

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
AUDIT COMMITTEE**

HELD ON THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER 2008

Present: Councillor G Pinkney (Chair)
Councillors E Bell, Mrs G Bleasdale, R Davison,
G Johnson and B Quinn.

Apology: Councillor Mrs M Nugent

1. **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 13 November 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.
2. **DATA QUALITY AUDIT PROGRAMME 2008/9**

Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Corporate Development Officer on the Data Quality Audit Programme for 2008/9, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

K Daglish, Senior Corporate Development Officer advised that the purpose of the report was to present the outcomes from the programme of data quality audits carried out on a selection of National Indicators and the corporate local Performance Indicators for the period April to October 2008.

She reported that the new National Indicator Set was introduced on 1 April 2008 to replace the previous Best Value Performance Indicators. The Council continued to regard data quality as a key factor in its performance management arrangements and with the new Indicator Set, the data quality audits were considered to play a significant role in the quality assurance process.

Key to managing and improving performance through informed decision-making was knowing that all data was accurate and timely. An assurance was required that all partners and the Council had robust arrangements in place for maintaining and improving data quality. The characteristics which formed this assurance framework were set out in the report.

She continued that the Council had continued to strengthen its data quality arrangements enabling less reliance on the annual programme of detailed audits on performance indicators carried out by specialist inspectors from the Audit Commission. The Council's arrangements for ensuring data quality were annually tested and assessed as part of the Use of Resources Judgement.

The process of auditing the data quality of National Indicators involved a number of checks which were listed in the report.

A new proforma had been set up for Officers to complete for each indicator, a copy of which was attached at Appendix 1 for information.

In summary the majority of the audits carried out so far were found to be compliant with the definitions of each National Indicator. The audits carried out on some key corporate local indicators were also found to be compliant with applicable guidance. All systems checks had shown satisfactory data quality.

Audit Committee – 11 December 2008

The Audits did identify some errors but also highlighted some points of good practice with the following indicators, details of which were given in the report:-

NI 181 – time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change events

NI 195 – improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly-posting)

NI 182 – satisfaction of business with local authority regulation services

NI 184 – food establishments in the area that are broadly compliant with food hygiene law.

Members discussed NI 181 – time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change events, and the new software system which rectified errors immediately where previously they had to be done manually. It was noted that the system eradicated errors in relation to the input of data to speed up the time taken to process new claims and change events, and not errors in benefit calculations. In order to discuss the matter in more detail it was suggested that the Benefits Manager be invited to the next meeting of the Committee.

With regard to NI 182 – satisfaction of business with local authority regulation services, a Member expressed concern at the length of time taken to collate the information for this indicator. He acknowledged that the information required was spread across two Directorates but considered that this should not have been a barrier to integrating manual and computerised systems to collate the data required.

Following discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted and the Benefits Manager be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to discuss NI 181 – time taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims and change events.