

Commitment to pursue an Archives Service Improvement Plan in support of Midlothian Council's statutory duties and obligations under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011

Effective from 31 May 2014

As Senior Accountable Officer for Strategic Records Management named in Element 2 of the Midlothian Council and Midlothian Council Licensing Board Records Management Plan (RMP), I hereby confirm the Council's commitment to pursue an Archives Service Improvement Plan following the framework laid out in the following report, in compliance with Element 7 – Archiving and Transfer Arrangements of the RMP.



Senior Accountable Officer for Strategic Records Management

1.0 Executive Summary

In order to comply with the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 (PRSA), Midlothian Council ('the Council') is required to make improvements to its Archives Service, subject to ongoing assessment by the Keeper of the Records of Scotland ('the Keeper'). This report indicates the Council's commitment to developing an Archives Service Improvement Plan ('Improvement Plan'), to be pursued over the next five years, and sets out the key areas to be included in the Improvement Plan. This report does **not** constitute the Improvement Plan itself; rather, it sets out the framework and scope of the Improvement Plan which is to be addressed in the near future as part of an options paper for developing the Records and Archives services.

2.0 Background

The Midlothian Council and Licensing Board Records Management Plan (RMP) was submitted to the Keeper for agreement on 28 February 2014. On 28 March, the Keeper's informal Interim Report was received by the Council. Among other recommendations, the Interim Report noted that the Council's provisions for archiving and transfer arrangements under Element 7 of the RMP were insufficient for agreement. Subsequent correspondence with the Keeper's Assessment Team established that submission of a signed commitment at a senior level to pursue an Archives Service Improvement Plan, including the key areas outlined below and accompanied by a written transfer procedure, would allow the Keeper to agree the Council's RMP.

See Appendix 1 for the Keeper's full Interim Report.

3.0 Archives Service Improvement Plan

3.1 Timescale

The Improvement Plan will be pursued over a period of 5 years.

3.2 TNA Archives Service Accreditation Standard

Midlothian Council will use the *TNA Archives Service Accreditation Standard* as a framework and guide for its Archives Service Improvement Plan. This externally validated standard defines good archival practice in the UK and is designed to support other national and international recordkeeping standards.

The standard covers the following key areas:

Organisational Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission statement • Governance and management structures • Forward planning • Resources: buildings • Resources: finance • Resources: workforce
Collections: plans, policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collections development • Collections information • Collections care and conservation
Stakeholders and their Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access policies • Access planning • Access information, procedures and activities

3.3 Service Ownership

The Council is currently undergoing a re-structuring programme to transform and reposition services. As a part of this process, ownership of the Archives service is currently being reviewed and a number of options are being considered to maximise benefit to both internal and external stakeholders. Any changes to the management and reporting structure for the service will take into account archives' specialist requirements for professional oversight.

3.4 Archival Storage

Archives are currently stored in the Council's Records Centre and at Library Headquarters. Neither facility is suitable for the storage of archival materials with regard to environmental controls or disaster management.

The Improvement Plan will examine options and implement improvements in line with the international standard *PD 5454:2012 – Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials*.

3.5 Record Audits

The Council's recently-established Corporate Retention Schedule identifies 248 different record types which require permanent retention due to their ongoing business and historical value. To ensure that these records are correctly identified and transferred to archival control, the Improvement Plan will include the planning and implementation of regular record audits of Council offices and the electronic file network.

The Council is currently pursuing a programme of closure and consolidation of office space. Identification, registration and transfer of records has been identified as a key part of this process, and office staff are being trained in proper records management procedures. Archival records will be identified

and transferred as part of the office closures, thus supporting implementation of the Improvement Plan.

3.6 Digital Preservation Strategy

The Council is increasingly creating, receiving and using records in digital form. This presents new challenges to ensuring that information required by the Council's major stakeholders remains reliable and accessible over time. Digital media quickly become obsolete, and without a coordinated Digital Preservation Strategy there is a high risk that information will become inaccessible or lost over time.

The Council's existing Digital Strategy recognises the importance of its digital information assets. However, this Strategy focuses on delivery of services, without considering the long-term preservation of information to support those services; furthermore it does not consider the capture and maintenance of *authentic* and *trustworthy* records – a significant concern when the Council is required to produce records as evidence in court.

Accordingly, the Improvement Plan will include the development of a Digital Preservation Strategy, in support of the existing Digital Strategy, addressing:

- Stakeholder engagement
- Organisational infrastructure
- Preservation/access methods
- Preservation/access services
- Technical requirements (systems, hardware and software)
- Skills/knowledge
- Costs/timescales
- Ongoing management and updating of Strategy

3.7 Policies and Procedures

Midlothian Council has in place several policies and procedures governing the disposal and archival transfer of records, which have been submitted as evidence supporting the Council's RMP. These include:

- Records Management Policy
- Records Disposal Policy
- Records Disposal Procedure
- Archival Transfer Procedure
- Corporate Retention Schedule

The Improvement Plan will address the creation of additional policies and procedures for archives management, in line with the *TNA Archives Services Accreditation Standard* (see section 3.2) as appropriate to the service ownership model established (see section 3.3).

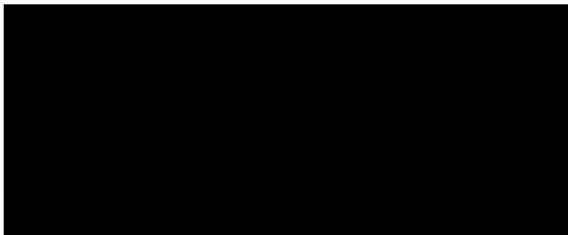
3.8 Resources

Midlothian Council will develop the proposed Improvement Plan taking cognisance of the constrained financial environment in which all public sector bodies operate. The resource implications of proposals in respect of the Improvement Plan will be considered, by the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT).

3.9 Governance and Oversight

Development and implementation of the Improvement Plan will be included in the Information Management Group Action Plan, which is subject to internal audit and governed by the CMT. The IMG Action Plan for 2013-14 has been included in the evidence submitted in support of the Council's RMP.

Any changes to the Archives or Records Management services affecting the Council's Records Management Plan will be duly reported to the Keeper of the Records of Scotland.



Senior Records Officer
Midlothian Council
23/05/2014