Rayleigh Town Council Records Management Policy

Introduction

The organisation recognises that its records are an important public asset, and a key resource for effective operation and accountability. Like any asset, they require careful management and this policy sets out the Council's responsibilities and activities in regard to the management of its records. It provides the framework for specific departmental and service guidance and detailed operating procedures.

Scope

This policy will ensure that records are managed effectively throughout the organisation in accordance with professional principles and the legislation and guidelines specified in appendix 1. It applies to all the records of The organisation.

A record is any recorded information on paper, microfilm, electronic, audio¬visual and record copies of publications, which is created, collected, processed, used, stored or disposed of by employees, as well as those acting as its agents in the course of any activity. It applies to all employees of the organisation. [Not all documentary materials we use are records. For example, library and reference material, stocks of publications and documents retained for distribution, extra copies made for convenience of reference and personal papers are all not records in the terms of this policy.]

Policy Statement

The aim of the policy is to define a framework for managing the Organisation's records to ensure that it:

•   creates and captures authentic and reliable records to demonstrate evidence, accountability and information about its decisions and activities

•   facilitates auditing and protects our legal and other rights

•   maintains records securely and preserves access to them

•   disposes appropriately of records that are no longer required

•   protects vital records, which it needs to order to function effectively

•   maintains records to meet the authority's business needs

•   addresses the needs of the organisations's stakeholders, including the public, employees and the Record Office

•   conforms to any legal and statutory requirements relating to record-keeping

•   complies with government directives.

Identification of roles and responsibilities

The Management Board of the organisation is responsible for approving a framework for managing and overseeing its duties in relation to records management as set out in this policy.

The Data Protection Officer will provide the link between the e-government initiative, Data Protection and Freedom of Information, and records management practices. Where appropriate, the Data Protection Officer will coordinate activities, such as maintaining the Corporate Retention Schedule and Publication Scheme.

Managers are responsible for the management of their records, in accordance with this policy, and ensuring that all staff understands record keeping issues.

The Data Protection Officer will advise departments and individuals on the retention and management of their records, and where appropriate will take custody of those records deemed worthy of permanent preservation.

All the organisation's employees will be responsible for creating and maintaining records in relation to their work that are authentic and reliable. Staff with specific responsibilities for records management will have these clearly defined in their job descriptions. All The organisation employees will be responsible for receiving Freedom of Information Act requests, and passing them on to the appropriate officer.

Training and Awareness

Since all employees are involved in creating, maintaining and using records, it is vital that everyone understands their record management responsibilities as set out in this policy. Managers will ensure that staff responsible for managing records are appropriately trained or experienced and that all staff understands the need for records management.

A training programme will be established to ensure that all staff are aware of their obligations around Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Records Management.

Records Creation and Record Keeping

Each department must have in place a record keeping system (paper or electronic) that documents it activities and provides for quick and easy retrieval of information. It must also take into account the legal and regulatory environment specific to their area of work. This system will include:

• Records arranged and indexed in such a way that they can be retrieved quickly and efficiently.

• Procedures and guidelines for referencing, titling, indexing and version control and security marking.

• Procedures for keeping the system updated.

• The ability to cross reference electronic and paper records.

- Documentation of this system and guidelines on how to use it.

Record Maintenance

The record keeping system will be maintained so that the records are properly stored and protected, and can easily be located and retrieved. This will include:

- Ensuring that adequate storage accommodation is provided for the records.

- Monitoring the movement and location of records so that they can be easily retrieved and provide an audit trail.

- Controlling access to the information.

- Identifying vital records and applying the appropriate protection, including a business recovery plan.

- Ensuring non-current records are transferred in a controlled manner to a designated records centre rather than stored in offices.

Record Retention and Disposal

With increasing public access to records, it is important that disposal of records happens as part of a managed process and is adequately documented. Therefore, the organisation must have in place clearly defined arrangements for the appraisal and selection of records for disposal, and for documenting this work.

The system should ensure that:

- The appropriate records are reviewed and transferred to an archive each year in accordance with the Retention Guidelines for Local Authorities produced by the Records Management Society of Great Britain, specific department requirements and the organisation's procedures for destroying confidential material and magnetic media.

- Documentation of the disposal or transfer of records is completed and retained.

- Records selected for permanent preservation are transferred to the County Record Office, as soon as possible.

- An intended disposal or review date must be captured when creating electronic records.

- Records subject to a Freedom of Information request are not destroyed.

Access

The organisation needs to ensure that decisions regarding access to the records are documented so that they are consistent, and can be explained and referred to. Managers must ensure that:

- All staff are aware of the arrangements for allowing access to certain types of information.

- Procedures are in place to document decisions concerning access.

Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually

Appendix 1: Standards and Legislation

Archive and Record-Keeping legislation [There will be other record-keeping legislation specific to certain areas of work, which should also be taken into account.]

•   Public Records Act 1958 and 1967

•   Local Government (Records) Act 1962

•   Local Government Act 1972

•   Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

•   Freedom of Information Act 2000

•   Records Management Standards and guidelines

•   British Standards (BSI)

o   BS 4783 Storage, transportation and maintenance of

media for use in data processing and information storage

o   BS 7799 Code of practice for information security management

o   BS ISO 15489 Information and Documentation - Records Management

o   BSI DISC PD 0008 Code of practice for legal admissibility and evidential weight of information stored on electronic document management systems

o   BSI DISC PD0010 Principles of good practice for information management

o   BSI DISC PD0012 Guide to the practical implications of the Data Protection Act 1998

•   Public Record Office standards for the management of public records

•   Retention Guidelines for Local Authorities. by the Local Government Group of the Records Management Society Great Britain