Waste management
receptacles or dustbins?

Freedom of Information
- the West Sussex experience

Robert Kirk
Head of e-Government
West Sussex County Council
What I aim to do

• Explain briefly the West Sussex approach to FoI
• Show how we believe this links with e-government
• Say something about what we have learned from preparing our Publication Scheme
West Sussex keen to be an open and accessible council

- Applied to be Publication Scheme pilot
- Linked Freedom of Information work closely with e-Government programme
- Aimed to produce a scheme that met user needs and was not simply a reflection of the organisation
This means customer focus in practice as well as policies. Making information accessible and in terms that are meaningful to people outside local government. How does this relate to e-government?
What is e-government?

• “It is about putting citizens and customers at the heart of everything that we do and building service access and democratic accountability around them.”

(e-gov@local Towards a national strategy for local e-government - a consultation paper April 2002)
Put another way

- Giving people access to services how and when they want
- Improving those services - more streamlined - more joined up
- Using technology to help us
- Driving organisational change
The West Sussex e-Government Programme

- All e-government activity managed within one programme
- Common programme/project management methodologies
- Designed to achieve co-ordination and the management of dependencies
- Bias towards partnership
Key Points about the West Sussex Publication scheme

- Prepared to be initially available in paper form
- Planned from outset to become
  - Web enabled
  - Part of overall approach to information and document management
FoI - e-government convergence

- LGOL Pathfinder I-Man project in partnership with District councils
- A-Z category listing based on APLAWS used to organise Publication Scheme classes
- Contact Centre and enhanced website projects in pipeline
- Integrated model of operation
Why is this important?

• Preparing the Publication Scheme is only the start!
• Maintaining the currency of the scheme
• Ensuring what it contains is available

very significant tasks
Also the 2005 targets - opportunities or threats?

- FoI Act - individual access
- e-Government - BVPI157 100% electronic service delivery
What we have learned

- Involve everyone
- Especially the people who run one stop shops (if you have any)
- Out of date publications will be revealed
- The penny will drop on the importance of information management
- Deep cultural change takes time
Also

- The Publication Scheme is a live document
- May not have uncovered everything that it is planned to make available but apply 80/20 rule
- It will work even better when e-enabled and information available on-line
- This will also facilitate mediated access via the Contact Centre and HelpPoints
What would we do differently?

Make sure that there is a named individual responsible for delivery of FOI requirements in every service/department/unit.
And

Take an audit approach to data collection. Responses that are variable in terms of format and depth can take a lot of effort to place into a common framework.
Still to do

- Consultation exercise with the public to check that we have got it right
- More sharing and learning with and between councils and other agencies
- More work on achieving cultural change within the County Council
Thanks for listening

Further information

• Latest edition of West Sussex Publication Scheme in your packs

• See also:–

“Freedom of Information – the corporate implications”

by Mike Kendall

County Secretary West Sussex