

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance and Resources
DATE	6 th December 2012
DIRECTOR	Stewart Carruth
TITLE OF REPORT	Corporate Records Management
REPORT NUMBER:	CG12/120

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Committee on the proposed corporate approach to Records Management.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Committee notes the corporate approach to records management that will compliment the Corporate Information Management Strategy and provide the Council with the governance framework which is required come January 2013 when the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 becomes a legislative requirement.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Any requirements from the Action Plan have to date been met from existing budget.

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 is mandatory for all Scottish Public Authorities. Failure to comply could result in an 'Action Notice' being issued by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland with attendant reputational damage. Adherence to this legislation also supports compliance with other information management legislation such as the Data Protection Act, Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act and Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations. This related legislation also has reputational and financial penalties should the Council be found to be non-compliant.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The implementation of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 from January 2013 is an opportunity for positive change in records management practices within Aberdeen City Council. The scope of the Act applies to all records irrespective of the technology used to create and store them or the type of information they contain.

The principle vehicle for achieving this change will be a Records Management Plan which Aberdeen City Council will be statutorily obliged to prepare and submit to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland (the “Keeper”) for his approval. To assist authorities with this process, the Keeper has published a Model Records Management Plan which Aberdeen City Council must adopt.

The plan has 14 elements which can be themed into the following areas:

- Governance and Policy
- Business classification, retention and disposal (transfer, archiving, destruction)
- Information security and data protection
- Business continuity, audit trail
- Competency framework for records management staff
- Assessment and review

A number of these themed areas are already in place or are underway at Aberdeen City Council because of the adoption of the Information Management Strategy in 2010:

Governance, Policy and competency framework

- Defined responsibilities at senior management and Records Management level
- Corporate Records Management Policy
- Corporate Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Policy
- Corporate Information Management Strategy
- Recent transfer of Records Management and Access to Information Compliance team from Legal and Democratic to Customer Service and Performance

Business classification, retention, disposal

- Recent commencement of developing a corporate classification scheme and working with Service areas to define appropriate records management practice – creation, processing and retention
- Procurement of corporate confidential waste contract underway

Information security and data protection

- Defined responsibilities at senior management, Information Security and Data Protection level
- Data Protection Policy
- Information Security Policy

Business continuity, audit trail

- Corporate Business Continuity plans underway
- Audit trail will be evidenced via the Corporate classification scheme

Assessment and Review

- Quarterly CMT reporting
- September 2012 - positive Good Practice Assessment from Office of Scottish Information Commissioner

The timetable for submission of the Records Management Plan to the Keeper by public authorities has not yet been stated, but is likely to be in the latter part of 2013, early part of 2014.

During 2012, Corporate Governance has focused on merging the strands of information management service areas. There are already a number of positive results coming from this, in particular, the recent Good Practice Assessment by the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner who regulates the Council's compliance with the Freedom of Information legislation. Since 2010 when the Council was previously assessed, compliance figures have increased from 66% to 78%, although in July this year compliance rose to 89%. These figures demonstrate the benefits of a corporate approach being taken to manage information, which at the core is about day-to-day records management practice.

The Records Management service has also seen some significant changes in its operational delivery with staff and business areas establishing their transactional activities within the new headquarters at Marischal College. There are currently two corporate record stores, one on-site for active records at Marischal College and one off-site for semi / non-active records at Whitemyres. The Records Management operational requirements at Whitemyres have remained at this higher level since 2011, whilst at Marischal they ebb and flow as business areas look at developing new ways of working where there is a high dependency on large quantities of hardcopy records. The Records Management team and Access to Information Compliance team (formerly known as the Freedom of Information Compliance) have evolved their day-to-day practice to promote this holistic information management approach to compliance and records management.

The bringing together of all records management functions regardless of media or format will allow ACC to take a more strategic approach to the management and use of data including master data management, security, business intelligence, research, data analysis, document retention and the provision of a unified technical infrastructure over time. This corporate approach will provide the Council with a strong foundation to support the ongoing work to implement the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 requirements, Corporate Information Management Strategy whilst adhering to all related legislation.

6. IMPACT

Using this corporate records management approach and continuing to progress the corporate Information Management Strategy action plan will ensure the Council continues to develop a fit-for-purpose framework for robust information governance. Public sector organisations are now under increasing pressure to develop business efficiencies, whilst ensuring business continuity and risk management. This paper supports that ethos and provides a framework through which the required management can be achieved and audited. It also demonstrates the value placed by the Council on its information assets and how this will contribute effectively to the overall management of the organisation. These include:

- Effective management of information assets in all formats, electronic and hardcopy
- Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements
- Reduction of risk
- Greater accountability and governance
- Efficient use of staff time
- Space savings
- Cost reduction
- Improved working environment

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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