WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

21 NOVEMBER 2016

1. **MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION**

   Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

   RECOMMENDED

   THAT the Authority considers and comments on the Management of Information framework as set out in the draft Standing Order (Appendix 1).

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

   This report is submitted to inform Members of the Management of Information framework and seek comments on the draft Standing Order covering this area.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The term 'Management of Information' covers the whole lifecycle of the Brigade's information governance. This includes data inputs, handling instructions, processing and data outputs.

3.2 The Chief Fire Officer delegates responsibility for the Management of Information to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer as the designated Senior Information Risk Owner.

3.3 There are two processes covered within this lifecycle, namely 'Classification and Marking' and 'Requests for Information'.

3.4 Classification and marking is where the Brigade assesses and classifies the information received from various sources before appropriately labelling and handling that information.

3.5 The Government Security Classifications Scheme's move to three categories (OFFICIAL, SECRET and TOP SECRET) provides greater flexibility on how each organisation governs its information.

3.6   In seeking to appropriately protect the Brigade whilst maximising the opportunity for flexible working, the following OFFICIAL WMFS categories have been identified:

- OFFICIAL WMFS – PUBLIC
- OFFICIAL WMFS – LOW
- OFFICIAL WMFS – MEDIUM
- OFFICIAL WMFS – HIGH

3.7   The flexibility within the Government Security Classifications Scheme introduces further complexity and potential confusion when sharing data with other agencies who may adopt different approaches under these general headings.

3.8   Therefore, awareness of other organisations' classification labels and handling instructions is vital when receiving external data. Likewise it is imperative to provide WMFS handling instructions alongside any data provided to external bodies.

3.9   The Information Asset Register underpins the classification process and consequently needs to be maintained by the Data Manager, Deputy Chief Fire Officer as the Senior Information Risk Owner and the Strategic Enablers as the Information Asset Owners for their respective areas of responsibility.

3.10 Requests for information are regularly received across the Brigade. As per the Standing Order, the processing of requests falls into three categories namely General, Freedom of Information and Data Protection.

3.11 The flowchart within the Standing Order highlights the need for all Freedom of Information and Data Protection requests to be referred to Data Management with all other requests logged and processed accordingly to the classification of the information requested.

3.12 Systems will need to be implemented to aid in the logging and analysis of all requests received to further support Organisational Intelligence.

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3.13 In supporting the framework, the following changes have been made to the Freedom of Information processes. These amendments are to help in clarifying SET and Authority Members' responsibilities:-

- For each Freedom of Information request received, the relevant SET member will be notified of the request.

- A monthly report will be produced by Data Management and distributed to all SET members for awareness.

- Requests specifically relating to the Fire Authority will be handled in line with the process above and liaison will occur with Authority Members.

- In line with best practice, anonymised requests will be published in a disclosure log on the Brigade website to further promote openness and transparency.

3.14 These changes highlight how Freedom of Information requests are processed under the wider Management of Information framework. This provides a single approach for Members in receiving requests for information and provides clarity on how requests for information are received and handled by both the Service and the Authority.

3.15 In order to aid communication and simplify the Management of Information framework, the following six Standing Orders have been merged into the single Management of Information Standing Order (Appendix 1):-

1/5   Freedom of Information 2000
1/10   Environmental Information Regulations 2004
1/17   Re-use Public Sector Information 2005
1/30   Government Classification Scheme
2/16   Data Protection Act 1998
2/21   Personal Information Policy.

3.16 The draft Standing Order is being circulated for consultation to the wider Brigade including Representative Bodies.

3.17 Work continues with Corporate Communications and Training Teams to ensure all staff and Members are aware of their responsibilities within the Management of Information lifecycle.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The creation of an overarching framework to improve the management of information ensures that relevant guidance related to legislation such as the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is grouped more logically.

5.2 This will assist with raising awareness within the organisation and reducing the risk of monetary penalties and damage to reputation from inappropriate handling of information.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications relating to the matters set out within this report.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct environmental implications arising from this work.

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