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Information Management Review Feedback

Vale of Glamorgan County Council

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Status of report

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Summary

1. There are concerns about the management and quality of information and records within the public sector following widely publicised failures, and a perception that improvements in public services are being hampered by inefficient management of information. Government-commissioned reports such as the *Bichard Report*¹ have indicated a ‘systemic and corporate failure’ in relation to information management.
2. More recently, two reports² by the Audit Commission reflect little progress in local government in England and reinforce the need for appropriately managed information to support operational service delivery and effective decision making.
3. With increasing financial pressure on the public sector there is a need to maximise and exploit the information held to deliver and plan for quality services effectively, taking decisions with all the available information to support and protect vulnerable people.
4. The collaboration agenda is growing with the recent publication of the Simpson report – *Local, Regional, National: What services are best delivered where?* This is likely to set the direction of travel and, if adopted by the Welsh Government, does set national expectations over coming years. Where collaboration through efficient, integrated and shared services is required, this will only work with effective strategies for technology and information.
5. In 2010 the Wales Audit Office identified that many local authorities were grappling with using information effectively to support service transformation and efficiency savings; as a result, reviews of information management are being undertaken at all councils in Wales.
6. This review sought to answer the question: ‘Is the Council’s approach to information management positively supporting improvement?’
7. Our review of the Vale of Glamorgan County Council (the Council) concluded that: **‘The Council’s approach to information management is supporting improvement and the Council’s proactive approach is delivering benefits.’** We came to this conclusion because:
 - the Council’s information management arrangements are robust and well established; and
 - the Council performs well, delivering and using information effectively to achieve service improvements and efficiencies.
8. Our findings, conclusions, and proposals for improvement are outlined in the table below.

¹ *The Bichard Inquiry Report*, Parliamentary Publication, June 2004.

² *Is there something I should know?* Audit Commission, 2009, and *Nothing but the Truth*, Audit Commission, 2009.

High-level questions and findings

High-level question	Is the organisation's approach to information management positively supporting improvement?
High-level answer: We have concluded that:	The Council's approach to information management is supporting improvement and the Council's proactive approach is delivering benefits.
Assessment of current arrangements	The Council's information management arrangements are robust and well established.
Assessment of performance	The Council's performs well, delivering and using information effectively to achieve service improvements and efficiencies.
Proposals for improvement	<p>P1 Ensure that back-up data is held outside the recommended nine-mile limit to enable a full restoration of service information in the event of a disaster.</p> <p>P2 Establish measures to monitor and report on the Council's effectiveness in managing its information.</p> <p>P3 Address the non-compliance issues in relation to the time it takes to respond to freedom of information requests.</p>

Question	Yes or No	Because:
<p>Are the organisation's plans for information management likely to secure continuous improvement?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2005, the Council produced an ambitious, comprehensive information management strategy, as part of the Council's One Vale transformational change programme which looks at the interrelationship between the Council, its customers, suppliers and staff. The Council is progressing the delivery of the strategy. • The Council has a robust set of plans to deliver and support the information strategy. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Data Protection Implementation plan – a clearly written blue print for information management within the Council; – the information management operational programme – the Democratic Services Annual Service Plan; and – the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) Implementation project, part of the corporate One Vale programme. • The Council has a comprehensive, well-written set of policies covering Information Management. The Council consults and engages with all stakeholders to develop its corporate information policies and strategies which Council members considered before Corporate Management Team formally endorsed them.

Question	Yes or No	Because:
<p>Are the organisation's arrangements for information management likely to secure continuous improvement?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has well-established Information Governance arrangements through which it discharges its ISO27001 ISMF responsibilities. The Information Strategy and Governance Board (ISGB) undertake the Council's Information Management function, and they formulate policies, procedures, and refer decisions and recommendations to Corporate Management Team and Cabinet for approval. • The Council has delegated Data Protection and the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) responsibilities to the Director of Legal, Public Protection and Housing Services, who chairs the ISGB. Senior officers from all Directorates are members of the ISGB which meets quarterly. Board members are drawn from Departmental Management teams providing good links with service areas. The Head of ICT chairs the ICT Security Group which is responsible for electronic security and receives all electronic incident reports which it reports to the ISGB. Paper security incidents are reported through line managers to the IGSB. The Council's Information Manager is the main contact for staff across the Council for information management issues, Data Protection Act (DPA) and Freedom of Information (FOI). Heads of Service and Operational Managers have been designated 'Responsible Officers' for the information and systems within their service areas. • Senior decision makers understand Information Management issues and opportunities, recognising the importance of effectively managing and using information to deliver improved, more focused services for citizens and achieve savings. The Council had been responsive to information needs since 2004 with an initial Information Management review by the National Computer Centre; the Council has continued this commitment to the EDRMS implementation through the One Vale Programme. • The Council effectively manages the impact of information management on staff. The Council's Intranet StaffNet provides information on both DPA and FOI responsibilities/procedures and offers e-learning. In addition a comprehensive training programme has been established, tailored towards specific needs. For example, Induction training, Data Protection training, Training for Managers and Supervisors, Training for Members, EDRMS training. Training records are maintained and staff are required to attend refresher training every three years. • The Council effectively manages its financial and staff resources to support the implementation of its plans for Information Management. The Council has made substantial investment since 2005 in technology to support the Council's information management objectives to improve services and secure improvement, and the Council is now realising the benefits arising from the investment.

Question	Yes or No	Because:
<p>Are the organisation's arrangements for information management likely to secure continuous improvement?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is sharing information effectively. The Corporate Plan emphasises collaborative working, data sharing, and work is underway to ensure compliance with new regulations and international standards. The Council has arrangements in place for the exchange of secure e-mail and documents with Government departments via the Government Secure Extranet. • The Information Management function has established sound business processes. The Council has a detailed risk management strategy. The ISGB and the Corporate Risk Management Group manage corporate information risks. Responsible Officers are responsible for service risks, and these service risks are identified in individual service plans. The Council has a robust project management methodology which it uses to support the delivery of information projects.
<p>Is the authority's information management performance supporting it in providing efficient, effective and economical services?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is implementing an electronic document management system HP TRIM, so that all its electronic documents are held within a single system in a structured format. Over 500,000 records are now stored within HP TRIM and 75 per cent of office-based staff use the system. Work Flow technology is used with Revenue Services, all information is scanned into the system which has significantly increased efficiencies and improved customer services through automation of processes. • Several years ago the Council invested in the Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) e-business suite and is now starting to realise its benefits from consolidating applications and information wherever possible, maximising its investment in the Oracle ERP system. • The Council has good and improving knowledge about the data it holds. An information audit was undertaken in 2005 as part of the OneVale change programme. This identified information that was duplicated across systems. The Local Government Classification Scheme is used in the HP TRIM system to classify electronic information. Information held on paper located in offices is reducing as the Council scans documents into HP TRIM. A corporate Records Management Unit (RMU), a separate unit and physically secure environment stores archived paper documents which will eventually be scanned into HP TRIM, reducing storage costs, freeing space and making them more easily accessible.

Question	Yes or No	Because:
<p>Is the authority's information management performance supporting it in providing efficient, effective and economical services?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's principle, to hold only one version of data, positively supports robust data quality. The process of transferring information into HP TRIM where it is classified and retention data is allocated, is a data quality process, validating information and supporting the timely destruction of electronic information. The Council transferred data from a number of financial systems and is consolidating it into the Oracle e-Business Suite, removing duplication and validating the quality of data during the process. All records are disposed of in accordance with the Council's Retention Schedules. Responsible officers are required to confirm in their annual statement their Department's compliance with data protection principles and produce action plans in respect of any non compliance. The Internal Audit Service undertakes checks to ensure compliance. • The Council has appropriate security measures in place to protect its information assets. The Information Security Group deals with technical security issues. The ICT Services follow ITIL procedures for change management to ensure that any changes that are made to any of the systems are properly considered and approved before taking place. All systems are backed up and tapes stored off site. • The Council has plans in place for business continuity and data is also replicated electronically to the Council's Disaster Recovery site based at the Alps Depot which is some six miles away from the main offices, this is within the recommended nine-mile radius affected by electro-magnetic radiation following a bomb blast. • The Council has appropriate processes in place for archiving and disposal of information.

Question	Yes or No	Because:
<p>Is the organisation effectively monitoring and evaluating improvement and performance of its information management function?</p>	<p>In part</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is learning from its monitoring and evaluation processes. Internal Audit undertakes periodic reviews and assists in major projects, the Council learns from others. The FOI Unit monitors the ICO's website in relation to guidance and good practice on Information Management. Staff also participate in information groups such as the Welsh Information Governance Group and the South Wales Information Forum and Access. • The Council has limited performance measures relating to information management. The information management operational programme is presented to the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee who receives quarterly reports in relation to decisions made against the Council by the Information Commissioner's Office in respect of FOI. However, whilst FOIA and DPA statistics are regularly collated they are not included in the Democratic Services Business plan. Figures indicate that between January and March 2010 the Council responded to 80 per cent of FOAI requests in the expected 20-day time line, however, performance between January and March 2011 was significantly reduced with the Council only responding to 67 per cent of requests. • The Council has no FOI appeals upheld by the Information Commissioner's Office, and following a security breach the ICO determined to take no action stating that: 'Having now considered all the circumstances, together with the Council's policies and procedures, I am satisfied that there is no need to take regulatory action.' • The Council is audited annually by external auditors to ensure compliance with the Government Secure Extranet (GCSX) standard and is planning for compliance with the International Information Security Standard ISO27001.



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