



Data Strategy

2021-2024

Surrey County Council



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Executive summary

Data is a key enabler to delivering our organisational objectives. We aspire to use data to power our processes and support our digital transformation, facilitate better and more robust decision making, and to build trust with our residents. This strategy sets out our ambitions for how we will use data in the council and the practical actions that we will take to achieve these ambitions over the next few years. These actions are organised into three areas of focus:

1. **Building the foundations**, putting in place the foundations (governance, policies, processes, and systems) so that we can fully exploit all our data.
2. **Developing new approaches to insight**, to show how insight can be used to deliver the outcomes that the organisation wants to see.
3. **Building the skills and knowledge of our workforce**, to build skills and understanding at all levels of the organisation, so that staff are confident in managing, analysing, and interpreting data. To drive cultural changes in how we collaborate and share data across council services and with partners

To achieve our bold ambitions the implementation of the strategy will demand a focus on people, culture, and governance, as well as data and technology. Extensive engagement, particularly as part of our data review, has been essential to the development of this data strategy. Thank you to all our stakeholders within directorates and services who have fed into this work.


We recognize the importance of continuing engagement at all levels within the council, ensuring that services and directorates can input into the strategy and feel ownership of it. If we can get this right and build engagement and buy-in from services across the council and our partners, the potential for using data to enable our organisational ambitions is vast.

About the data strategy

The data strategy complements and enables other key strategies, namely the [Surrey County Council Organisation Strategy](#), the [Surrey County Council Digital Strategy](#) and aligns with the Surrey Wide Data Strategy that is currently in development.

The strategy has been developed through extensive engagement with leaders and officers in the council, as well as with partners. This engagement was completed as part of a data review in early 2021 to assess our organisational maturity regarding data and how we use it currently. This strategy is a response to the review and sets out how we will address these gaps to become a truly data enabled organisation.

The scope of the strategy covers data in a broad sense, from how we manage and govern it, to how we use it to create actionable insights. One important distinction to understand is the difference between the terms data, information, and insight, which are related but separate concepts. This strategy is concerned with all three, though has a focus on data and insight. The term 'data' is used throughout this document as shorthand for all three concepts. A definition of these terms, and a full articulation of the scope of this strategy, is included in Appendix 2.



The strategy has been designed to be ambitious, as well as actionable and pragmatic. To create accountability for delivering the strategy, we will publish it and share it with our partners and residents. It will be a living document and will be updated as our data maturity evolves.

Implementation of the strategy will be taken forward jointly through the Data Insights and Digital transformation programmes.

Our ambition for using data in SCC

Our Organisation Strategy sets out the council's contribution to achieving the aims and ambitions of the Community Vision for Surrey in 2030 and how we will work over the next five years to make a real difference to residents' lives. The Organisation Strategy recognises that data is a critical resource to achieving our objectives and that good use of data will enable us to transform our services and deliver better outcomes. The strategy states that:

“Data is a vital asset with the power to transform the way we see the world, and our ability to change it. It has a crucial role in designing, delivering and transforming our services to improve outcomes, drive efficiencies, and achieve greater collaboration.”

Specifically, there are three ways that we aspire to use our data for the benefit of the council and our residents. These are:

1. To power processes and support our digital transformation

The first way we will use data in the council is to power our processes. Ultimately data lies at the heart of all operations, from conducting a care assessment, to providing customer services, to paying an invoice and everything else in-between. All these processes rely on good quality, timely data that is available, easily accessible, of good quality, and trustworthy. Data is also essential to digital maturity, powering digital transformation, and one of the seven strategic priorities in our digital strategy.

2. To facilitate better and more robust decision making

This second way we will use data is to facilitate better and more robust decision making. Decision making happens at various levels in the organisation – the transactional level, the service level, and the strategic level. Data is used to make decisions at all these levels, though often in slightly different ways:

- At the **transactional level** data can be used to support our processes and operations, as outlined in point 1.
- At the **service level** data can be used to measure the performance and impact of our services and guide decisions around service improvements and re-design.

- At the **strategic level** data can be used for horizon scanning and policy development, to understand whole population needs, and to inform commissioning and choices around the design of new services.

3. To build trust with our residents

The third way we will use data is to build trust with our residents. Data is a powerful tool for enabling transparency, improving participation, and strengthening democracy. By being transparent with residents about how the council operates, what we know, and what we are doing, data has the potential to help us build stronger relationships with local people and communities. It is also crucial that residents understand how we are using their data and can input into our plans. For this reason, we plan to consult with residents about their expectations on how we use and share data.

Of course, data is already being used in all these ways within SCC, though our data review highlighted that we are better at using it in some areas more than others. One of the aims of this strategy is to ensure that we can use our data for multiple purposes, to support all of the council's goals and priorities.

Ultimately, our ambition is to become a data enabled organisation that uses data to underpin policy, decisions, and actions in our effort to improve services and outcomes for residents, businesses, and the county. We need to use data to not just to understand how we are performing and monitor what has happened, but also to help us plan and prepare for the future, predicting issues before they arise. Becoming a truly data enabled organisation will support our delivery of our priority objectives and benefit our residents by providing tailored and responsive public services and increased efficiencies, therefore ultimately saving taxpayers' money.


Barriers to achieving our ambition

The data review has highlighted that there are some missing capabilities, skills and behaviours within the organisation that currently stop us from getting the most from our data and that our general data maturity is low.

For the organisation to become truly data-enabled, we need to have data that is high quality and fit for purpose, as well as an organisational culture that understands and values data and actively seeks to use it. In this sense, the barriers to achieving our ambition can be considered from two perspectives, first in terms of the foundations that need to be in place to improve our data, and second the skills and behaviours that support its effective use.

Our data review indicated that there is improvement required in both areas and common themes and symptoms came up repeatedly. Examples of these are:

- We can't bring all our data together and use it for a variety of purposes
- Teams don't have a good understanding of what is out there or what others are working on

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- The data we have access to is often untimely, out of date, inconsistently recorded, and generally of poor quality
 - We lack confidence in using our data to make decisions.

Immaturity across both areas means that the intelligence and insight that we produce from our data aren't as impactful as they could be, affecting our ability to make evidence-based decisions and deliver effective services.

Analysis of all the findings from the review highlight some possible root causes for these problems:

1. **We lack understanding about why data is important which leads us not to value it enough. As a result, we have not prioritised the governance and management of our data in the same way that we do for other vital assets and resources such as our finances.**

We have not put in place the processes and systems to manage and fully exploit our data, for example by establishing clear accountability and responsibility for managing it, or taking the time to understand our data architecture and the potential for our systems to be more joined up.

We have also not developed sufficient capacity in data roles, whereas we have lots of capacity in insight roles. This is problematic since good insight depends on good data.


2. **We lack understanding about how to get the most from our data and don't have the skills across the organisation to use it in a way that is effective and leads to action.**

Our all-staff survey showed that officers are confident in their ability to manage, analyse and interpret data. However, these findings are at odds with the experience of data and insight practitioners that we spoke to during interviews and workshops, who described a lack of skills and understanding across the workforce. This highlights a potential gap between the self-perception of officers and the actual skill level we have in the organisation.

Moreover, the SODA skills survey showed significant variation in analytical skills between analysts in the council, especially in capabilities that we are ambitious to improve such as predictive analytics.

There is also a lack of knowledge amongst officers around information governance and data sharing processes. We lack understanding about when we can or can't share data, and don't know whether we are acting ethically, or what our residents think about how we use their data. This leads to nervousness and risk aversion to sharing data with other teams and services. It also creates pressure on internal teams such as Information Governance, as this is often a last-minute thought.

There is also limited understanding of how to effectively commission and use insight, meaning that we don't use it consistently or effectively to guide our



decision making. When we do use insight, we tend to take a narrow view and fixate on specific indicators and measures of activity, and don't make enough use of different tools and techniques. For example, we don't make enough use of qualitative data and human stories to measure performance, we are very limited in our use of evaluation to understand if our interventions are having impact, and we haven't explored the possibilities of predictive analytics to help us understand future demand on our services. It is also not clear what we do with our insight or how it informs action. Often, we fall into the trap of 'analysis-paralysis', and hope that by collecting all the data together in one place this will enable us to make better decisions, though this is rarely the case.

3. **We have a siloed culture and way of working across the organisation and with partners.**

There is a siloed culture and way of working across the organisation and with partners. This leads to fragmentation of data, lack of visibility, lack of access and a culture of overprotection. It results in a situation where we don't know what data exists in different services, we don't know how to access the data that each service holds, and we have different interpretations and ways of describing our data.

Some of the data we need access to may not be ours but is captured by partners, third sector, suppliers, or the private sector. Data is also fragmented across numerous systems, often making it difficult and slow to access and use. We struggle to get hold of this data and often suppliers of technology systems charge fees for extracting system data that is not part of standard reports or dashboards. In some cases, we use manual effort to move data through a process and often hold information locally in spreadsheets.


Data sharing is perceived to be one of the biggest barriers to become a data-enabled organisation, both internally and with partners. Officers have reported that they find Information Governance (IG) processes to be cumbersome and slow.

Lastly, we don't have a good understanding of what insight exists and don't make this accessible and visible for staff, partners, and residents. We don't know what work has already been done, or what others are working on. This often leads to duplication of effort and analysis of the same things, in different teams, over and over.

Aims and outcomes of the data strategy

There are several outcomes that this strategy hopes to deliver, which should go some way to resolving some of these root causes and helps us to achieve our ambitions. These are:


- **To improve our data** – We want to have data that is high quality, consistent and well defined, with clear ownership and accountability for managing it. This will provide us with greater confidence and trust in our data and make us more effective at using it.

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- **To make our data and insight more visible and accessible** – We want officers and partners to understand what data and insights exists in the council, and to know where it is held, therefore creating opportunities to use it in multiple ways and for multiple purposes.
 - **To make it easier to share data across teams and systems** – We want to make it easier to share data between internal and external teams and make it possible to bring data together from across multiple systems.
 - **To build more collaborative ways of working between data teams** – We want to undo siloed ways of working and the culture of protectionism that currently exists around data. This will help to foster more collaboration and reduce duplication between teams.
 - **To create insight that leads to tangible action and improvements to outcomes** – We want to adopt approaches to insight that are focused on producing tangible actions and lead to improved outcomes for residents, taking an outcome-first approach rather than a data-first approach.
 - **To build a holistic understanding of our performance and impact** – We want to truly understand what impact we are having on our residents and service users and use data effectively to optimise and redesign our service offerings. This means moving beyond KPIs to a more holistic understanding of performance, for example by incorporating qualitative data and human stories.
 - **To ensure residents' data is used legally and ethically** – We want to ensure that all necessary security, legal, and ethical implications are considered in a consistent, timely and proportionate way. We also want to have a clear understanding of our tolerance for using personal data and ensure that this is proportionate to the risk of using it.
 - **To develop greater skills and understanding in managing, interpreting, and analysing data** – We want officers at all levels in the organisation to be data literate, and to be confident in managing and analysing data.
 - **To build a greater understanding of the value of data** – We want everyone in the organisation to understand the value of data and treat it as an asset.

Conditions and principles for success

Our belief is that to be truly data enabled requires not just changes to our data, tools and technology, but also to our ways of working, skills and competencies, assets and resources, and people and relationships. This means fundamentally rethinking the way in which we work with data and with each other. Therefore, a key focus of this strategy is to put in place the right conditions for the council to become data enabled by initiating a shift in mindset, culture, behaviours, and ways of working.

To achieve this requires cross-functional and collaborative working, involving teams from across the council as well as partners. We believe data is everyone business – from our key workers, our back-office staff, our leaders and senior managers, our



politicians, our businesses, and our residents. It will be a collective responsibility to make the changes needed to deliver on this strategy and achieve the outcomes we have set out.

To facilitate this, we have developed a set of principles with stakeholders from across the council that set out how we will deliver on the strategy. We will:

- Focus on outcome to ensure all workstreams will aim to produce effective behaviour changes to be embedded in all our processes rather than just being considered deliverables of the programme
- Deliver the programme in an engaging and collaborative way, getting input from a range of stakeholders and being open to feedback, drawing on proven project approaches such as the Digital Operating Model
- Work closely and share information with partners such as Surrey Heartlands, Surrey Police, and District and Borough Councils to ensure our transformation programmes are aligned, thereby actively working to avoid duplication
- Work in the open by being transparent about the purpose of each workstream with fellow colleagues and residents
- Be open to change and failure, and we will not be risk adverse to changing processes. By adopting an iterative approach to the programme, we will try and learn what works and what does not
- Create opportunities to share lessons and best practices across council teams, partners, and the wider sector

What we will do to meet our ambitions and outcomes

The strategy is divided up into three areas of focus which set out the activities to move the organisation forward and become data enabled, and which together will deliver the outcomes we want to achieve. These areas of focus are to: build the foundations, develop new approaches to insight, and build the skills and understanding of our workforce. These activities are a snapshot of what we need to do now – but they will also change and can be reprioritised over time.


Build the foundations

Aim: to put in place the foundations (governance, policies, processes, and systems) so that we can fully exploit all our data.

Organisation wide data governance

We plan to establish data governance as a strategic capability for the whole organisation. Doing this will help us to improve the quality of our data, understand what data is held and enable us to use it for a variety of purposes.

Key deliverables:


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- **Establishing an organisation-wide data governance framework and onboarding plan** – We will use a leading Data Governance Framework to introduce key capabilities and best practice for the organisation. This will include customised knowledge transfer and training focused on different organisation levels, roles, and positions to embed the data governance awareness, understanding, and skills across all council services.
 - **Building an enterprise-wide data catalogue** – We will curate a data catalogue and business glossary that map out all data held by the council, the information held with in it, where it is, who owns it and for what purposes it can be shared. This will also include an Enterprise Business Glossary to help us understand the language we use to describe data.
 - **Reviewing all the data we hold and its quality** – Starting small with a prioritised list of datasets, we will work with system owners across the organisation to profile the data and understand if, and where, quality issues exist. We will also put in place clear measures and targets for data quality.
 - **Consolidating data standards** – We will build a set of data standards that are trusted and agreed by business owners which allow us to capture consistent and unified data at source. This will support greater utility and interoperability of data long term. We will work with services to put in place solutions to fix the issues identified at source and eliminate the cost of correcting data later in the process.
 - **Building a holistic view of our business-critical data** – We will create a master data repository and consistent definitions for residents, employees, suppliers, buildings, and locations across multiple lines of business systems (such as names and addresses) ensuring we have unified views and shared reference points for the organisation.
 - **Investing in data governance tools** – We will build the data catalogues and glossaries to facilitate more effective data management, simplifying the task of data discovery, highlighting, and improving poor data quality.

Data architecture

We will create a modern data architecture (see appendix 1 for definition) that supports our organisational ambitions. It will do this by ensuring flexibility in the data types we ingest and the ways we deliver information, building connections between systems and enabling more seamless data and workflows, supporting better access to data and more real-time (or near real-time) availability where it is needed and making data a central consideration in how we build and buy digital services as well how we commission services.

Key deliverables:

- **Reviewing our data architecture** (including databases, applications, integration, security, workflows, information architecture design, and associated data processes) to identify gaps and opportunities to develop our capabilities, better meet our analytics needs internally and within the wider partnership,



ensuring a focus on privacy by design and reuse. This will require a new Data Architect role to be created.

- **Strengthening system requirements and data standards for all new systems procured or developed** to ensure they support our approach and configuration needs, ensuring that we are only working with suppliers who support open data access.
- **Reviewing contracts** to ensure we work with suppliers who understand and support our need for data access. We will review all new contracts to ensure that data requirements are built in, enabling better access to data held by third party suppliers.

Data sharing and information governance

We will build processes and establish ways of working between internal and external data teams and services that enables easier legal and ethical data sharing across the organisation and with partners.

- **Streamlining data sharing across the system** – we will work with colleagues in Information Governance to develop an approach to data sharing that starts from a ‘duty to share’ stance and enables us to use our data to its full potential, whilst also safeguarding the privacy of residents. This will involve a range of activities, for example identifying and investing in common tools for data sharing, e.g. the Information Sharing Gateway, as well as exploring approaches to data minimisation and anonymisation. The existing IG Risk board and networks which represents IG leads from across the partnership will support this. We suggest these become the primary forums for creating and formally endorsing pan-Surrey data sharing agreements.
- **Develop a default platform for data sharing** – this platform will be used for publishing open data and for securely sharing closed datasets between organisations. Using one platform for collaboration projects will ensure consistent data sharing practices across partners and will make it easier to build automation into the data exchange process, reducing the time from analysis to action. It will also ensure that metadata (descriptions and limitations) is shared and improve version control (so analysts know they are using the right version of a dataset). The platform will include a system for managing our user insight, bringing together resident opinion and voice into a searchable database. This in turn could be combined with other datasets to provide a more sophisticated understanding of our performance.

Ethics

- **Embed data ethics in data practices and processes** – we will work with business owners to create a Joint Statement of Intent on Responsible Data Collaboration, introducing and embedding common tools to support decision making (e.g. the ODI ethics canvas/DCMS ethics framework). We will also build a panel of residents who can support the council to make decisions that resident would expect and be comfortable with.



New approaches to insight

Aim: to show how insight can be used to deliver the outcomes that the organisation wants to see.

Key deliverables:


- **Developing a programme of work sponsored by CLT** to define the questions that we want to tackle using data analytics, building on existing initiatives such as the twin-track budgeting process. The purpose of this work will be to identify specific outcomes that the council wishes to achieve that can be supported through better insight, and to develop a pipeline of projects that provide this required insight.
- **Refreshing the [Surrey Office of Data Analytics \(SODA\)](#) and deliver initial pilots adopting tried and tested methodologies** – we will adopt the outcome-led approaches to data analytics used by the London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI) and Nesta and socialise these with insight teams across the council and with partners. We recognise that various organisations across Surrey hold different datasets about our strategic objectives and key outcomes. [We will work closely with partners](#) through SODA and other forums to develop a joint statement of Intent on Responsible Data Collaboration.
- **Introducing innovative approaches to measuring impact** – through our performance operating model we will introduce new ways of measuring our performance, including improving our ability to benchmark against peers, and increasing our use and visibility of qualitative data from residents.

Skills and understanding

Aim: to build skills and understanding at all levels of the organisation, so that staff are confident in managing, analysing and interpreting data. To drive cultural changes in how we collaborate and share data across council services and with partners.

Key deliverables:

- **Running skills audits and self-assessments** – we will enable officers to understand where they are on their data literacy journey and use this information to design training programmes that respond to the identified gaps in knowledge.
- **Creating a data competency framework** to build a common understanding of the council's data values, policies, processes and expected performance behaviour in relation to data.
- **Establishing an SCC data academy** through which we can train existing staff. This will have distinct programmes for leaders, officers (focussed on data management, using insight tools, basic data analysis skills and data literacy), and analysts (focussed on storytelling and impact measurement).

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- **Building data networks and learning sets** – we will create communities of practice that come together to share data best practice or work on specific problems.
 - **Socialise the changes** that are introduced through the first two key areas of focus, around building the foundations, and developing new approaches to insight. This will involve developing a communications and change management plan to ensure that all services can input into programme activities and be kept informed about how they will be impacted by any changes.
 - **Implementing behavioural nudges** – we will look for opportunities to build data thinking into existing processes. These nudges will help to promote a different way of thinking and encourage data to be embedded into what we do. For example, ensuring that business case templates include a section on evidence, CLT papers include a standard slide on evidence, and governance and decision-making boards ask for the data to help inform decisions.

Capacity and resources

In addition to the three areas of focus described above, it is recognised that the council will need additional expert capacity to deliver this strategy. This section outlines what additional resource is required to make this strategy a reality.

- **Establishing accountability for delivering the data strategy in a new Head of Data role** – our data review highlighted that staff at all levels do not know where accountability for data sits in the organisation. It is recognised that it may not be practical to have a single person accountable for data as a whole across the council given the breadth and complexity of the data we hold, and also that some roles already exist, for example to protect information risk (the Senior Information Risk Officer) and to protect the confidentiality of health and care data (Caldicott Guardians). Nevertheless, it is also important to have accountability for delivery of this data strategy, and to have a single point of the leadership in the organisation to drive our ambitions. As such, a Head of Data, (supported and empowered by a member of CLT) will be required to help drive the data agenda across the organisation.
- **Introducing other new expert roles** – to get better with data we need several new expert roles within the organisation to drive, co-ordinate and champion the activities described in this strategy. These roles should have data as the core function, rather than an add on to a day job. These will include a Data Governance Manager and a team of Data Stewards.
- **Expanding our capacity in information governance** – to support our existing information governance teams to manage the growing demand for sharing data, we must invest in new roles. This includes a new Information Sharing Officer role, as well as roles dedicated to records management.
- **Working with existing data teams to create space for experimentation** – in addition to adding new capacity, we will also explore opportunities to upskill existing analysts and create space for them to work on innovative and experimental projects alongside their day-to-day responsibilities



Appendix 1 – Glossary

Analytics

This term covers the discovery, interpretation, and communication of meaningful patterns in data.

Data

Data can be just about anything, from a number inputted into an IT system, to a sentence written in a report, to the words spoken during a meeting. Data might be held within an IT system, like Liquid Logic, in emails that we write, in documents we create or recordings of meetings. Data is not only things that are recorded in digital format but also anything recorded on paper. Data is everywhere, though it tends to be meaningless when looked at in isolation or outside of its context.

Data architecture

Data architecture is a set of rules, policies, standards, and models that govern and define the type of data collected and how it is used, stored, managed and integrated within an organization and its database systems.

Data enabled

A data enabled organisation is one that has the data, skills, tools and resources able to use data as part of its wider capabilities set to meet the challenges and changes it is faced with.

Data governance


Data governance is a strategic capability that provides standards, processes, and tools to enhance the value of data in an organisation. In Surrey the implementation of data governance will be based on the DAMA (Data Management Association) as the leading and most comprehensive body of Data Management standards and practices. Importantly data governance is not about more bureaucracy, instead it is a structure approach that enables the right information to get to the right people at the right time. It supports the cultural journey and change required to become truly data enabled organisation

Information

Like data, information is all around us, but unlike data it has meaning and context and can be used to support decision making. Information includes things like emails, documents, reports, spreadsheets, and dashboards. Generally, it requires somebody to have taken lots of data and combined it together for a specific purpose.

Information governance

Information Governance is concerned with ensuring that personal information is being managed and shared legally. It is a subset of data governance, which has a



broader remit to improve the quality of information, ensure clear and consistent standards and help the organisation find and use data more effectively.

Insight

Insight is information that has been tailored to the specific needs of the customer. Insight is different to information since it starts with what the customer wants, and the outcome that we want to achieve. Good insight therefore takes an outcome-first approach rather than a data-first approach. It is this nuance that means that insight can lead us to action, whereas information often does not.

Integration

Integration involves the detailed design and implementation of services (pipes) that connect systems with each other to share data. Each integration is designed to manage the specific data elements that are being shared.

Interoperability

The technical ability of services to work together as a single system, with data moving seamlessly between them. This goes beyond portability to look at access to key shared infrastructure, standardised data formats, and secure transfer mechanisms. Interoperability maximises data mobility, however it is often technically complex to achieve.

Appendix 2 – What do we mean by ‘data’?

Discussions with officers from across the council highlighted the varying ways that we perceive data. Often this will depend on the officer’s role. For example, in our survey many officers from front-line services indicated that they primarily use data for casework and their interaction with data is through line of business systems. Other officers perceive data more terms of quantitative reports or dashboards, while some look at it more broadly, for example in terms of service user feedback or customer complaints, which is often in the form of qualitative data.

These are all valid views, but the differences in perception highlights the need to be clear about our definition of data. This in turn has implications for the scope of this strategy.

One useful distinction to make is the difference between data, information, and insight. Each of these are slightly different, though also closely related. We can use the analogy of baking a cake to illustrate the differences and interconnectedness of these terms.

Using this analogy, we can define each of these terms as follows:

Data is the raw ingredients for our cake, such as flour eggs and sugar. These ingredients are distinct and will have some value on their own. In real terms, this could be just about anything, from a number inputted into an IT system, to a sentence written in a report, to the words spoken during a meeting. All these things are data, and do have value, however they can lack meaning when looked at in isolation or outside of their context. Like the ingredients for our cake, we want to make sure that our data is well looked after, managed, accessible and secure. It is important that we know where to find it when we need it, that we can trust in its quality, that it is not out of date, and that we don’t mistakenly choose the salt when we wanted the sugar! This is why building the foundations and establishing cross-council data governance is a core component to this strategy. If we can’t ensure that our raw ingredients are good quality, accessible and secure, then the cake we end up baking isn’t going to taste very good. In material terms it means that any information or insight that we generate is unlikely to be valid, and therefore won’t lead to robust evidence-led decisions.

Information is the cake once the raw ingredients have been combined. Like data, information is all around us, but unlike data it has meaning and context and can be used to support decision making. Information includes things like emails, documents, reports, spreadsheets, and dashboards. Generally, it requires somebody to have taken lots of data and combined it together for a specific purpose. Like data, information also requires careful governance and management. Within the council this is provided by policies and functions around Information Governance and Records Management. The main drawback is that information often does not help to move us forward. This is because it is usually assembled by taking a ‘data-first’ approach, whereby the focus is on bringing together lots of different data to see what it tells us, rather than focussing on a specific outcome that we want to achieve.

Insight is the cake once it has all the toppings, flavours, and decorations that the customer has requested. The important distinction here is that insight starts with

what the customer wants, and the outcome that we want to achieve. Good insight therefore takes an outcome-first approach rather than a data-first approach. It is this nuance that means that insight can lead us to **action**, whereas information often does not. After all, if you ordered a chocolate cake, but instead got a carrot cake, you might still eat it, but you probably won't be too happy about it!

We have found this distinction between data, information, and insight useful while developing this strategy and for having conversations with stakeholders who have slightly different perceptions of what we mean when we talk about data. Generally, within this document when we refer to data we use this as an encompassing term to cover data, information and insight.

From the perspective of scope, this strategy touches on elements across data, information and insight, though is primarily focussed on data (through the Build the Foundations area of focus) and insight (through the New Approaches to Insight area of focus).