

**Report To:** Corporate Governance Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013

**Lead Member / Officer:** Alan Smith, Head of Business Planning & Performance

**Report Author:** Craig Berry, Corporate Information Manager

**Title:** Information Management Strategy

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## **1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 Information represents one of Denbighshire County Council's most valuable resources. As an organisation, we need to ensure that we are managing our information effectively, thereby enabling us to realise and exploit its true value as a corporate asset in support of achieving business priorities, delivering efficiencies and reducing risk.
- 1.2 An Information Management Strategy has been developed to provide the corporate framework for managing the Council's information assets (see appendix 1).
- 1.3 SLT approved the adoption of the Information Management Strategy during their meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1 To raise awareness of the new framework for managing our information assets with the Corporate Governance Committee. The Committee should note the improved governance of the Council's information that the Strategy will provide.

## **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is recommended that Corporate Governance Committee note the Council's framework for managing its information assets, as detailed in the Information Management Strategy.

## **4. Report Details**

- 4.1 We are entering a time when public sector organisations, such as ourselves, are now under increasing pressure to deliver business efficiencies, whilst ensuring business continuity and risk management. In addition, there is now more external scrutiny of how public organisations manage their information with a move towards greater openness and transparency around the information that we hold and greater levels of regulatory requirements requiring us to protect our information resources more rigorously.

4.2 Without a defined corporate framework in place to manage information at the Council, it has very much been left to individuals, teams and departments to manage this valuable resource. Consequently, information management practices are inconsistent across the organisation, which has created several challenges, including:

- **Difficult and time consuming to find information** – Information is spread across a mixture of storage media including: network drives, emails, business applications, paper etc. This makes the process of trying to identify and locate information time consuming and complex.
- **Increasing regulatory requirements** – Increasing levels of requirements from the legislative framework governing our information such as; the Data Protection Act, Public Services Network and Freedom of Information Act. This can often lead to confusion and uncertainty over compliance.
- **Competency levels** – The majority of Officers and Members have not received sufficient training in key legislation such as the Data Protection Act. This is placing both individuals and the Council at increased risk of prosecution under relevant legislation.
- **Information ownership** – Information often seen as belonging to an individual or department rather than actually being an organisational resource. This can inhibit information sharing and suppress collaboration activities.
- **Business continuity** - Vital information kept on paper, representing a risk to the business of not being able to operate effectively in the event of a disaster such as a fire or flood. There are also related challenges around knowing what our vital information assets are and ensuring that they are sufficiently secure and accessible.
- **Information overload (electronic & paper)** – The Council has 8 million electronic files stored on the corporate network and 26,000 boxes of paper records held at the Corporate Stores. This represents a vast volume of information to manage at a significant cost.
- **Inconsistent records management practices** - Corporate records (both paper and electronic) not being retained and disposed of in accordance with the corporate Retention Schedule, thereby exposing the Council to operational and legislative risks.
- **Transparency and accountability** – Increasing requirements for public sector organisations to be transparent and accountable, meaning that we need to be more proactive in publishing our information, where we are able to do so.

4.3 Since 2008, reports from both the Wales Audit Office and the Council's Internal Audit team have identified weaknesses in the way the Council manages its information.

4.4 The Council has provided a greater focus to information management matters through the formation of the Corporate Information Team at the end of 2012. The Corporate Information Team has now developed an Information Management Strategy to address the challenges identified and to embed the required improved working practices in the following areas:

- Information Compliance
- Information Access
- Information Assurance
- Information Quality
- Information Retention and Disposal
- Information Training and Awareness Raising

## 5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

5.1 The framework depicted in the Strategy will support the Council in achieving the corporate priorities, by:

- Ensuring our information can be quickly and easily identified;
- Ensuring our information is protected, according to risk;
- Ensuring our staff and members have the required levels of competencies to manage information appropriately;
- Ensuring our information meets statutory requirements; and
- Ensuring our vital records are identified and protected accordingly.

## 6. What will it cost and how will affect other services?

6.1 Funding for the EDRMS project has recently been approved by CET for a further 3 years. There are no additional financial resources required for implementing the Information Management Strategy, as it requires a change in culture and behaviour, which will be supported through new policies, processes, procedures and training.

6.2 There are several actions contained within the Information Management Strategy that will have a direct impact upon all Officers and Members, namely:

- **Mandatory Training** - all Members and relevant Officers are required to undertake eLearning modules on the Data Protection Act and Information Security (approx. 30 minutes each). Alternative training options will be presented to those that do not have access to a PC.

- **File-naming Policy** – documents to be named consistently and to corporate standards, thereby enabling quicker and easier identification.
- **Email Policy** – all Denbighshire County Council email account holders to follow an agreed approach to email management.
- **Privacy Impact Assessment** - will be embedded into the corporate project management framework and be mandatory for those projects that process personal data.
- **Proactive publication of information** - all departments will need to publish more information via the Council's Publication Scheme for greater transparency and to meet statutory requirements from the Information Commissioner's Office:
- **EDRMS** – further embedded across the Council to provide a consistent approach to the filing and storing of electronic files.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?**

- 7.1 The Council's Equalities Officer has suggested that Impact Assessments are undertaken on the actions rather than the Strategy.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

- 8.1 In developing the Information Management Strategy, a draft version was shared with the following key stakeholders for comments:

- Head of Business Planning & Performance
- Business Transformation and ICT Manager
- Corporate Director – Modernisation and Wellbeing
- Corporate Director – Customers
- Lead Member for Modernising and Performance
- Legal Solicitors

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

- 9.1 n/a

**10 What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

- 10.1 The risks of not managing our information assets appropriately include:

- Fines - Data Protection Act is £500,000
- Reputational harm
- Unable to deliver efficiencies
- Unable to deliver modernisation programme