

Information Management Policy



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POLICY TITLE

Information Management

REVISION DATE

REPLACES POLICY

New Policy

POLICY NUMBER

0040/2004

POLICY AIM

The purpose of this policy is to govern the management and provision of information to the public under a number of statutory and other formal arrangements, with particular emphasis on the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It will interact with other council policies in this area of work. The aims and objectives of this policy are:

- To provide an overall framework for the effective management of information and records held by the authority
- To meet the Council's legal and other responsibilities for supplying information to the public, whether on request or by proactive publication
- To ensure that information and records are valued as an asset to the Council and are managed as such
- To promote a culture of openness and transparency with regard to information and access to it
- To provide a consistent and corporate approach to information management
- To comply with statutory timescales for responding to requests for information
- To maximize opportunities for proactive publication of information e.g. the Council's website and the Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- To maintain public accountability

POLICY SCOPE

This policy will apply to:

- All information and records, irrespective of format, which have been created, gathered and processed for the business of the Council
- Any systems or procedures for the management of information and records
- All service areas within the authority, and sections within any partner organizations which originate and manage information and records on behalf of the Council.

POLICY STATEMENT

South Holland District Council ("the Council") supports the principle that openness and not secrecy should be the norm in public life. The Council wants to create a climate of openness and dialogue with the general public and stakeholders and improved access to information about the Council will help the development of such an environment.

We also believe that individuals have a right to privacy and confidentiality. This policy does not overturn the common law duties of confidence or statutory provisions that prevent disclosure of personal identifiable information. The release of such information continues to be covered by the data subject access provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Public authorities must be allowed to discharge their functions effectively. The Council will therefore use the exemptions contained in the Freedom of Information Act where an absolute exemption can be applied or where a qualified exemption can reasonably be applied in terms of the public interest of disclosure.

We have adopted a Publication Scheme in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and will ensure that it remains up to date and is reviewed by the Information Commissioner. The Publication Scheme will detail the format in which the information is available and whether or not a charge will be made for the provision of any information contained in it.

We will also ensure our staff has access to expert knowledge to assist and support them in understanding the implications of Information Management legislation and appropriate training to help them.

MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION

The Council will provide suitable management and control arrangements for its information and records. Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that employees are able to locate information when required, store and deploy it carefully, and dispose of it in an organized and timely fashion, according to agreed procedures. A basic principle of records management is that records should be retained no longer than the purpose for which they were created except when needed for statutory or legal purposes or as historical reference material. Records identified as being of historical importance, usually more than thirty years old, will, from time to time, be transferred to Lincolnshire Archives after they have ceased to be of current administrative use.

The Council recognizes the importance of its information and records as a business asset and will introduce and maintain security measures and procedures designed to protect and enhance that asset.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Corporate Management Team

It is for Corporate Management Team to approve the Policy and the procedures underpinning the policy. It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service to implement the agreed procedures.

Information Champion

The Head of Legal and Member Services has been designated Information Champion and has responsibility for determining policies that shall apply to information held by the Council and for establishing policies, procedures and guidance for administering requests for information in compliance with the provisions of various information legislation and in particular the Access to Information Act 1985, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The Information Champion will also provide a point of contact for all members of staff and councilors who require advice on Freedom of Information Act matters. He will, where possible, provide advice directly to staff or councilors on FOI matters or otherwise refer them to a competent person to obtain such advice.

Heads of Service

Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that information held within their areas of responsibility, including information processed by contractors, partners or other bodies working under a service level agreement, complies with the appropriate policies and procedures.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that staff under their direction and control are aware of the Council's policies and guidance and for checking that those staff understand and appropriately apply policies, procedures and guidance in carrying out their day to day work.

All staff are responsible for familiarizing themselves and following and complying with the Council's policies, procedures and guidance relating to information management.

MONITORING

This policy will be monitored in the following ways:

| MONITORING ACTIVITY | PERSON RESPONSIBLE |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Make sure that any issues, concerns or praise surrounding an individuals handling of information requests are addressed during annual performance/development reviews | All staff |
| Coordination of Data Protection and FOI requests via central database | Head of Legal and Member Services |
| Review of information management policies, procedures, guidance and training in light of legislative or operational changes | FOI Project Implementation Group |

HUMAN RIGHTS

Basic Human Rights principles will apply

POLICY CONSULTATION

Corporate Management Team

POLICY APPROVAL

Corporate Management Team - 18 October 2004

RELATED POLICIES & STRATEGIES

Communications Strategy – Jun 2002
Data Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Staff - 2004
Electronic Government Strategies & Customer Services Strategy – Oct 2002
Freedom of Information Publication Scheme – June 2004
Freedom of Information – Code of Practice and Staff Procedures – 2004 (Draft)
Human Rights Policy – 2004 (Draft)
Records Management Policy – 2004 (Draft)
Suggestions and Complaints Procedure – 2004 (New Draft)