

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE UPDATE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

1.1 To provide the Audit Committee with a position statement on the development of the council’s Information Governance function.

1.2 Key points are:

- The council is required by law to comply with a range of information related requirements.
- An Information Governance Policy Framework with associated policies is in place and is reviewed annually to support the council in complying with legislative requirements.
- The council has undertaken a number of internal and external assessments which indicate assurance in its discharge of these functions.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Information is a key council asset and it is crucial that it is looked after with the same care as other critical assets, such as finance, people and land/property.
- 2.2 The council has a legal obligation to comply with information related legislation, notably the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations. Collectively we refer to these requirements and activities as ‘Information Governance’.
- 2.3 An Information Governance Policy Framework underpinned by associated policies sets out how the council will comply with legislation and good practice. This framework comprises sixteen schedules, as follows:

01	Records Management	09	Re-use of Council Information
02	Humber Information Sharing Charter	10	Publication Scheme
03	Internal Information Sharing Protocol	11	Information Complaints
04	Data Protection and Confidentiality	12	Information Security
05	Caldicott Plan	13	Security Incident and Data Breaches
06	Freedom of Information Act	14	Information Security Classification
07	Environmental Information Regulations	15	Data De-identification
08	Information Request Charging	16	Data Quality Framework

2.4 The following provides assurance for the Audit Committee of compliance with Information Governance legislation and good practice:

- Internal Audit awarded the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act audits adequate assurance June 2013 and the Information Governance Policy Framework adequate assurance January 2014.
- The council received confirmation of continued successful compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Network (PSN) Code of Connection (CoCo) at the end of 2014.
- In March 2014 the second successful NHS Information Governance Self-Assessment submission was made. This submission is a requirement for organisations that have access to health information, as it provides assurance to the NHS that suitable policies and procedures are in place to protect health information to which there is access.
- The council has received no challenges from the Information Commissioner (ICO), who regulates information legislation in the UK, about how the council is taking care of its information.

2.5 The following demonstrates Information Governance progress over the previous six months:

- Information Security continues to be taken very seriously with September 2014 seeing the launch of a six week campaign, comprising of a week long screen saver, posters, six council wide information security messages and an electronic booklet that sums up the campaign.
- Information Security has been further strengthened by building on the requirements to only allow the use of council issue encrypted memory sticks and the further encryption of laptops. New security arrangements have seen the withdrawal of unsecure email access.
- Key employees are required to undertake expert level Information Governance training. E-learning packages have been developed on the following:
 - Information Sharing and Caldicott
 - Security Classification
 - Data Quality
- Legislation also requires that good care is taken of records. To further strengthen this function a Records Management Development Plan has been produced and agreed by the Council Management Team (CMT). This will be implemented as an eighteen month project that commenced December 2014.
- The North Lincolnshire Council Records Retention Schedule is now complete and will sit as an appendix to the Records Management Policy after some additional refinement. This schedule sets out the minimum amount of time records should be kept.

- An updated and user friendly Publication Scheme providing easy access to routinely published information has been created. Other information that is regularly requested will be also be considered for regular publication, starting with a pilot in the Local Taxation and Benefit area.
- Security Classification is necessary to ensure that personal information that could identify someone and other confidential information is stored with an appropriate level of security. National guidelines suggest three levels of protection – Top Secret, Secret and Official, with the option to apply a descriptor to the Official option. Official is used for all information requiring no protection. The addition of a descriptor shows that protection is necessary. A local council is unlikely to use the Top Secret or Secret options. A pilot to test this process has commenced within the Local Taxation and Benefits function.

2.6 Over the coming year the following Information Governance further improvements and next steps are planned:

- The annual review of the Information Governance Policy Framework to ensure that any changes to legislation or good practice are incorporated.
- The next NHS submission is due March 2015, this time against a newly rationalised list of requirements better tailored to a local authority, reducing duplication with Public Sector Network requirements.
- The further strengthening of the Records Management function will take place, as set out in agreed Records Management Development project and based on the findings of the internal Records Management audit.
- An audit of the Records Management function commenced December 2014, the results of which will, if necessary lead to further improvement work.
- The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) regulates the Information Governance legislation in the UK. Work will continue to ensure a good relationship with the ICO is maintained particularly around the protection of information.
- A key element in ensuring compliance with Information Governance legislation is the training of employees. A three year training plan covering the period 2013-16 is in place making basic Information Governance training mandatory for all employees every three years. The next council-wide basic training session will take place 2016.

- Further expert level training packages for key employees are in the process of being created in the following:
 - Requests for Information
 - Records Management
 - Information Security, Risk and PSN
 - Data De-identification.
- Work towards the further implementation of an Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS) will continue to enhance the way records are managed.
- Interest in the use of the council's Corporate Record Store by schools is being explored as part of the 'Services to Schools' project. Other Commercial interest in this facility is also being explored.
- The further roll-out of Security Classification is planned to ensure information is suitably protected, once any learning from the Local Taxation and Benefit pilot has been addressed.
- A comprehensive Information Governance action plan was developed for the 2014-15 period to guide IG improvement work. This will be refreshed April 2015 for the 2015-16 period.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 As detailed below.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 **Option 1** – That the Audit Committee considers the current progress and recommended developments provide sufficient assurance of the adequacy of the council's Information Governance arrangements.
- 4.2 **Option 2** – That the Audit Committee considers the current progress and further recommended developments are not sufficient and requests that additional work is undertaken.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 The risks in not identifying and addressing weaknesses in Information Governance compliance include the inefficient working of the council if for example records cannot be easily located to complete internal work or to answer requests for information, possible reputational damage and action by the Information Commissioner that could result in the council being fined up to £500k for any one incident.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

6.1 An integrated impact assessment is not required for this report.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

7.1 There are no consultations or conflicts of interests to report.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Audit Committee should consider whether the report provides sufficient assurance of the adequacy of the council's Information Governance arrangements.

8.2 That a further update on Information Governance is submitted in June 2015.

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