

## **Audit Committee – 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016**

### **Information Governance Annual Report: Summary**

#### **Recommendation**

1. That the Audit and Standards Committee considers the Annual Report of the Information Governance Unit and notes the work ongoing to manage the County Council's information assets with regard to legislative and regulatory requirements.

#### **Report of the Director of Strategy, Governance and Change**

##### **Background**

2. Information Governance is the term used to describe how the Council manages its information assets particularly with respect to legislative and regulatory requirements. This report seeks to provide assurance around the policies, processes and practices employed to ensure we meet those requirements.
3. There is a comprehensive and complex legal and regulatory information landscape within which the County Council must operate including compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Environmental Information Regulations 2004, other statutes, regulations and guidance. Compliance is monitored and administered through various national commissioner roles with powers to impose monetary and custodial penalties on organisations and individuals who breach the rules.
4. The County Council has adopted and promotes an Information Governance Framework which provides a strategic direction and detailed guidance for staff and includes how to work in a complex partnership environment. All new starters receive an introduction to Information Governance as part of their induction together with access to a suite of e-learning modules.

##### **Freedom of Information**

5. Published statistics have shown that nationally the number and complexity of Freedom of Information requests submitted to Local Authorities remains high. The benchmark set by the Information Commissioner for an acceptable service is 85% of requests answered with 20 days currently we answer 96% on target.
6. Central to information sharing is the on-going use of the One Staffordshire Information Sharing Protocol. Information sharing protocols are agreements that establish mutually binding rules for the safe and appropriate sharing of personal information between different agencies. The County Council took the lead on establishing this single agreement which has been signed by over 173 public sector bodies across Staffordshire and committing the organisations to effective information sharing.

7. The County Council has also signed up to a national protocol to expedite Police and Crown Prosecution Service requests for information in child safeguarding investigations known as Annexe C requests.

### **Information Security**

8. There has been an increase in the number of cyber-attacks with which the authority has needed to deal. An increase in malware email campaigns (software which is specifically designed to disrupt or damage a computer system) has led to limits being placed on downloading executable files. Blocked traffic is monitored and a breakdown of blocked malicious and threat emails are in Appendix C to the main report. In 2015, 53,220 malware emails were blocked.
9. The Information Governance Unit record all reported security incidents and investigate where necessary.
10. Staffordshire County Council has successfully been granted Public Services Network (PSN) accreditation again for 2016. PSN is a key part of Government ICT Strategy and accreditation means that the authority can continue access a secure network that facilitates the safe access of Government shared services.
11. A detailed audit against the Audit Commission checklist has been completed. The results of this have been appended at Appendix E to the main report.

### **Governance**

12. Governance of information requirements is provided through the Corporate Governance Group, Information Governance Unit and Senior Information Risk Owners (SIRO).
13. The role of SIRO is to foster a culture of best practice in how the organisation uses, shares and keeps information, and to own the risk policies and procedures for managing information. Since the Senior Information Risk Owners were appointed in 2013 there have been significant changes within the Authority. There is currently one SIRO in place and work will take place in 2016/17 to identify appropriate personnel to take the lead as directorate SIROs in line with the new SCC structure.

### **Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act**

14. Staffordshire County Council is entitled to use the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act for carrying out covert surveillance as part of our statutory duties. All applications for surveillance must be approved by a Magistrate. In 2015 there were three Directed Surveillance applications approved and four Access to Communications Data applications approved. No applications were rejected.