

Thursday 23 May 2019

Some improvements in handling Fol requests but poor progress in records management

Comptroller and Auditor General issues latest report

Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Karen McConnell, has today (23 May 2019) published a follow-up report on *Arrangements for Freedom of Information*.

The Freedom of Information (Jersey) Law 2011 (the Law) came in to force on 1 January 2015 replacing the previous Code of Practice on Public Access to Official Information. The Law was introduced to provide access to public information to individuals and organisations except when there is a good cause not to. In March 2016 the C&AG reported the findings of her review of the arrangements for Freedom of Information (Fol). She concluded that the States had established arrangements that allowed substantial compliance with their statutory responsibilities under the Law, including establishing a central Fol team to support departments in responding to Fol requests.

She also explained that Fol was just one element of information management and that to be effective good data and records management was essential.

This follow-up review focussed on how effectively change had been secured through implementing the recommendations made in the 2016 report.

Karen McConnell concluded there had been some progress in implementing her previous recommendations, for example in developing comprehensive guidance for handling Fol requests, but she was concerned that:

- there is no timetable for making a decision on whether to implement an electronic data and records management system;
- although analysis had been undertaken to support a decision on whether investment in an IT solution for Fol management was needed, no formal decision was made;
- the records management delivery plan prepared in 2016 was never formally adopted and implemented;
- there has been no structured evaluation of the effectiveness of training provided on Fol;
- although information on the cost of handling Fol requests has been collected, it has not been used to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of Fol handling; and
- no comprehensive information governance strategy, reflecting Fol handling and its linkages to other elements of information governance, has been developed.



Karen McConnell said:

“There has been some progress in implementing my previous recommendations. However, a number of key actions agreed to implement those recommendations have repeatedly stalled. Overall progress, particularly in records management, is disappointing.”

The report will be available on the Jersey Audit Office’s website from 0930 on 23 May 2019 at <https://www.jerseyauditoffice.je/our-work/2019/>

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Notes to Editors:

- The Office of Comptroller and Auditor General (‘C&AG’) was established in 2005 and operates under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014
- The remit of the C&AG includes the audit of financial statements, corporate governance, internal control and wider consideration of public funds, often expressed as ‘value for money’
- Karen McConnell was appointed in 2013 and the term of office was extended in 2014 to 31 December 2019. Following the introduction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 the term of office is now fixed at seven years and is non-renewable
- Formerly of the UK Audit Commission (‘the Commission’), Karen held a variety of senior positions, including leading the Audit Practice
- Karen has a full programme of work which she intends to fulfil before the end of her term of office. Arrangements are in place for the appointment of a new C&AG from 1 January 2020 and handover arrangements are being overseen by the Board of Governance of the C&AG
- The Office of Comptroller & Auditor General is known as the ‘Jersey Audit Office’
- Contact details are: de Carteret House, 7 Castle Street, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3BT / T:716800 / E: enquiries@jerseyauditoffice.je



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- Press releases will be published by the Jersey Audit Office to accompany the publication of each report
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- Other press releases/ statements may be made on an occasional basis and not necessarily dependent upon the publication of a report. They will be subject to the same embargoes where set
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- Any comments made additional to any reports, will be included within any press release(s) as issued by the Jersey Audit Office, in the form of a quotation by the C&AG. These comments will be available for publication; but there will not be any supplementary live or pre-recorded interviews offered or undertaken by either Karen McConnell or the employees of the Jersey Audit Office
- The C&AG is prepared, on an occasional basis, to provide articles for publication in the local media, following a specific request and consideration of the relevant topic
- All public information, including press releases and reports, are accessible on the Jersey Audit Office website at www.jerseyauditoffice.je

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