Notes from the Model Plan Review Breakout Group Stakeholders Forum 2018 01

The breakaway group lead by Meic Pierce-Owen was given the task of considering the value, structure and text of the Keeper of the Records of Scotland's Model Records Management Plan (Model RMP) with an aim of making improvements where appropriate, prior to going to public consultation in autumn 2018.

Value

The group unanimously approved the Model RMP in principle with several members reporting its usefulness in preparing their own authority's plan, particularly when they were responsible for preparing an RMP from scratch. It was noted by the Assessment Team that every Scottish public authority that has submitted an RMP for the Keeper's agreement has followed the 14 element structure (so far) even though this is not a requirement of the Public Records (Scotland) Act which simply refers to authorities "having regard" to the Model.

It was suggested by the group that the universal use of the Model structure is a benefit to the Keeper's Assessment Team.

The group discussed the utility of rearranging the elements of the Model plan into themes (compliance, responsibilities..etc.). This is a question for the Stakeholders Forum (see questions below).

It was asked if following the structure of the Model RMP might be made compulsory. This would require a change in the text of the Act itself which is not something that the Keeper is currently considering. Similarly, the idea of making the publication of Records Management Plans by public authorities a requirement of the Act is not one that is being actively pursued.

Generally it was accepted that the Model RMP needs to be simple and generic enough to apply to all scheduled public authorities.

It was suggested that the Model RMP should be 'marketed' with more emphasis on its function as an improvement tool.

The use of RAG (Red/Amber/Green) markings when assessing RMPs against the Model was unanimously approved by the group.

Structure

The current structure of the Keeper's Model RMP was the principle discussion point for the group in this breakout session. Several questions about the structure were raised that should be put to the entire Forum (see below).

Some members of the group, while supporting the 14 elements in principle, felt that it could be a struggle to capture the attention of an audience (such as a management board) with such a large number of 'things to do'. Perhaps it would be better to have 3 or 4 themes such as 'compliance' or 'information assets' which could then be subdivided into the 14 elements (see questions below).

Several authorities developed a 15th element which they added to the end of the Keeper's 14. It seems likely that a Third Party Contactors element will be requested by the breakout group responsible for that aspect of PRSA. However, the Model Plan group also discussed the value of an FOI element. The provision of evidence against this was discussed (see questions below).

On the subject of a '15th element' the question of familiarity in the Scottish public sector with the idea of 14 elements was raised. Has the concept of a 14 element Model become such a 'brand' that the inclusion of a new element would require the removal of another. It was suggested by one member of the group that element 13 could be removed (see questions below).

The group discussed the inclusion of 'vital records' in element 10. It was generally thought that as long as authorities have hard-copy records (and most do) there is value in retaining this component.

The general order of elements was discussed. It was noted that even though the order should not matter there seemed to be a sensible arrangement in the first half (perhaps 1 – 7) and then 'a lack of reason' in the second half. It was noted that some of the later elements were added by the previous Stakeholders Forum as extra to the Keeper's original draft.

Specifically, it was asked by the group why 'Review' (element 13) was not at the end.

It would be interesting to determine what appetite there was for re-ordering the elements (see questions below).

The group discussed the use of the term 'Business Classification' for element 4. Many authority's have developed Information Asset Registers, possibly with GDPR in mind. These should be sufficient for this element. However, it was noted that some IARs focus on records holding personal information to the exclusion of those containing general corporate information. These would not fully comply with the Keeper's expectations under this element. However, perhaps a renaming of this (or any other) element would aid clarity (see questions below). Should this element be outcome based and named accordingly?

The group also discussed the value of having a Data Protection element (currently element 9). It was asked under what circumstances the Keeper might not agree element 9 if the Information Commissioner was apparently already satisfied that an authority was compliant with GDPR/DP 2018. With no answer to this, is there any point in including this element? However, it was pointed out that even those in an organisation that are distant from information governance issues are loosely familiar with the idea of 'data protection' and therefore there might be good reason to retain it. It was also pointed out that it would be 'brave' to remove the data protection element shortly after May 2018! There is another breakout group dealing with this issue specifically and, in the first instance, the Model Plan group defers to them.

Text

It was generally accepted that the wording of certain elements in the Model RMP may have caused difficulties (elements 11, 13 and 14 were specifically mentioned). It was also pointed out that, to maintain usefulness, it might be important that the Model Plan is worded in such a way that it can be referred to by public authorities after the creation of their RMP as an implementation tool. In his introduction, Meic touched on the idea of making the text of the Model RMP more outcomes based and management friendly. Similarly, it was suggested that the Model could focus more on 'What does Good look like?"

However, the group did not engage with reworking the text at this stage. This can be done in detail later once the structure has been agreed.

Guidance

The Model RMP is accompanied and supported by a Guidance Document issued and updated by the PRSA Assessment Team on behalf of the Keeper. It was generally agreed that the current version is overlong and that many of the links could usefully be swapped for Scottish public authority examples, now they are more readily available. Links to published agreed plans should also be easier to find.

However, the review of the Guidance Document can only be undertaken once the Model RMP has been finalised as it would be the Keeper's intention to link directly from Model RMP elements to the corresponding Guidance pages.

The review of the Guidance Document may therefore be a task for Spring 2019.

Mode of communication

The group discussed the potential means of communication that might be utilised to keep up the momentum of the review process. Both e-mail (with all Forum members copied in) and the setting up of a discussion board (such as Knowledge Hub) were discussed. No definite answer was determined by this breakout group and a decision on this issue was remitted to the full Forum. It is worth noting, however, that at least

one member of the Model Plan breakout group indicated that they would be unable to successfully engage in a discussion board arrangement, due to lack of time.

Questions Arising

It was felt that, rather than engaging in a discussion at this stage in the review process, it would be preferable to share a series of questions raised by the Model Plan breakout group with the entire forum and invite responses within a specific timeframe. It was felt by the group that it was important that clear opinion can be garnered around certain issues before the next Stakeholders Forum meeting (23rd August). To this end the Group would like to ask:

1. Would it be useful to rearrange the elements of the Model RMP thematically? This might make presenting PRSA requirements more straightforward.

2. If so what 'themes' should the elements be grouped into.

3. Should there be an FOI element?

4. If so, what evidence could the Keeper reasonably expect to see around an FOI element?

5. Should the Keeper's Model Plan always maintain the number of elements at 14? This would require ensuring that the inclusion of any new elements (such as Third Party Contractors) would result in the removal of others elsewhere.

6. Are the elements currently in a sensible order? What would you move and where?

7. Are the names given to elements currently clear? What names would you change and what to?

8. Should the tone of the Model RMP change to make it more 'management friendly' or outcomes based? Should the Model RMP focus more on future developments and improvement plans.

9. Should the Model RMP endeavour to express clearly what the Keeper considers 'good looks like' under each element?