



**The Highland Council**  
**Information Management Strategy**

(Reviewed November 2016)

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## 1. Document Control

### 1.1 Version History

Version	Date	Author	Change
V1	19/08/2009	Vicki Nairn	Approved at Resources Committee First Version - 2009-2012
V1.1	01/12/2011	Vicki Nairn	Approved at Resources Committee Mid-term Review - 2009-2012 Version
V2	28/08/2013	Philip Mallard	Approved by Finance, Housing & Resources Committee  New 2013-2017 Strategy Continuation of previous 2009-2012 strategy – document refocused as high level strategy with separate Implementation Plans.
V2.1	25/02/2015	Philip Mallard	Approved at Resources Committee Mid-term Review – 2013-2017 Version
V2.6 DRAFT  (V3 when approved)	03/11/2016	Philip Mallard Information & Records Manager	New Information Management Strategy Continuation of previous 2013-2017 strategy document.  Builds upon the successes of the work by the Corporate IM Team and MI Project – increased focus on extracting value from information and Business Intelligence.

### 1.2 Document Approval

Name	Title	Role
	Resources Committee	Approval
	Information Management Governance Board (IMGB)	Review and acceptance
Michelle Morris	Depute Chief Executive	Review and acceptance
Vicki Nairn	Head of Digital Transformation	Review and acceptance

## 2. Executive Summary

Information management is the function of managing an organisation's information through its lifecycle from creation or receipt through to disposal.

Information management is about getting the right information in the right format to the right people at the right time and in the right place. The Information Management Principles that this strategy sets out are summarised below.

1. Highland Council information is a corporate asset.
2. Information management is everybody's responsibility.
3. We will manage information throughout its lifecycle to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, good practice and the Records Management Policy.
4. The right Information will be made available in the right place at the right time, accessible to those who need it.
5. We will ensure that information is accurate and fit for purpose.
6. Information is re-used and shared where appropriate.
7. Our ICT supports effective Information Management.

Information is continually created and received by the Council and this needs to be managed. We need to understand and apply these principles of information management and security. This requires the ability to identify a record; know the value of information and its sensitivity, and know how long the records need to be kept. It is equally important that staff know what should be shared, with whom and with what safeguards.

A key part of information management is the storage of information in a secure and appropriate manner. Highland Council holds a range of sensitive and confidential information, including personal information and commercial details of organisations. There is a need to maintain the security of this information whilst ensuring effective and appropriate sharing can take place with our partners, such as the NHS and Police.

Conversely there is a need to enable re-use of information and data, both within the organisation and externally. The council will work to enable open data for our non-personal and non-commercially sensitive datasets. This will create benefits for the council and the community we serve, creating opportunities for more efficient delivery and community delivery of services, along with local business opportunities.

Effective implementation of this Information Management Strategy will reduce the amount of time required to find the right information, in the right format. It will facilitate the aims of the Council, specifically in relation to enabling mobile and flexible working. It will also support asset management, customer engagement, information security, legal compliance, retention and information access, business continuity and partnership working/shared services.

### **3. Introduction**

The Information Management Strategy recognises that information is an asset of the Council and that the Council needs to manage it as such. Like any other asset, information has a value to the Council. It may incur a cost in its collection and its handling, but more importantly it will have value in effective decision making or in the effective and efficient delivery of services. Some information also has a commercial value as intellectual property. Collecting the wrong information, storing it for too long or not handling it appropriately can also make information a liability and incur cost.

This Information Management Strategy therefore sets down how the Council will manage its information assets effectively and securely, derive maximum value from those assets, contribute to the strategic aims of the Council as a whole and support the delivery of improved services to its customers. To ensure that the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information is protected the council will ensure it understands the information risks associated with its information assets.

This document defines what is meant by information and information management and it sets out what it means to the Council. It lays down the Council's vision for effective information management and the role of this Information Management Strategy in realising that vision for the Council.

Delivery of this Strategy is supported by a Corporate Information Management Programme that is overseen by the Information Management Governance Board.

### **4. What is Information?**

For the purposes of this strategy, we define information to be:

- Any paper-based (including printed and handwritten) document, including correspondence received into the Council
- Any electronically-held file or document or group of such, including images, email, office documents, audio and video files (known as unstructured or semi-structured information)
- Metadata – data held about electronic documents and files
- Any information held in a database or similar repository (known as structured information)
- Informal information held by individuals in notes of meetings, diaries, site notes

This is a deliberately broad and wide ranging definition, with the implication that any information, in whatever shape or form, needs to be managed with the same care and attention.

It excludes information carried in the heads of employees and partners which is known as Knowledge. However, through the implementation of this strategy and

the application of the Information Management Policy Framework, some knowledge will be transferred into information by being recorded in information systems.

## 5. What is Information Management?

Information management is the approach to the management of information, which includes the use of policies, governance, processes, and introduces information handling behaviours to the management of information throughout its lifecycle. The information lifecycle runs from capture or creation, through its handling, storage, retrieval and use, and ultimately to its disposal (either destruction or disposition in an historical archive). Managing information throughout its lifecycle is central to effective information management in the creation of authentic records.

Our approach should ensure that all live information is accurate and up-to-date, or, in the case of records, is an accurate record of a council activity at the time it was created. It should achieve compliance with legislative and regulatory constraints, and support the effective delivery of services.

The Council has identified 6 main streams of activity as part of the Corporate Information Management Programme:

- **Information Governance**  
The creation of a governance structure with an accountability framework that sets out roles and responsibilities and expected behaviours of staff. It includes the development and maintenance of this Strategy, the Information Management Policy Framework, information management standards, processes, controls and procedures, which together support the council in achieving its aims and activities. The presence of an appropriate Information architecture that supports the council's management of its information assets is a vital enabler for this.
- **Document & Content Management**  
The management of unstructured information in the form of documents and other containers of content throughout their lifecycle from creation to disposal. This aims to create structure through the use of effective storage, filing and indexing systems (both paper and electronic based) that enable the effective search and retrieval of information, making it available to the right people in the right format and right place at the right time.
- **Data Management & Business Intelligence**  
The identification, management and exploitation of structured data held within database driven business systems and other data stores. It is also about exploiting that information to enable further understanding and value to be obtained from it through analysis and linking of data. This will support the council's aim of making data open and available for re-use where

appropriate.

- **Geospatial Data Management**  
Management of data that identifies the geographic location or extents of features and boundaries such as buildings, streets, catchment or service areas and administrative boundaries. Ensuring the Council has a single view of its geographically related data and enabling spatial capability within its information systems. As a specialist area of data management it has its own stream of activity but the aim is to exploit the council spatial data holdings and identify linkages with other datasets to provide new insights that can support the council's operations.
- **Records Management**  
The management and creation of information to provide an evidential record of the Council's activities, and its interactions and transactions with third parties. This requires both human and technical controls to deliver evidential records.
- **Information Assurance & Security**  
Protecting the Council's information assets and management of information to provide a high level of information assurance, through protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information and meeting legislative, statutory and best practice requirements. Central to this is risk based approach to the management of information that identifies the information risks and takes appropriate action to mitigate these risks.

## 6. Why does the Council need an Information Management Strategy?

This Information Management Strategy is required for the following reasons:

- To establish common aims and strategic direction for the Council in its approach to information management, in line with British and International Standards.
- To ensure that information management activities are undertaken in a secure, coordinated manner, and are managed consistently across the Council.
- To define a suitable governance structure for information management
- To ensure that common standards, policies and consistent approaches are adopted.
- To capitalise on economies of scale, wherever possible, in the implementation of information management solutions.
- To support the creation of a flexible workplace to enable and capitalise on opportunities for joined-up services, making the sharing of information possible, and ultimately providing better services.



- To meet the Council's statutory and legal requirements.

As time passes, the way in which the Council operates will change and as such, the Information Management Strategy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to support the Council's objectives and any legislation changes.

## **7. The Council Information Architecture**

Information architecture can be defined as the design of information environments. It deals with where we store information, and the structuring and labelling of information.

The Council will establish a common language for information management to define what information the Council needs in order to provide its services, where it is to be stored, how it is handled and shared, who can use it, how access is controlled and how information is protected. This is the key enabling step for the Information Management Strategy. The benefit is increased coordination of information management across the Council.

The move from a traditional centralised data storage model to the use of multiple cloud / external based storage hosts creates a more complex information architecture and therefore presents increased information management challenges. These challenges need to be overcome through careful management and understanding of the location and interconnections of data stores, along with enabling technology to bring this information together in as close as possible to a single view.

### **7.1 Information & Data Storage**

The Council stores information in both structured and unstructured information stores.

#### **Structured Data Storage**

The Council holds structured data across a number of key information systems, each with its own information/data model or schema.

Together these form the core of the Council's Information architecture.

Structured data is more managed and defined than unstructured information and as such allows the Council to extract maximum value from it. It is an aim of this strategy to move towards holding as much information as possible within these information systems. This can be achieved through reviews of business processes to collect data in structured forms rather than through the use of documents that do not separate and define individual data items.

## **Unstructured Information Storage**

Like many organisations, the Council creates and uses a wide variety of unstructured information i.e. information outwith structured databases. A large proportion of this unstructured information is in the form of electronic documents, created using Microsoft Office applications such as Word, Excel, and Outlook. Other forms of unstructured information include PDFs, images, photographs, audio and video recordings.

It is the management of unstructured information and its storage that presents the biggest challenge to the Council and requires the most work to manage. Whilst structured information stores have their own information/data model or schema, these unstructured information stores do not normally have this control.

Unstructured Information is normally stored on file servers that have filing structures and security access controls. However the quality of the filing structures is varied, and, with local decision and control over the approach to structuring the folders of documents, there is a need to introduce further controls.

The information management policies provide a framework that guides and sets out the approaches to be taken, but the technical tools and controls to support this are not available for information stored in the the file server stores.

## **Semi-structured Information Storage**

The Council is committed to the introduction of more advanced information management tools to support management of unstructured information. Microsoft SharePoint is the main tool that is currently being used to achieve this. The structures within the SharePoint platform are a key part of the Council's information architecture and provide the tools and technical controls to support the transformation of unstructured information into a semi-structured information store through the application of metadata.

## **7.2 Corporate Information Asset Register**

The Corporate Information Asset Register is a key component of the information architecture as it defines information that is held, provides details on the management of that information, and identifies an owner and manager for each information asset. This information is required to provide a single view of the Council's information holdings and to support development of the information architecture in order to meet the needs for the management of this information.

It also provides information on the high level risk profile of the information assets, enabling prioritisation of resources to make information management improvements where this will deliver maximum value for the Council.

A council-wide Corporate Information Asset Register has been created and a process is in place for its maintenance.

### **7.3 Information Lifecycle Management**

The Records Management Policy and supporting Corporate Retention Schedules set out the Council's approach to its management of records from their creation through to their disposal. The periods of retention for each type of record, the tools to manage the process of declaring a record, and the disposal of it together form an important part of the Information Architecture.

The Council's SharePoint platform provides tools to support the management of information and records through their lifecycle. Unstructured information currently held within the file stores will be gradually reviewed, and where appropriate moved to the SharePoint document stores.

Structured information held within ICT Systems will be managed through the lifecycle using the available tools within each system. New ICT systems must be specified to take account of the requirements within this strategy to manage information through its lifecycle and to ensure retention periods can be applied.

### **7.4 Structuring and Labelling of Unstructured Information**

A business classification scheme creates structures for unstructured documents that have been identified as records, which can be used to create a corporate file plan or filing structure. We will establish the Highland Council Business Classification Scheme, which will take account of national standards and meet the requirements of the Public Records (Scotland) Act.

Accurate descriptions of information help to reduce duplication. Information that is described accurately is easier to search for and retrieve. We will exploit the features of our SharePoint platform to enable collaboration, document management, workflow and automation, and to automate the capture of metadata values where possible.

The council has an agreed security classification scheme and this scheme must be used where a security classification is applied to council information (this is known as protective marking). The council security classification scheme is consistent with the government security classification scheme, supporting appropriate sharing of information.

Protective marking shall be used where appropriate to highlight information that is sensitive to support appropriate handling of that information by recipients of the information both within the council and by partners.

## 7.5 Information Management Policy Framework

This strategy sets out the information management policies that are required to support this strategy. The policies are in place and are regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to support this strategy. Together they form a part of the information architecture by providing the policy framework for information management.

## 7.6 Information Security Management System (ISMS)

The security of the information held within the Council's information stores is of vital importance and as such the Council has an ISMS which defines its approach to the management of information to maintain its confidentiality, integrity and availability.

This is supported by the Information Security & Assurance Policy and other information management policies.

# 8. A Vision for Information Management in the Council

## 8.1 Strategic Information Management Aims

This strategic vision aims to create an information environment which is:

- **Objective driven** – Managers collaborate with staff to ensure that the right information is available to the right staff and partners, that it is shared with others when appropriate, and that the information management processes are in place to facilitate the achievement of core business and operational objectives.
- **Knowledge based** – supports staff in the quest for organisational learning e.g. intranet, Frequently Asked Questions.
- **Integrated** – information from a wide variety of sources is available to staff through a simple interface in a way that permits easy use and re-use.
- **Reliable** – information can be trusted to be complete and accurate and with one version of the truth.
- **Transparent** – the infrastructure for delivering information is invisible to the information user.
- **Secure and with known privacy boundaries** - owners and users of information know exactly who can access information and under what

circumstances. They understand the extent of their rights and that of others' to privacy and compliance with Data Protection legislation.

- **Affordable** – comes at a cost the Council considers affordable.
- **Personalised** – information is presented in a manner that is customised to the individual user's requirements and behaviours.
- **Compatible** with current systems, enhancing resilience, and supporting development and improvement.

## 8.2 Information Management Principles

The following information management principles must be followed by all Council employees, those working on behalf of the Council and any person who handles Council information. The structure and operation of all our business processes and ICT systems should be compatible with them. The principles are:

**1. Highland Council information is a corporate asset.**

The culture and attitudes within the Council towards information assets will be such that information is seen as a valuable asset and accordingly treated with respect and professionalism, without hesitation or second thought, as the natural way to handle information.

**2. Information management is everybody's responsibility**

All staff and those handling Council information are personally responsible for the security and management of the information they create, capture, store, use or share.

**3. We will manage information throughout its lifecycle to ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, good practice and the Records Management Policy.**

We will ensure that records are appropriately managed, with professional records management practice and technology that meets legislative requirements, and approaches will be embedded in business processes and systems.

**4. The right Information will be made available in the right place at the right time, accessible to those who need it.**

Employees will benefit from the right information being readily available for them to undertake their duties effectively and efficiently. Information will be accessible anywhere and anytime with the correct access controls applied, regardless of where and how it is stored.

**5. We will ensure that information is accurate and fit for purpose.**

Employees will be able to trust in the accuracy and integrity of the information made available to them. They will be able to quickly and unambiguously identify the owner and the correct version of any piece of

information held by the Council.

## **6. Information is re-used and shared where appropriate**

Information, once generated, will be available for reuse across the Council where appropriate, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort. This will support a “learning organisation”, with each employee benefiting from the information products of others, avoiding re-invention and re-discovery and reducing costs. Readily accessible information will enable new and improved ways of working and support continuous improvement based on accurate and timely information.

Information will be readily shareable, and shared where appropriate. For personal data this will be supported by Data Sharing Agreements, entered into between Services, functions, partners and third parties, enabling the delivery of consistent and joined-up services. Non-personal and non-commercially sensitive information shall be made available as open data for external re-use wherever this is possible.

## **7. Our ICT supports effective Information Management**

Information Systems and use of technology must be coordinated, compatible, integrated and supportive of information management policies and processes.

# **9. Information Management Policy Framework**

This section identifies supporting information management policies that the Council requires and outlines their content and purpose. Policy setting is led corporately and these apply to all areas of the Council. The collection of council policies are known as the Information Management Policy Framework.

## **9.1 Information Management Policy**

The Information Management Policy is the Council’s overarching policy on managing information.

The policy expands the Council’s Information Management Principles set out in this strategy and provides supporting policy statements which encompass the Council’s statutory and regulatory requirements for managing information.

## **9.2 Records Management Policy**

The Council’s Records Management Policy sets out the Council’s approach to the management of its records, the roles, responsibilities and governance.

### **9.3 Records Retention and Disposal Policy and supporting Corporate Retention Schedules**

The Records Retention & Disposal Policy sets out the council approach to the setting and enforcing of retention periods for different record types and sets out the disposal approach that Information Asset Owners must follow.

The Corporate Retention Schedules are the mechanism to ensure the Council is maintaining necessary records for the appropriate length of time. The Corporate Retention Schedules are made available to staff through the Intranet and are governed by the Information Management Governance Board.

### **9.4 Information Security & Assurance Policy**

To ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of council information assets and to support the Information Security Management System there are a range of policy positions that need to be set out. The Information Security & Assurance Policy provides this Council statement of policy on a range of security issues such as passwords, encryption, clear desk and clear screen.

It sets out the councils commitment to taking a risk based approach to the management of its information and through this enabling the council to take managed risks to minimise cost whilst protecting the confidentiality, integrity and availability of its information assets.

### **9.5 Data Protection Policy**

The Data Protection Policy sets out how the Council will comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. This is supported by the other information management policies that direct the handling of personal data and information.

## **10. Strategy Implementation**

The implementation of this strategy is overseen by the Information Management Governance Board (IMGB).

The IMGB 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 Management Programme that will guide the information management work in the council.

The information management policies provide a framework that requires council

staff to work in ways that are consistent with this strategy. The governance structure will support compliance with these Council policies through changes to business processes, communication and staff training.

## **11. Information Governance**

The Information Management Strategy and any reviews require approval by Resources Committee.

Specific Roles under this strategy are:

### **11.1 Resources Committee**

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

### **11.2 Information Management Governance Board (IMGB)**

A Board has been created to oversee the delivery of the Information Management Strategy and to govern the implementation of this across the Council, reporting to the Executive Leadership Team. An Information Management Lead Officer from each Service represents their Service Director on the Board. The primary role of the Board is to identify priorities for the implementation of information management improvements and support delivery within services.

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

The IMGB is chaired by the Head of Digital Transformation as the corporate owner of the Information Management Strategy and as Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO).

### **11.3 Depute Chief Executive**

The Depute Chief Executive has executive responsibility for Information Management, and represents the corporate functions at the Executive Leadership Team.

### **11.4 Head of Digital Transformation**

The Head of Digital Transformation has corporate strategic responsibility for the Information Management Strategy and its correct deployment within the



organisation. The Head of Digital Transformation is the chair of the IMGB and is the Council's SIRO.

The Head of Digital Transformation is responsible for the effective operation of the corporate information management resources, including the Corporate Information Management Team and Records Management Service.

### **11.5 Information & Records Manager**

The Information & Records Manager has corporate operational responsibility for the delivery of the Information Management strategy and oversees all activity to deliver this, reporting to the Head of Digital Transformation. The Information & Records Manager has corporate oversight of the council's application of the Information Management Policy Framework and Council Information Assurance.

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

The Information & Records Manager manages the Corporate Information Management Team and the outsourced Records Management Service on behalf of the Head of Digital Transformation.

## **12. Resources**

The implementation of this Strategy will be delivered using existing staff resources within The Corporate Information Management Team and Records Management Service.

A time limited Managing Information Project has been operating to support the existing teams by implementing specific areas of this Strategy. This has been funded through additional resources from the Transformational Savings Board. This programme of work has delivered efficiency savings through the focused implementation of this strategy. The project has been focused on delivering sustainable benefits that can be maintained after the end of the project by the Corporate Information Management Team.

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