PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

3 December 2014

Records Management Policy

Head of Legal Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report presents a new Records Management Policy for the Council. It requires to be approved by the Council prior to submission to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland as part of the Council's Records Management Plan in December 2014. This is to achieve compliance with the requirements of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

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1.   BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

1.1   Legislative Background

The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (the Act) sets out standards in Information and Records Management practice for public authorities in Scotland. The provisions of the Act apply to around 270 organisations and it became law on 1 January 2013. Compliance is achieved by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland (the Keeper) approving a five-year Records Management Plan (RMP) for each public authority.

The purpose of the Act is to improve the standard of information and records management across the Scottish public sector identified in the 2007 Shaw Report into the Historic Abuse of Children in Residential Schools and Homes in Scotland.

The standards required by the Act are set out in a Model Records Management Plan (Model Plan) issued by the Keeper. The form of the RMP is not prescribed, but it is expected that the plan will cover at least the 14 elements set out in the Keeper's Model Plan.

The RMP must include a policy statement of commitment to compliance with the Act. The proposed Records Management Policy will fulfil that requirement once approved by the Council.

The Records Management Policy represents this statement.

The RMP should describe current practice within the organisation and set out plans for improvement in areas where current practice/provision is seen as deficient. The Keeper has given the following guidance in respect of RMPs:-

- Compliance is a process. Apart from a limited number of elements where reaching the required standard is compulsory from the outset, organisations are not required to have reached the required standards across all areas of practice to attain initial compliance. Instead, organisations are required to commit to a 'journey of improvement' that clearly expresses the 'ambition of compliance' through stated actions over the 5 year period covered by the initial RMP.

- Where actions are required to either maintain or attain compliance, these actions must have been approved by the organisation before the RMP is submitted to the Keeper. Commitment to future approval will not be deemed sufficient.

- Where the Keeper so chooses, the term of the initial RMP can be reduced to considerably shorter than five years. This will be done where an organisation is perceived to have serious failings in its information and records management practices.

- As the document that commits the Council to managing its information and records in compliance with the Act, this Policy is a key component of the Council RMP.

1.2 Perth and Kinross Council Background

The Council has a current policy which was approved in 2003. In order to help achieve compliance with the Act, its revision was delayed pending the publication of the detailed requirements in 2012.

The Council has appointed a suitably qualified and experienced Records Manager to prepare the Council's RMP and carry out the other work emanating from it including the revision of the policy.

The proposed policy follows the structure of the Keeper's Model Plan and sets out the standard required and how this will be implemented in the Council for each of the 14 elements.

The Council's RMP is due for submission to the Keeper in December 2014 and the Records Management Policy must receive formal approval before the RMP can be submitted.

1.3 Main Issues

The Keeper's Model RMP sets out the required standard for compliance across 14 areas of information and records management practice.

Attaining these standards across these elements is designed to ensure that an organisation will be managing its information and records in an appropriate and lawful manner. It will also mean that the organisation is managing its information and records in a manner that will be helpful to the effective operation of its business.

Mapping of current Council practice against the required standards of the 14 elements has revealed weaknesses in 10 of the 14 areas.

These weaknesses challenge both the Council's ability to control its information and documents (i.e. to know what information it holds, where and how it is held and who can see it) and also the Council's ability to deliver services effectively and efficiently (through weaknesses and inefficiencies in its information and records systems and processes).

These challenges will need to be met over the five year term of the initial RMP as the Keeper has indicated that, by that time, bodies will be expected to have taken the steps necessary to reach the required standard across the 14 elements.

2.   **PROPOSALS**

The revised Records Management Policy forms the foundation piece of the Council's RMP. It sets out what the Council is required to do in order to comply with each of the 14 elements of the Keeper's Model RMP as well as those provisions of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 which relate to Archives Services.

The Policy does this in language that is designed to be accessible to Council staff.

In addition to the policy, the Council's RMP comprises statements of current practice and action plans across the 14 elements as well as two additional areas: electronic records and third party service providers.

For each of these 16 areas, the statement will contain:-

- a description of good practice;
- the practical business benefits of good practice;
- a note of whether or not reaching the required standard is compulsory at this time;
- an assessment of whether or not the Council is currently compliant (with evidence provided where good practice is claimed);
- actions required over the coming five years to either maintain or attain the required standard;
- smart objectives, roles and responsibilities and governance related to these actions; and
- resource implications.

Following approval of the RMP by the Keeper, the actions in it will be formed into action plans. Development and implementation of these action plans over the five-year term of the RMP will be managed by the Records Manager and will align with relevant Corporate and Service programmes and projects wherever possible.

Developing the timetable for these plans will be done in conjunction with relevant officers in Services and also, where appropriate, with IST, the Perth Office Programme ('POP') and the Council Archivist.

Over the term of the RMP, the timetable will adapt wherever possible to meet changing circumstances.

Progress will be monitored quarterly by the Policy and Governance Group and will be reported annually to the Senior Information Risk Owner.

It is envisaged that the implementation of changes required to bring the Council into line with the standards required by the Act will take the full five-year term of the initial RMP.

3.   **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 introduces a legal requirement to reach a certain standard of information and records management across the public sector in Scotland.

In addition to being a legal requirement, the changes in information and records management practice required to attain on-going compliance with the Act will help facilitate business change within the Council. Moreover, much of the work required ties in closely with the business change work of the Perth Office Programme and other modern ways of working programmes and initiatives including Human Resources (HR) New Ways of Working as well as the Council's Information Management Strategy.

Under the terms of the Act, the Council is required to submit a Records Management Plan to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland in December 2014. It must both map the Council's current practice across 14 defined areas of records management practice and also, where required, state what actions will be required to both maintain and reach the required standards of practice over the 5 year term of the Records Management Plan.

As such, the Records Management Policy forms a key part of the Records Management Plan. The policy sets out what the Council is required to do in terms of records management, both in relation to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and, for archive services, the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994.

The Committee is asked to approve the revised Records Management Policy.

Author(s)

Name	Designation	Contact Details
Meic Pierce Owen	Records Manager	E: MPierceOwen@pkc.gov.uk T: 01738 475732

Approved

Name	Designation	Date
Ian Innes	Head of Legal Services	12 November 2014

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1. **IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION**

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	**None**
Corporate Plan	**None**
Resource Implications	
Financial	**Yes**
Workforce	**None**
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	**None**
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	**None**
Strategic Environmental Assessment	**None**
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	**None**
Legal and Governance	**Yes**
Risk	**Yes**
Consultation	
Internal	**Yes**
External	**Yes**
Communication	
Communications Plan	**Yes**

1.1 **Strategic Implications**

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

1.2 **Corporate Plan**

n/a

2. **Resource Implications**

Financial

2.1 It is not anticipated that proposals for improvements in Council practice as foreseen within the RMP at this time will have any new major cost implications as proposed improvements are embedded within existing or forthcoming business improvement programmes, projects or initiative or they are low-cost stand-alone items.

However, based on similar programmes, it is likely that improved practices and systems will lead to both on-going storage cost savings for both paper and electronic documents and also to staff time efficiency gains through both improved retrieval of information and documents and also improved information processes and systems.

2.2   Workforce

     n/a

2.3   Asset Management (land, property, IT)

     n/a

3.   Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

3.1   The proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) and assessed as not relevant for the purposes of EqIA.

3.2   Strategic Environmental Assessment

The proposals have been considered under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

3.3   Sustainability

     n/a

3.4   Legal and Governance

Local Authorities are included in the schedule of Scottish public authorities and are required to comply with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011. Approval of this Records Management Policy is a necessary step to achieve compliance.

3.5   Risk

The key risks associated with the proposals are: -

a) The RMP will not be completed in time for the submission date

     Control: the submission date is considered achievable

     Control: progress will be closely monitored and there is potential scope to delay the submission date.

b) The Keeper will not approve the RMP

     Control: the Office of the Keeper has been consulted regarding the current proposals and any developments in the standard expected will be taken into consideration.

c) Implementation of the policy will be restricted due to lack of appropriate resources

Control: the need for additional funding has been highlighted as an expenditure pressure.

4. Consultation

4.1 <u>Internal</u>

The policy has been developed following the approval of the Executive Officer Team ('EOT') in February 2014 and in consultation with Service representatives on the Records Management Group and the Policy & Governance Group.

4.2 <u>External</u>

The policy forms part of the Council's RMP. The development of the RMP has been informed by discussions with the Office of the Keeper and the information and records management practitioner community, both in Scotland and beyond. This practice is being followed by many other organisations covered by the Act.

5. Communication

5.1 In terms of stakeholder engagement relating to the development of the policy (together with the broader RMP), a communication and engagement plan based on targeted email has been adopted.

Looking ahead, a communication plan will be developed in conjunction with the Corporate Communications Team as part of the process of initially raising awareness of both the compliance requirements of the Act and the business opportunities offered by improved information and records practices.

This communications plan will then highlight and promote the benefits and improvements in practice as RMP delivery progresses. In this context, a programme of Learn, Innovate, Grow sessions is in development.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following web-based resource centre has been utilised in the preparation of this report: -

Guidance to the Keeper's Model Plan

7. APPENDIX

Perth and Kinross Council - Records Management Policy.

Perth and Kinross Council

Records Management Policy

Contents

1. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Council to manage its information, documents and records ('records') in a manner which

- complies with legislation;
- helps facilitate customer service and business efficiency gains, and
- adheres to Council policy on best value.

The Council will achieve these aims by embracing both the letter and the spirit of the Public Records (Scotland) Act (2011) ('the Act'), together with the founding principles of records management as set out in ISO 15489: 2001.

Further information on the Act, on ISO 15489: 2001 and on other relevant legislation can be found in Legislation and standards.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and Elected Members of Perth & Kinross Council and any partner organisation (voluntary or otherwise), third party contractor, or agent delivering a Council function on behalf of or in conjunction with the Council.

This policy is applicable to all records held by the Council.

'Records' as defined in this policy refers to records in all formats: paper, electronic and any other including video, audio, etc.

3. REVIEW

This policy will be subject to review after five years, in line with the compliance requirements of the Act.

Non-material changes may be made to this policy with the approval of the Policy and Governance Group.

4. STRUCTURE

This policy is structured using the **14 elements of key records management practice** ('the 14 elements') as defined in the Keeper of the Records of Scotland's ('the Keeper') model records management plan ('the Keeper's Model RMP') for implementing the Act.

It sets out what is required in each of the 14 elements in order to attain the required standard of records management practice.

In addition, this policy also includes sections relating to particular considerations for electronic records; to archive services; and to third party service providers.

Finally, this policy also includes a brief glossary of records management terms used within the Policy.

Note: where a word is underlined (with the exception of this illustrative example) this denotes a hyperlink in the electronic version of the document. By placing the cursor over the underlined word and following the instructions given, the hyperlink takes the reader directly to the specified item.

5. SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Council's designated Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) will have corporate strategic responsibility for records management in the Council.

The SIRO will be responsible for designating a Council Records Manager. The Records Manager will be responsible for providing operational level support for the delivery of this policy.

The Records Manager will be responsible for the provision of records management guidance, advice and training. The Records Manager will also be responsible for maintaining the Council Business Classification Scheme ('the classification scheme') and the Council Records Retention Schedule ('the retention schedule') and for making each of these available.

Executive Directors are responsible for all aspects of compliance with this policy and associated legislation within their Services and, in particular, for ensuring that employees within their Service are both aware of this policy and their responsibilities under it, and that all relevant procedures within their area of responsibility are carried out correctly.

The Council Archivist is responsible for management of the Council Archive.

The role of employees and Elected Members

All employees and Elected Members must

- be familiar with the requirements of this policy;

- work within Council guidelines and procedures at all times when working with records;

- follow good practice as directed by this policy , any codes of practice issued by the Keeper, and guidance issued by the Council; and

- ensure that any partner organisation, contractor, or agent performing work on behalf of or in conjunction with the Council is familiar with this policy and their

responsibilities relating to it. These responsibilities are outlined in Third party service providers.

6. THE 14 ELEMENTS

The 14 Elements of Key Records Management Practice contained within the Keeper's Model RMP are set out below.

The entry for each element comprises a statement of

- the **requirement** as set out within the Keeper's Model Plan; and
- the **standard** the Council will adopt to meet this requirement including related roles and responsibilities

Specific terms used in this policy are explained in the Glossary.

1. Senior management responsibility

1.1   Requirement

The Organisation rests corporate strategic responsibility for records management with a nominated individual. This nominated individual is a senior officer.

1.2   Standard

The Council's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) will have corporate strategic responsibility for records management (see Glossary).

2. Records management responsibility

2.1   Requirement

The Organisation rests the responsibility for operational records management with the nominated individual. This nominated individual is designated as the Records Manager.

2.2   Standard

The SIRO will designate an officer to be the Records Manager (see Glossary).

The Council recognises that in order to attain an effective standard of records management, the Records Manager should be a professionally qualified and suitably experienced individual.

The Records Manager will have operational responsibility for records management.

The Records Manager will submit an annual report on the state and progress of records management to the SIRO.

3. Records management policy statement

3.1 Requirement

The Organisation has issued a policy statement on records management stating its commitment to compliance with the Act.

3.2 Standard

This policy is a statement of commitment to compliance with the Act.

All the Council's records must be managed in accordance with this policy. Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this policy will constitute non-compliance with the Act.

4. Business classification

4.1 Requirement

The Organisation arranges its documents in a systematic manner by function.

4.2 Standard

The Council will have a business classification scheme (see Glossary). This must be arranged in a systematic manner by function.

Services will arrange their records in accordance with the business classification scheme. The Records Manager is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the business classification scheme.

5. Retention schedules

5.1 Requirement

The Organisation manages its document retention by means of a retention schedule.

5.2 Standard

The Council's Retention Schedule (see Glossary) is the Scottish Council on Archives Records Retention Schedules.

The Records Manager will be responsible for maintaining the Council Retention Schedule. Services must carry out retention practices in accordance with the Council Retention Schedule. These practices will be carried out annually in a systematic manner.

The appropriate storage location of those records required by the Council in perpetuity as part of Business Intelligence provision will be determined by the relevant Executive Director and the Archivist.

6. Destruction arrangements

6.1 Requirement

The Organisation destroys all documents promptly and lawfully at the end of their lifecycle. Destruction is in a lawful manner and is documented.

6.2 Standard

The Council must destroy all documents promptly and lawfully at the end of their lifecycle (see Glossary) in accordance with the Council Retention Schedule. This destruction must be documented.

Services must carry out confidential waste destruction in accordance with the Council Standard on the Disposal of Confidential Paper (information security standard 10.7.2.2)

Note: The prompt and appropriate destruction of confidential waste is essential in ensuring compliance with this policy as this practice forms part of ensuring compliance with records retention (element 5), information security (element 8), data protection (element 9) and document audit trail (element 11).

7. Archive selection and transfer arrangements

7.1 Requirement

The Organisation makes provision for the routine and systematic selection of documents for permanent archive preservation ('selection') and for the transfer of those documents selected to the appropriate Archive ('transfer'). These processes are documented.

7.2 Standard

Services must carry out selection annually and systematically and in accordance with both the Council Retention Schedule and the Archive Service Level Agreement.

Once selected, arrangements will be made for the transfer of selected documents to the Archive. Transfer arrangements will be agreed between the appropriate Executive Director and the Archivist.

Access conditions will be determined by the appropriate Executive Director and the Archivist and also, where applicable, by the Information Compliance Manager.

8. Information security

8.1 Requirement

The Organisation manages its Information lawfully.

8.2 Standard

The Council must manage its information in accordance with the Council Information Security Policy and standards.

Roles, responsibilities and requirements in this area are set out in the Council's Information Security Policy and standards

9. Data protection

9.1 Requirement

The Organisation processes its personal and otherwise sensitive data lawfully.

9.2 Standard

The Council must process its personal and otherwise sensitive data in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

Roles, responsibilities and requirements in this area are set out in the Council Data Protection Policy.

10. Business continuity and vital records

10.1 Requirement

The Organisation's Business Continuity Plan (BCP) includes provision for the protection of and access to vital records.

10.2 Standard

Vital record (see Glossary) provision will be included within the Council BCP.

Services will both identify their vital records and make appropriate provision for their survival in the event of an incident, in accordance with the Council BCP.

The Records Manager will be responsible for assisting Services in the development of records provision within their BCP arrangements.

11. Document audit trail

11.1   Requirement

The Organisation is able to locate all its documents and, if required, correctly identify the document version being viewed.

11.2   Standard

Services will ensure that effective document audit trail (see Glossary) provision for both paper and electronic records is in place.

The Records Manager will be responsible for assisting services in developing these audit trail provisions. The Records Manager also will be responsible for creating and maintaining a File Naming Convention (see Glossary). Services will ensure that file naming is carried out in accordance with the File Naming Convention.

12. Competency framework for records management staff

12.1   Requirement

The Organisation operates a competency framework for records management staff in place.

12.2   Standard

The Council recognises that in order to attain an effective standard of records management, all staff are required to receive training in records management practices.

Services will ensure that all staff have sufficient knowledge of records management to allow them to comply with their responsibilities under this policy.

In addition it is recognised that where a clear need is identified, provision should be made for a dedicated records management resource. Where such provision is in place, Services will ensure that staff receive appropriate training. This training will be in accord with the Records Management Staff Competency Framework ('Competency Framework').

The Records Manager will be responsible for the creation and maintenance of the Competency Framework.

13. Assessment and review

13.1 Requirement

The Organisation regularly and systematically assesses its records management systems and practices. These assessments are documented.

13.2 Standard

On-going improvement is a key part of compliance with the Act. In order to assess and monitor this improvement, systematic annual documented assessments are required.

Services will carry out annual documented assessments of their records management systems (annual assessments).

The Records Manager will be responsible for the creation and maintenance of an annual assessment scheme; for the management and coordination of the annual assessments and for making an annual report on the scheme to the SIRO.

14. Information sharing

14.1 Requirement

The Organisation carries out appropriate information sharing in a lawful and timely manner. Information is shared in such a way that the meaning of the information being shared is clearly understood.

14.2 Standard

All Information sharing with parties outwith the Council will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy. Information sharing within the Council will be managed.

Roles, responsibilities and requirements with regards information sharing with parties outwith the Council are set out in the Council Data Protection Policy.

In addition, Services sharing information with parties outwith the Council will do so in accordance with the Council Information Security Policy and standards

When considering sharing information within and outwith the Council, the Information Compliance Manager will be consulted on each occasion and at the earliest stage in the process.

7. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to the 14 elements, this policy also takes into account a number of other considerations. These are: -

Particular considerations for electronic records

The provisions of this policy cover records in all formats. This includes electronic records. That said, the Council recognises that the expansion of electronic working is a dynamic area at this time and, as such, that electronic records management warrants particular highlighting within this policy.

With new opportunities for electronic working becoming available all the time, it is vital that the Council maintains a coherent and compliant approach to electronic working.

Accordingly, Services must engage with the Records Manager and the Archivist at the earliest stages in the consideration of any expansion, revision or development of electronic records provision.

Third party service providers

Section 3 of the Act requires that external bodies, and individuals, delivering functions on behalf of the Council manage those of their records that relate to the service(s) provided in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

It is the responsibility of the officer signing the contract or agreement to ensure that effective measures are in place so as to ensure this practice.

8. THE COUNCIL ARCHIVE

Overview

The Council will have a Council Archive ('the Archive'). The Archive will comprise public reading room provision, staff office and workspace and appropriate and sufficient secure storage for the Council's archival holdings. This storage will conform to environmental standards as set-out in PD 5454: 2012.

The function of the Archive will be to provide archive services to the Council. These services will comprise both the corporate archive function for the Council, and the public archive function for Perth and Kinross. The corporate archive function will include preservation and production of documents with the Archive for Business Intelligence purposes.

Relevant legislation in this area is the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994, the Data Protection Act (1998), the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (2002) and the Public Records (Scotland) Act (2011).

Information on each of these acts is included in Legislation and standards.

The Council Archivist

The Council will have a Council Archivist ('the Archivist'). The Archivist must be suitably qualified and experienced and a registered member of the Archives and Records Association (ARA).

The Archivist will be responsible for the management and administration of the Council Archive, and its staff, and for all matters relating to the archival records of the Council.

The Archivist will be responsible for advising the Council on matters relating to Archives, including the physical management, storage, preservation and conservation of documents as well as archival storage requirements.

The Archivist will be responsible for working with services to ensure selection and also transfer arrangements (see element 7). These activities will be governed by the Archive Collection Policy and the Service Level Agreement.

The Archivist will work with the Records Manager on the development of all records management guidance. This will, at all times, take into account archival considerations.

9. **PUBLIC ACCESS**

The public will have access to all Council documents unless there is a valid reason for withholding access to a document or documents, either in its entirety or in part.

The valid reasons for the withholding of public access to a document, either in its entirety or in part, are defined in the Council's Freedom of Information Policy and the Council Data Protection Policy.

Public access ('access') to documents held by the Services will be through application made to the Information Compliance Manager.

Access to documents held by the Archive will be through application made to the Archivist.

APPENDIX 1: LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994

Under Sections 53 and 54 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, a statutory obligation is placed upon Perth and Kinross Council to "make proper arrangements for the preservation and management of any records" transferred to, vested in, created or acquired by, or otherwise placed in its custody. This applies to all records, regardless of age.

The terms of this Act require that the Council consult the Keeper both prior to the initial implementation of these arrangements, and prior to making any material changes in existing arrangements.

Data Protection Act 1998

The requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 place a legal obligation upon the Council to ensure that access to 'structured' personal records (in whatever medium), containing specified kinds of information, is restricted to authorised persons only.

All requests for access to personal information will be in accordance with the subject access provision within this Act.

Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 has considerable implications for record keeping. The Act places a legal requirement upon the Council to provide access to all its non-personal records, current and historic, unless specifically exempt under the terms of this Act.

In addition, a 'Code of Practice on Records Management' was issued under Section 61 of the Act. Since 01 January 2013, when the Public Records (Scotland) Act ('PRSA') came into force, this code of practice is to be used to complement the guidance offered under the PRSA.

Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011

The Act requires that the Council manage its records to a defined standard.

Compliance with the Act is attained by the approval by the Keeper of a Records Management Plan ('RMP') for the Council. Once approved, the RMP will be due for review at a date stipulated by the Keeper at time of approval. This date will be no longer than 5 years after the date of approval.

The RMP will detail Council provision across the 14 elements and will include, as appropriate, improvement plans designed to progress Council practices to comply with the required standard over the term of the RMP.

The RMP improvement plans will be required to commit the Council to actions that will maintain compliance throughout the term of the RMP where practice is compliant and, where improvements are required, commit the Council to actions that will attain (and then maintain) the required standard within the term of the RMP.

ISO 15489: 2001

This is the industry standard for records management practice.

PD 5454: 2012

This is the industry standard for the storage & exhibition of archival documents.

APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Records Management (element 1)

The Information and Records Management Society (IRMS) describes records management as: -

'The methods, procedures and practices by which an organisation controls and utilises its information assets. Information and records management relates to the legal, legitimate, appropriate and timely gathering of information and the creation, use, secure storage, accessing, utilisation, governance and selection for archive/disposal of fit for purpose records.'

Records Manager (element 2)

A records manager is an individual who is engaged in the management of information and records. S/he is concerned with ensuring that the right information is available to the right person at the right time and that this information is in the right format.

Records managers deal with all aspects of the management, governance and utilisation of information.

In terms of the Act, the Keeper expects that Records Manager provision be both on-going and appropriate to the scale and the complexity of the Organisation. In the context of a local authority, the Records Manager should be a suitably qualified records management professional with sufficient experience across all areas of the Act so as to be able to effectively steer delivery of on-going compliance.

Business classification (element 4)

Business classification ('classification') is the term for a system of arrangement by which an organisation sets out its records. Such systems are typically arranged by function and are typically called a 'Business classification scheme' or a 'file plan'.

Classification allows an organisation to identify common record types across its full range of activities; to better locate and retrieve records; and to readily relocate the records of a particular function or on a particular topic from across the organisation if required.

These elements make classification increasingly important as the Council looks to expand its electronic working.

Records retention (element 5)

'Records retention' ('retention') is the term for the system by which an organisation determines the period of time for which records should be retained and what should be done with these records at the end of that period.

The period for which records should be kept is determined by a consideration of requirements set out in relevant legislation together with the length of time for which the records may be said to be reasonably required for a business need. The longer of these two periods for any given record will be the retention period.

Once the retention period is complete, records will be reviewed for continued business need. Further retention will be by exception only. Where a record is to be retained for such an additional period ('retention by exception') there must be an identified significant business need and a defined reasonable additional retention period, at the end of which the record will be reviewed again. All reasons for retention by exception will be documented.

Once no longer required, records will be available for selection and transfer to the Council Archive (see element 7 and 'Archive Services').

Those records not selected for archive will then be disposed of promptly and appropriately (see element 6).

Retention practices are governed by what are called a 'retention schedule'. This is a document that lists records by type and defines both the retention period and the archive selection requirements of each type of record.

Document lifecycle (element 6)

'Document lifecycle' is a term that describes the various stages in the 'life' of a document. These are its creation, its active/current use as part of the business, its semi-current retention as part of the business and its definition as being dead once its retention period has come to an end. At this time a document is either retained for an additional period if there is legitimate business need ('retention by exception'), selected for permanent archive retention (at which point it ceases to be a 'business' document and becomes and 'archival' document) or it is sent for disposal.

Vital records (element 11)

'Vital records' is the term for those records without which the Council cannot conduct its business. These are in turn divided into those records which would be required immediately post-incident in order to allow the Council to deliver its business (eg: social work files, housing benefit files) and those records which are needed long term (eg: title deeds, contracts).

Document audit trail (element 11)

'Document audit trail' ('audit trail') is the term for the means by which an organisation can both locate records and determine, where required, the version of a particular record.

In paper records, this is achieved by means of record issue registers and clear file version numbering.

In electronic records, this is achieved by means of system activity logs; through document 'check out' (where available); and through clear file version number titling.

In both paper and electronic systems, a standardised system of file naming should also be followed. This is called the 'file naming convention'.