

CLIENT CASE STUDY

Using Covalent Models for self-assessments at Worthing Borough Council

Worthing Borough Council selected Covalent as its corporate performance management solution in April 2005. Following a short, effective implementation and training programme, Covalent was rolled out across the organisation.

Covalent is now being used across all departments within Worthing BC and is the primary source of management information for Heads of Service, Senior Management Team and members. Worthing were pioneers in the development of the Models module from August 2006, using Covalent to unify data quality procedures throughout the council.

*'We chose Covalent to enable us to maintain the **highest standards** of data quality and get our performance information **right first time**. Covalent has transformed the way we manage performance.'*

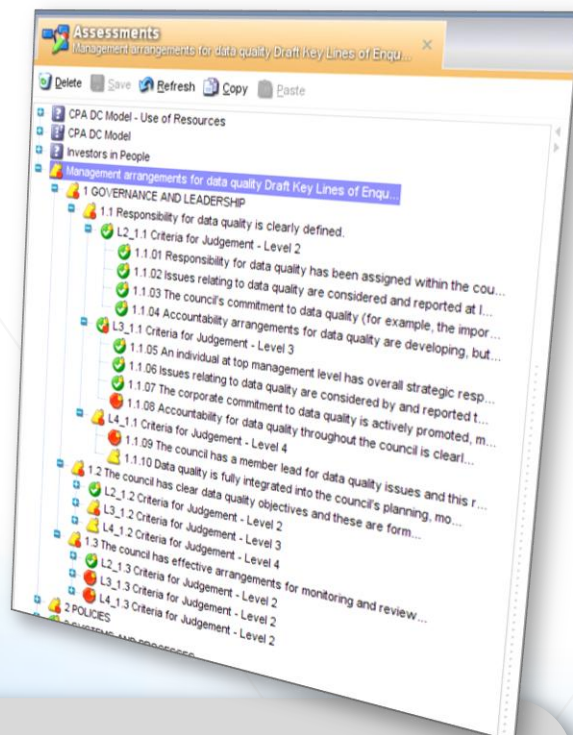
Alan Balkham, Performance Officer, Worthing BC

Consolidating supporting evidence for inspections

The Audit Commission recently carried out a data quality audit at Worthing BC. Prior to the inspection, the Council used the Models module on Covalent to undertake a **self-assessment** to evidence performance monitoring in line with the Commission's **Data Quality Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs)**.

The statutory framework was **pre-loaded** by Covalent and was available for immediate completion via Covalent's comprehensive self-assessment tool. The framework mapped exactly to the format the Audit Commission were looking for, which took the panic out of the Council's short-notice inspection.

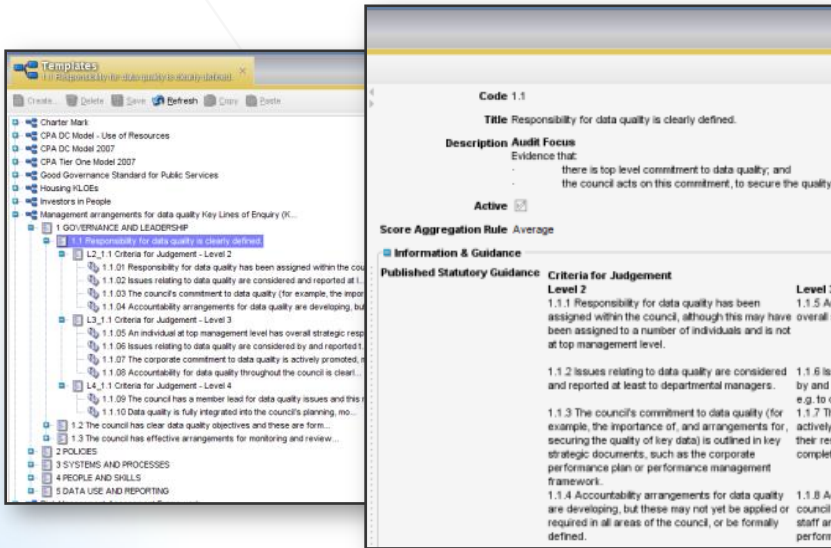
Having access to Covalent was helpful to the auditor and invaluable to Worthing BC as the auditor was able to immediately identify and show the Council areas where they had in fact **undersold themselves**. There were instances where the documentation linked to the self-assessment provided **evidence** that they had met more criteria than they had initially believed.



*'The Audit Commission told us that we had a **robust system for performance monitoring** with Covalent, so I felt confident that Covalent gave me a sound base from which to work. We were able to give the auditor **remote access** to the Models button on our web-hosted Covalent site so that she could log in and view the data prior to the visit. This allowed her to work on Covalent remotely and to focus on areas that she wanted to raise, which she found very useful. The inspector could also see a **clear audit trail**. The meeting that followed was very focused as a result and relevant evidence was readily accessible on Covalent, which ultimately **improved our score**.'*

Alan Balkham, Worthing BC

Pre-loaded and updated definitions and guidance



Covalent provides a framework for collection and reporting of PIs and other data. The system offers a simple way to provide staff with **clear definitions and guidance** for statutory PIs and Key Lines of Enquiry, which are pre-loaded and updated by the Covalent team.

Covalent lays out the statutory framework in **hierarchical format**. Under each theme is a question, showing the criteria for judgement for each level. This enables users to quickly and conveniently answer each question, and ensure data is relevant and is recorded consistently and accurately every time.

Straightforward and comprehensive reporting

Covalent provides aggregated, traffic-lighted scores for self-assessments. All relevant documentation can be attached and explanatory notes added. These features allow Worthing BC to provide auditors with a full, **clear account** of how the council is meeting criteria at each inspection, also allowing for **year-on-year comparison** to monitor and view the rate of improvement.

The Council can also report back on their progress using Covalent's **integrated Reports** module, quickly generating customised reports to display data in tabular and graphical formats, fitting the layout and content to suit the audience.

*'Overall **Covalent makes my job much easier**. Each score for each question corresponds to a traffic-lighted status, so I can see at a glance what to target for improvement, which **gives the council a clear direction**. The KLOEs pre-loaded by Covalent are presented in such a way that it is easy to answer each question. I have also found the fact that users can upload relevant documents to back up self-assessment criteria invaluable in managing our performance. Covalent is quick and convenient to use and has proved to be **vital before and during inspections**, as it cuts down both the initial inspection process and the interview process as well.'*

Alan Balkham, Worthing BC

The Models module can be used for many purposes, not just for data quality management. Worthing BC's HR Manager has used Covalent for a self-assessment for Investors in People interviews, for example, and Worthing also use the CPA's DC models.