

RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Version Control

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Statement by the Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer

It is the aim of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board to achieve efficiency benefits through best practice applied to records management. This is intended to lead to improvements in the use of personnel and financial resources.

Best Practice in records management will ensure that all information:

- *Received or created is stored in the appropriate way and is easily retrievable*
- *Is retained, destroyed or preserved in accordance with the Board's Record Retention and Disposal Schedule*
- *Meets our current needs and our requirements into the foreseeable future*
- *Is capable of enabling change when required*
- *Is easily accessible to users and that the skills and technology are available to achieve this aim*

The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, (the Act) emphasises the importance placed on records management in local authorities. It is our aim to implement an effective Records Management Plan in order to meet the requirements of the Act. The Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness with progress update reviews provided to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland.

Compliance with the Act lies with the Depute Electoral Registration Officer/Business Manager who is responsible for the Records Management Plan (Records Manager). It will be their responsibility to report to the senior management team on any relevant issues and develop any solutions necessary.

Assessor & Electoral Registration Officer Date: 1 March 2023

1.0 General

1.1 The Assessor, as appointed by the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board (HWIVJB), carries out the functions of valuation of Non-Domestic properties for the purposes of the Valuation Roll; the banding of dwellings for the purposes of the Valuation List for the two constituent local authorities and the Electoral Registration function in both local authority areas.

1.2 HWIVJB recognises that the effective management of its records, regardless of format, is essential in order to support its core functions, to comply with legal, statutory and regulatory obligations, and to demonstrate transparency and accountability to all its stakeholders. Records are a vital information asset and a valuable resource for the organisation's decision-making processes, policy creation and operations, and must be managed effectively from the point of their creation until their ultimate disposal.

2.0 Purpose and Scope

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate the importance of managing records effectively within HWIVJB, to outline key aims and objectives in relation to recordkeeping, and to act as a mandate for the support and delivery of records management policies, procedures and initiatives across HWIVJB.

2.2 This policy relates to all divisions and sectors of HWIVJB and all records created by its employees. It relates to the management of records as a facilitating function of the organisation and covers the records created by the organisation about its activities. It does not relate to the management of any former records that may have been transferred to an archive.

2.3 The policy relates to all staff. It applies to all records regardless of format or medium, including paper, electronic, audio or visual.

2.4 The policy is to be read in conjunction with the Service Plan for HWIVJB, which details the aims, objectives and priorities for HWIVJB. Such aims require the improvement of business efficiency through less time spent searching for information, increased joined up working and improved communications across the organisation as a whole; the demonstration of compliance with statutory and regulatory recordkeeping obligations including the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011, the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, the UK Freedom of Information Act 2000, UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018, The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025; and the promotion of openness, transparency, accountability and improved corporate governance.

2.5 The Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 places an obligation on named authorities in Scotland to produce a records management plan which sets out their arrangements for the effective management of all records. HWIVJB is a named authority as defined in the act. The creation of a records management policy statement is a mandatory element of the plan and is necessary in order to identify the procedures to be followed in managing the Board's public records.

3.0 What is Records Management?

3.1 Records management may be defined as the process whereby an organisation manages its records, whether created internally or externally and in any format or media type, from their creation or receipt, through to their destruction or permanent preservation.

3.2 Records management is about placing controls around each stage of a record's lifecycle, at the point of creation (through the application of relevant data relating to a record, version control and naming conventions), during maintenance and use (through the management of security and access classifications, facilities for access and tracking of records), at regular review intervals (through the application of retention and disposal rules), and ultimate disposal (whether this be recycling, confidential destruction or transfer to an archive for permanent preservation). By placing such controls around the lifecycle of a record, we can ensure they demonstrate the key attributes of authenticity, reliability, integrity and accessibility, both now and in the future.

3.3 HWIVJB can provide a comprehensive and accurate account of its activities and transactions by the effective management of its records. This may be achieved through the management of effective metadata as well as the maintenance of audit trail data.

3.4 We retain records that provide evidence of our functions, activities and transactions, for:

- **Operational Use**

  Information which serves the purpose for which it was originally created (e.g., property records), to support our decision-making processes, to allow us to look back at decisions made previously and learn from previous successes and failure (e.g., minutes of meetings), and to protect the Board's assets and rights (e.g., Asset Register).

- **Internal & External Accountability**

  Information demonstrates transparency and accountability for all actions, provides evidence of legislative, regulatory and statutory compliance and demonstrates that all business is conducted in line with best practice (e.g., Policies and Procedures).

4.0 Why is Records Management Important?

4.1 Information and records are a valuable asset without which we would be unable to carry out our functions, activities and transactions, meet the needs of our stakeholders, and ensure legislative compliance.

4.2 The benefits of implementing records management systems and processes include:

- Improved information sharing and the provision of quick and easy access to the right information at the right time
- The support and facilitation of more efficient service delivery
- Improved business efficiency through reduced time spent searching for information
- Demonstration of transparency, consistency and accountability for all actions
- The maintenance of a record of the transactions of HWIVJB
- The creation of better working environments and identification of opportunities for office rationalisation
- Risk management in terms of ensuring and demonstrating compliance with all legal, regulatory and statutory obligations
- The meeting of stakeholder expectations through the provision of good quality services

5.0 Policy Statement and Commitment

5.1 It is the policy of HWIVJB to maintain reliable and useable records, which are capable of supporting business functions and activities for as long as they are required. This will be achieved through the consolidation and establishment of effective records management policies and procedures, including:

- The development of a business classification scheme to reflect the functions, activities and transactions of HWIVJB

- The review and consolidation of the records retention and disposal schedule to provide clear guidance regarding the management of HWIVJB records.

- The review and consolidation of destruction arrangements to detail the correct procedures to follow when disposing of business information and to ensure that information is not being retained without a business justification

- The production of archive transfer arrangements in order to provide advice and guidance on how to securely transfer records to the archive, if appropriate.

- The review and consolidation of information security policies and procedures in order to protect records and systems from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction

- The review and consolidation of data protection policies in order to demonstrate HWIVJB's commitment to compliance with the Act and the safeguarding and fair processing of all personal data held

- The continuing review of our business continuity arrangements, encompassing strategies to ensure that vital records held by HWIVJB remain accessible and that there are processes in place to monitor the integrity and usability of records

- The review of audit trail mechanisms, the potential of existing systems, and the gap which exists between current provision and best practice, in order to produce a clear strategy for improving the capture and management of key events in a record's lifecycle (e.g., creation, access, editing, destruction or preservation)

- The identification of records management as a distinct stream within the Board's training aims, with requisite training provided to all staff

- The completion of a self-assessment progress update review, following the implementation of the records management plan in order to ensure that the records management practices remain fit for purpose

6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 All staff have a responsibility to manage records effectively, through the documentation of all decisions and actions made by HWIVJB; the effective maintenance of records throughout their lifecycle, including access, tracking and storage of records; the timely review of records and their ultimate disposal, whether this be for confidential destruction or recycling or transfer to an archive for permanent preservation.

6.2 The lead responsible officer for records management in HWIVJB is the Assessor. With the support of the Depute Electoral Registration Officer/Business Manager (Records Manager), they have responsibility for ensuring compliance with this records management policy.

6.3 The management team is responsible for approving a corporate approach to the management of records as defined within this policy; promoting a culture of best practice recordkeeping principles in order to improve business efficiency and supporting records management through commitment and the provision of sufficient resources.

6.4 Senior managers are responsible for offering advice and guidance regarding records management to all staff within their area; highlighting any records management issues or concerns to the Records Manager and transferring any records of historical value to an archive for permanent preservation.

6.6 All staff are responsible for suitably maintaining all records so that they can be easily retrieved, retaining all records in line with the retention and disposal schedule, ensuring that all actions and decisions are properly recorded and adhere to this policy.

6.7 The Records Manager is responsible for ensuring that records management practices and procedures are established in line with all legal obligations and professional standards and issuing advice and guidance to senior managers where necessary.

7.0 Legislation

7.1 The management of HWIVJB's records is done so in line with the following legislative, statutory and regulatory framework. Compliance with this policy will facilitate compliance with these acts, regulations and standards.

- Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011
- Equality Act 2010
- Local Electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) Act 2006
- The Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004
- Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Public Records (Scotland) Act 1937

8.0 Relationship to other HWIVJB Policies

8.1 This policy forms part of HWIVJB's overall framework but is specifically related to the following policies and procedures:

- Data Protection
- Retention Guidelines and Disposal Arrangements
- Business Continuity Plan & Disaster Recovery Plan
- Highland Council Information Technology Policies and Procedures

9.0 Training

9.1 Training will be provided to all staff in order to highlight and increase awareness of their responsibilities in line with data protection, freedom of information and records management. Furthermore, core competencies and key knowledge and skills required by staff with operational responsibility for records management will be clearly defined to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities; can offer advice and guidance and can remain proactive in their management of recordkeeping issues and procedures within HWIVJB.

10.0 Monitoring & Review

10.1 Compliance with this Policy and related standards and guidance will be monitored by the Records Manager in consultation with the other senior managers. Regular reports will be made at Management Team meetings and updates will be disseminated to all staff when required.

10.2 This policy will be reviewed annually in order to take account of any new or changed legislation, regulations or business practices. Any updates to the overall Records Management Plan will be notified to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland through progress update reviews.