

ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

DATA QUALITY AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Rochford District Council recognises that the efficient management of its records is necessary, to support its core functions to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the authority. This document provides the policy framework through which this effective management can be achieved and audited. It covers

1. Scope of the policy
2. Responsibilities
3. Relationship with existing policies
4. Available guidance for implementation of the policy
5. Data Quality
6. Risk management
7. Contacts

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1.1 This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by officers of the Council in the course of carrying out their duties including provision of services and corporate functions.

1.2 Records are defined as all those documents, which facilitate the business carried out by the Council and which are thereafter retained (for a set period) to provide evidence of its transactions or activities. These records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically.

1.3 Records management is defined as a 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 of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.

1.4 Some of the Council's records may be selected for permanent preservation as part of the County's archives for historical purposes and as an enduring record of the conduct of business.

1.5 The policy also applies to information (statistics and data) derived from the Council's records and the processes by which such information and data is produced.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 The Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record-keeping systems in accordance with the regulatory environment.

2.2 The Audit Committee will monitor and review this policy.

2.3 The officer with overall responsibility for this policy is the Corporate Director (Internal Services).

2.4 The Head of Administrative and Member Services is responsible for drawing up guidance for good records management practice and promoting compliance with this policy in such a way as to ensure the easy, appropriate and timely retrieval of information.

2.5 Heads of Service have responsibility for ensuring records management practice and procedures within their divisions comply with this policy and guidelines.

2.6 Individual employees must ensure that records for which they are responsible are accurate, and are maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Council's records management guidelines

2.7 All staff with responsibility for producing information derived from the Council records must ensure that the data produced is accurate and correctly calculated or summarised.

2.8 Where information and data are submitted to external bodies or publicly reported the accuracy and submission of such data must be approved by the appropriate Head of Service or Service Manager.

2.9 The Audit and Process Review Manager will be responsible for ensuring that periodic checks of Data Quality are undertaken, including a comprehensive annual audit of all nationally reported Performance Indicators and statistics.

3. RELATIONSHIP WITH EXISTING POLICIES

This policy has been formulated within the context of the following Council documents

- Information Strategy
 - Freedom of Information policy
 - Data Protection policy
 - Electronic Records Management Policy
- (available at www.rochford.gov.uk)

Compliance with this policy will in turn facilitate compliance not only with information-related legislation but also with all other legislation or regulations (including audit, equal opportunities and the Council's Constitution) affecting the authority.

4. RECORDS MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

Guidance on the procedures necessary to comply with this Policy is available at www.rochford.gov.uk or from the Central Services Manager. This guidance covers;

- records creation
- business classification (for filing schemes)
- retention periods for records
- storage options for records
- destruction options for records
- archival records: selection and management
- external codes of practice and relevant legislation

5. DATA QUALITY

5.1 The council recognises the importance of reliable information to the delivery of excellent customer services. The council needs reliable, accurate and timely information with which to manage services, inform users and account for our performance.

5.2 The council is committed to ensuring it maintains the highest standards of data quality and, as a result, getting its performance information right first time.

5.3 The council will collect and process data in accordance with the appropriate national and locally defined standards

5.4 The council understands the importance of data quality and is committed to improving its management within the organisation and in partnership with others.

5.5 Our objectives in relation to data quality are as follows:

- To ensure that the information we use is of high quality, consistent, timely, comprehensive and held securely and confidentially.
- To put in place arrangements at senior level to secure the quality of data we use to manage our service and demonstrate our performance.
- To make clear what we expect from our staff and Members in terms of the standards of data quality
- To put in place systems, policies and procedures to ensure the highest possible data quality, particularly where information is shared with partners.
- To ensure that we put in place the right resources, and have the right people with the right skills, to ensure we have timely and accurate performance information.
- To ensure that we have the right controls in place to ensure we meet what is expected of us with respect to Data Quality Standards.
- To ensure that data is stored, used and shared in accordance with the law including the Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act.

5.6 A Data Quality Strategy and Action Plan have been prepared with reference to Audit Commission Key Lines Of Enquiry (KLOE) to ensure the achievement of the above objectives.

5.7 The council is committed to working with partners to achieve its objectives and is a signatory to the Essex Trust Charter, which provides a formal framework for sharing of data with partners, supplemented by specific protocols for various types of data.

5.8 Where data is received from partners or other external sources, appropriate and proportionate checks will be performed to ensure the Data Quality of such information.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The council will ensure that it adequately manages risk associated with data quality.

6.2 The council recognises the need to achieve a balance between the resources required to set and meet data quality standards and the relative benefits that flow. It will take this into account in developing its approach to data quality and its monitoring and review.

6.3 A Records Management and Data Quality awareness campaign will be undertaken in 2007 and every third year to ensure that all members of staff are aware of the importance of accurate and timely data collection and recording.

7. CONTACTS

Enquiries about this policy should be addressed to:

Records Management - Central Services Manager: Dawn Tribe x3828

Data Quality – Senior Performance Management Officer Terry Harper x3212