

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27th February 2023

Information Governance

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 This item has come to scrutiny at the request of the committee following its inclusion on the Executive Forward Plan.
- 1.2 The purpose of this discussion paper is to enable the committee to understand the council's information governance arrangements, how the council is performing in the area of information governance and to identify any key risks.
- 1.3 Information governance is the framework for handling information legally, securely, efficiently and effectively in order to deliver the best possible services.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 The council generates and receives a huge amount of data. It therefore acknowledges that information is one of its key assets and as such requires the same discipline to its management that it would to other important assets such as people, buildings and finances. Information assets can be either electronic or paper and include records and data sets held in back-office systems, network/shared drives, and within email systems.
- 2.2 It is vital that the council applies a robust management system in relation to information governance and that it has an effective framework in place which details how it collects, processes, accesses, stores, shares and deletes information.
- 2.3 A recent review of the council's information governance framework identified that some policies were in need of a review and that further work could be done to bolster assurance. Failure to update policies and/or have robust procedures in place can place the council at risk to complaints, intervention and fines from the Information Commissioners Office and ultimately of legal challenge.

3. Summary of evidence/information

- 3.1 The Information Commissioners Office provides a number of self-assessment tools which enables organisations to self-assess themselves in terms of their maturity in various areas of information governance. The Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer has recently conducted three of these self-assessments in order to assist in identifying areas for improvement. The results of those assessments were:

Area of Assessment	Overall Rating
Data Protection	GREEN
Data Sharing	GREEN
Records Management	AMBER

3.2 Data Protection

Whilst the overall assurance level for the council in this area was GREEN, a number of areas were identified for further review:

- The council should complete a data audit across each business area to identify the data it processes and how it flows into, through and out of the council
- The council should maintain records of processing activities i.e what data it collects and uses, detailing what personal data it holds, where it came from, who its shared with and what we do with it
- The council should make it clear to individuals how they can challenge the data we hold, how they can request rectification of errors, and their rights to erasure and restriction of processing
- The council should have processes in place for the deletion of information, including having a written retention policy
- The council should establish a policy which sets out when it is necessary to conduct a Data Protection Impact Assessment (an assessment of the impacts on individuals associated with processing their personal data)

3.3 Data Sharing

Whilst the overall assurance level for the council in this area was GREEN, a number of areas were identified for further review:

- The council should have a policy in place setting out when it is appropriate for the staff to share and/or disclose data
- Services should have allocated record 'owners' who take the lead on data within their service area
- A log of all decisions to share information should be retained within service areas

3.4 Records Management

The overall rating for the council in this area was AMBER. The following areas were identified for further review:

- Services should have allocated record 'owners' who take the lead on data within their service area
- The council should have processes in place for the deletion of information, including having a written retention policy
- Periodic checks on compliance should be carried out
- Central log or information asset register for each area should be produced

3.5 Data Quality

Data quality is a measure of the condition of data based on factors such as accuracy, completeness, consistency, reliability and whether it's up to date. It is a core component of the overall information governance framework. Poor data quality can lead to significant consequences such as fines and findings of non-compliance with regulatory regimes.

Whilst the council has a data quality policy, which seeks to set out a number of key considerations it is out of date, having last been updated in 2008. Work has now commenced on updating that policy to bring it in line with the most recent data quality standards and to reflect the corporate branding utilised by CBC.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1** An action plan has been produced (attached) which will be presented to Cabinet in May 2023, together with a number of updated policies for approval. Completion of this action plan will minimise the risks to the council of non-compliance with statutory provisions in the areas of data protection and information security.

Background Papers	None
Contact Officer	Claire Hughes, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer claire.hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council