



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council

Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Records Management Policy

September 2015

1. Background.

Records management is defined as the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence and information of business activities and transactions in the form of records.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council:

- ◆ recognises that its records are part of the cultural and archival heritage and resources of the community it serves;
- ◆ accepts that it has an obligation to ensure that its records are managed effectively and at least cost, commensurate with legal, operational and information requirements; and
- ◆ is committed to fulfilling its responsibilities under the Public Records Act (NI) 1923; the Disposal of Documents Order (No.167) 1925; the Data Protection Act 1998; and the Freedom of Information Act 2000

2. Aim.

The aim of this policy is to ensure the creation and management of authentic, reliable and useable records, capable of supporting the functions of Council for as long as they are required.

The aims of the policy are to:

- 2.1 establish a Council-wide framework for the management of records in all mediums;
- 2.2 promote and ensure compliance with legislative requirements and best practice standards;
- 2.3 ensure that all records can be used as an information resource which enhances their value as assets of the organisation; and
- 2.4 identify the roles and responsibilities for ensuring good records management.

3. Scope.

This policy applies to all records created or received by the Council in the course of its business. The same Records Management principles apply irrespective of the medium in which the record is held. A record is any paper, book, photograph, microfilm, map, drawing, artefact, chart, magnetic tape, disk, optical disk or electronic storage medium.

4. Objectives.

By working in accordance with this Policy, the Council intends:

- 4.1 to implement best practice in its systems and procedures for records management, data protection and access to information legislation to ensure that records are managed throughout their life cycle in the medium most appropriate to the task they perform;
- 4.2 to develop and maintain information retrieval systems which facilitate access to individual records and the information they contain, enable them to be retrieved quickly and accurately and identify their relationship with other records held by the Council;
- 4.3 to ensure records are protected and kept secure in a manner commensurate with their value to the operation and business continuity of the Council and the archival heritage of the County;
- 4.4 to ensure records are retained for the appropriate period of time and that those records worthy of permanent preservation are identified as early as possible through the creation and implementation of a Retention and Disposal Schedule;
- 4.5 to ensure the Council's notification entry in the Data Protection Register is accurate, and that personal data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Principles and the other requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998; and
- 4.6 to ensure the Council's Publication Scheme is maintained and complied with, and that requests for information are handled in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

5. Responsibilities.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Records Management Policy. All employees are expected to follow this policy and take the appropriate action to meet the aims and objectives. Appendix A provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities of key persons.

6. Linkages.

This Policy provides the framework to guide the Council's practice in relation to Records Management, and links to the Council's Retention and Disposal Schedule. Further procedural guidance will be developed including Guidance on preservation of

electronic data, a business classification scheme, Guidance on file creation, maintenance and management and Procedures for the disposal of records

7. Information Management Principles.

The Council will ensure that:

- 7.1 we manage information effectively as a strategic Fermanagh and Omagh District Council resource.** Information resources, regardless of where they are held, are a corporate resource and hence the property of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and not the property of individual employees or teams. All information resources and processes must add value to the work of the Council and demonstrate value for money;
- 7.2 we are all responsible for the Council's information assets.** Those with specific responsibility for managing information assets must be clearly identified. However, all users are accountable for their use of information;
- 7.3 we share information (responsibly) with our colleagues, partners and customers.** Staff should be able to access information for the effective performance of their role and there should be the opportunity for the free flow of information, as appropriate, across the Council. The choice of IT systems, and decisions about their implementation, should take account of the increasing requirement for the need for effective and appropriate access;
- 7.4 we protect information,** especially personal information, which cannot be shared for legal reasons, e.g. in relation to privacy, security or due to commercial sensitivity;
- 7.5 we produce accurate information and meet our customers' expectations.** Information must be timely, relevant and consistent, with duplication of information kept to a minimum;
- 7.6 we maintain our information in compliance with our statutory obligations.** Information management must comply with prevailing legislation, information must be managed in accordance with Council policies, standards and procedures and information must be kept secure as appropriate;
- 7.7 we keep adequate records of what we do, and retain them in the most cost effective way.**

8. Review.

The Records Management Policy will, under normal circumstances, be reviewed every three years, and, from time to time, updates and re-issues will be circulated.

However, the policy will be reviewed sooner in the event of any one or more of the following:

1. Failure or weakness in the policy is highlighted.
2. Changes in legislative requirements.
3. Changes in Government/Council or other directives and requirements.

Roles and Responsibilities.

As compliance with this policy and the legislation to which it relates is very important to the business needs of the Council and its commitment to accountability and openness, the following key people have a role in encouraging the implementation of best practice:

The Council

The role of the Council, exercised in the first instance through the Policy and Resources Committee, is to set the policy on records management issues and to ensure that those responsible for the implementation of the policy are held accountable for its delivery.

Individual Members

The role of individual Members of the Council is to ensure that they support the concept of good record management and adhere to the principles of data protection and freedom of information as public representatives.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that the Council complies with legislative requirements relating to records management, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Their principal role is to ensure that the Council's policy is adhered to.

Directors

Each Director is responsible for the management of the records within their Department and for the application of the policy within their areas of responsibility.

Head of Policy and Strategic Services

Their role is to be responsible for the promotion and communication of the policy, to monitor compliance by Departments, in consultation with Directors and to be the 'corporate champion' of good records management.

Senior Managers

All managers in the Council are accountable to their supervising managers for ensuring that all information and records systems within their operational responsibilities comply with the record management guidelines. They are also responsible for ensuring that guidelines and records management procedures are developed and maintained for their operational units and communicated to employees.

All Employees

All employees are accountable to their line managers for compliance with this policy and the related corporate guidelines and operational procedures, which will be communicated to them.

Others

This policy also applies to any individual organisation acting on behalf of the Council.