Melton Borough Council
DATA QUALITY POLICY

1. Introduction – Strategy

1.1 Data Quality is an underpinning requirement and enabler of our ability to use data, whether for performance management of the organisation, or for designing services which give people in our community what they want. The authority collects and reports upon a range of data which needs to be calculated accurately. This includes the performance indicator data contained within the Corporate Plan and Service Standards metrics, and Business Intelligence data, both of which can guide decisions, inform strategies and ultimately improve service delivery. This Policy also encompasses all other external returns. The Council's strategy is to ensure that data is managed to the highest quality.

1.2 Our objectives for the management of data quality are:

- To collect that information which is essential to business and performance management, and which accurately identifies the Council's performance over time, and customer requirements
- To ensure that the data collected is both accessible and secure
- To have data collection processes which result in information which is 'right first time'. This encompasses the audit requirements of accuracy, reliability, timeliness, relevance and completeness, and ensures that data is processed and added into the performance and business intelligence management systems by few people, as near to source as possible
- To identify and address issues with data quality at the earliest possible opportunity
- To ensure that data is used appropriately both within the organisation and externally to achieve knowledge and understanding of how well the Council is performing, and to drive improvements.
- To underpin our 'show me' culture (evidence based decision-making)

1.3 This Data Quality Policy sets out the framework within which this work is undertaken.

1.4 There are, in seeking and maintaining good data quality practice, *seven* Critical Success Factors (CSF), each of which is dependent on its predecessor. Sequentially, these are:

Number	CSF heading	CSF detail
1	**Awareness**	The need for quality data is recognised throughout the organisation with all staff understanding their personal responsibility in achieving it
2	**Definition**	All mandatory fields are adequately defined and the reasons for their accurate completion are understood

3	Input	Data should be entered in an accurate and timely manner
4	Verification	The accuracy of data should be verified as close to the point of capture as possible
5	Systems	All systems should be fit for purpose, understood by staff entering and retrieving data, and where possible software should be utilised to monitor data on input and highlight previous records relating to the same information for data quality and linking purposes
6	Output	Information should be structured in such a way that staff can identify relevant information with the minimum amount of time being spent on searching. Performance information should be extracted and communicated in good time to ensure it is current to pertinent decision making
7	Presentation	Information should be presented in such a way as to be easily understood

These Critical Success Factors relate to all areas in which data are used, on all systems the Council operates.

1.5 Strategic compliance with the requirements of data quality is to be achieved through a risk assessed analytical framework, the Proforma for which is Appendix 1 to this Policy.

1.6 This Proforma identifies the key elements of the overall approach to establishing and controlling data quality, consisting of the strands and themes to be risk assessed and monitored by the Council's Monitoring Officer:

Strand	Theme	Actions (high-level)
1. People	1.1 Leadership and Direction	Governance, information quality accountability, quality checking
	1.2 Knowledge and Understanding	Responsibilities, processes, importance, impact of getting things wrong
	1.3 Personal Responsibility	Attitude and aptitude
	1.4 Resources	Analysis
2. Process	2.1 Monitoring	System/information asset owner specified assurance of access and use
	2.2 Auditing	Independent activity identifying best practice and improvement areas
	2.3 Records Management	Operating procedures, review and linking of information, embedding best practice
	2.4 Reporting Mechanism	Visible performance reporting of data quality issues
3. Systems	3.1 Data Entry Validation	Development and/or procurement of systems
	3.2 Prime Record	Oversight and corporate memory, direction toward convergence and integration

	3.3 Reporting Capability	Monitors and highlights issues

1.7   The Proforma allows for a risk assessment rating (using the standard Zurich Municipal Risk Rating template values) against the high-level Actions, to create an overall rating against the Themes, but also specific risk rating against underlying actions with target dates for their completion.

1.8   Risk assessment rating using the Zurich Municipal rating system allows consideration of both probability and impact severity, and a value should be assigned on this basis to the items in the Proforma.

1.9   The Proforma will be completed in conjunction with the Council's Information Management Group (IMG) with oversight by the Council's Monitoring Officer.

2.   Data Quality Procedure

2.1   To ensure that the management of performance is coherent, the following roles and responsibilities are operated:

- Chief Executive – Ultimate strategic responsibility for data quality

- Heads of Service – Strategic responsibility for data quality submitted from their service

- Head of Communications – Responsible for co-ordination of performance data and systems to support this activity, and compliance with national and legislative requirements, and compliance with Freedom of Information and other legislation pertinent to the holding of data on customers, businesses and our geographical area

- Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods – Responsible for co-ordination of business intelligence data and systems to support this activity

- Responsible Officer – Operational accountability for the quality of data generated in their service area

- Data Compiler – Operational responsibility for gathering data within their service area

- Internal Audit Manager - Independent validation of systems and controls

2.2   Heads of Service and T3 Section Managers will ensure that:
- appropriate systems are in place to collate data ('right first time'), and that they are fit for purpose

- electronic systems/procedure notes/manuals are in place for business-critical systems and that these are reviewed and updated as appropriate

- staff are aware of the requirement for them to assure data quality and that responsibility for data quality is reflected in job descriptions and

the appraisal process.   Services are encouraged to ensure that suitable appraisal targets are included in work plans

- ensure that third parties are aware of the requirement for them to assure data quality, and our processes for checking the information they provide. When entering into contracts with service providers, wherever relevant, to ensure there is a contractual requirement to provide timely and accurate information

- appropriate risk management and business continuity management arrangements are in place

2.3   The Head of Communications will ensure that appropriate IT systems are available to support officers in collating performance data, and that external submissions of that data comply with national and legislative requirements.

2.4   The Head of Communities & Neighbourhoods will ensure that the appropriate IT systems are available to support officers in collating business intelligence data.

3   Producing Performance Indicator Outturns

3.1   Each performance indicator will have a designated officer ('the Responsible Officer') who is responsible for managing progress against targets that have been set, for managing risks associated with the indicator and for verifying the accuracy of published outturns.

3.2   Outturn data will be produced as soon as is practicable after the required timescale has elapsed. The Responsible Officer will ensure that calculations / workings are checked by a colleague to reduce the potential for error.

3.3   Working papers for audit inspection will be maintained and submitted corporately for review. The Responsible Officer by submitting the data confirms that the data provided has been produced accurately. Heads of Service by authorising and forwarding the data within their area of responsibility are certifying that it is correct.

3.4   Melton's Performance Reporting Framework sets out in greater detail the current reporting process for performance management information within the context of the Corporate Plan, Service Plan standards, and the scorecards and metrics used to monitor corporate performance and its management.

3.5   The LGIP Data Quality Toolkit, itself based on Audit Commission guidance, is a useful piece of best practice reference, and forms Appendix 2 to this Policy.

4   Legislative Requirements and Operational Context

4.1   In the compilation and presentation of data by the authority, it is necessary to take account of legislative and regulatory requirements deriving from the Data Protection Act 1998 (with data quality controls constituting a key means of complying with Data Protection Principle 7, appropriate technical and organisational measures), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (and the associated Environmental Information Regulations 2004), the datasets changes to FOIA 2000 arising from the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012, and the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency.

4.2   One of the key effects of the datasets and transparency requirements is to make information available in reusable formats, chiefly as comma separated version (csv) files.

4.3   Data quality also operates in the context of information sharing and partnership working with countywide and national partners, such as neighbouring districts, county-level organisations, and central government departments.

4.4   Officers of the Council will need to bear these legislative, regulatory and partnership issues in mind when considering data quality matters.