

## **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

<b>DATE</b>	16th April 2026
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Assistant Director Policy Strategy & Resources (Senior Information Risk Owner)
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Information Governance and Security - Annual Governance Report
<b>STATUS</b>	Open

### **CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIM**

Effective information governance and security arrangements ensures the information we use and have access to is managed effectively, kept protected and secure, evidencing and informing decision making, forward planning and service delivery, and contributing to the achievement of the priorities and outcomes of the Council, the Place and our partners.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report outlines the key information governance and security activities undertaken by the Council in 2025 and provides assurance that the Council across all its work areas and functions remains compliant with its legal obligations and follows good practice.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Annual information governance and security report for the calendar year 2025 at Appendix 1 be received and approved.

### **REASONS FOR DECISION**

To support the Council's information governance activities.

### **1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

- 1.1 To carry out many of its' functions, the Council is required to process personal data and special category personal data about identifiable individuals (data subjects).
- 1.2 The UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and The Data Use and Access Act 2025 (DUAA) set out the data protection principles that the Council must follow for the lawful, fair and transparent processing of personal data; as well as the rights that individuals have in relation to the processing of their personal data, to hold the Council to account and ensure that their privacy is respected. Failure to comply with these responsibilities can result in a monetary penalty of up to 20 million Euros (18 million pounds) or 4% of global annual turnover.
- 1.3 Other information governance legislation that must be complied with when processing personal data, include the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations, the Human Rights Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations and associated Codes of Practice.

Failure to comply with our legal obligations can result in:

- a) Inconvenience, distress, prejudice or harm to individuals or organisations.
- b) Loss or compromise of personal, commercial, or sensitive data affecting the Council's ability to make decisions and / or deliver services.
- c) Damage to the Council's reputation, which may result in a loss or reduction in the level of trust others have in us.
- d) Enforcement action and / or a monetary penalty from the Information Commissioner's Office.
- e) Prosecution through the Courts.
- f) Loss of the ability to take card payments in person or online.
- g) Restricted access to the Public Services Network.

1.4 Common factors in the cause of many data and cyber incidents are human error and a lack of awareness of responsibilities and good practice.

1.5 To address these risks and raise awareness, understanding and compliance with our obligations, policies, procedures and guidance for the effective management and security of personal data and associated systems are in place, and promoted at both corporate and service levels, supported by mandatory data protection and cyber security training for all staff (including agency staff and partners accessing the Council's network) and Elected Members.

## **2. RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND EQUALITY ISSUES**

Ineffective information governance and security arrangements have inherent risks in the context of organisational management, the use of resources and service delivery. Addressing the issues raised in the report is a means of mitigating such potential risks and maximising opportunities for effective information management and security to support decision making and service delivery to all in our communities.

## **3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

None.

## **4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

Each of the issues identified in the annual information governance and security report could have a potential reputational impact if not addressed.

## **5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable in relation to this report.

## **6. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

Effective and secure information governance arrangements help to ensure the safeguarding and protection of our children and young people and enables them to exercise their data protection rights.

## **7. CLIMATE CHANGE NATURE RECOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no such implications arising from this report.

## **8. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct implications arising from the content of this report, however strong information governance and information security arrangements support the Council's work in relation to Public Health, Health Inequalities and the Marmot principles.

## **9. CONSULTATION WITH SCRUTINY**

Scrutiny notes the position.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, we need to continue to be mindful of the potential financial implications arising as a result of failure to comply with council policies, standards and statutory legislation.

## **11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Council is under a duty to ensure that it processes, holds and releases any information in line with a range of legislative provisions including the UK General Data Protection Regulation, Data Protection Act 2018, The Data Use and Access Act 2025, Freedom of Information Act, Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations and the Human Rights Act. The Council also has a duty to publish information wherever possible, and in accordance with its own publication scheme. However, regard should be had to not publishing any information of a confidential or sensitive nature, in accordance with the relevant legislation and public interest tests.

## **12. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resource implications arising directly from this report. However, we need to continue to be mindful of the potential employee relations' implications arising as a result of failure to comply with council policies and standards.

## **13. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

All wards.

## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

## **15. CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

Paul Ellis, Strategic Lead Business Practice and Performance (Data Protection Officer)

John Padley, Cyber Security Technical Specialist

**Joanne Robinson**  
**Assistant Director Policy Strategy & Resources**

# Appendix 1

## Annual Information Governance Report for the calendar year 2025

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Governance Committee on the Council's information governance (IG) and security activities and provide assurance of its compliance with its legal obligations.

### 2 Information Governance and Security arrangements

- 2.1 The Council has officers appointed to the following information governance and security roles: Senior Information Risk Owner, Deputy Senior Information Risk Owner, 3 Caldicott Guardians (for Adults, Children and Public Health), Data Protection Officer, Cyber Security Technical Specialist, Clinical Safety Officer, and Information Asset Owners.
- 2.2 Through the Information Security and Assurance Board (ISAB) the Council reviews and maintains its information governance, management and security arrangements, policies and procedures reflecting local lessons learnt, developing good practice and changes to legislation and codes of practice. In 2025 an additional quarterly ISAB meeting has been set up to focus on AI (Artificial Intelligence).
- 2.3 The Council's cyber security arrangements are managed through a specialist team within the ICT and Digital service and aligned to the Governments Cyber Assessment Framework
- 2.4 Cyber and IG risks are included on the Corporate Risk Register and are reviewed and updated as a standing agenda item of the ISAB meetings. As part of the assessment of risk in relation to the processing of data in 2025, 39 Stage-One and 5 Stage-Two Data Protection Impact Assessments were completed.
- 2.5 Assurance activities include reviews with Information Asset Owners of the Record of Processing Activity Register, Corporate Retention Schedule and Information Sharing Agreement Register, and information governance risk and compliance reviews for each of the Council's buildings with the building responsible person.
- 2.6 In 2025 the Council maintained its compliance with the Public Services Network Code of Connection and the NHS Data Security and Protection toolkit.
- 2.7 The North East Lincolnshire Archives are managed on our behalf through Lincs Inspire and are accredited through The National Archives. In November 2025, the Archives received full accreditation from the National Archives, previously the accreditation was provisional. A reapplication will be required in

November 2027.

- 2.8 We work proactively with place and regional partners to ensure a collaborative and consistent approach to information governance, management and security compliance and promotion and are members of the Yorkshire and Humber Digital Partnership, the Humber Information Governance Alliance, Yorkshire and Humber Information Governance Group, Strategic Information Governance Network, Yorkshire and Humber WARP, Humber and North Yorkshire Cyber Security Group and the North East Lincolnshire Caldicott Guardian's Group.

### **3 Mandatory information governance training and awareness raising**

- 3.1 The 6th data protection principle states personal data shall be processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction, or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures (integrity and confidentiality').
- 3.2 An essential part of this is raising awareness and understanding of the importance of keeping personal data protected and secure, the responsibilities for this and the legislation, policies, procedures, and standards in place to support this. Everyone acting on behalf of the Council has a personal responsibility to keep the information they process protected and secure, and when logging on to the Council's ICT network, users are required to confirm compliance with the Council's policies and standards.
- 3.3 As part of the Council's induction process all new starters attend an induction day, which includes a presentation on information governance, data protection, confidentiality and cyber security. From 2026 all new starters are enrolled into a cyber and data security onboarding program.
- 3.4 All officers and elected members with access to the Council's ICT network must also complete the mandatory 'Cyber Awareness and Staying Safe Online' and the 'Data Protection: Compliance Following GDPR' e-learning modules as part of their induction and complete annual refreshers of the courses.
- 3.5 ICT Officers with privilege accounts are required to complete the Privilege Users Terms of Use Agreement.
- 3.6 For officers without access to the Council's ICT network, awareness is raised through the 'Keep It Safe' leaflet and a requirement to sign a declaration confirming they understand their responsibilities.
- 3.7 Officers and their Line Managers are automatically notified through the Learning Management System when they are required to undertake their training, with additional weekly reminders issued to them from the Information Governance Team. Currently 99% of officers are compliant with their induction / refresher GDPR training, and 92% compliant with their Cyber Awareness

training.

- 3.8 Training compliance details are available to line managers in real-time through the corporate learning management system; ISAB representatives are made aware of outstanding officers for their service areas to chase up non-compliance, with procedures in place to suspend the network access of any officer who does not complete the training within the agreed timescale of one month from registration.
- 3.9 Awareness raising at officer, service and corporate level of information governance, management and security issues and good practice, is further supported and embedded through internal communications and face to face training / workshops.
- 3.10 During 2025, there has been a continued focus on maintaining and raising awareness of Cyber Security reflecting the increased risk and sophistication of phishing and cyber-attacks. Dedicated campaigns have taken place to target every person with network access with a phishing simulation email.

**4 Incidents and breaches reported in 2025.**

- 4.1 Arrangements are established for the reporting of data incidents, which are allocated to an investigating officer and reported to the Data Protection Officer on behalf of the Information Security and Assurance Board for review and sign off. These arrangements continue to be reviewed to ensure lessons are identified and improvements are made to policies, procedures and controls. The ICT and Information Security Policy and Wiki pages on the employee intranet provide guidance on the reporting and investigation of incidents.
- 4.2 In 2025, 229 incidents were investigated, a slight increase on the previous year. Corresponding figures for the previous 3 years are:

Calendar Year	Incidents investigated	Reported to the ICO
2025	229	2
2024	190	2
2023	173	5
2022	156	5

- 4.3 The investigations identified that for 187 of the incidents there was no significant risk to the data subject, 35 investigations found that no data breach had occurred, 2 were found to be third party incidents, and for 3 incidents there was insufficient information for an investigation.
- 4.4 We self-referred 2 incidents to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO). One of the incidents has been closed by the ICO with advice provided, the second incident is still open for investigation.
- 4.7 No other incidents were reported directly to the ICO by the data subject.

- 4.4 The continued increase in the number of incidents can likely be attributed to officers being more aware of the need to report all data incidents through our mandatory training, awareness raising activities and guidance, even relatively minor incidents such as emails going to the wrong internal recipient or post being sent to a former address and returned to the Council unopened are reported, which may not have been reported previously. 2025, saw an increase in the number of investigations that identified no data breach had occurred to 35, compared to 9 in 2024.

## 5 Handling of Access to Information requests

- 5.1 In 2025, 1,434 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests were received with 99% responded to within 20 working days. 28 internal reviews were requested concerning the handling of the requests, a significant increase from previous years, of which 4 were escalated to the ICO for independent resolution. Three of these cases remain open, for the fourth additional information was disclosed in response to the request.

- 5.2 Corresponding figures for the previous 5 years are:

Calendar Year	Requests	responded to in 20 days	Internal reviews	ICO complaints
2025	1,434	99%	28	4
2024	1,295	99%	11	2
2023	1,187	95%	16	1
2022	1,083	94%	27	2
2021	1,010	94%	23	6
2020	1,092	82%	12	4

- 5.3 2025 volumes are slightly higher than the previous 4 years, returning to pre-COVID, which were 1,418 in 2019 and 1,433 in 2018.
- 5.4 The percentage of FOI requests responded to within the statutory timescale of 20 working days, at 99%, continues to show recovery from the reduced level of 82% in 2020 which is attributed to the reallocation of resources for service delivery as part of the COVID-19 working arrangements.
- 5.5 Under the Data Protection Act in 2025, we received 73 Subject Access Requests, compared to 63 in 2024.
- 5.6 We received in 2025, 511 third party data protection requests, compared to 193 in 2024.

## 6 Internal Audits

- 6.1 Internal audits related to Information Governance have been undertaken for:
- CCTV
  - Customer Services Management Platform

- Cyber Security Incident Handling Process
- Information Governance
- Supplier Chain

6.2 The following internal audits are currently scheduled:

- AI (Artificial Intelligence)
- Children's System C review is just starting.
- Business Resilience sometime 2026/27.

6.3 It should also be noted that non-IG and security related audits may include reviews of IG and security controls and practices.

## **7 Future Actions**

7.1 The ISAB will continue to monitor and review our information governance and security arrangements including policies, procedures, guidance, and training (both current provision and future need) to ensure compliance with our statutory duties and promote officer understanding. This monitoring and review will reflect any developments or changes required as a result of the reforms to the UK's data protection regime and identified good practice.

7.2 Monitoring of the completion of the mandatory e-learning modules for Cyber Security and Data Protection against agreed deadlines will continue, with appropriate action taken against those not complying.

7.3 Awareness raising activities will continue with a specific focus on cyber security and phishing attacks.

7.4 To provide assurance of information governance compliance and the arrangements in place to ISAB and the Senior Information Risk Owner, the following reviews will continue to be undertaken:

- a) The Record of Process Activity Register, Corporate Retention Schedule and the Information Sharing Agreement Register with Information Asset Owners,
- b) Building Information Governance Checks with the person responsible for each building.

7.5 Work will continue with partners to develop a consistent and collaborative approach for information management and security for the place of North East Lincolnshire and the wider region.

7.6 The Council will continue to meet all compliance requirements and conduct annual penetration testing. In 2026 all cyber security work is linked to the Cyber Assessment Framework