

The Office of Public Sector Information Information Fair Trader Scheme (IFTS) Strategy

1. Strategic Objective

To deliver measurable improvements in Public Sector Information Holders' (PSIHs) information trading activities by providing robust, independent validation of performance against key principles. IFTS provides a published supervisory framework that supports the delivery of effective re-use strategies across the PSIHs.

2. Background

2.1 IFTS, underpinned by disputes resolution processes managed by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), was launched as the foundation of the OPSI regulatory framework in 2002. The public sector information landscape has evolved significantly and expectations from customers and PSIHs are that much greater, in both policy and statutory regimes. It is essential that IFTS is at the forefront of raising standards and shaping new information policy strategies.

2.2 IFTS is an evidence based audit process. The original remit of IFTS was to regulate the information trading activities of government trading funds. Information rich trading funds continue to provide the central focus of IFTS, but the scheme has been widened to supervise other public organisations on a volunteer basis.

2.3 The principles that underpinned IFTS were: openness, fairness, transparency, compliance and challenge. In the light of emerging government functions such as the Power of Information and Digital Britain, it is vital that we raise the bar on maximising the re-use of public sector information. More is expected of PSIHs, for instance, a duty to release information for re-use. OPSI has therefore reviewed the principles with a view to making them more robust and in order to meet current requirements.

3. Scope

3.1 This IFTS Strategy is the framework for identifying, prioritising and assessing standards across a range of PSIHs.

3.2 The new principles are:

- **Maximisation** - An obligation to allow others to re-use information. The default position should be that information can be re-used unless there are strong reasons (for example personal information) not to allow re-use;
- **Simplicity** - Simple processes, policies and licences;
- **Innovation** - PSIHs actively remove obstacles to re-use, and facilitate the development of new and innovative forms of re-use.

3.3 The following principles have been retained, but the bar raised in terms of expected performance:

- **Transparency** - Transparency of the terms of re-use, including licence terms, where used. There should also be transparency about charges and the details of what information is available for re-use;
- **Fairness** - All re-users must be treated in a non-discriminatory way for same for the same type of re-use. PSIHs should not use their market power to compete unfairly by virtue of having produced the information;
- **Challenge** - A robust complaints process in place to reconsider licensing decisions, with appropriate references to OPSI, that will investigate any complaints that the PSIH cannot resolve to the customer's satisfaction.

3.4 To reinforce these principles, IFTS verification will consider:

- Governance and culture
- Risk Management
- Re-use policies
- Licensing
- Pricing
- Customer experience and feedback
- Complaints

3.5 The final scope of the on-site IFTS verification will be dependent on the level of risk identified in the preliminary assessment.

4. Aims

4.1 To provide a robust framework that is consistent with IFTS principles.

4.2 To support and encourage public sector organisations to actively review their own capability in relation to the re-use agenda.

5. Objectives

5.1 To provide a clear vision for the future direction of the IFTS programme, delivering a clear outcome for the assessed PSIHs, with a planned ongoing accreditation schedule.

5.2 To provide robust, independent validation of the standards and integrity of the licensing and information trading processes within PSIHs.

5.3 To work in partnership with public sector organisations to promote, highlight and disseminate good practice across the sector.

5.4 To use IFTS and the assessment process to inform future policy and standards guidance.

6. IFTS Online

6.1 IFTS Online, the online self-assessment tool that measures how effectively wider public sector organisations such as local government and

the National Health Service manage the re-use of their information, was introduced in 2005. IFTS Online will be revised by 30 June 2009 to reflect the changes introduced as part of the wider IFTS Strategy.

7. Links to Other Government Initiatives

7.1 The following initiatives and work areas have an impact on the shape of the IFTS.

- Links between access and re-uses policies and legislation via memoranda of understanding with the Information Commissioners;
- Links with disputes resolution activities of The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) – OPSI has a Memorandum of Understanding with the OFT which ensures co-operation and cross working in the context of re-use and competition policy;
- Emerging policies under the Operational Efficiency Review, including work in connection with intangible assets;
- Cabinet Office – The Power of Information Taskforce recommendations;
- European Commission – PSI (Public Sector Information) Directive Review.

8. Business Outcomes for Trading Funds and Other PSIHs

8.1 IFTS ensures that PSIHs are ready to attain the standards for effective licensing and re-use of information that is consistent with maximising the potential of Public Sector Information.

8.2 Enhances the capability of PSIHs to meet their future obligations on facilitating the information they hold.

8.3 IFTS verifications identify areas for development and make recommendations based on these areas. The IFTS team will then monitor PSIHs actions plans and review progress at regular intervals.

9. Commitment

9.1 All Trading Funds or organisations subject to IFTS verification must declare their commitment to the programme. In order to demonstrate this commitment and to promote best practice and provide consistency, the CEO or equivalent will publish their personal statement of commitment to the IFTS process on their website.

9.2 This commitment will form the basis of the Terms of Reference for the IFTS verification; it will also include an agreement to publish the IFTS report.

10. Risk Assessment

10.1 An initial risk assessment of the PSIH will be undertaken prior to each verification. This will be based on information gleaned from a questionnaire, documents and preliminary meetings. An Issues List

developed from this preliminary assessment will identify potential risks for further investigation.

- 10.2 Once accredited into the IFTS programme, PSIHS will be reassessed at regular intervals, depending on the level of risk identified.

11. Looking Ahead

- 11.1 The IFTS programme and Strategy will continue to evolve to reflect changing priorities and developments in re-use of government information.
- 11.2 The IFTS team will work collaboratively with PSIHS and stakeholders to resolve problem areas and through the OPSI disputes resolution processes.

12. Standards and Guidance

- 12.1 The IFTS verifications are conducted and scoped within the framework of government policy and legislation.
- 12.2 Government organisations that license the re-use of information that they produce must do so in accordance with the terms of the delegation of authority that is granted by The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- 12.3 The Re-Use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2005 (SI 2005 No. 1515), which set a minimum standard for information trading by PSIHS.
- 12.4 Competition Act, Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

13. Success Factors and Outcomes

- 13.1 Compliance with the IFTS principles delivering measurable progress against Action Plans.
- 13.2 Greater re-use of public sector information.
- 13.3 Enabling and facilitative processes that get user approval.

14. Resources

Verifications will be conducted by a multi-disciplinary OPSI team, drawing on expert skills as necessary.

15. Publication

The final report and action plan of each individual IFTS verification will be published and made available on the OPSI website.

16. Timescale

This document came into effect from April 2009. It is subject to annual review of progress against targets and priorities.

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