



# Information Management Strategy 2013 - 2016

Supporting the corporate vision and helping the Council to meet its priorities through the improved management, use and exploitation of its information assets.

## FOREWORD

I'm delighted to introduce Denbighshire County Council's Information Management Strategy.

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.

The Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage its information appropriately and that it represents a vital asset. Similarly to our other assets such as our people, money, land, and buildings, it needs to be managed effectively if its true value is to be realised and exploited.



This strategy demonstrates to staff, Members, citizens and our other stakeholders the Council's commitment to managing information effectively.

The Information management Strategy presents the information challenges we face, our vision, the principles to be followed, our aims and the key actions for delivering the strategy.

## THE INFORMATION CHALLENGES

The absence of an agreed corporate information management framework has meant that it has very much been left to individuals, teams and departments to manage this valuable resource. Consequently, information management practices have been inconsistent across the organisation. This 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.
- **Competency levels** – The majority of employees 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.

- **Capturing knowledge** – Key information and knowledge leaving the organisation as staffing changes occur. We need to capture records and knowledge rather than relying on individuals.
- **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 stifle collaboration activities.
- **Increasing regulatory requirements and punishments**– Increasing 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 uncertainties over compliance. Furthermore, there are now more stringent punishments associated with non-compliance e.g. £500,000 for the Data Protection Act.
- **Inconsistent application of version control practices** - This is leading to confusion over which version is the latest and staff spending time trying to find the latest version of a document. A lack of version control can also increase the risk of decisions being based upon out-of-date information.
- **Business continuity** - Vital information being 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 nearly 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 and at a significant financial overhead.
- **Information redundancy** – Many of the 8 million electronic files held on the corporate network are redundant i.e. they are either no longer required, have been superseded or are duplicates. This ‘redundant’ information is unnecessarily contributing towards spiralling storage costs (approx. £50k p.a.).
- **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.



- **Email Management** – Email is a vital communications tool that has developed in an ad-hoc way into a personal information management tool. This has resulted in personal information silos with high levels of duplication.
- **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.

## VISION

The Council's vision for information management is:

**To support Denbighshire County Council in realising its corporate vision and achieving its priorities through the improved management, use and exploitation of its information assets.**

## WHAT THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE

The implementation of the Information Management Strategy will mean the following to our stakeholders:

### STAFF

- Can find information quicker and easier, regardless of location;
- Know what information we have and where it is held;
- Know where to keep information;
- Can easily identify the latest version of a document;
- Work in clean and tidy office environments with little paper;
- Can share information confidently i.e. know what information can be shared and with whom;
- Know what information needs to be kept and for how long;
- Have the knowledge and skills to be able manage information appropriately; and
- Can manage information securely whilst working remotely or flexibly.

### PUBLIC

- Can easily find service information online;
- Can make more informed decisions on service choice, influence future services and hold the Council to account;
- Have a greater understanding of what the Council does;

- Have confidence and trust that the Council is handling information securely and appropriately;
- Know that the Council only has to be informed once;
- Know that the Council is making best use of its information; and
- Receive faster response times to information and service requests.

## ORGANISATION

- Has a culture of being open and transparent that shares information unless there is a good reason not to;
- Provides the public with readily available access to information they are entitled to;
- Builds trust in the quality of our information for staff, Members and the public;
- Has confidence that information risk is being managed effectively and that all its information is adequately protected;
- Has confidence that statutory obligations are being met, such as those under the Data Protection Act 1998 and Public Services Network;
- Uses information effectively and avoids duplication of time and resources;
- Produces consistent, accurate, timely and comprehensive information by collecting information once and using it numerous times;
- Has a clean and tidy working environment, with little paper;
- Information and records are managed coherently and consistently across the Council and in accordance with statutory and business requirements;
- Vital records are identified and protected;
- Has Members and employees with sufficient skills and knowledge to be able to handle information appropriately;
- Has reduced costs through removing redundant information, leading to savings in terms of the cost of storage and its manageability;
- Has clear ownership of information, leading to a single source of control and responsibility; and
- Has reduced the risk of losing information and the cost of replacing it.

## SCOPE

The Information Management Strategy applies to all information held by the Council, irrespective of format.

The Strategy applies to all Members and officers of the Council.

The Council has a duty to schools and as such schools are welcome to adopt this strategy should they wish.

## PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION

Improved information management requires the organisation to follow several principles of operation, as illustrated below.

**Our information will be:**



**Principle 1 – Created once:** Our information will be created once as close to the source as possible and shared as many times as needed; thereby reducing duplication of keyed input, increasing consistency and lessening the cost of both input and maintenance.

**Principle 2 – Fit for purpose:** Our information will be accurate and up to date in order to support the Council's operations and the decision-making process. All information users will be responsible for ensuring quality i.e. named correctly, consistent, adequate for its purpose, available, accurate, up-to-date and reliable.

**Principle 3 – Owned:** Our information will be seen as a corporate resource and not one that is owned by an individual or department. Information assets will have an identified owner who is responsible for managing it accordingly.

**Principle 4 – Electronic:** Our information will be stored, created and handled in an electronic format, as our first choice.

**Principle 5 – EDRMS:** Our unstructured information will be filed and stored in a single managed repository, where practical to do so. The EDRMS will become this repository and represent the corporate filing system.

**Principle 6 – Compliant:** Our information will comply with the relevant legislation and standards.

**Principle 7 – Secure:** Our information will be secured according to risk and its impact to an individual, group or organisation. Our information will be held safely and securely to prevent unauthorised access and to ensure it remains available to promote continuity of service.

**Principle 8 – Published:** Our information will be proactively published and made available to share unless there is a legitimate reason not to do so.

- **Public information is open by default:** information is treated as being open and transparent unless it is personal or confidential. We publish information about our services to everyone and provide methods for anyone to access it, unless there are specific reasons not to, e.g. commercially and legally privileged information.
- **Service information is shared:** where appropriate or agreed, customer and service information will be shared with staff, business partners and others as appropriate to deliver services within the legislative framework.

**Principle 9 – Retained –** Our records will be retained in accordance with the recommended retention periods, as summarised within the Corporate Retention Schedule.

**Principle 10 - Disposed of appropriately:** Our information will be disposed of in an appropriate manner i.e. proportionate to levels of risk.

## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Delivery of the vision over the next few years requires a significant amount of work across a range of overlapping areas of information management.

A separate delivery plan will be produced containing the key actions, which will be reinforced through the Business Planning and Performance Service Plan. The majority of the actions detailed in the delivery plan will be undertaken by the Corporate Information Team with support from departments.

The implementation of the Information Management Strategy and the associated action plan will be coordinated and monitored by the Corporate Information Manager who in turn will report to the Head of Service for Business Planning and Performance.

The delivery of the strategy is split amongst several themes, as illustrated below:

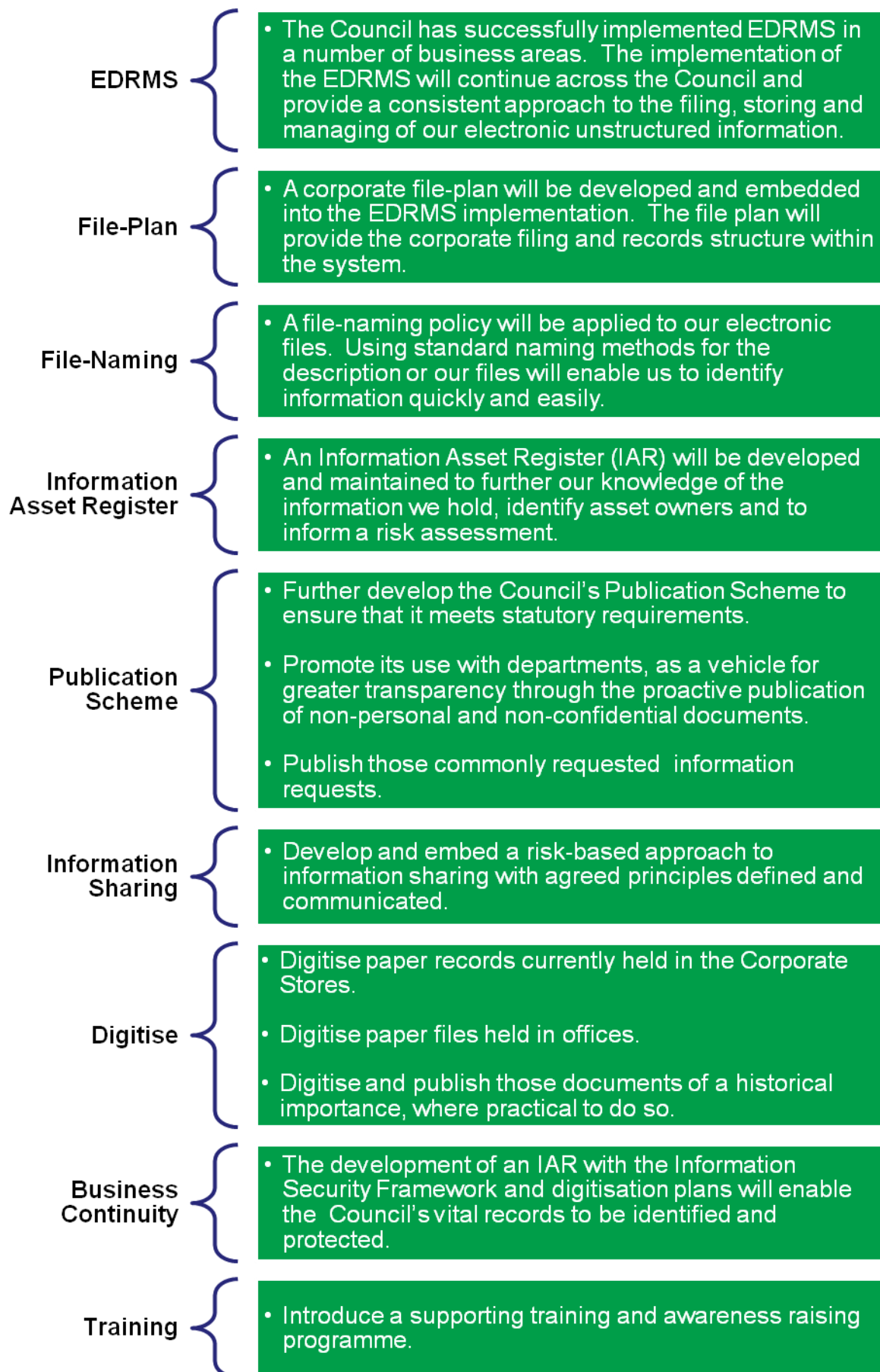




## **INFORMATION ACCESS**

Citizens, Members and staff all need to have access to the information that is important to them, that they are entitled to see in a fast and efficient manner, regardless of their location. This can be achieved through a mixture of utilising technology and embedding new working practices.

Improved information access will be delivered by undertaking the following tasks:



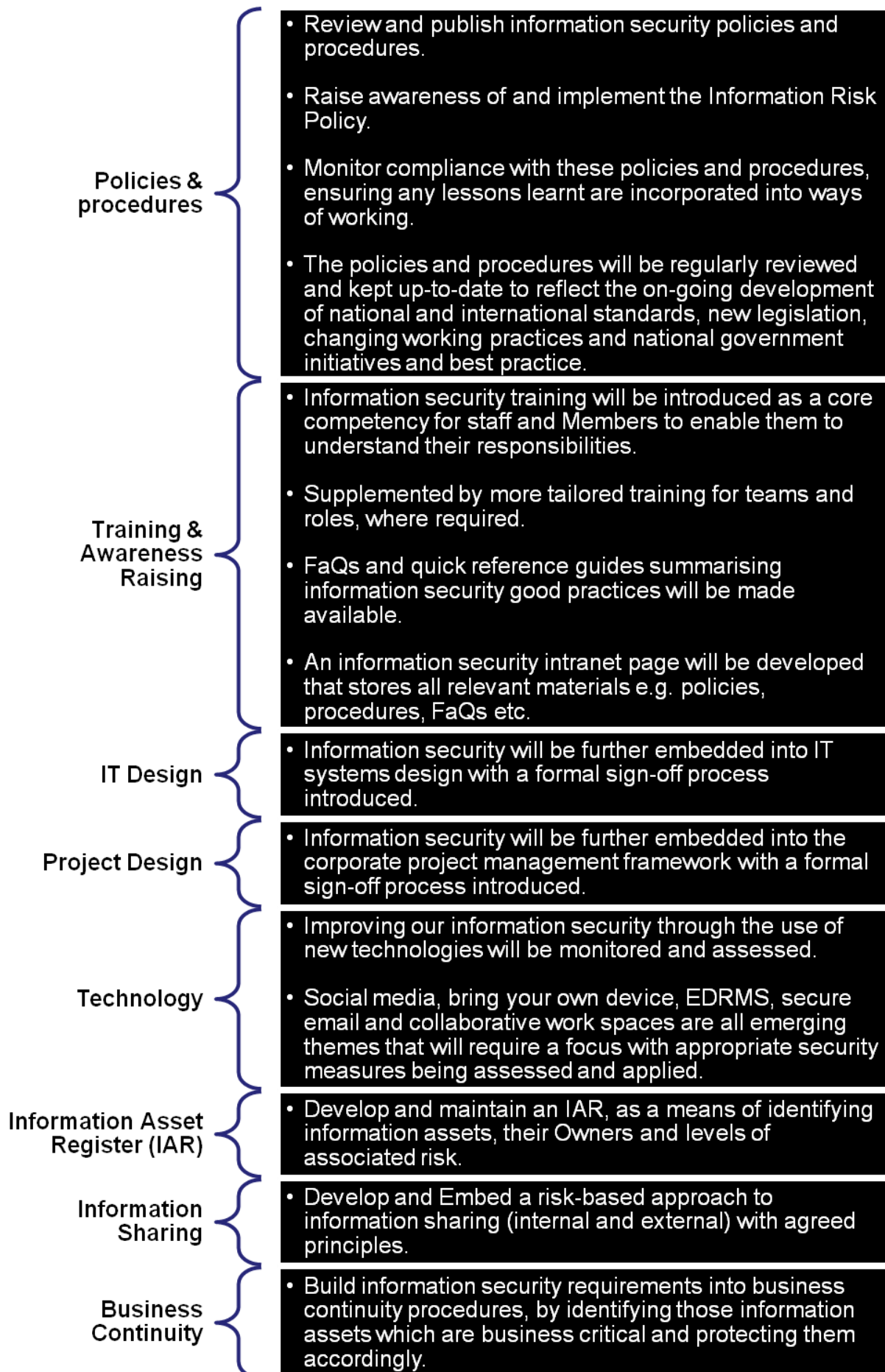
## INFORMATION ASSURANCE

By adopting a more strategic approach to information assurance we are now more aware than ever of the associated risks of managing information. However, there is still much to do and we must continue to build upon our achievements.

Going forward we need to maintain a proactive, planned, proportionate approach to risk and security, particularly considering the introduction of the new Public Services Network accreditation.

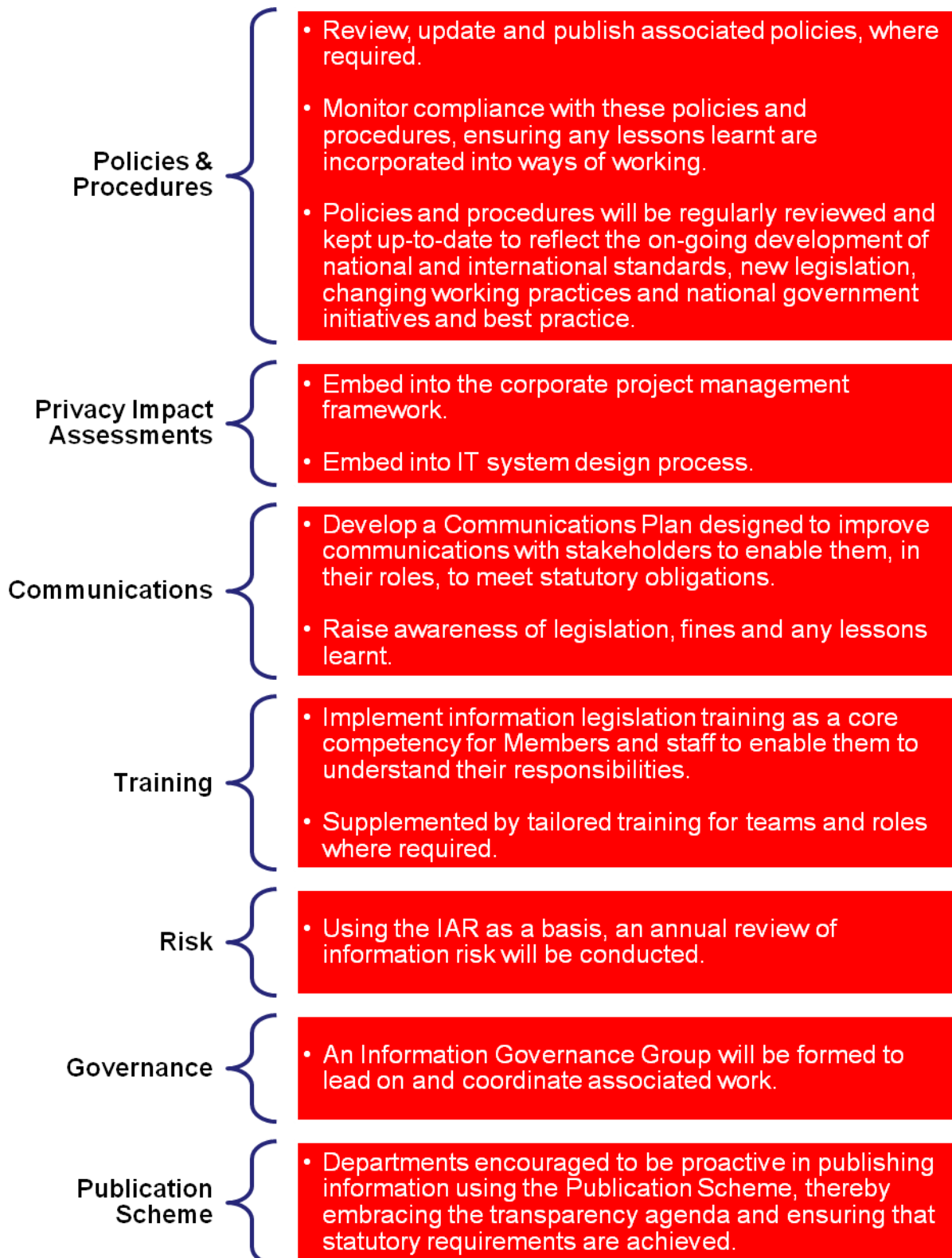
Our response to managing risk should be appropriate and balanced with business need, enabling staff to do their jobs whilst safeguarding information. We must work to achieve an environment where staff are risk aware and have the confidence to share information, whilst ensuring that information is properly protected. We will appropriately and effectively share information in order to protect and inform the public. It is essential that we communicate to staff that the protection and sharing of information are not opposing principles.

Improved information assurance will be delivered by undertaking the following tasks:



## COMPLIANCE

Our information is subject to a wide variety of regulatory controls. The Council will strengthen its levels of compliance to the legislative framework governing our information by undertaking the following tasks:



## QUALITY

Information Quality is an important part of the information management framework in terms of ensuring the consistent quality and integrity of our information and the image this provides of the Council.

Quality is generally defined, as 'fit for purpose' and all employees need to ensure that information is relevant and accurate.

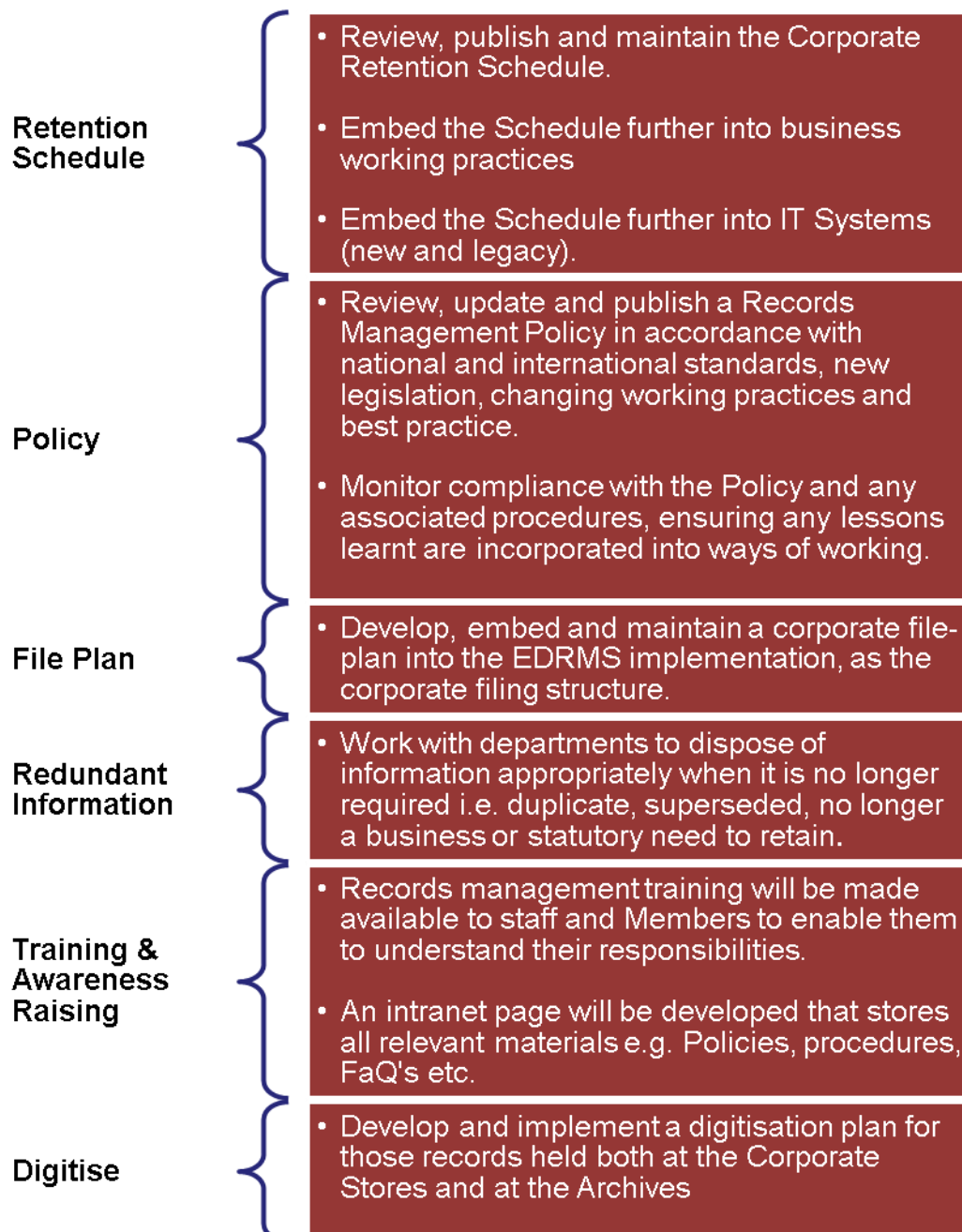
Improved information quality will be delivered by undertaking the following tasks:

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>File-naming</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A file-naming policy will be introduced to electronic files. Using standard naming methods for the description of our files is vital to being able to identify information quickly and easily.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Version Control</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A version control policy will be introduced to our electronic files. Consistent application of version control practices across the Council will reduce wasted time and effort in trying to identify latest versions and ensure decisions are made on the most up-to-date information.</li></ul> |
| <b>Training</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A supporting training and awareness raising programme will be introduced.</li></ul>  |
| <b>Information Redundancy</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Departments will be encouraged to dispose of all redundant information (electronic and paper).</li></ul>   |
| <b>Templates</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop and introduce a range of corporate templates, thereby ensuring consistent quality of our information e.g. Agenda, Minutes, Policy, SLT Reports etc.</li></ul>  |

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT

The Council recognises that its records are an important public asset and an effective records management framework needs to be in place to manage this asset.

Improved records management practices and processes will be achieved by undertaking the following tasks:



## **TRAINING, EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING**

Training is at the core of the Information Management framework. It is important that Members and all employees are fully aware of their responsibilities when it comes to managing information, and that they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to operate effectively.

Policies and procedures can be put into place but it is the responsibility of all to understand that the information they create and use is the property of the Council and if not managed appropriately, can lead to serious consequences such as reputational harm, criminal proceedings, organisational fines and job losses.

The required levels of knowledge and skills will be delivered to Members and employees through a comprehensive training programme that encompasses the following actions:



**Data Protection Act**

- Basic overview included in the corporate induction.
- eLearning module that is mandatory for all Members and relevant Officers to complete within a defined timescale.
- For those that do not have access to a work computer, they will be encouraged to either access the eLearning modules from home or to read paper-based guidance that will be made available.
- Bespoke classroom-based training sessions will be available for those that require more in-depth knowledge.

**Information Security**

- Basic overview included in corporate induction.
- eLearning module that is mandatory for all Members and relevant Officers to complete within a defined timescale.
- For those that do not have access to a work computer, they will be encouraged to either access the eLearning modules from home or to read paper-based guidance that will be made available.
- Bespoke classroom-based training sessions will be available for those that require more in-depth knowledge.

**Freedom of Information Act**

- Basic overview included in the corporate induction.
- eLearning module that is optional to complete.
- Bespoke classroom-based training sessions will be available for those that require more in-depth knowledge.

**Environmental Information Regulations**

- Basic overview included in the corporate induction.
- eLearning module that is optional to complete.
- Bespoke classroom-based training sessions will be available for those that require more in-depth knowledge.

**Records Management**

- Basic overview included in corporate induction.
- eLearning module that is optional to complete.
- Bespoke classroom-based training sessions will be available for those that require more in-depth knowledge.

**Email Management**

- Basic overview included in corporate induction.
- eLearning module that is optional to complete.

**Document Management & EDRMS**

- eLearning module that is optional to complete.
- Bespoke classroom-based training for all new users of the EDRMS.

## GLOSSARY

The following definitions will help provide an understanding of the main concepts and terms involved in the Information Management Strategy.

### **Document**

A set of formatted and related information, either physical or electronic.

### **Document Management**

A process for managing the life cycle of a document, from inception, version creation, publication, storage, retention and disposal. This usually refers to electronic documents and uses specific document management software.

### **Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS)**

EDRMS describes the technologies for managing the capture, storage, security, revision control, retrieval, distribution, preservation and destruction of documents and content.

### **File Plan**

A, hierarchical classification for documents and records within which electronic files can be placed within an organisation. It is a full representation of the business of the organisation, within a structure which is best suited to support the conduct of that business and meet record management needs.

### **Governance**

A set of multi-disciplinary structures, policies, procedures, processes and controls implemented to manage information across an organisation, supporting immediate and future regulatory, legal, risk, environmental and operational requirements.

### **Information**

Data that has been processed into a form that gives meaning and value.

### **Information Assurance**

The practice of managing information-related risks. Seeks to protect and defend information and information systems by ensuring confidentiality, integrity, authentication, availability, and nonrepudiation. These goals are relevant whether the information is in storage, processing, or transit, and whether threatened by malice or accident. It is the process of ensuring that authorised users have access to authorised information at the authorised time.

### **Information Management**

An umbrella term for the various activities that contribute to the effective production, co-ordination, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information, which leads to the more efficient functioning of an organisation.

### **Knowledge**

Collected information that is used as intelligence to inform decision-making or improve business practices.

**Records**

Recorded information, created, collected, processed, used, stored and/or disposed of for the business purposes of the Council. Records can appear in any medium (including paper, email, microform, digital, audio-visual).

**Records Management**

The discipline and professional function of managing records in order to meet organisational needs, business efficiency and legal and financial accountability.

**Retention Schedule**

The length of time records must be kept before they are eligible for destruction or archival preservation.

**Unstructured Information**

Is a generic label for describing any corporate information that is not in a database. Unstructured data can be textual or non-textual. Textual unstructured data is generated in media like email messages, PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, Excel Spread sheets and instant messages. Non-textual unstructured data is generated in media like JPEG images, MP3 audio files and Flash video files.

**Vital Records**

Those records crucial to the conduct of the Council's business without which it could not continue to operate in the event of a flood, fire or other disaster. Records that protect the assets and interests of the Council.