

# Information Management Strategy 2011

## Introduction

The information management strategy outlines the approach to the management of this *key and valued* resource. From the creation or acquisition of new information to its destruction or permanent archiving, the policies and guidance that support this strategy takes account of security, storage, access, distribution, use, presentation and retention of information to facilitate the delivery of our business objectives.

This strategy applies to all employees, elected Members, contractors, agents and representatives and temporary staff working for or on behalf of our organisations. It applies to *all* information created or held by the council, in whatever format (e.g. paper, electronic, e-mail, microfiche, film) and however it is stored (e.g. ICT systems, databases, drive filing structures, email, filing cabinets).

## Vision

*'To provide and maintain easily accessible, high quality and secure information for our customers, partners and business'*

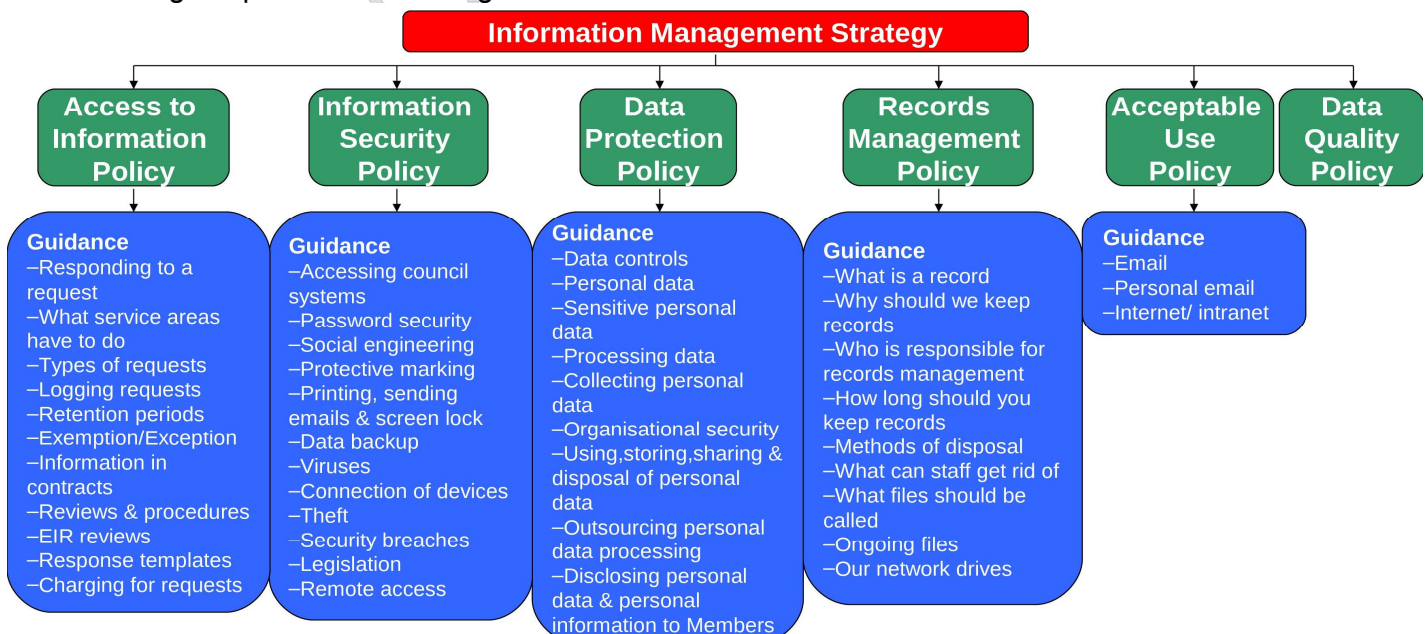
## Aims

The successful implementation of this strategy will enable the council to:

- act lawfully and meet our e-government and transformation targets
- improve our responsiveness to requests for information and transparency requirements
- share and exchange information efficiently
- make full use of our information resources
- preserve the context, integrity, sensitivity and security of the information
- record information electronically where practicable, to ensure that it can be stored, accessed and re-used in the most effective manner
- generate a sound information management culture.

## Framework

The strategy and supporting policies provide a framework for the use and disposal of information in line with good practice. Detailed guidance is available for staff on the intranet.



## **Importance of information management**

There is a growing movement within business and local government to treat information as a key shared asset in the same way as Property or Finance, and that it should be managed accordingly. It must not however, be considered an end in itself and must be resourced appropriately and integrated within each area for it to be effective.

There are many major initiatives which have been instigated by government, such as Electronic and Transformational Government and the wider use of partnerships to deliver services and solve problems. Information management has an important role to play in achieving the government standards, codes of practice and legislative requirements.

There has been a raft of new legislation in the last few years which has placed new obligations on councils. There are regulations which require us to provide information within given time scales, to make information more accessible and to guard people's rights. In order to comply we must manage our information effectively, taking into account these new legal requirements. Below are examples of legislation which affects some or all services:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004

Good quality, timely and easily accessible information is key to the efficient running of our business and enhanced service delivery. It supports effective decision-making, informs the allocation of valuable resources and ensures that our activities are as transparent as possible. An excellent approach to information management will ensure that this is maintained and will also save time, money and effort.

## **Principles**

Poor information management can undermine accountability and damage public trust, which can lead to financial loss and poor value for money. It can also leave vulnerable people at risk. We are all individually responsible for achieving excellent information management. To do this we must apply certain principles consistently throughout the organisation. Information will be:

- collected once and used many times
- appropriately managed according to its level of sensitivity/security
- appropriately accessible
- managed appropriately as a valuable resource
- right first time to avoid waste.

In order for information management to be successful, we must also ensure essential good practice is applied by:

- not keeping records for longer than required (see retention schedule guidance)
- the proper resourcing for the creation, tracking, retrieval and eventual disposal of all records
- maintaining a system to track movements of records
- storing records in a way that makes them easily identifiable and managed
- staff having access to accurate and appropriate information for their role

## **Individual Roles and responsibilities**

All employees and Members are responsible for:

- ensuring that information resources are handled in accordance with this Strategy.

- compliance with information management policies.
- keeping up to date with the policies and guidance that applies to our roles.
- supporting a culture of excellent information management across our organisations.

The Director of Resources is responsible for the Information Management Strategy and championing efficient and effective practices to an excellent standard across the organisation.

The Directors are responsible for ensuring that a culture of excellent information management is promoted within the organisation at all levels which is underpinned with adequate resources.

Service Managers are responsible for ensuring that appropriate information management practices and access controls are in place to comply with the policy requirements and being adhered to.

Line Managers are responsible for ensuring their staff has access to the policies, guidance and training that applies to their roles.

### **Training and support**

The Council will provide training to all employees and Members that they require for them to undertake their roles effectively, efficiently and in accordance with this Strategy and its supporting policies and guidance.

Training is available through the Corporate Training Programme.

### **Monitoring arrangements**

- Annual Governance Statement
- Internal control checklist
- Corporate risk register
- Customer relations quarterly report to Senior Leadership Team.
- Reporting of breaches
- Internal Audit assurance work

### **Information Management Group**

The group will review and develop:

- compliance with the Section 46 code of practice (Freedom of Information Act 2000) that requires local authorities to meet a minimum standard on the management of records.
- the advice available to employees or elected Members and staff on their information management responsibilities.
- the strategy, policies and guidance regularly to ensure they remain relevant and up to date.

### **Assurance**

The annual assurance assessment will seek assurances from Directors and Service Managers that legislative and policy requirements are being met. The Corporate Governance Group and Internal Audit will consider the output from the assessment and make any necessary recommendations to SLT.

Internal Audit will also consider the need for further assurance work to be included within their audit plan and report any findings to the Audit Committee.