
CORPORATE INFORMATION GOVERNANCE POLICY

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Stephen Harker, Resources Portfolio

Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of the report is to seek approval from Cabinet for the Corporate Information Governance Policy at **Appendix 1**.

Information

What do we mean by information governance?

2. The term information governance covers all components of information management:-
 - (a) records management (including document management and archives) – the systematic management of all documents that are a record of a transaction or activity and the information or data they contain.
 - (b) compliance – adherence to legislation and mandatory standards that dictate how information is created, processed, managed, accessed, retained, archived and destroyed.
 - (c) information security – to ensure that information is stored in secure environments and only accessed by appropriate and approved individuals.
 - (d) data quality – to ensure that data is accurate, valid, reliable, precise, timely, relevant and complete.
 - (e) knowledge management – to develop a working environment that ensures knowledge is created, shared, learned, enhanced and organised to retain the expertise and experience of staff and members for the benefit of the Council and its citizens.

Why do we need an information governance policy?

3. An information governance policy establishes a framework to address the requirements that the law, ethics and policy place upon information management and processing, holding, obtaining, recording using and sharing of information. It will ensure the systematic adoption of the following information management principles that are at the core of the Council's operations and service delivery :-

Corporate asset	Information is a corporate asset and therefore requires a corporate approach to its management, as with any other asset.
Secure and confidential	Information must be managed in a secure fashion, preventing unauthorised access and ensuring confidentiality.
Accessible and open	Information must be readily accessible and open to those who need it for operational or business reasons and systematically shared within the organisation and with partners.
Accurate and up-to-date	Information must be accurate and up-to-date
Held once	Information must be captured once , as close to the source as possible, and shared/reused many times
Compliance	Information must be managed in compliance with legislation and operation requirements.
Managed	Information must be managed in line with the Records Management Society's retention, archiving and disposal schedule.
Relevant	Information must be relevant to help improve the efficiency of the services offered by the Council.

Information Governance Policy - Background

4. In 2004, a Records and Information Manager was appointed to bring a strategic focus to information governance within the Council and to prepare for the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. However, owing to the volume of information requests received, the strategic nature of the service became dominated by the operational task of managing requests in accordance with statutory obligations. As a result, the function was augmented by an Information Officer in 2006. Due to staff turnover, the Records and Information Manager post lay vacant from September 2006 until June 2007. Since that time, effort has been centred around the production of a Corporate Information Governance Policy.

Darlington Borough Council's Corporate Information Governance Policy

5. The Council's Corporate Information Governance Policy will initiate an ongoing, phased and collaborative approach to information governance throughout the Council thereby ensuring its key outputs that follow are relevant and fit for purpose:-
 - (a) A strategic framework of records and information management policies and protocols, standards and guidance for all employees and members, for example a Data Quality Policy;
 - (b) An implementation mechanism to deliver the above framework that includes the development of information governance centres of excellence across the directorates and contributions to Leading Edge projects; the delivery of core officer support to provide secure and quality information; and the establishment of staff and members' awareness-raising and training sessions.
6. The Corporate Information Governance Policy is an "umbrella" policy reinforced by a number of more detailed and service specific policies, for example Freedom of Information and Records Management. Existing policies will be refreshed to reflect changes to legislative requirements and international quality standards.
7. The Corporate Information Governance Policy will underpin the Council's working practices with regard to information and data security, particularly the disclosure, sharing and transfer of

personal data and underpin compliance with legislation, such as the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

8. The Corporate Information Governance Policy and its outputs will be implemented by the cross-departmental Corporate Information Governance Group, chaired by the Head of Corporate Assurance, who will produce a 6 monthly progress report to the Audit Committee. All reviews of the Corporate Information Governance Policy will be overseen by the Corporate Information Governance Group and any fundamental changes will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

Outcome of Consultation

9. The Policy was devised in consultation with Council directors and senior managers and with reference to professional peers and organisations, such as the Records Management Society.

Legal Implications

10. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

11. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

12. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council Policy or the Council's Policy framework.

Decision Deadline

13. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that the Corporate Information Governance Policy be approved.

Reasons

15. To enhance the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements.

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