Audit and Governance Committee	Reading Borough Council Working better with you
20 July 2023	

Title	Information Governance Quarterly Update
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Michael Graham, Asst. Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Lead councillor	Cllr Liz Terry, Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources
Corporate priority	Our Foundations
Recommendations	The Committee is asked to: 1. To note the progress to date and future actions outlined in this report 2. To identify matters of interest for future reports

1. Executive summary

1.1. This report provides an update on the actions in progress to improve the Council's policies, systems and processes around Information Governance.

1.2. In the last two years, the Committee has received a number of limited assurance reports in relation to information governance and work is ongoing to address the underlying issues in the following areas:

- Freedom of Information
- Data Transparency
- Records Management

2. Policy context

2.1. The Council's new Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:

- Healthy Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Inclusive Economy

2.2. These themes are underpinned by "Our Foundations" explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value
- Collaborating with others

2.3. Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website. These priorities and the Corporate

Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

2.4.   Data is playing an increasing role in designing, delivering and transforming public services to improve outcomes for customers and drive efficiencies within current financial constraints.

2.5.   The Local Government Association describe the value of data to public services as facilitating:

- The design of services around user needs
- The engagement and empowerment of citizens to build their communities
- Efficiencies and public service transformation
- Economic and social growth
- Greater transparency and accountability

2.6.   Effective information governance is a key requirement for the Council which has duties to be both open and transparent whilst at the same time protecting the confidential information it holds about people and businesses. How it collects, uses, stores, shares and destroys personal data is governed by the Data Protection Act. The Council also has to comply with the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations and the Access to Information Act in relation to its records. Compliance is monitored by the Information Commissioner who has wide ranging powers including the ability to impose considerable financial penalties for breaches of the Data Protection Act.

3.   Update

Subject Access Requests

3.1.   3 cases from 19/20 were completed and we now have no cases outstanding for 2019/20. 7 cases from 20/21 & 21/22 financial years have been completed since the last report in April 2023, leaving 18 cases outstanding.

3.2.   In 22/23 a total of 46 new requests were received for RBC, all 46 have been completed. Of the 59 new cases received for BFfC, 39 have been completed with 20 outstanding. The data for Q1 of 23/24 is on the table below.

3.3.   The contract for the redaction software has been signed by the supplier. We hope to start the implementation process at the end of August. This is later than expected as we had to liaise with the supplier over the terms and conditions of the contract on several occasions prior to signing.

SAR Backlog Data as of 30 June 2023

	20/21		21/22		22/23		23/24	
	RBC	**BFfC**	**RBC**	**BFfC**	**RBC**	**BFfC**	**RBC**	**BFfC**
No Received	35	64	44	38	46	59	13	20
No Completed	28	62	35	38	46*	39	7	8
No Outstanding	7	2	9	0	0	20	6	12

FOI cases

3.4.   As previously reported, a number of measures have been taken with the aim of increasing FOI performance:

- Centralisation of the function in the Customer Relations Team
- Implementation of a new case management system

- Review of the procedures
- Training has been provided to officers
- Continual monitoring weekly by CMT

3.5.   Notwithstanding these measures, performance across the Council remained low, despite some pockets of improved performance which have been reported to previous Committees. The Council aspires to meet the 90% response rate expected by the Information Commissioner and this has been included as a Corporate Plan KPI.

3.6.   Following the update provided at the April 2023 meeting for quarter 3 of financial year, 2022/23 the data for quarter 4 is below.

Total number received in Q4 allocated to Directorates and FOI Team

Directorate	Total No. Received	%	Q3	Q2	Q1
BFfC	36	10.9	38	51	41
DACHS	26	7.9	18	14	23
DEGNS	131	39.3	77	131	107
DoR	100	30	76	95	118
FOI Team	41	11.9	28	7	N/A
Total	334	100	237	298	289

FOI's Responded to in Timescale by Directorate and FOI Team in Q4

Directorate	Total No. sent out in Timescale	%
BFfC	27	75
DACHS	16	61.6
DEGNS	112	85.5
DoR	76	76
FOI Team	41	100
Total	272	81.4

3.7.   There has been a 40.9% increase in the number of FOI's received during the quarter 4, the reasons for this may be as a result of enquires about Reading's plans for the Kings Coronation, about the Voter ID prior to the May elections, and given Q4 falls in the Winter months we have seen a rise in enquires about the cost of re-surfacing roads and maintenance of potholes.

Breakdown by month for Q4

Directorate	FOI's received in January	% sent out in time in January	FOI's received in February	% sent out in time in February	FOI's received in March	% sent out in time in March
BFfC	11	72.7	10	50.0	15	73.3
DACHS	6	83.3	9	55.6	11	54.5
DEGNS	60	93.2	43	74.4	28	85.7

DoR	33	73.5	32	78.1	35	77.1
FOI Team	14	100	12	100	15	100
Overall	124	86.2	106	74.5	104	80.6

3.8.   In Q4 the Council and BFfC responded to 334 FOI's and 272 (81.4%) of these were within timescale, this shows continuous improvement from 58.1% in Q1, 72.1% in Q2 and 77.2% in Q3.

3.9.   Of the 272 FOI's responded to, 11 of these came back to the Information Governance Team for Internal Reviews (IR). Of these 11 IR's, 5 were issued with revised responses and 6 were issued with the original information.

3.10.   The FOI Act 2000 states all responses must be sent out within 20 working days. The Assistant Director of Legal Services and the Information Rights Services Manager (responsible for the Customer Relations & Information Governance Teams) met with Information Commissioners Office (ICO) in May to discuss the progress made from the Action Plan work undertaken to improve the response rates. The ICO agreed the Council was continuing along the correct path and was satisfied that the Action Plan tasks were complete. The ICO closed their case without issuing any formal advice. The data above has been shared with ICO and will continue to be shared with them to demonstrate ongoing improvement.

3.11.   The above findings were also shared with the regular FOI responding officers and ongoing support to them has continued. The Intranet page is also kept updated to assist the responding officers and FOI approving managers.

3.12.   The Assistant Director of Legal Services and the Information Rights Services Manager met with the Project Team involved in the implantation of the Council's new CRM system. We have asked them to write a new FOI form to improve our process and simplify the FOI management workflow. We have started this work by process mapping our requirements at a session that took place on 28 March. The findings from this work will be shared with the Project Team as part of the wider case management implementation programme.

Data Transparency

3.13.   The Data Transparency pages were reviewed on 30 June 2023 and the Contract and Procurement data remain out of date. This has been highlighted to the Assistant Director Procurement and Contracts who is taking steps to update the data.

Information Governance Board

3.14.   The Information Governance Board meet monthly and review Cyber Security Incidents and possible breaches of the Data Protection Act which may need to be reported to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO). Where any subsequent actions are identified then these are monitored.

3.15.   There have been no further cyber incidents since the last report to this committee. The cyber incident we reported in January 2023 to this committee, the ICO has now closed this case with no further action and no fault found by the Council. The cyber incident reported in April 2023 to this committee however is still under investigation by the ICO, we await their feedback.

3.16.   The IG Board commissioned a review of the Council's and BFfC's breach management response and process in respect of these two third party software cyber incidents. This review is now complete, and we are in receipt of a draft report with the recommended action plan. The findings are in the process of being discussed by the IG Board and a recommendation will be made to the Board to appoint a working group from the Council and BFfC to work on the action plan.

3.17.   The most common themes across both organisations continue to relate to mis-addressed emails and postal addresses being wrongly input, either through transcription

errors or in a few cases, wrong data has been held on our systems. These incidents and main themes are reported to IG Board on a monthly basis. The IG Team review each incident and identify learning for the staff/services involved to ensure repeat incidents do not reoccur. Additional team training sessions were provided to the Joint Legal Team (JLT) after a number of unrelated incidents were reported to the IG Board in the last two quarters. We have worked with the managers to create an action plan specifically for JLT and will assist them to work through this to reduce the number of breaches. This action plan is also in the process of being discussed at the IG Board. The training session with Children's Social Care staff is still at planning stage.

3.18.   At the Board's request the Information Governance Team and IT Security team have explored measures that can be put in place to increase security of outgoing emails. Since the last update, due to the continuing issue of misdirection of emails colleagues in IT Security have identified an MS Office product as a security measure to address this problem.

Information Management Strategy

3.19.   The Information Management Strategy and Action Plan was presented and signed off by the Policy Committee in March 2022. This sets out the Council's approach to information management and governance.

3.20.   The Data Stewards have been identified for all of Directorates and the first meeting with the DS's in BFfC and DACHS took place on 24 March to agree the terms of reference and kick start the Action Plan work. The Action Plan work has been rolled out across BFfC and DACHS, the IG Team are meeting monthly with these Data Stewards who are engaged and helping towards the completion of tasks.

Training

3.21.   The Board continues to monitor the Cyber Security and Information Governance training which is currently rolled out for all staff and members through Learning Pool, the Council's e-learning package. The uptake of the new Cyber Security training for 2023 show that 48% of staff RBC staff 27% of BFfC staff have completed the new 2023 Cyber Security module. We are disappointed by the low uptake, the need for completion of this training by the 30 June has been sent to staff weekly through messages via the all-staff newsletter. The Information Rights Services Manager also presented at the All Staff Briefing on 13 June 2023 to highlight the importance of completing this training. There will be further follow up with Services to ensure that the training uptake improves.

3.22.   Managers who have staff that are non-IT users, have been asked to contact the IG Team to arrange bespoke face to face training.

Next Steps

3.23.   The focus is on continuing the work with the Data Stewards, the action plan work from the Breach Management process review, JLT action plan and the implementation of the redaction software.

4.   Contribution to strategic aims

4.1.   The purpose of Information Governance is cross-cutting and relevant to all Services of the Council and to all of our public facing services which collect and retain data about the public. The role of Information Governance contributes to the Corporate Priority foundation of "Getting the best value".

5.   Environmental and climate implications

5.1.   The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

5.2.   There is nothing within this report which is of relevance for the Council's strategic priority of Climate Change.

6.   Community engagement

6.1.   It is not anticipated that there will be public consultation on the Information Management Strategy or Action Plan. It will however be in the public domain at Policy Committee and this Committee, and I anticipate members will wish to receive regular updates at this Committee. This will ensure that progress in this field is visible to residents.

7.   Equality impact assessment

7.1.   An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not relevant to this report. All citizens have rights to information and there is no evidence that any section of the community is disadvantaged in accessing those rights under the current service provision. There is no reason to think that any section of society will be adversely affected by the roll-out of better Information Governance and an Information Management Strategy within the Council.

8.   Other relevant considerations

8.1.   Nothing relevant.

9.   Legal implications

9.1.   The Council is required to comply with a number of information governance regulations including the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations and the Access to Information Act. Effective governance, policies and practices are essential to minimising the risk of data protection breaches and to help ensure the appropriate handling of information requests. Failure to do so could result in regulatory action being taken against the Council.

10.   Financial implications

10.1.   There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

11.   Timetable for implementation

11.1.   Not applicable.

12.   Background papers

12.1.   There are none.