



The Highland Council

Information and Data Strategy

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1. Document Control

1.1 Version History

Version	Date	Author	Change
1.0	08/09/2022	Miles Watters FOI & Data Protection Manger	New Strategy replacing Information Management Strategy V3.0 2016 Approved by Corporate Resources Committee 08/09/2022

1.1 Document Approval

Name	Role	Reason
	Corporate Resources Committee	Approval
	Information Governance Board (IGB)	Review and acceptance
Kate Lackie	ECO Performance & Governance (Senior Information Risk Owner)	Review and acceptance

2. Introduction

Information and data are critical to every part of the Council's business. Managing and using it correctly, protecting it appropriately and making it available to both stakeholders and the public enables the Council to fulfil its objectives, deliver improved services and increase our standing with the public.

Increasing demands for the right to government information and data means the relationship between the citizen and the public sector is changing. Digital approaches are transforming the way that public services are used and delivered. In responding to these challenges, the Council is embracing a move towards greater openness and maximising the value of information to help facilitate closer collaboration and digital services.

This refreshed information & data strategy sets out the Council's approach to managing information to achieve the right balance between making information more widely available to the public, whilst ensuring that adequate protection is in place.

2.1 Why do we need a strategy?

Information comes in many forms – policy documents, research papers, minutes, statistics, operational data, case files, personal data – and is held in a variety of printed and electronic formats. Across the Council we use this information in our daily working lives as we work to achieve our objectives – whether it be delivering services, formulating policy, managing projects, holding meetings or managing staff.

Many services are now delivered in partnership or are commissioned from third parties. This requires additional safeguards when managing the Council's information: we need to ensure that information ownership is clear, the right people have appropriate access to the right information and it is handled correctly throughout its lifecycle.

The Council is evolving the way we do business with our customers and increasing provision of digital services. The Council's Digital Vision sees the integration of digital tools and solutions throughout the organisation. This will be evident across all services, with responsibility for leading and delivering on digital broadly adopted across the Council. There will be close alignment with the People Strategy with staff encouraged to learn and develop new digital, data and technology skills. The Council will utilise business intelligence and information management to adopt a data-informed, collaborative approach throughout the organisation's day to day operations, improving efficiencies and delivering positive outcomes for our citizens. The Council's Digital Strategy will continue to evolve and improve with active monitoring and adoption of new technology, innovation, and skills development, underpinned with strong governance.

Evidence-based decision making requires good quality, relevant and timely information and data interrogation tools to provide business intelligence which supports service delivery and the planning of future services and informs decisions about resource allocation. Good business intelligence supports efficient performance monitoring and reporting of statutory or key performance indicators.

We need flexible and agile teams across the Council; staff need secure access to the information they need, at any time, from anywhere. To encourage a 'One Council' approach and reduce silo working, records must be regarded as corporate rather than personal assets. This means a change of culture from relying on information held by individuals in their personal drives and email stores, as well as manual storage units.

In addition, there is now more external scrutiny of how councils manage their information, through enhanced data protection legislation, and a move towards greater openness and transparency around the information that we hold.

To maximise the potential benefit from our information, we need to manage it effectively, re-use it where we can, share it appropriately and ensure that it is adequately protected. Information that is not managed properly may be lost, shared with the wrong people or not found at all.

Poor data quality and failure to manage information appropriately can lead to:

- Less value for money in terms of service delivery
- Additional costs of recreating or recovering lost information, and storing or digitising information that is not needed
- Poor outcomes for customers
- Poor decision making
- Difficulty, delays or additional costs in providing on-going services
- Poor external inspection outcomes
- Loss of access to information affecting the rights and freedoms of our customers as well as the Council's performance
- Penalties and fines.

This strategy sets out the Council's approach to improving the way it creates, uses, manages, shares and protects information to achieve the Council's objectives and effective partnership working. The strategy is aligned with our Digital and ICT strategies in order to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach.

2.2 Benefits

When information and data is well managed it brings a number of benefits to citizens, staff and the Council:

2.2.1 Citizens

- Your information is accurate, reliable and accessible
- Your transactions with the Council and its commissioned service providers and partners will be processed promptly
- You will be confident that your information is protected and handled appropriately
- You will know what information we hold, how we use it and with whom it is shared
- Services are delivered efficiently and cost effectively
- Decisions that affect you are more transparent
- You can participate more in decision making
- You can engage and collaborate with us in achieving our aims
- You can hold us to account

2.2.2 Staff

- You can find the information you need quickly and easily
- You know what your responsibilities are, what to keep and what to dispose of
- You can work more efficiently
- You can make the best use of resources, re- using information that you and colleagues create rather than reinventing the wheel
- You can work more collaboratively, making best use of skills and knowledge
- You know what can be shared and with whom
- You know what information needs to be protected and what should be made available

- to the public
- You can provide assurance that risks are being managed and that you are complying with your responsibilities and legal requirements

2.2.3 The Council

- We can provide more effective services and help control costs
- We can be more transparent
- We can keep information protected and secure
- Our information risks and likelihood of associated fines are reduced
- Our customer experience is improved
- We build trust in the quality of our information both for staff and the public
- Our decisions and policies are better informed
- We can comply with legislation
- We can share our corporate memory with future generations
- We can meet expectations of how we will manage information
- Through the role of Information Asset Owners (IAOs), we are aware of our information holdings

3. Strategic context and challenges

It is widely acknowledged that the expectations of public services are changing. With increasing demand for good quality services to be delivered in a timely and efficient way, it has never been more important that we put value for money at the forefront of our thinking, ensuring that we understand our data and evidence base in order to design services in the best way. Key to this is the development of our use of information and data, both in terms of how we collect, integrate, manage, analyse and present information to inform decisions, and how we manage and get maximum value from the data that we hold. This strategy has been developed in the context of the key drivers which will support the Council in delivering its commitments as set out in the Council Programme and Corporate Plan. These business drivers fall into four main categories:

3.1 Strategic drivers

- Sustained pressure on public sector funding and increasing demand and inflationary pressures combined with the impact of Covid means that the Council faces a growing funding gap. These factors continually challenge the Council's existing models of service delivery to remain affordable, sustainable and relevant to service users. Key to the success of any new/revised operating model(s) will be the information and insight that the Council uses to make decisions about services.
- Nationally driven initiatives such as the Early Years & Child Care, City Region Deal, Adult & Children's Social Care partnership arrangements, the Community Empowerment Act, Fairer Scotland Duty, Community Planning, Climate Change requirements and Covid recovery require shared intelligence for the targeting of action and interventions.

3.2 Service drivers

- Demand from Services and external audit for more advanced intelligence to move beyond our reporting of 'what happened' to understand more analytical questions such as 'how could we prevent it happening?', 'why did it happen?', 'could it happen again?', 'what will happen if we change xyz?' and 'what else does the data tell us that we have never thought to ask?'

- Increasing need for service redesign to improve productivity, meet new pressures, implement any data driven recommendations of service diagnostics carried out through Redesign or Change Programmes and realise the benefits of the reconfiguration of Services through the Service Redesign work.

3.3 Technology drivers

- The availability of data to learn from continues to grow at a significant pace as the Highland population increasingly interacts with social media, smart technology, voice recognition and as big data and the Internet become a greater part of everybody's lives.
- Data and the technology to analyse data are being revolutionised through the development of data science, predictive analytics, data mining and cognitive processes such as machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI). Developing the Council's uses of these techniques offers opportunities to redesign public service built around the needs of local people.
- The Council has a clear direction to move to off-premises (Cloud) solutions and has migrated to Office 365 with a significant programme of refreshing both hardware and software. A rapid deployment of tools such as MS Teams in response to Covid-19 has also increased the pace of change within the organisation. This presents opportunities in terms of where the Council's data resides, how it is shared and how it is used.

3.4 Legislative drivers

- There is a complex framework of legislation which requires initiatives resulting from the above drivers to be closely governed:
 - Local Government (Scotland) Acts
 - Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011
 - UK General Data Protection Regulation
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003
 - Pupils' Educational Records (Scotland) Regulations 2003
 - Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002
 - Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004
 - Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015
 - INSPIRE (Scotland) Regulations 2009
 - Digital Economy Act 2017
 - Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2016
 - Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
 - Copyright and Rights in Databases Regulations 1997
- These are supported by statutory and non-statutory codes of practice as well as guidance from government, ombudsmen and professional bodies.
- This legislation covers privacy and the protection of information, transparency and the publication of information as well as obligations to provide evidence that the Council's information and data is being appropriately managed.
- Information Asset Owners must understand the obligations they have under primary legislation and how these obligations fit with the information governance legal framework.
- A key aspect of Information governance is risk management. The risks associated with different sets of data and the way they are processed must be clearly understood, documented and mitigated.

4. Strategic principles

The following principles will be complied with in relation to all information and data.

4.1 Information assets

An information asset is a body of information that is valuable to the Council's business regardless of the format e.g. paper, electronic, or microfilm. It will often be a collection of business information, for example information held in the social care system and any supporting files and documents would collectively be an information asset.

Managing information assets involves understanding why information is held, what information is held, where information is held, what is added and removed, how information is moved, and who has access and why. It is important that information assets are properly managed so we can understand and address risks to the information and data, and ensure that information is only used within the law for the public good.

Information assets must be managed in compliance with the data protection principles.

We will:

- ensure that information asset ownership and responsibilities are clear
- maintain a register of our information assets and owners
- rationalise our information assets and ensure their potential is maximized
- implement data quality standards
- continue to work towards a comprehensive overview of core business data, using tools such as the information asset register, register of processing activity (ROPA) and information flow mapping.

4.2 Lifecycle management

Lifecycle management is the management of information in systems throughout its whole life; creation or receipt, storage, use and retention/disposal.

Many Council staff spend a high proportion of their time creating, gathering or managing information. We can maximise the return on this investment in information by using it to inform the commissioning and delivery of services to our citizens.

We need to move away from a reliance on paper towards creating, storing and accessing all records in digital form in appropriate line of business systems, sharepoint sites and team sites, helping us to become a paper light organisation. All new projects, processes and service reviews should store all key information electronically, where feasible.

We will:

Support Digital and agile working

- Maximise the use of existing technology to help users manage and use information more effectively
- Implement data quality standards
- Take account of improved customer outcomes when designing and/or commissioning new information systems
- Improve the management of our information on corporate servers

Manage people's expectations about the use of their information

- Embed privacy by design
- Understand and document the reasons for processing personal data
- Ensure that data subjects are aware of the collection and use of their personal data

Ensure the provision of suitable storage solutions

- Develop and apply information lifecycle principles to our document and records stores
- Securely manage physical records in our records centre and satellite stores
- Work to reduce the amount of information being stored
- Work towards a change of culture where key information is held for corporate benefit rather than in personal stores

Improve retention and disposal practices

- Improve retention functionality of our IT systems
- Maintain a records retention schedule
- Ensure secure confidential waste facilities are in place

Continue to identify and preserve key records

- Develop tools for the digital preservation of records
- Manage records of the Council's major activities and decisions permanently in the Archives

Maximise the value of information and data

- Implement data quality standards
- Develop and implement our Business Intelligence vision
- Improve collection of management information throughout business processes
- Make better use of data and collaborate to improve our strategic and operational insights

4.3 Transparency

There are increasing demands for transparency of public sector information. Each year we see a significant growth in the number and/or complexity of requests for information under Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Environmental Information legislation.

We will:

- provide dedicated resources to manage requests for information
- regularly review practices to ensure we are best placed to deal with the ongoing increase in volume and complexity of requests
- keep up to date with the Scottish Information Commissioner's guidance and decisions, and case law
- develop and upskill an internal network of key staff
- promote the public's rights of access to information on our website
- analyse requests to identify additional information that can be proactively published
- look to open up our data to encourage those with digital skills to develop solutions for the public
- ensure FOI responses provide access to information in a re-usable format.

4.4 Business intelligence and analysis

Business Intelligence is how we bring together data for analytical purposes so that we can plan and provide efficient services to the public. Business Intelligence in its wider sense is

all of the information the Council holds both quantitative and qualitative. This includes our Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and benchmarking information as well as other operational data and information and external statistics about the Highland population.

Data is generated throughout the customer journey through our services and this includes data about our customers and our staff. Through analysis of this data and the wider sources of data that are available, the Council will seek to manage efficient services as part of our Planning and Performance Management Framework based on:

- our understanding of customer needs
- planning services to meet needs
- managing delivery of
 - the customer journey or service as a whole through to its outcome
 - the stages of the journey or the business processes that lead to the outcome
- learning from the customer experience (across one or more services) to improve or transform future service delivery
- improve our understanding of future need.

We have developed a Business Intelligence Vision which details our approach to business intelligence and how we more effectively use our data and information. This vision sits within a suite of strategy documents including this one which will support our overall digital transformation.

To deliver the vision we will:

- define the roles, processes and competencies of managers and staff in using Business Intelligence in our work.
- identify and develop organisational learning and development to support the use of Business Intelligence.
- bring together data, intelligence, change and performance analysts and rebalance these with new skills in a dedicated Business Intelligence service.
- develop a data catalogue to ensure the Council understands the data resources available to it and exploit them in order to drive transformation and improvement.
- use Business Intelligence in a campaign showing achievements against the Council's plans and strategies and improve the communication of Business Intelligence, performance and successes and strengthen public performance reporting.

4.5 Information and data sharing

We work with a multitude of partners and suppliers and need to consider how information flows between us, ensuring any sharing is legal and compliant. To support this we need to embed information & data sharing agreements Council-wide and ensure guidance and tools to facilitate partnership working are in place.

We will:

- commit to and support the appropriate sharing of information and data between Community Partnership members
- promote use of approved data sharing agreement templates
- provide guidance to project managers, commissioners and contract managers to aid partnership working, implement privacy by design, reduce associated risks and ensure the whole information lifecycle is taken into account
- develop tools to enable an improved understanding of Council information and its sensitivities before it is shared, e.g. information flow maps

- provide a secure means to store, organise, share and access information (including, but not limited to, secure email)
- consider information implications and, where appropriate, undertake data protection impact assessments at the outset of commissioning services, major change projects or new contracts
- develop appropriate information governance, procedures and guidance before new technological solutions are implemented.

4.6 Confidentiality and security

The significance of information and related technologies is increasing in most aspects of business and public life, with the associated information security and cyber threats also increasing.

We therefore have a greater need to mitigate information risk and protect our information and related ICT assets from ever changing threats.

Security is an essential part of managing information. It is important that we embed an excellent user experience alongside sufficient security measures. We are developing our understanding of information risk management to encourage proportionate security measures that reflect a balance of the risks and the benefits. We are developing an holistic approach to protecting information through a combination of technical and non-technical security measures.

We will ensure appropriate organisational measures are in place, including:

- building security
- pre-employment checks that meet the Government standards
- secure transfer methods for physical records
- an information risk register
- a framework of policies, guidance and self-help tools
- a framework of Council-wide business continuity measures
- contracts with our processors that comply with data protection legislation and records management standards.

We will maintain and develop appropriate technical measures, including:

- system security standards for new systems
- network protection, including firewalls, antivirus software and penetration testing
- data classification standards and tools
- secure channels for interacting with customers
- monitoring of information security controls used by our data processors
- understanding of security weaknesses and incidents, implementing improvements as required.

4.7 Training and awareness

Education is key to bringing staff on the journey. Users are our last line of defence in securing the important information and data that we hold; all staff therefore need to be upskilled in managing the information and data that they work with.

We will:

- ensure there are suitably qualified staff in place to advise the Council
- ensure our information asset owners understand their responsibilities
- deploy regular communications to our staff
- learn from security incidents, apply and share that learning
- upskill our staff in information and data management

We will achieve this through:

- appropriate training for our information specialists
- annual e-learning for all staff
- use of internal communication tools to disseminate policies and key messages
- specialist training for key groups such as information asset owners, data analysts or those dealing with personal and sensitive information on a regular basis
- system specific training
- role-based training

4.8 Measuring success

In order to know if the strategy is successful, it is important to have in place some performance measures, these include:

- Fines received
- Number of Information Asset Owners trained
- Number of staff undertaken baseline security and information governance training
- Number of incidents reported internally
- Number of incidents reported to the Information Commissioner's Office
- Register of privacy impact assessments in place
- Number of privacy impact assessments completed
- Information asset register and register of processing activity developed and maintained
- Number of retention schedule reviews completed
- Register of information sharing agreements in place
- Number of contracts with data protection compliant clauses
- Percentage of formal requests (FOI, EIR, SAR) responded within legal timescales
- Percentage of responses to formal requests resulting in a review
- Number of files held in the Records Centre.
- Data Catalogue created supporting effective sharing and integration of business intelligence across the organisation and with partners.

5. Strategy Implementation

5.1 Corporate Resources Committee

Corporate Resources Committee agrees the vision and the Information and Data Strategy and approves changes following review of the strategy as appropriate.

5.2 Information Governance Board (IGB)

A Board has been created to oversee the delivery of the Information and Data Strategy and to govern the implementation of this across the Council, reporting to the Executive Leadership Team. An Information Governance Lead Officer from each Service represents

their Executive Chief Officer on the Board. The primary role of the Board is to identify priorities for the implementation of information and data management improvements and support delivery within services.

The IGB has a duty to consider and make recommendations to the Executive Leadership Team about information governance issues and to influence strategy and policy development. It also exists to support delivery of information and data management improvements within Services.

The IGB is chaired by the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance as the corporate owner of the Information and Data Strategy and as the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).

The IGB will agree the implementation priorities, to enable delivery in a cost-effective way that prioritises the available resources to deliver maximum return on our investments. This will form the basis of an Information Governance Programme that will guide the information governance work in the Council. The main thrust of this plan will be to create an assurance framework which enables the Council to provide evidence of its compliance with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and with the requirement under Article 30 of UK GDPR to provide a record of processing activity.

There is a framework of information management policies that requires Council staff to work in ways that are consistent with this strategy:

- Data Protection policy
- Information and Communications Technology - Acceptable Use Policy (ICT AUP)
- Information Management Policy
- Information Security and Assurance Policy
- Records management policy
- Records retention and disposal policy

These policies will be kept under review by the IGB and recommendations for significant changes will be presented to Corporate Resources Committee.

The IGB will also support compliance with these Council policies through communication and staff training.

The IGB will have close links with the ICT Strategy Board, the Digital Transformation Board and any other relevant Boards to ensure that Council initiatives and projects consider the requirements of information governance from the outset.

5.3 Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

The Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance has executive responsibility for Information Governance, and represents the corporate functions at the Executive Leadership Team. They have corporate strategic responsibility for the Information and Data Strategy and its correct deployment within the organisation. The Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance is the chair of the IGB and is the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner.

The Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance is responsible for the effective operation of the corporate information governance resources, including the Information Governance Team and Records Management Service.

5.4 Information Governance Manager

The Information Governance Manager has corporate responsibility for the delivery of the Information and Data Strategy, reporting to the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance. The Information Governance Manager has corporate oversight of the Council's application of the Information Governance Policy Framework and Council Information Assurance.

The Information Governance Manager leads the reviews of this strategy and the Information Governance Policy Framework and advises the Council on the operation of these.

The Information Governance Manager manages the Information Governance Team and the outsourced Records Management Service on behalf of the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

6. Resources

The implementation of this strategy will be delivered using existing staff resources within The Information Governance Team and Records Management Service. Both teams support Service staff in implementing the policy framework and provide advice to Services on how to ensure that new projects and initiatives comply. Services use existing resources to ensure that they comply with the Information Governance Policy Framework.

Through detailed planning of the implementation, additional resource requirements may be identified and brought to the Information Governance Board for consideration and additional resources sought from the Executive Leadership Team.