

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Committee met on 11 March 2009. Attendances:

Councillor Taylor (Chairman)
Councillors Howson, Martin, Scott, Skilton and Whetstone

1. Scrutiny review of records management

1.1 The Committee has completed its Scrutiny Review of records management. The full report has been previously circulated to all councillors and copies are also available on request from Mary Clarke, telephone 01273 481587.

1.2 The review was carried out by a Review Board comprised of the following members of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee: Councillors Philip Howson (Chairman), Phil Scott and Francis Whetstone.

1.3 The objective of the Scrutiny Review was to assess the Council's policy and practice for records management, and the sustainability of the service. The review specifically excluded the archives side of the Archives and Records Management service. The review therefore did not look in any detail at 'The Keep' project, except in so far as the possibility of future records storage being provided as part of the project.

1.4 The Review Board focussed on the following areas:

- Records storage capacity
- Risk management
- Use of electronic records management and digital storage/scanning
- Funding, charging and income generation

1.5 The final report contains detailed findings based on the evidence gathered by the Review Board. It is not intended to summarise the findings in this report to Council.

1.6 The Cabinet considered and commended the Committee's recommendations at its meeting on 28 April 2009. The Committee recommends to the County Council that:

- ☆ Additional warehouse space will now be required for several years to come if the records management service is to be able to manage all modern records as intended and minimise the associated risks to the Council in this area. The Council needs to consider how this could be resourced, either corporately or through departmental budgets;
- ☆ Repairs to the buildings should be prioritised in order to enable the use of currently empty shelf space and to reduce staff time, costs and risks associated with damaged records. In the longer term, alternative ways to manage the buildings should be investigated in order to avoid specialist records staff being diverted from their records management duties;
- ☆ Secure carrying receptacles (e.g. security wallets) should be introduced for highly sensitive records in order to improve security of records in transit;

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- ✧ Records management should be included in staff induction and on-line records management training made available to all staff, supported by specific advice from the records management team as required;
- ✧ A network of departmental records management champions should be created. Each department should nominate a champion who will receive additional training from records management, promote good records management in their department and meet quarterly with other champions and records management staff to share good practice and promote consistency of approach;
- ✧ The Records Management service should undertake the National Archives self-assessment process, prioritising the modules so that those likely to be of most benefit are undertaken first;
- ✧ The Council should continue to take a proactive approach to the introduction of Electronic Document Records Management (EDRM) and scanning technology in order to realise the medium and long term benefits, but should be aware that this will not relieve pressure on systems for managing paper records in the short term;
- ✧ There should be a mechanism for ensuring a co-ordinated corporate approach to EDRM once the EDRM pilot project concludes;
- ✧ The records management team needs to increase its work with departments now to ensure that the same standards of records management are applied to e-records systems as are currently applied to paper records. Ways to free up staff time to undertake this role must be identified as a priority;
- ✧ On an 'invest to save' basis, resources for a time-limited additional post should be considered. This would recognise the demands of the 'transitional' period when EDRM is being established at the same time as the paper records workload must also continue to be managed. The post should enable increased provision of advice and input to departments on the introduction of EDRM, the revision of retention schedules and offer training for staff;
- ✧ The specific recharges made to departments should be reviewed with a view to using these to incentivise good records management and to relieve pressure on the records centre;
- ✧ The potential savings and feasibility of a single corporate or multi-organisation contract for destruction of confidential waste should be explored; and
- ✧ Costs of private sector provided records management should be investigated to determine whether East Sussex County Council's current charges to external clients are set at an appropriate level.

[See also report of the Cabinet, paragraph 3, page 19]

11 March 2009

BARRY TAYLOR
Chairman