



Shared Service: Information Governance

Shared service commenced: April 2018

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Overview of the shared service arrangement:

The Legal shared service including Information Governance was established in April 2017, with arrangements amended in July 2018 to respond to the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and enable both authorities to benefit from all resources within the Information Governance (IG) Team (6FTE).

The Shared Service Agreement sets the basis for splitting the available resources between the two councils as approximately 59% for Medway and 41% for Gravesham.

The team structure of the service is formed of the Information Governance Manager, Senior Information Governance officer, three Information Governance Officers and an Information Governance Apprentice. The budgeted cost of the service is currently incorporated into a single charge for both Legal and Information Governance services; for 2021/22 the budget costs to Gravesham of the Legal and Information Governance Shared Service was £450,510, with actual costs being £429,850.

In the last nine months the service has experienced significant staff turnover, with resignations at the Information Governance Manager, Senior Information Governance officer and Information Governance Officer levels. Consequently, the service has had to make use of temporary staff to fulfil the needs of each authority. The Information Governance Manager role was successfully recruited to and the new postholder assumed the role in September 2022. The team structure is currently completed with one permanent Information Governance Officer and the remaining posts being filled on a temporary basis, subject to the outcomes of a planned review of the shared service by both councils.

Progress against objectives:

	Objective	Update
1	Efficiency savings. Realising actual financial savings across the two sites but maintaining delivery of the service.	<p>Prior to the shared service arrangement, Gravesham employed a single FTE resource in the form of a Freedom of Information (FOI) Officer. This was expanded to one FTE supported by a part time FOI Officer when the two councils agreed to share management of their Information Governance resources as a precursor to the full shared service.</p> <p>It was, however, recognised by both council's that even if a shared service was not progressed, additional officers would be required by each to ensure adequate resourcing of information governance activity, particularly given the imminent introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) at that time. The shared service was therefore set in place to respond to that expanded need across Gravesham and Medway.</p> <p>If the shared service were not in place each local authority would have to resource the role of Data Protection Officer and employ their own IG resources.</p>
2	Added resilience across the two authorities. There will be a larger pool of officers covering both authorities providing additional resilience to cover sickness absence/vacancies or increased workload should this be required	The recruitment and retention challenges over the last year has supported the objective of providing resilience across the two authorities, with a required level of service being maintained, as set out in the Annual Information Governance Report considered by the Performance & Administration Cabinet Committee in June 2022.
3	Availability of specialist skills across both authorities leading to increased efficiency; potential for a reduced requirement for external support from contractors etc.	This had been a focus for the shared service during the last two years, with officers within the team obtaining GDPR practitioner certificates and receiving FOI training. Given the turnover of staff the new Information Governance Manager, along with the Director (Corporate Services) and Assistant Director, Legal and Governance will be reviewing team resourcing, including the identification of any training and development needs to maintain the necessary skills within the team.
4	Sharing of best practice in the delivery of services	The ability of the IG Team to work across the two councils provides a strong basis from which to identify and develop best practice and share this between the two partner organisations.

5	Expansion of knowledge base of individual officers	See point three above.
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Key Performance Measures:

		Target 2020/21	Outturn 2020-21
1	Following the review of the shared service conducted in 2021, a suite of KPIs was developed and agreed in January 2022 for implementation from 1 April 2022, including measures around cost of service and allocation and use of resource. These will be refined during 2022 and incorporated into annual service reporting and the next shared service review.		

Update against recommendations identified in previous year review:

	Objective	Update
1	Action taken to enhance arrangements to demonstrate the equitable allocation of resources between the partner councils. This will enable each partner to determine the use of resources available to them, effectively manage and monitor performance and to be able to demonstrate Value for Money (VfM) against these work programmes.	The Director (Corporate Services) and Assistant Director, Legal and Governance have committed to reviewing the shared service agreement for Legal Services and Information Governance, with a view to setting in place separate agreements (including KPI and charging) for each service. This will enable greater transparency which, in turn, will assist each partner in effectively managing and monitoring performance of the service and demonstrate Value for Money (VfM).
2	Develop a suite of KPIs to demonstrate achievement of expected performance standards and VfM of the Shared Service in future years.	A suite of KPIs was developed and agreed in January 2022 for implementation from 1 April 2022, including measures around cost of service and allocation and use of resource. These will be refined during 2022 and incorporated into regular monthly management reporting for the service. Availability of resource has impinged on the ability to progress this recommendation as quickly as both councils would have liked.

Recommendations/Service Improvements for the coming year:

1	A review of Information Governance arrangements at each council is to be conducted to determine targeted areas of activity for the Shared Service in the forthcoming period. This review to be used to reset the objectives of the Shared Service moving forwards.
2	Following the completion of action one, a full review is to be completed of Shared Service resourcing to ensure this remains fit for purpose and is sufficiently skilled to be able to respond to the needs of each authority.
3	Development of a shared service agreement specifically for Information Governance, which will stipulate expected service levels for each council alongside agreed mechanisms and measures for managing service performance, demonstrating value for money and ensuring the equitable allocation of costs between each council.

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