

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

- (a) This Records Management Policy (the RM Policy) sets out a corporate policy and framework for the management of records within **Dartford Borough Council** (the Council) and covers:
- the requirements that must be met for records of the Council to be considered as proper records of the activities of the organisation;
 - the requirements for systems and processes that deal with records;
 - the quality and reliability which must be maintained to provide a valuable information and knowledge resource for the Council;
 - its place within the strategic and policy framework of the Council;
 - the requirements governing the records registration process;
 - the requirements for the long term preservation of information;
 - the requirements for reviewing this RM Policy and ensuring implementation/compliance throughout the Council.
- (b) The Council recognizes that its records are an important public asset and are a key resource to effective operation and accountability and that records require careful management.
- (c) Good records management practices ensure:
- open government;
 - legal compliance;
 - accountability;
 - support for the Council's decision making processes and activities
 - proper storage and prompt and reliable retrieval of information
- (d) In this RM Policy, 'records' is any recorded information regardless of medium (paper, microfilm, electronic, audio-visual , copies of publications etc.) which are created, collected, processed, used, stored and/or disposed of by the Council, its employees and any other person/body/organisation acting for or on behalf of the Council as its agent.
- (e) Legislation and codes of practice which affect the management of the Council's records, include:
- Local Government Act 1972;
 - Limitation Act 1980;
 - Data Protection Act 1998;
 - Freedom of Information Act 2000;
 - Code of Practice on the Management of Records;
 - Environmental Information Regulations.

2. Principles of Records Management Systems

Good practice will be achieved by:

- Determining what records should be created and retained by each Department through the establishment of retention schedules.
- Determining appropriate corporate systems for the retention of records which ensure all appropriate records and related data (metadata*) are captured into the system. These systems may be electronic or paper based, as appropriate.
- Ensuring that there is no unwarranted duplication between the paper and electronic record collection.
- Retaining records to satisfy operational, legal and other needs.
- Developing appropriate retrieval aids such as classification schemes and indexes to facilitate the retrieval of records and information.
- Ensuring records are maintained in a safe and secure environment.
- Ensuring records are retained for as long as required and no longer.
- Carrying out timely and appropriate destruction of records and information in conjunction with Council retention schedules.

** Metadata – data describing content, context and structure of records to allow them to be linked to the business process from which they were created*

3. Accountability

(a) Managing Director

The Managing Director will ensure that the Council complies with the requirements of legislation, codes and regulations affecting management of records.

(b) Strategic Director

- i. Will take lead responsibility for the Council's records management system and, through the Council's organizational structures and periodic audits, will:-
 - monitor implementation of, and compliance with, this Policy.
 - ensure that an inventory of record collections is developed and maintained of the nature and type of records and potential records within collections.
- ii. Will in consultation with the Data Protection Officer and Freedom of Information Officer, be responsible for:
 - initiating and directing information audits to develop appropriate retention schedules and classification schemes (corporate and departmental);

- initiating and directing compliance audits of records management systems (policies, procedures and systems) to ensure the Council's statutory obligations are met;
 - ensuring that systems for the destruction of records complies with all Council obligations under data protection and freedom of information legislation;
 - issuing guidance for implementing records management systems and compliance with this RM Policy;
 - for developing strategies for the permanent preservation of selected records.
 - issuing standards and guidance on records management.
- iii. Will work closely with the IT Manager (Delivery), Service Managers and any designated Officers to ensure that there is consistency in the management of records throughout the Council and that advice and guidance, including training on good records management practice, is provided.

(c) Directors

Will:

- support the Managing Director and Strategic Director in their roles relating to RM;
- designate an Officer within each Department,, who may be the Service Manager, to take responsibility for the implementation of this RM Policy;
- ensure that written procedures for the management of records are established and followed within their respective Departments to meet the requirements of this RM Policy.

(d) Services Managers

will be required to:

- ensure the capture of records (both paper and electronic) that provides evidence of its functional activities;
- ensure the requirements of this RM Policy are articulated in business plans and procedures/works instructions as necessary and appropriate;
- identify staff responsibilities to implement this RM Policy;
- establish record retention schedules for all areas of work;
- ensure that staff receive appropriate training to meet their responsibilities under this RM Policy.
- provide low cost secure storage for departmental records as necessary and appropriate;

- ensure that there is a distinction made between the electronic documents which are printed, printed records that reside in the paper record systems and other original documents that are retained as electronic records (possibly to be passed to an electronic record keeping system).

(e) Staff

who create, use, manage or dispose of Council records:-

- have a duty to protect them and to ensure that any information that they add to the record is accurate, complete and necessary;
- abide by departmental written procedures/works instructions relating to records management.

4. RM Policy Statement

(a) Information is a corporate asset and the records of the Council are important sources of administrative, evidential and historical information. They are vital to the Council in its current and future operations, for the purposes of accountability, and for an awareness and understanding of its history and procedures. They form part of the corporate memory of the Council.

(b) In consultation with organisations which may be concerned with the management of records held by the Council on their behalf, the Council will create, use, manage and destroy or preserve such records in accordance with all statutory requirements and/or organisations' specific requirements.

(c) Systematic records management is fundamental to Council efficiency. It ensures that the right information is:

- captured, stored, retrieved and destroyed or preserved according to need;
- fully exploited to meet current and future needs, and to support change;
- accessible to those who need to make use of it.

and

that the appropriate technical, Council and IT and staffing resource elements exist to make this possible.

(d) The Council's records management system aims to ensure that

- the record is present;
- there is no unnecessary duplication of the record;
- the Council has the information that is needed to form a reconstruction of activities or transactions that have taken place;
- it is possible to locate and access the information and display it in a way consistent with initial use;
- the record can be interpreted;
- it is possible to establish the context of the record: who created the document, during which business process, and how the record is related to other records;
- the record can be trusted;

- the record reliably represents the information that was actually used in or created by the business process, and its integrity and authenticity can be demonstrated;
- the record can be maintained through time;
- the qualities of accessibility, interpretation and trustworthiness can be maintained for as long as the record is needed, perhaps permanently, despite changes of formats.

5. Policy Framework

This RM Policy may be merged with other general corporate policies or strategies or kept separate.

(a) Following Best Practice

- records should be managed in accordance with relevant codes of practice for records management such as ISO 15489, which provides an overall guide to best practice in records management of the Council's e-business strategy;
- electronic records will underpin e-business providing records for business use, corporate knowledge management and evidence-based policy making, and evidence for accountability and historical use.

(b) Freedom of Information

The formation and maintenance of records will adhere to procedures under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the associated Code of Practice on the Management of Records under Freedom of Information.

(c) Data Protection

Records will be managed in accordance with procedures under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Data Retention Schedule (available through the Intranet).

(d) Audit

Records will meet any specific audit requirements but, as a minimum, all records will be retained for a minimum of 12 months after the audit for the relevant year of account is signed off. Records that affect the accounts (e.g. invoices, receipts) will be retained for 6 years.

(e) Environmental Information Regulations

Records will be managed in accordance with these regulations.

6. Records Registration Requirements

- (a) A records registration system helps the Council to set minimum conditions for the registration of records, so ensuring a link between the record and its administrative roots.
- (b) The registration of records will follow best practice in records management and allow for users of the records to identify and track particular records. The Council's registration systems require:

- classifying of records into series that have meaningful titles and a consistent reference code;
- making those individuals responsible for creating records, responsible for allocating them to a series and, if necessary, a sub-series;
- having sequences of reference numbers that can cover series containing either, or both, electronic and paper records;
- checking that the correct records have been allocated to the sequence and that meaningful titles are used;
- auditing lists of the references used so that the registration system makes sense and records can be found in appropriate search sequences.

7. Preservation Requirements

- (a) A preservation requirement aims to minimize the risks associated with technological changes and ensures that records remain intact. It also allows for any non-technical changes, for example always having an associated context which remains comprehensible as the organisational structure changes.
- (b) The Council will therefore seek to preserve electronic records during any change in infrastructure. Preservation needs will be satisfied when there are changes in:
- the technology that processes the electronic records and how this affects the way records are processed throughout the record's existence;
 - organisational structures and how these are interpreted and give the records context;
 - the definition of terms used in the metadata and within the records themselves;
 - the classification of the electronic records, including how the records are grouped and described, so that they can be presented in a way consistent with the original understanding of the subject when the record was created.

8. Policy Review

- (a) Departments of the Council will adhere to this RM Policy in the operation of their records management activities. Implementation and interpretation of this RM Policy will be monitored by the Strategic Director in consultation with the Freedom of Information Officer and Data Protection Officer and there will be periodic planned audits, of the Council's records management systems to assess how this RM Policy is being put into practice. The audits will seek to highlight where non-conformance is occurring and suggest a tightening of controls and adjustment to related procedures.
- (b) The review of this RM Policy will be synchronized with the review of the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme.

References

- International Standard on Records Management (ISO 15489)
 Management, Appraisal and Preservation of Electronic Records (2 vols, PRO, 1999)
 Guidance for an Inventory of Record Collections (PRO, 2000)
 Data Protection Act 1998
 A Guide for Records Managers and Archivists (PRO, PRONI, NAS, in association with ODPC, 2000)
 Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records under Freedom of Information
 Records Management Standards and Guidance (PRO, from 1998) on:
- Record keeping;
 - Acquisition and appraisal;
 - Information policy;
 - Preservation.