

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 26 JULY 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

## **RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND RECORDS RETENTION POLICY**

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### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report recommends two essential policies, in relation to information management and record keeping. The first is the Records Management Policy; the second is the Records Retention Policy which replaces the current Records Retention Policy, published in 2005.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. The Council records are a vital information asset and a valuable resource to both staff and the public. By implementing these two policies, the Council will demonstrate commitment to best practice and compliance in information governance.
- 2.2. The implementation of these two policies is a necessary prerequisite to ensuring that information can be accessed easily and efficiently, can be destroyed in a timely manner, and that it meets all legislative, financial and regulatory obligations. Their adoption ensures that Wirral Council remains at the forefront of innovation and best practice in this area and will make best use of the emerging Records Management and Archive Facility.
- 2.3. The policies will be reviewed at least every two years in order to take account of any amendments in legislation and best practice.

### **3. RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

- 3.1. The Records Management Policy is a legal requirement, as set out in the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice, issued under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The proposed policy, attached at Appendix 1, states the commitment to the introduction of efficient records management practices and procedures, including the creation, use and disposal of all records. It defines specific roles and responsibilities for record keeping and provides a best practice framework for the management of all Council records, regardless of their format.

### **4. RECORDS RETENTION POLICY**

- 4.1. This proposed Policy is based on current legal, financial and regulatory requirements as well as professional best practice. Ensuring that records

are managed effectively, will lead to substantial savings in both time and money. This policy aims to give staff who work with information the confidence to dispose of it in a timely manner, avoiding unnecessary build-up of redundant information, confusion within back-office systems, and the operational inefficiencies which result from these.

- 4.2. This is an operational policy which builds upon the current Records Retention Policy and will act as a guidance tool for the management and retention of all records produced and held by the Council. The proposed policy is attached at Appendix 2, and the detailed retention schedules will be circulated to managers when the overall policy has been agreed.

## 5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications.

## 6. **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report. It should be noted, however, that as the Records Management Facility and Archive store develops the ongoing effect of these policies may impact on staffing requirements. This will be kept under review.

## 7. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

## 8. **HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

## 9. **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

## 10. **COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

## 11. **PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

## 12. **LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

13. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

13.1. Freedom of Information Act Code of Practice – Lord Chancellor

13.2. Records Retention Policy - 2005.

14. **RECOMMENDATION**

14.1. That the Records Management Policy and Records Retention Policy be agreed.

IAN COLEMAN  
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/170/07

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Records Management Policy</b>
<b>Owner</b>	<b>Records Manager (0151 666 3180)</b>
<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date of Approval</b>	<b>26 July 2007</b>
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Review Frequency</b>	<b>Every two years</b>
<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>July 2009</b>

**Introduction**

Wirral Council recognises that the effective management of its records, regardless of format, is essential in order to support its core functions, to comply with its legal 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 Council's decision making processes, policy creation and operations, and must be managed effectively from the point of their creation until their ultimate disposal.

**What is Records Management?**

Records Management can 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 disposal or permanent preservation within the Archives.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all records are created and maintained in such a way that they can be classed as authentic and reliable, in order to demonstrate evidence and accountability for all actions carried out in the course of business.

Wirral Council is committed to securely maintaining and providing access to all records that are required for continuing business purposes; identifying and protecting the Council's vital records; permanently preserving those records that are deemed of historical value to the Council and community; destroying all records in an appropriate and timely manner in line with the Corporate Retention Policy; and meeting all legal and regulatory requirements.

**Benefits**

The benefits of implementing records management systems and processes include:

1. A reduction in duplication throughout the Council.
2. A simplification of procedures and processes.
3. Increased information sharing and the provision of quick and easy access to the right information at the right time.
4. Improved business efficiency and service level improvements through reduced time spent searching for information.
5. Meeting community expectations through the provision of good quality services.
6. A demonstration of transparency and accountability for all actions.

7. Risk management in terms of meeting all legislative and regulatory requirements through evidence of compliance.
8. Support for decision-making through maintenance of the corporate memory and provision of access to decisions that were made previously.
9. Creation of better working environments.
10. Cost savings on current and future records management resources and storage.

## **Scope**

This corporate policy relates to all departments, divisions, sections and services of Wirral Council and all records created and received by its employees. It similarly relates to all staff that are mobile working, working off site and working within joint partnerships. It applies to all records regardless of format or medium, including paper, electronic, audio, visual and photographic.

## **Statement**

It is the policy of the Council to maintain authentic, 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 establishment of effective records management policies and procedures, including:

- The creation of a central Records Management Facility for the management of all semi-current paper records, including retrieval, review and disposal.
- The review and redistribution of the Corporate Retention Policy to reflect the needs of the Council.
- The development of a functionally based classification scheme within the corporate document management system.
- The implementation of training and awareness sessions to highlight the importance of record keeping within the Council.
- The provision of access to semi-current and historical records in order to encourage well informed decision making processes.
- The protection of vital records against accidental loss or destruction.
- The timely and appropriate destruction of records in line with the Corporate Retention Policy.

The policy has been developed in accordance with BS ISO 15489 and the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records, issued under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## **Objectives**

The primary objectives of this Policy are:

1. To comply with all legislative requirements for records management.
2. To protect the Council and its employees from litigation.
3. To establish a culture whereby the importance and value of effective and efficient record keeping is supported and adopted.
4. To support the long term preservation of the Council's archival records.
5. To promote efficient record keeping practices and overall business efficiency throughout the Council.
6. To maintain all records in a safe and secure environment.
7. To develop consistent naming conventions and classification schemes for the efficient retrieval of records.
8. To facilitate joined up working and a reduction in duplication through the amalgamation of records throughout the Council.

9. To encourage information sharing throughout the Council and ensure the right information is available to the right people at the right time.
10. To track the use of records throughout their retention and ensure timely and appropriate disposal of records, in line with the Corporate Retention Policy.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff creating, receiving and using records have specific records management responsibilities:

All Senior Management Teams are responsible for:

- Approving a corporate approach to the management of records as defined within this Policy.
- Promoting a culture of excellent record keeping principles and practices in order to improve business efficiency.
- Supporting records management through commitment and the provision of resources.
- Recognising the importance of preserving the corporate memory.

Departmental Contacts:

- Offering advice and guidance regarding records management to all staff within his/her department.
- Ensuring that all records management practices and procedures are being adhered to within the department.
- Liaising with the Records Manager regarding the storage, retrieval, review and disposal of all records relating to their department, held within the Records Management Facility.
- Highlighting any records management issues or concerns within the department, with the Records Manager.
- Transferring all records of historical value to the Archives Facility for permanent preservation.
- Ensuring the regular transfer of semi-current records to the Records Management Facility.

Individual Wirral Council Employees are responsible for:

- Suitably managing paper records so that they can be easily retrieved.
- Retaining all records in line with the Corporate Retention and Disposal Policy.
- Regularly transferring their semi-current records to the Records Management Facility for storage.
- Ensuring that all actions and decisions are properly recorded.
- Information stored on various media is transferred to Documentum to ensure long term access and retrieval.
- Ensuring that the Corporate Records Management Policy is adhered to.

The Records Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that records management practices and procedures are established in line with all legal obligations and professional standards.
- Managing all records, regardless of their format.
- Issuing advice and guidance to all staff throughout the Council.
- Running the Records Management and Archives Facility and ensuring it meets the needs of all users.
- Creating and reviewing the Corporate Records Management Policy.

- Creating and reviewing the Corporate Retention Policy.
- Establishing and liaising with departmental contacts in each department and section throughout the Council.

### **Legislative Framework**

Compliance with this policy will facilitate compliance with following legislation and standards:

- Public Records Acts (1958 and 1967)
- Local Government Act (1972)
- Environmental Information Regulations (1992)
- Data Protection Act (1998)
- Freedom of Information Act (2000)
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000)
- Environmental Information Regulations (2004)
- The Children Act (2004)
- Civil Contingencies Act (2004)
- Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations (2005)
- BS ISO 15489 Standard for Records Management
- BS ISO 17799 Code of practice for Information Security Management
- BIP 0008 Code of practice for Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically

In addition, compliance with the policy will also facilitate compliance with other statutory and regulatory record-keeping obligations that are specific to certain Council functions or departments.

### **Training**

A training programme will be established to ensure that all staff are aware of their obligations relating to Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Records Management. This will include an introduction to best practice in record keeping at all Departmental Inductions. All staff must feel confident in the level of training they have received with regards to records management, and should contact the Records Manager if they have any concerns in this regard.

### **Review**

Compliance with this Policy and related standards and guidance will be monitored by the Records Manager in consultation with the Departmental Contacts and the Information Manager. A review of this Policy will then take place at least every two years to take account of any new or changed legislation, regulations or business practices.

## **RECORDS RETENTION POLICY**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Records Retention Policy</b>
<b>Owner</b>	<b>Records Manager</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date of Approval</b>	<b>26 July 2007</b>
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<b>Review Frequency</b>	<b>Every two years</b>
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### **Scope**

The Corporate Retention Policy contains recommended retention periods for records created and maintained by Wirral Council. It lists the types of records created or received by Wirral Council, and the length of time they should be retained, in line with business need, legislative and regulatory requirements. The Policy refers to all records, regardless of their format. It includes paper documents, electronic documents, excel spreadsheets, databases and emails.

The Policy is based on the Local Government Classification Scheme and the Retention Guidelines for Local Authorities, both produced by the Records Management Society of Great Britain.

Many of the retention periods are laid down by statute, whilst others are guidelines following best practice. Every effort has been made to ensure that these retention periods are compliant with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Furthermore, the retention periods have been agreed by a period of consultation with representatives from all departments.

The Corporate Retention Policy should be used as a point of reference by all staff with regards to the day-to-day management of their records.

### **How to Use the Policy**

Although the Policy has been redesigned functionally, it should be clear for many departments, which section they need to refer to for their records. If it is unclear, a free text search can be performed in order to locate the relevant documents.

There are generally three procedures to follow with regards to the management of your records once their administrative use has been concluded, i.e. they are no longer referred to on a regular basis by staff but need to be retained in line with their agreed retention period.

1. 'Transfer to Records Management' – you should transfer all records that need to be retained for longer than their administrative use, to the Corporate Records Management Facility. Once the records have reached the end of their retention period within the Facility, a review of the records will take place which will either lead to confidential destruction, extension of the review period or transfer to the Archives



for permanent preservation. For information about the Records Management Facility and Service available, please contact the Records Manager.

2. 'Offer to Archivist' – all records that are of potential historical value to the Council should be offered to the Archivist once their administrative use is concluded. These records will then be appraised and possibly selected for permanent preservation within Wirral Archives Facility. Please contact the Archivist for further information.
3. 'Retain in Office then recycle documents having shredded any confidential elements' – if records have a short retention period applied to them or need to be retained close to hand for regular referral, there is no need to send them to the Records Management Facility for storage. Instead these records should be retained in their creating department until the end of their retention period, then recycled and/or confidentially shredded, depending on their content, once they have reached the end of their retention period. If the records are held in electronic format, staff should ensure that they are deleted entirely from their systems.

### **Important Notes for Consideration**

If you only have a convenience copy of a document, and did not create or have responsibility for it, then you may destroy it as soon as you stop referring to it. You should not keep any copies longer than the full retention period stated.

If a department and/or section do not require the use of the Records Management Facility for the storage of their records, it should be noted that any destruction of records should be fully and accurately documented. The Council must comply with the obligations set out with the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act and provide information regarding destruction if records are requested for access but no longer held. Contact the Records Manager for further information and guidance on documentation requirements.

Under the Data Protection Act 2000 you should only retain personal information whilst there is a business need, so be careful not to retain personal information for too long.

### **Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of all Wirral Council staff to adhere to this Corporate Retention Policy.

### **Review**

This Policy will be reviewed regularly, at least every two years, in line with any changes in legislation and business practices.