



PR.48 14/15

**Policy and Resources
Committee**

Date: 19 February 2015

Subject: Data Quality Policy

Report by:

Director of Resources

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Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of this report is to introduce a new council policy with the aim of improving and maintaining the quality of data held in corporate information systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS as agreed by JSCC:

- (a) The Data Quality Policy be approved for formal adoption; and
- (b) Delegated authority be granted to the SIRO to make minor house-keeping amendments to the policy in the future, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: This report has direct positive implications on the council's compliance with legislation including, but not limited to, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Specifically, the implementation of this policy will improve the council's ability to maintain the **Integrity** of its data.

Financial: None from this report

Fin Ref: FIN-137-15

Staffing : None from this report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

In compiling this policy it was considered that ensuring the council has high quality data would impact positively on all equality strands. It will result in better understanding of needs and, in consequence, delivery of better services to the council's diverse communities.

Risk Assessment: None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : None from this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

[Data Quality Policy \(Draft\)](#)

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

X

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

X

Background

1.1 Data and the information we derive from it is one of the council's most important assets. Since we use it to inform our decisions, our plans, and to measure our performance, then we must take care to make sure that our data is **accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant, secure, accessible, and complete**. This policy document provides an overarching, corporate approach to managing data quality and has been developed in response to an Annual Governance Statement commitment.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy only applies to structured data. That is data which is based on a data model and held in fixed fields in spreadsheets, databases, and business systems. The policy does not apply to unstructured data such business documents, email, and web content.

2.2 The policy applies primarily to staff and members of the council but also applies to data created, processed, and used by the council's strategic partnerships.

3. The Policy

3.1 The document sets out the council's policy for improving and maintain the quality of its data and draws on the Audit Commission's "Standards for Better Data Quality" to define those elements of data considered important to quality. These elements are listed in bold at para 1.1 of this report.

3.2 The policy details:

- The legislative context;
- Governance, roles and responsibilities;
- People and skills required;
- Systems and process training requirements;
- Data Security requirements;
- Our commitment to the Transparency Board's draft data principles; and
- Our intent to put in place control and validation processes to ensure data quality.

3.3 Appendix 1 is a list of the council's critical business systems covered by this policy. This list is part of the council's Information Risk Management System currently in development. It is recommended that Delegated Powers for Appendix 1 are granted to the authority's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) – currently the Director of Resources.

4. Decisions Required

- 1) **That Members APPROVE and formally ADOPT the Data Quality Policy.**
- 2) **Delegated authority be granted to the SIRO to make minor house-keeping amendments to the policy in the future, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee.**



Version Number	1.0
Approved by	Policy and Resources Committee
Date approved	19/2/2015
Review Date	19/2/2016
Authorised by	Director of Resources
Contact Officer	Information Governance Officer

Revision History				
Version No	Date	Amended by	Authorised by	Approved by

Change History		
Version No	Date	Change Details
0.3		Minor changes from consultation.
1.0	19/2/2015	Approved and adopted by the Policy and Resources Committee.

Related Documents	
Document Title	Location
Information Management and Protection Policy	Corporate Policy Document Library

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1 Introduction

This policy sets out West Lindsey District Council's approach to data quality. It is a key element of the council's Information Governance Framework and supports its Performance Management Framework. Data is one of our most important assets - it is extremely important as we want to be sure that information on which we base decisions and inform our planning is robust.

This policy supports the Corporate Plan's 5 key themes:

- Theme 1: a prosperous and enterprising District
- Theme 2: an accessible and connected District
- Theme 3: a green district where people want to work, live and visit
- Theme 4: active, health and safe citizens and communities
- Theme 5: the Entrepreneurial Council

It also underpins the council's priorities:

- 1.1: Asset acquisition, disposal and management
- 1.2: Job creation, NEETS and apprenticeships
- 1.3: Open for business

- 2.1: Broadband
- 2.2: E-accessibility
- 2.3: Mobile accessibility

- 3.1: Green premier energy solutions
- 3.2: Drive down waste and support rural initiatives

- 4.1: Community action and volunteering
- 4.2: Promote well-being and healthy communities
- 4.3: Address the wider determinants of health

- 5.1: Achieving value for money through the efficient, economic and effective delivery of services

2 Summary Statement

West Lindsey District Council is committed to high standards of data quality. We take every care to ensure that the data and information used throughout the organisation and in particular in performance management is **accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant, secure, accessible, and complete**.

3 Aim and objectives

High-quality data is an integral part of the council's operational, performance management and governance arrangements so that it can drive service improvement and inform policy.

Our key objectives are:

- To ensure that service delivery is supported by good quality data.
- To ensure all staff understand and undertake their specific responsibilities in relation to data quality.
- To ensure that data produced, held and used within the council is of good quality.
- To enable effective, evidence based decision making supported by good quality data.
- To ensure that data quality is embedded across all services and is a key consideration for everyone dealing with data.

4 Scope

This policy document provides an overarching, corporate approach to the management of data quality. Service specific procedures will flow from this corporate policy, where relevant and necessary, ensuring that standards outlined in this policy are maintained throughout the council.

This policy covers the quality of structured data only.

Structured data is based on a data model and is held in fixed fields in spreadsheets, databases and business critical systems.

This policy does not apply to unstructured data which is defined by Gartner as content that does not conform to a specific, pre-defined data model. This tends to be the human-generated and people-oriented content such as business documents (reports, presentations, and the like), email and web content that does not fit neatly into database tables.

Appendix 1 shows a list of the council's key business systems where the key structured data for the council is held.

The policy is mainly aimed at officers and members of West Lindsey District Council but it applies equally to data used by the council's strategic partnerships.

5 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following definitions will be used:

- **Data:** Numbers, words or images that have yet to be organised or analysed to answer a specific question.
- **Information:** Produced through processing, manipulating and organising data to answer questions, adding to the knowledge of the receiver.
- **Knowledge:** What is known by a person or persons. This involves interpreting information received, adding relevance and context to clarify the insights the information contains.

The council takes guidance from and uses the Audit Commission’s “Standards for Better Data Quality”. These are:

- **Accuracy** – data should be sufficiently accurate for their intended purposes.
- **Validity** – data should be recorded and used in compliance with relevant requirements, including the correct application of any rules or definitions.
- **Reliability** – data should reflect stable and consistent data collection processes across collection points and over time.
- **Timeliness** - data should be captured as quickly as possible after the event or activity and be available for the intended use quickly and frequently enough to support information needs and to influence service or management decisions.
- **Relevance** – data should be relevant to the purposes for which they are used. This entails periodic review of requirements to reflect changing needs.
- **Completeness** – Data requirements should be clearly specified based on the information needs of the organisation and data collection processes matched to these requirements.

6 Legislative Context

The data held by the council is subject to all legislation affecting the creation and processing of data. This includes but is not limited to:

- The Data Protection Act 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act 2000
- The Computer Misuse Act 1990
- The Human Rights Act 1998

7 Application of the Data Quality Policy

This section details the council’s approach to improving and maintaining data quality.

Governance, Roles and Responsibilities

This policy applies to all staff within West Lindsey District Council as data quality is everyone’s responsibility. However, where officers are assigned specific responsibilities in terms of data quality, these should be clearly defined and documented. The following table outlines the key roles and responsibilities for data quality:

Role	Responsibilities
Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)	To be the Council's champion for data quality with responsibility for formulation of policy and overall review and audit arrangements.
Directors (Accounting Officers)	Overall responsibility for the reliability of data and information presented to Boards and Members.
Strategic Leads	Responsible for ensuring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that adequate, safe systems are in place which hold data of acceptable standard • that the data for their service is accurate, timely and meets relevant guidance • that actions arising from data quality audits are satisfactorily addressed • the implementation of corporate policy and procedures • training needs are identified
Corporate Governance Team (Accreditor)	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-ordinate risk assessments of systems and PI Audits, liaising with Internal Audit and service areas • ensuring improvements have been implemented • communicating and promoting commitment to Data Quality • providing training advice and guidance to services • regularly reviewing compliance with the data quality policy and liaising with appropriate officers to rectify non-compliance • reporting on Data Quality issues to performance review meetings and CLT

Role	Responsibilities
Team Managers (Information Asset Owners)	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of relevant Performance Indicator definitions and guidance • ensuring compliance with indicator definitions and guidance • inputting accurate information on council systems • maintaining a robust control environment • identifying and rectifying gaps in control environment • providing information to the Head of Service and CLT as and when required
All employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate and timely recording of data on appropriate systems • Adhering to the Councils Data Quality Policy

People and Skills

As an organisation we ensure that staff are in a position to undertake their responsibilities in relation to data quality. Training and development of staff and an understanding of the importance of data quality for Members underpin the achievement of high quality data and information. The following therefore has been considered across all service areas:

- Staff are made aware by their line manager of their responsibilities in relation to data quality.
- Commitment to data quality is clearly stated in job descriptions for all relevant roles within the council.
- Staff have the relevant skills and competencies to fulfil their role in ensuring good quality data. They receive appropriate training and guidance.
- Officer training needs are identified through the appraisal process and built into personal development plans and the council's core development programme.
- Data quality is a key part of the induction process.
- Commitment to data quality is clearly communicated through the council. A Minerva support resource has been developed with all current strategies, procedures and guidance.

Systems and Processes

The council ensures that appropriate systems are in place for the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of data. The council recognises the importance of these systems operating on a right first time principle. Therefore, users are

adequately trained and all systems have an appropriate training programme in place which is periodically evaluated and adapted as necessary.

The council uses the principle of ‘collect once and use numerous times’ (COUNT) to underpin data collection and use.

Data Security

The council ensures that data is stored in a secure environment with appropriate security and system backups for all business critical systems. The access and use of data should be appropriate to the data user and comply with relevant legislation such as the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the council’s IT security policies. Systems are regularly tested to ensure that they are secure. The council’s Business Continuity Plan will make provisions for the business critical systems listed at Appendix 1.

Information Sharing

The council will ensure that formal frameworks for data sharing with partners are put in place. Data quality requirements will be applied to data used by the council and shared externally, or which is provided by partner or third party organisations. These requirements will be in the form of data sharing protocols, contracts or service level agreements which specify the responsibilities of partners to provide data which is fit for purpose. This includes complying with all legal, compliance and confidentiality standards. A validation process will be established for all data provided by partners or other third parties.

The council will have regard to the Transparency Board’s draft public data principles as set out in Appendix 2.

8 Control and Validation

The council will ensure that it has effective validation processes in place to ensure the accuracy of data used in managing services and service performance. These will include:

- An ongoing programme of data quality audits undertaken by the Corporate Governance Team. The outcomes of these audits are reported to CLT
- Reviews of systems and process undertaken by Internal Audit.
- The development and implementation of service specific Data Quality Assurance frameworks.
- Data returns are supported by clear and complete audit trails and subject to directorate and corporate verification checks.
- Any shortcomings identified during audits are corrected within agreed timescales.
- The role of the Chief Operating Officer in scrutinising performance data submitted for publication to members and the public.

Independent audits of data are reported to the CLT and the Governance and Audit Committee. Improvement recommendations arising from internal and external audits

are acted on so that there is continuous improvement to the council's approach to data quality.

9 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually. The Corporate Information Governance Group will act as the consultation and approving body for the policy.

10 Equality Impact

Ensuring that the council has high quality data will impact positively on all equality strands. It will result in better understanding needs and in delivery of better services to the council's diverse communities.

11 Further Information

This policy has been developed by the council's Corporate Information Governance Group. If you have any feedback or require further information please contact:

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Appendix 1 - The Council's Business Critical Systems

This Appendix lists systems used to create, process, and store data that are critical to the council's business.

Business System	Modules	Information Asset Owner (IAO)
Northgate	Revenues Benefits	Revenues Team Leader Benefits Team Leader
Civica APP	Planning Building Control Housing Enforcement Anti-Social Behaviour	Planning Team Leader Building Control Team Leader Housing Team Leader Housing Team Leader Localism Team Leader
Civica	Financials Payments	Group Accountant Group Accountant
XPress	Electoral Registration	Senior Elections Officer
Symphony iManage	Local Land and Property Gazetteer	Corporate Systems Team Manager
Sentinel	Anti-Social Behaviour Case Management	Lincolnshire Police
Firmstep	AchieveForms	Corporate Systems Team Manager
ICT	Active Directory	ICT Team Manager

Appendix 2 - Transparency Board's Draft Public Data Principles

- **Public data policy and practice will be clearly driven by the public and businesses who want and use the data, including what data is released when and in what form** – and in addition to the legal Right to Data itself this overriding principle should apply to the implementation of all the other principles.
- **Public data will be published in reusable, machine-readable form – publication alone is only part of transparency** – the data needs to be reusable, and to make it reusable it needs to be machine-readable. At the moment a lot of Government information is locked into PDFs or other un-processable formats.
- **Public data will be released under the same open licence which enables free reuse, including commercial reuse** – all data should be under the same easy to understand licence. Data released under the Freedom of Information Act or the new Right to Data should be automatically released under that licence.
- **Public data will be available and easy to find through a single easy to use online access point (data.gov.uk)** – the public sector has a myriad of different websites, and search does not work well across them. It's important to have a well-known single point where people can find the data.
- **Public data will be published using open standards, and following relevant recommendations of the World Wide Web Consortium.** Open, standardised formats are essential. However to increase reusability and the ability to compare data it also means openness and standardisation of the content as well as the format.
- **Public data underlying the Government's own websites will be published in reusable form for others to use** – anything published on Government websites should be available as data for others to reuse. Public bodies should not require people to come to their websites to obtain information.
- **Public data will be timely and fine grained** – Data will be released as quickly as possible after its collection and in as fine a detail as is possible. Speed may mean that the first release may have inaccuracies; more accurate versions will be released when available.
- **Release data quickly, and then re-publish it in linked data form** – Linked data standards allow the most powerful and easiest re-use of data. However most existing internal public sector data is not in linked data form. Rather than delay any release of the data, our recommendation is to release it 'as is' as soon as possible, and then work to convert it to a better format.

- **Public data will be freely available to use in any lawful way** – raw public data should be available without registration, although for API-based services a developer key may be needed. Applications should be able to use the data in any lawful way without having to inform or obtain the permission of the public body concerned.
- **Public bodies should actively encourage the re-use of their public data** – in addition to publishing the data itself, public bodies should provide information and support to enable it to be reused easily and effectively. The Government should also encourage and assist those using public data to share knowledge and applications, and should work with business to help grow new, innovative uses of data and to generate economic benefit.
- **Public bodies should maintain and publish inventories of their data holdings** – accurate and up-to-date records of data collected and held, including their format, accuracy and availability.