

Version Control

Version	Comments	Updated by	Date
1.0	1 st draft	Neil Lawrence	3 February 2009
1.1	2 nd draft after consultation	Neil Lawrence	2 March 2009
1.2	Further amendments for CIP	Neil Lawrence	4 March 2009

Consultation/Approval

Name	Organisation	Date
Council Management Team	Cherwell District Council	4 February 2009
Extended Management Team	Cherwell District Council	27 February 2009
Executive	Cherwell District Council	16 March 2009

1. Introduction and purpose of the strategy

The quality and cost of public services depends on the decisions that many people make. Poor quality information can lead to poor decisions or inappropriate conclusions that can affect our services and so impact on the lives of Cherwell residents.

This strategy sets out a broad framework of how the council intends to develop its management arrangements for the production, sharing, analysis and interpretation of management information. It will be used as the basis for a medium term action plan to guide improvement activity during the period 2009/10 to 2011/12.

2. Scope of the strategy

The strategy outlines our general approach and commitment to good quality management information; it looks to future improvements rather than focusing on current arrangements, which are captured in live frameworks and working procedures developed as part of the council's overall approach.

The strategy covers information produced and used by the council, and also that obtained or shared with its partners.

3. Timeframe of the strategy

This is a medium term strategy covering the period 2009/10 to 2011/12

4. Performance and review

An annual report will be produced that reviews our performance and progress against the strategic aim, objectives and actions outlined in this strategy. The content of the strategy and its action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis taking into account new national expectations or requirements and also the changing needs of the council.

5. Strategic aim

This strategy will provide the framework for a consistent, corporate and agreed approach to how we collect, produce, use and share management information at Cherwell.

6. Strategy objectives

Our objectives are to:

- Ensure we have all relevant information needed to help the council and its partners make effective decisions
- Ensure the information we produce, share or accept from others is of a suitable quality for the purpose it is used for
- Produce and present information in the most appropriate way to satisfy the needs of those who use it and to ensure they understand it

- Ensure all staff, managers and members have the skills, knowledge and tools needed to collect, analyse, present and interpret management information
- Safeguard the security of our management information

7. What is management information?

Management information is derived from a variety of sources and can include the following:-

- Activity information; how much/how many of an item or service is produced or consumed
- Financial; revenue and capital budget and spend, forecasting information
- Demographic; the characteristics of the population of the district, particularly its age and ethnic profile
- Social indicators; for example the economic activity of the district, or the rate of teenage conception
- Trends; how an area under review has changed over time, for example increases in population or the reduction in crime rates in key areas
- Performance indicators; comparative measurements assessing actual performance against national standards or local targets
- Qualitative; commentary or opinions expressed by others about the council or its services

This list is not exhaustive. The distinguishing characteristic of management information is its relevance to directing and assessing council performance alongside the trends of its environment.

8. Why is management information important?

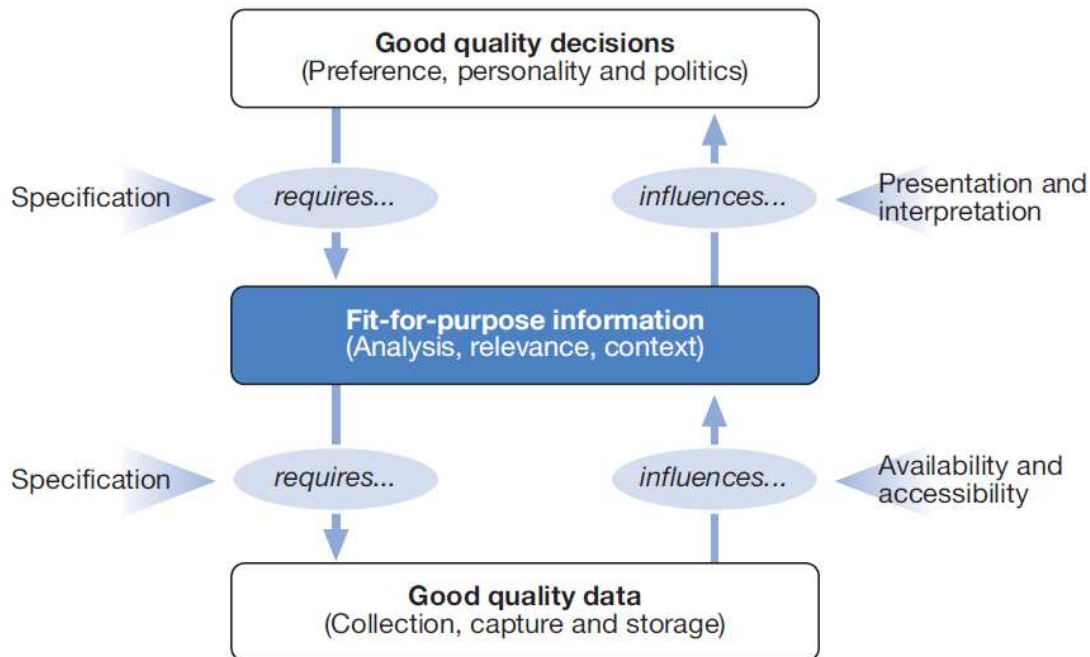
The quality and cost of public services depends on the decisions that many people make. Poor quality information can lead to poor decisions or inappropriate conclusions that can affect our services and so impact on the lives of Cherwell residents. The key risks arising from relying on information which is not fit-for-purpose are significant, and may include;

- Published information which is misleading
- Poor use of council resources
- Failure to improve services
- Poor policy decisions
- Not recognising and rewarding good performance
- Not identifying and monitoring improvement opportunities

There are strong links between what we want to achieve as a council and the need for good quality information (see 9. below). It therefore makes good business sense to aim to improve our management information.

Having the right information, and being sure that information provided by other people is right, makes our jobs easier. If we get information right first time there is no need for others to check our work, or recalculate it themselves.

We have specific duties under the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act in relation to the collection, storage, accuracy and use of information. If we fail to safeguard data properly it can have huge consequences for the council's reputation.



Source: "In the know" (Audit Commission 2008)

9. How management information fits with the council's objectives and priorities

Good information assists in meeting the following Aims from the council's Strategic Priority 4: "Cherwell; an accessible and value for money council";

- Improve the way we communicate with the public, partners and other stakeholders in order to explain what the council is doing and why
- Demonstrate that we can be trusted to act properly for you

The council's Improvement Strategy has specific aims which require high quality information to be used;

- to be recognised as an 'excellent authority', which includes the target of 'achieving the highest possible rating under central Government's inspection regime
- to ensure decision making is based on high quality management and demographic information' with a target of having accurate and up to date management information available on line that is actively used to deliver service improvement

- to work in partnership with others whenever this will enable us to better deliver our objectives, meet community needs and achieve economies of scale

The council's Partnership Protocol sets out the following commitment on management information;

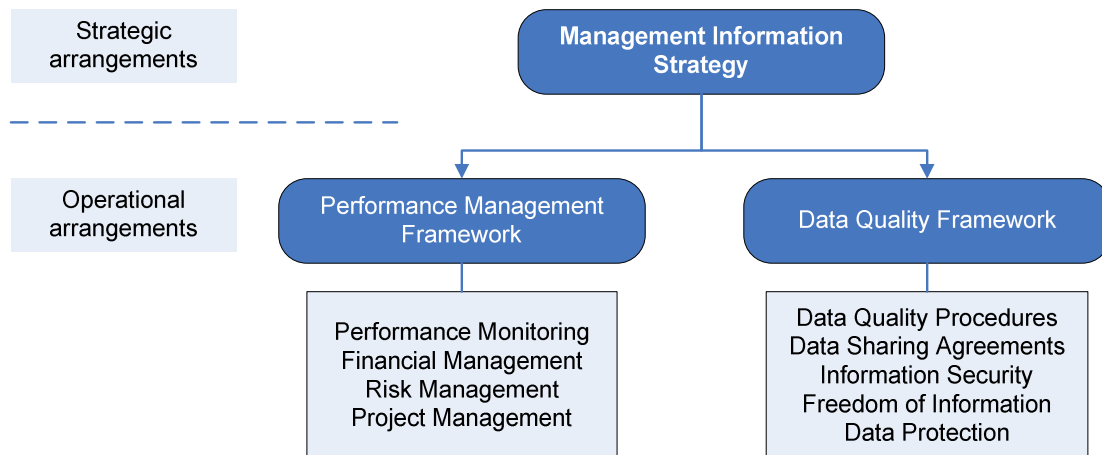
- Partnerships will make decisions based on the data provided. The partner organisations must therefore commit to provide to the partnership the most robust data they are able to. Cherwell will scrutinise the reliability of data and seek assurances as to quality and the processes in place to ensure such quality. Information sharing will be a key part of partnership working. Partner organisations are expected to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Where confidential information is exchanged there should be an information sharing protocol.

In addition, the council's Code of Governance sets out the following commitment;

- The council will endeavour to provide a high standard of information and advice relevant and timely to community needs to ensure that services are effectively delivered

10. How Information is managed

This strategy will sit above our operational frameworks for ensuring good quality information, as set out in the diagram below. These frameworks and their supporting arrangements will be reviewed and updated as regularly as required.



Specific roles and responsibilities for individuals are set out within these frameworks or their supporting arrangements (e.g. the Head of Legal and Democratic Services is the data controller for the council under the Data Protection Act).

11. Quality and standards

There is a range of legislation and guidance we will work to in delivering this strategy, including;

- Relevant legislation and supporting guidance, such as that for Freedom of Information Act or Data Protection Act
- Specific guidance for management information, such as *In the know. Using information to make better decisions: a discussion paper* (Audit Commission, 2008)
- National standards such as ISO27001:2005 and *Improving information to support decision making: standards for better quality data* (Audit Commission, Nov 2007)
- The requirements set by others using our information, such as those for Government Connect

12. Cherwell management information principles

As part of the strategy we will agree a set of management information principles to work to that embody best practice;

Information is Accurate

The concept of 'right first time' will be used; making sure that there is no unnecessary checking, correcting or reformatting of information once it has been submitted. Information should be sufficiently accurate for its intended purpose; for example, financial accounts will be held to a higher standard of accuracy than financial forecasts, which by their nature rely on assumptions and will rarely be very accurate. Where the accuracy of information presented is an issue this will be drawn to the attention of the recipient or audience to help inform its interpretation.

Information is Comprehensive

Information is complete and representative, and is unbiased. Sufficient information is collected, and to a suitable quality, as is needed to draw significant or meaningful conclusions. For example, samples used for surveys will be statistically significant to give a high enough confidence level to draw conclusions about the district as a whole; population surveys will ensure the demographic profile of the district is used in their samples to make their findings representative. Quality measures are used for information where appropriate to advise decision makers.

Information is Relevant

Information is meaningful and in context. It will have a use and purpose and not be collected for the sake of collection. Where information is no longer relevant it will no longer be collected or used. When being used for decision making the information collected and presented must be relevant to that decision

Information is Valid

Any definitions and rules relating to information are complied with, and it is stored in an agreed format to ensure it is comparable over time and between bodies, e.g. Services/Directorates, or other local authorities.

Information produced is Timely

Information is collected as quickly as possible after the event as is feasible, and made available at a frequency and timescale that is deemed appropriate for its use. For example, financial monitoring information is produced and circulated within days

of the end of the month, whereas resident satisfaction information is collected on an annual basis and may require a good deal of analysis and interpretation before it can be made available.

Information is made Secure

Information is stored safely and with appropriate access controls. Sensitive information is only used for the purpose it has been collected for, and only retained for as long as it is needed. Information is only shared with others where the council is satisfied that appropriate controls and safeguards are in place.

Information is Reliable

Information is collected in a consistent way, and sufficient information is collected to be sure of the findings. Reliable sources of external information are to be used wherever possible, for example the Oxfordshire Data Observatory.

Information collection and production is Realistic

The benefit of the information collected outweighs the resources required to collect it and/or analyse it. The concept of 'Collect Once, Use Many Times (COUNT)' will be applied wherever possible, particularly in the collection of performance information.

13. Action Plan

In order to achieve our management information objectives a medium term action plan will be introduced and implemented from April 2009.

Objective 1: Ensure we have all relevant information needed to help the council and its partners make effective decisions			
Area	Action	Completion date	Lead Officer
Information from the community	Implement a Community Information Hub to gather and summarise data on reported community safety incidents	October 2009	Head of Safer Communities and Community Development
	Carry out customer satisfaction surveys in those areas not covered by the general residents satisfaction survey	September 2010	Relevant Heads of Service
	Introduce an web based system for community consultation exercises	May 2009	Head of Community and Corporate Planning
Demographic information	Introduce arrangements to update our demographic profile routinely through the Oxfordshire Data Observatory	October 2009	Project Manager, Improvement
Performance information	Monitor the deliver of service plans through Performance Plus	July 2009	Head of Improvement
	Introduce integrated risk monitoring with performance monitoring	October 2009	Head of Improvement
Comparative information	Participate fully in all CIPFA benchmarking clubs	Ongoing, each year	Relevant Heads of Service
	Establish a baseline performance comparison on national indicators with CIPFA family comparators	July 2009	Head of Improvement
	Ensure all our services have adequate benchmarking, customer feedback and productivity information	September 2010	Head of Improvement

Objective 2: Ensure the information we use, produce, share or accept from others is of a suitable quality for the purpose it is used for

Area	Action	Completion date	Lead Officer
Improving internal data	Refine our PIDRs to capture target profile info for all national indicators and corporate plan targets	April 2009	Project Manager, Improvement
	Carry out regular testing of high risk data and systems	Mid-year, annually	Strategic Director for Customer Service and Resources
	Undertake a risk-based programme of improvement for data and systems	March 2010 (for 1 st year audit) then annually each March	Project Manager, Improvement
Using reliable sources of information	Work with our LAA partners to introduce a Local Intelligence System for Oxfordshire	March 2010	Head of Community and Corporate Planning
Improving partnership data arrangements	Ensure all significant partnerships have operational data sharing procedures in place	March 2010	Project Manager, Improvement
	Undertake audits of data received from partners to ensure they meet the council's requirements	October 2009 and annually as required	Project Manager, Improvement
	Undertake a programme of improvement activity for partner data arrangements	March 2010 (for 1 st year audit) the annually each March	Relevant Heads of Service

Objective 3: Produce and present information in the most appropriate way to satisfy the needs of those who use it and to ensure they understand it

Area	Action	Completion date	Lead Officer
Access to performance information	Make performance information available monthly on the council's intranet	October 2009	Project Manager, Improvement
	Make quarterly performance monitoring information more accessible to the public on the council's website	October 2009	Project Manager, Improvement
Improved internal information sources	Improve the council's intranet to be fit for purpose and easy to use	March 2010	Information Systems Manager
	Expand the range of datasets available on the council's GIS to improve access to spatial information	October 2009	GIS Manager
Information for the public	Produce a high quality annual performance report and summary of accounts each year	September, annually	Head of Communications
	Make information more accessible on the council's websites	March 2010	Information Systems Manager
	Make more spatial information available to the public using LocalView GIS	March 2010	GIS Manager

Objective 4: Ensure all staff, managers and members have the skills, knowledge and tools needed to collect, analyse, present and interpret management information

Goal	Action	Completion date	Lead Officer
Raise awareness	Re-brand all data quality and management information improvements under the Cherwell KnowHOW banner	July 2009	Project Manager, Improvement
	Use Inside Cherwell, Cascade and team meetings to raise awareness of this strategy and its supporting frameworks	October 2009	Project Manager, Improvement
Improve guidance	Complete the suite of data quality procedure notes and publicise widely through the council	October 2009	Project Manager, Improvement
	Update working procedures and frameworks as necessary and publicise	As necessary	Project Manager, Improvement
	Introduce a council style guide for producing information in a consistent format	August 2009	Head of Communications
Improve the tools used	Improve the council's intranet to make accessing key information easier for staff	March 2010	Head of Customer Service and Information Systems

Objective 5: Safeguard the security of our management information			
Goal	Action	Completion date	Lead Officer
Security standards	Expand ISO27001 accreditation to all areas of council activity on a rolling programme	March 2012	Project Manager, Improvement
	Introduce and maintain management information security measures necessary to achieve and retain Government Connect status	April 2009 onwards	Information Systems Manager
Business Continuity	Carry out regular tests of business recovery plans and the emergency plan	As per test schedule	Head of Safer Communities and Community Development
	Develop and implement an risk-based improvement plan based on the results of regular tests	Ongoing, annually	Head of Safer Communities and Community Development