

EXECUTIVE MEMBER - THE MAYOR

A meeting of the Executive Member - The Mayor was held on Thursday, 17 July 2025.

PRESENT: Mayor C Cooke (Chair).

OFFICERS: T Frankland, A Johnstone and C Lunn.

**APOLOGIES FOR
ABSENCE:** None.

25/4 **WELCOME AND FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the fire evacuation procedures.

25/5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received at this point in the meeting.

25/6 **CORPORATE COMPLAINTS POLICY**

The Mayor considered a report regarding the Corporate Complaints Policy.

The report sought approval for proposed revisions to the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy to ensure the Council dealt appropriately with complaints raised. The report set out the procedures to ensure complaints were dealt with under the right process and resolved promptly, and detailed how the authority aimed to rectify issues for customers and learn lessons from those experiences to enhance future outcomes.

The decision required Single Member Executive approval as it was a 'minor variation to an existing policy or procedure', as per Section 6.38.2(a) of the constitution.

The policy applied to all services including services directly provided by the Council, by a contractor or through a partnership which the Council led.

The policy covered corporate complaints; it signposted to the separate statutory processes that were in place to manage qualifying complaints about Adult Social Care and/or Children's Services. It was indicated that separate processes were also in place for other areas, such as complaints about schools, Councillor and staff misconduct; potential insurance claims and data breaches; parking penalty charge notices; information requests; refusals of planning permission; and school admissions or exclusions.

The policy was reviewed every three years unless there were changes to legislation in the intervening period. This policy review had included a revision to reflect feedback from the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman to strengthen oversight of complaints once in process to improve control, and ensure responses were appropriately recorded.

OPTIONS

The Council could choose not to adopt corporate policies on complaints, however statutory duties would remain in place and, in the absence of a standard approach, there would be an increased risk of making decisions that failed to meet those duties, which could result in financial penalty imposed on us. Given these duties were in place this option was not recommended.

ORDERED that the revised Corporate Complaints Policy be approved.

REASONS

Consideration of policy was required to ensure compliance with the Council's statutory responsibilities which will ensure the Council articulates how it will deal with complaints raised with the Council and what can be expected from that process.

25/7

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INFORMATION REQUESTS POLICY

The Mayor considered a report regarding the Public Information and Information Requests Policy.

The report sought approval for the Council's Corporate Public Information and Information Requests Policy, following completion of a scheduled review.

The policy ensured that the Council met the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and associated guidance, proactively identified and published datasets over and above those required by the Code to minimise the need for individuals or organisations to submit statutory information requests.

The decision required Single Member Executive approval as it was a 'minor variation to an existing policy or procedure', as per Section 6.38.2(a) of the constitution.

The Public Information and Information Requests Policy applied to all services including services directly provided by the Council, by a contractor or through a partnership which the Council led.

The policy set out how the Council would respond to information requests submitted to the Council by individuals and organisations that could fall within the rights established by the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA), Environmental Information Requests (EIR), General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA).

The policy set out how the Council would proactively publish data to reduce the need for people to submit requests. The policy set out that the Council would respond to requests in line with statutory timescales.

Separate processes were in place for Councillor enquiries; legal requests; and CCTV requests.

The policy was reviewed every three years unless there were changes to legislation in the intervening period, or other events that would require an earlier review.

OPTIONS

The Council could choose not to adopt corporate policies on requests for information. However, statutory duties would remain in place. Without a standard approach, there was an increased risk of making decisions that failed to meet those duties, which could result in financial penalties. Given these duties, this option was not recommended.

ORDERED that the revised Public Information and Information Requests Policy be approved.

REASONS

Consideration of policy was required to ensure compliance with the Council's statutory responsibilities which will ensure the Council articulated how it would deal with requests for information and what could be expected from that process.

25/8

RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Mayor considered a report regarding the Records Management Policy.

The report presented and sought approval of the proposed revisions to the Council's Records Management Policy and Retention Schedule following their schedules' triennial review, in order to ensure the Council's continued compliance with the statutory Code of Practice on the management of records which sat within the Council's Information Governance Policy Framework.

The report provided the rules and guidance necessary to appropriately safeguard the Council's corporate information to ensure it was secure, complete, managed effectively and

appropriately accessible.

The decision required Single Member Executive approval as it was a 'minor variation to an existing policy or procedure', as per Section 6.38.2(a) of the constitution.

The increasing reliance on electronic records, with more information being created and received digitally, had added a new dimension to the challenges that Middlesbrough Council faced. The growth of digital technology had provided different ways for the Council to communicate and share information, which made information and records management even more complex.

The Council was in the process of implementing a new corporate storage platform which would ensure structure, consistency and security for its records. Its policy and retention schedules would determine how the Council's information was structured, and how long information was held for in line with retention legislation.

The policy would underpin and ensure that:

- where and when required, authoritative information about past activities could be found and used for current business (corporate memory);
- the Council could demonstrate compliance with its legal duties and respond to public information requests more efficiently;
- the Council would become more transparent by proactively and routinely publishing data of public interest; and
- the Council achieved a more effective use of resources, through the ongoing digitisation of records and the correct implementation of the Corporate Records Retention Schedule.

Furthermore, effective records management would also help the Council mitigate the following risks:

- loss of records vital to effective operations;
- taking poor decisions based on inadequate or incomplete records;
- failure to handle personal or confidential information with the required level of security;
- criticisms or sanctions from the Information Commissioner for non-compliance; and
- financial losses due to the lack of reliable evidence or incurring unnecessary costs for data storage.

The policy and schedule were reviewed every three years unless there were changes to legislation in the intervening period that would require an earlier review.

OPTIONS

The Council could choose not to adopt corporate policies on records management, however statutory duties would remain in place and in the absence of a standard approach there would be an increased risk of making decisions that failed to meet those legal duties. Given these duties were in place, this option was not recommended.

ORDERED that the Records Management Policy and Corporate Retention Schedule Refresh be approved.

REASONS

Consideration of policy was required to ensure compliance with the Council's statutory responsibilities, which would ensure the right information would be available to the right users, at any time, accessible and used ethically to support achievement of the Council Plan Ambitions.

Managing Records effectively would support delivery of the Council's emerging Digital Strategy.

None.

The decision(s) will come into force after five working days following the day the decision(s) were published unless the decision(s) become subject to the call in procedures.