

Information and Records Management Policy:

Annex 2: Guidance Notes

June 2007

1. Document Creation

Documents are now created in a mixture of ways and it is increasingly important that we achieve some consistency so as to improve their management and make them more easily found. **Documents are here taken to mean any item in any format including powerpoints, emails, websites etc**

- All hardcopy documents at LBC should be created using the current version of MS Word and preferably by adopting the appropriate template;
- Printed memos are for internal use only and where a formal signature is required - otherwise email is preferred;
- Printed letters are for external use and for formal communications where email communication is not possible or where a written signature is required;
- Emails should be the preferred means of communication for business transactions. Documents/files etc may be attached to an email but, for internal transfer, long documents/powerpoints etc should be posted in a folder and the file name sent by email;
- Reports – use this format for longer work or for presentation to committees etc;
- Committee papers for formal council committees are governed by policies set by committees services and documents should match those requirements;

2. Layout

Document titles should be brief but helpful to the reader. That is, avoiding general words such as 'Notes' as a title or at least they should be qualified with the context: thus "Web development: notes of meeting of 24th June 2006" rather than "Notes about last weeks meeting".

Where there are references e.g. query number 4/346, this should be quoted in the title or in a specific reference field.

Documents should be dated as per the date of final submission together with the authors name and for preference their section/title and phone number.

Dates should be written in full form in text e.g. 23rd December 2006 and abbreviated in file titles etc as: 06 12 23 so as to aid filing.

Documents should be filed on the appropriate shared drive and not on local or c: drives which are inherently insecure.

3. Metadata

For all documents, a properties 'box' or metadata box must be completed before the document is finally filed. This should include at a minimum: title, subject, author, manager, and keywords.

Title – see above;

Subject – if the title needs clarification;

Author - is likely to be generated automatically;

Manager – section or dept manager;

Keywords – include here one or two words – preferably from the IPSV (*or the LBC corporate taxonomy*) but if terms are not available then use keywords which either add to or complement those in the title/subject fields e.g. synonyms;

4. Final versions of documents must be filed in the correct folder. Where a document could be filed under more than one heading it can be duplicated but this should generally be avoided - rather a link should be posted in the alternative file.

Retention

5. Documents are retained for specified periods as laid down by LBC and in-line with best practice (local government guidelines) with the aim of meeting our statutory obligations and reducing the need for space and storage. Retained or relegated documents should be dealt with on a regular basis at the appropriate time as indicated by the retention schedule so as to avoid files building up over a period and retaining documents which we simply no longer need.
6. Documents may be relegated to store (at Bedford, or other long term stores or on site), or offered to the County Archivist for long term retention or disposed of by shredding. Computer records will be copied to off-line long-term storage or online low-access stores or deleted.
7. The above applies in just the same way to other media including emails; it is the responsibility of email users to ensure that emails are archived to a

- suitable business folder or stored on shared drives pending the introduction of a corporate EDRMS/ECM.
8. We need only retain one copy of any given document – preferably the master copy or the best copy available. There is **no requirement** to maintain print copies of scanned documents although it might be a lower risk to keep hard copies for a year post scanning.

Archiving

9. All print documents for archiving should be either put in an appropriate local store or sent to Bedford/BoxIT. Documents to be sent to Bedford/BoxIT should be boxed up as per their instructions and forms correctly filled out. Good practice suggests:
 - Not mixing documents together which have different retention periods i.e. keep like documents together, as the whole box will be kept until the very last document expires;
 - Keep years together - if at all possible; again this helps with deletion and shredding;
 - We should not be archiving anything we do not need to, under the retention policy.

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