



Guidance Note: Electronics Records Systems

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1. Introduction

East Renfrewshire Council is committed to delivering a paper-less working environment and to using digital information systems as far as possible.

Central to the sustainable delivery of these goals is that good information governance principles are built into the scoping, procurement, implementation and use of any new records systems which are deployed.

While the specific requirements of any information system will depend on the particular need identified, there are a number of principles which should be considered while determining what is required.

For full Electronic Document and Records Management systems, there is an international standard - ISO 15489 - and model compliance guidance has been issued by the DLM forum through their MoReq standard.

This guidance note makes some recommendations for consideration in relation to all electronic records systems across the Council. It should be considered in conjunction with the further records management and information technology guidance noted at the end and with the advice of your IT Business Relationship Manager. Also, remember that any new system should be appropriately referenced in your service's information asset register.

2. Requirements of an electronic records system

Perhaps the first consideration should be whether a new system is needed at all. Check with your Business Relationship Manager - the Council may already have a solution which will satisfy your requirements such as an application within M365

Not all of the following recommendations will be necessary in all systems, but due regard should be given to each prior to committing to any adoption.

CLARITY IN STRATEGIC GOALS

Be clear what you need from the system. It has to be fit for purpose. Don't use a system which does not fulfil your requirements; don't pay over-the-odds for something with excessive redundant functionality.

APPROPRIATE RESOURCING

All too often digital information systems fail to deliver not because of any problem with the system itself but because there is no proper commitment to the amount of ongoing support and resourcing required to properly utilise them. Consider what will be required for training, for ongoing administration and support and ensure that this is factored in to any assessment of the project. No information management system is simply "plug and play"

EASE OF USE

Any system has to be able to support the often-complex Council function that it is designed for; but it also has to be accessible to the staff who will be using it.

SECURITY & PRIVACY

The security of the information in a system will be largely dependent on the broader procedural and technical environment but consider whether any other measures are required. Access controls and audit functionality are important in protecting both the authenticity and integrity of the record. Also, consider whether a Privacy Impact Assessment

should be undertaken if the system will be processing personal data and ensure that the Council's Information Security Schedule is included in any procurement exercise

DEFINE RECORDS

Electronic systems need to be able to declare information as a record - that is they should be able to hold information in an unchanging form when required. Once declared as a record, to establish its accuracy, authenticity and evidential integrity, the content and the relevant metadata should not be capable of being changed. Audit functionality should make clear when records were last accessed and amended, and by whom and how

TAXONOMY and STRUCTURE

However good the search functionality is within a records system, it will not be able to adequately fulfil its information governance role if the records within it are not stored or displayed within a clear and logical hierarchical structure.

INTEROPERABILITY

Council systems should be able to relate to each other. Security is of course vital, but avoid bespoke systems which develop silos of data which can not be reused for other appropriate purposes.

METADATA

Consider what information you will need about the information in the system, and ensure that the system will properly maintain that. Metadata is an integral part of the record and the system should automatically record it, preserve it, and allow for its ultimate disposal or export.

IMPOSE RETENTIONS

Computer-based records systems need to be able to delete records once they have reached the end of their retention. Make sure that any system you are considering has this functionality and that this is properly deployed in accordance with the corporate retention schedule.

BACKUP

The system needs to have the ability to be properly backed up and to be test restored. The responsibility for this and for ensuring the continued availability of the records needs to be clearly assigned.

EXIT STRATEGY

Few electronic records systems last more than a decade. It is likely that at least some of the information within them will be required beyond that timescale. Ensure that you are clear how you will facilitate that when it comes to moving on. Also, if there are data within the system which will need to be permanently retained as part of the Council's archival records, consideration needs to be given to their long-term management.

See also:

Records Management Plan: [clicky](#)