Council's set to retain in top quartile performance for 2007/08

o Indicators included within the set to achieve top quartile position by year end 2007/08

Methodology

4.2 The process of auditing the data quality of performance indicators involves the following checks:
o To ensure that the data audited is valid, it is checked against the Performance Indicator definition.
o Sample testing of data is carried out so that checks for accuracy and consistency can be made.
o The process of data entry and updating is reviewed for relevancy and timeliness
o The calculation of the Indicator is reviewed and checked to ensure that the most up to date definition is being applied and that all relevant data sources are included within the return.
o The identification of responsibility for data collection and collation is reviewed to ensure staff are clear about their role within the data collection and reporting process
o The system for validating and checking data for error is robust

4.3 Where any non-compliances or errors in calculation are identified an agreement is reached on addressing the issues raised and targets are set for this. This is followed up by a further audit to ensure that corrective action has been put in place.

4.4 In some services manual systems are still being used for the collection of data. Where appropriate, consideration of computerised Information systems for that service has been made. Within the Benefits Service, changes to legislation have necessitated development of their systems.

4.5 There have been 36 audits carried out which completes the audit schedule for Performance Indicators for the year 2007/08.

5.0 Audit Summary

5.1 The Majority of audits were found to be compliant with the definition of each performance indicator being followed as stipulated by the guidance and the systems checks have shown satisfactory data quality.

5.2 **Issues identified as a result of the Audits**
The Audits did identify some errors with the following indicators:

5.3 **Housing Services**
Rent Collection and Arrears Recovery – EDH identified problems in the calculation of this indicator. It was found the information relating to income included monies relating to service charges in respect of Housing Benefit claimants, and that these were being included in the calculation relating to the amount of rent collected. The definition for this indicator states that these charges should not be included. Corrective action has been taken by the reprogramming of the system report which extracts the data; to calculate the income received in accordance with the definition of the indicator.

5.5.2 **Non-Decent Local Authority Dwellings** – As part of last year's Use of Resources judgement, in relation to the Council's data quality arrangements, the Audit Commission identified that the systems within East Durham Homes (EDH) which are used for the calculation of BV184 – Proportion of non decent homes, needed to be strengthened to avoid the need for excessive manual intervention.

Surveys of the existing stock have now been completed and a final report has been submitted to East Durham Homes Senior Management Team. In general the report found the stock condition database to be robust, however, some minor adjustments and points of good practice have been recommended by the consultants. EDH will incorporate these into their business plan and an action plan will be agreed outlining corrective actions and targets with the relevant officers. It is intended to carry out a further audit of this Indicator once work has been completed.

There are also plans to develop & implement an integrated IT system. Steps have been taken to organise links between the stock condition survey and the orchard system. This will commence the interface of information between different systems, which will minimise the need for manual intervention.

5.5.3 **Vacant dwellings returned to occupation or demolished** – the last audit highlighted a resource issue caused by a vacancy within the service, potentially causing a drop in performance in relation to this indicator. Since the audit, the post of Empty Properties Officer has been mainstreamed and filled. A new computer system has also been introduced which will streamline systems & procedures within the department.

5.6 **Planning**

Major applications, Minor applications and Other Applications – issues in relation to the input of dates were highlighted during a previous audit, these have now been resolved

Quality of Planning Checklist - It was highlighted at the last audit that a survey had been scored incorrectly as we did not have the facility to pay online for planning applications. Electronic facilities to pay online have now been put into place.

5.8 **The Audit Programme for 2008/9**

The new National Indicator set replaces the Best Value Performance indicators from 1st April 2008. These new "outcome" focussed indicators will be subject to the Council's data quality checks and a new Audit Schedule has been agreed to ensure compliance with the technical definitions and the recording The Council has also agreed to retain a number of former BVPI's not carried forward into the new National Indicator set, as local indicators and these will also be included on the schedule for data quality audits. (appendix 1)

6.0 Conclusion

The audits completed this year have highlighted some minor areas for improvement; all agreed actions have now been put in place.

The new National Indicator set is in place for 2008/09, and a data quality audit programme will be scheduled to monitor and audit these indicators.

A further report will be brought to Members at the end of the second quarter to report on progress made with the audits on the new National Indicator set.

7.0 Implications

7.1 Financial Implications

This report has no direct financial implications

7.2 Legal Implications

This report has no direct legal implications

7.3 Policy Implications

Data Quality is a key component of the Audit Commission's annual Use of Resources judgement.

7.4 Risk Implications

A risk assessment has been carried out

7.5 Communications

Communication between the various services is vital when audits are timetabled. Times and dates are agreed with the relevant officers across the Council to enable the audits/sample checks to be carried out.

8.0 Corporate Implications

8.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

BVPI's and performance form a major part of the Corporate Plan and it's priorities

8.2 Service Plans

BVPI's are included in Service Plans across the Authority and targets for these are set on a quarterly and year end basis.

8.3 Performance Management and Scrutiny

This report presents information from audits carried out and completed from an annual audit schedule. It also highlights any discrepancies/non compliances found during the audits and actions are agreed and followed up

to resolve this. Good data quality is a key component of Performance reporting and management.

8.4   Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications

8.5   Expenditure related to 'well-being' powers

There are no direct well being implications

8.6   Human Resource Implications

There are no HR implications

8.6   Information Technology

There are no I.T. implications

8.8   Equality and Diversity

There are no direct Equality and Diversity implications

8.9   Crime and Disorder

There are no direct crime and disorder implications

9.0   Human Rights

There are no human rights implications

9.1   Social Inclusion

There are no direct social inclusion implications

9.2   Procurement

There are no specific procurement issues

Recommendations

Members are recommended to note and comment upon the report for the data quality audits completed for the year 2007/08.

Background Papers

Audit Commission - Data Quality Report 2006/07
Internal Audit review of Data Quality Arrangements 2006/07
Audit reports 2007/08
Internal Audit Schedule