



RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

In relation to the Freedom of Information and the Data Protection policies the Parish Council recognises that the efficient management of its records is necessary to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the Parish Council. This document provides the policy framework through which this effective management can be achieved and audited.

This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by the Parish Council in the course of carrying out its functions.

Records are defined as all those documents which facilitate the business carried out by the Parish Council and which are thereafter retained (for a set period) to provide evidence of its transactions or activities. These records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically.

A small percentage of the Parish Council's records will be selected for permanent preservation as part of the council's archives and for historical research. Attached to this document are:

1. How to Manage & Look After Parish & Town Council Records – information sheet, and.
2. Recommendation Table for the Disposition of Records.

The Parish Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record management systems in accordance with the regulatory environment. The person with overall responsibility for this policy is the Clerk to the Parish Council. Management practice will promote compliance with this policy so that information will be retrieved easily, appropriately and timely.

Current records are held at the Parish Council office at:

- 16 St Mary's Way, Weedon, Northants, NN7 4QL.

Records that are of historical note are held at the County Records Office at Wootton Hall, Northampton. These include minute books, burial registers and financial records. The Clerk holds a copy of all documents registered at the County Records Office.

Title Deeds, leases and agreements are held in the safety deposit box at Lloyds Bank, High Street, Daventry. The Clerk holds a list of all documents held.

Adopted December 2008

Amended to include two attachments April 2012

HOW TO MANAGE AND LOOK AFTER PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL RECORDS

INTRODUCTION

Records form the corporate memory of the Council and their proper retention is the responsibility of the Council members who should ensure that there is an adequate system in place. If responsibility for the implementation of the Council policy has been given to the Parish or Town Clerk, the Councillors should be regularly monitoring that adequate attention is being paid to this important duty.

Since the work that Councils undertake is of great significance for their local community, their major records are of historical significance. However, many of the papers and electronic records which pass through a Clerk's hands are adequately held by other authorities or organisations and will not need to be retained. Unless records are managed, they close up administration, reduce efficiency and make transparent government much more difficult. The Freedom of Information Act (FOI) has therefore enjoined public authorities to adopt a scheme of management for their records.

Under the Local Government Acts, supervision of parish records is a matter for County Councils, and substantial numbers of Parish Council records have been deposited with the County Archives Service, who are always willing to offer advice.

This Guide attempts to set out clear and simple advice to Clerks, to enable them to obtain agreement from their Council to a management policy for their records and to effect that management through regular reviews of the records that they hold. It is good practice to ensure the regular and speedy destruction of ephemeral papers. Otherwise, it is recommended that record holdings be reviewed at least every 5 years and upon the change of Clerk.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION

All Parish & Town Councils are required, by law, to have an up-to-date Publication Scheme and are recommended to apply for Data Protection annually.

STORAGE AND CARE OF RECORDS

The information contained in its records is part of the authority's assets. Lost information can create substantial financial burden, not least in administrative time wasted. Records should therefore be stored in receptacles with adequate security against theft, damage and fire. This could be steel filing cabinets that will keep papers from disintegrating for 20 minutes in the event of a fire – or in the case of original deeds and official minute books, perhaps the Council should consider supplying a fire-proof cabinet. Particular care should be taken of records marked in the attached schedule for permanent preservation. The regular transfer of records to the care of the County Archives Service removes a significant part of the responsibility from the Council to the Service whose main duty is the conscientious care of records in its custody. These records remain the property of the Parish Council.

Records held in electronic format

Minutes and legal records should be held in hard (paper) copy, for reasons of legal admissibility. Please also note that any records transferred to the Archives Service must at present be in hard-copy format.

Any records held locally in electronic format must be regularly backed up. It is good practice for a back-up copy to be held off-site from the Clerk's office (perhaps by the Chairman, simply to provide safe custody).

Minutes

The Local Government Act 1972, schedule 12 paragraph 41 requires that

"Minutes of the proceedings of a meeting of a local authority shall ... be drawn up and entered in a book kept for that purpose and shall be signed at the same or next (suitable) meeting of the authority by the person presiding thereat and any minute purporting to be so signed shall be received in evidence without further proof".

- Loose-leaf minute books are lawful provided that the pages are consecutively numbered and initialled by the person signing the minutes at the point of signature. Loose-leaf books provide a ready method of retaining records, either to enable a sufficient volume to be brought together to be sent for binding (ensure that the book is not too 'fat' for comfortable use and photocopying and leave wide margins – on the relevant side of each page! – as some margin will be lost in binding).
- Ring binders are NOT suitable for the long-term storage of signed minutes.
- It is good practice for the signed official minutes to be produced on archival quality paper (which can be purchased from the Archives Service).
- These minutes should be securely and carefully stored at all times, and transferred to archives once a volume is complete.
- The retention of local use photocopies, which can be destroyed at the end of their useful life, may assist the Clerk in the office and at meetings.

Filing System

An effective but simple filing system is essential for both paper and electronic records. A file index log book should be created and maintained which can also be used to create a disposal record for administrative papers. This should also cover electronic files.

Review and Disposition

The attached schedule sets out many of the records which Councils will care for and suggests retention and destruction/transfer dates.

Any records the Council still retains from before 1990 should be subject to specific advice from the County Archivist as in many cases different legislation and criteria applied.

The advice in the schedule is based originally upon advice issued by Hampshire County Record Office in 1999 and which has now been substantially revised with the voluntary help of the previous County Archivist.

TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL RECORDS – DISPOSITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RECORDS

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
1 The democratic process: meetings			
1.1A	Signed minutes of Council meetings	Must be held in hard copy. Permanent records	Transfer to Archives at regular intervals for permanent retention
1.1B	Signed minutes of confidential business at Council meetings.	as 1A above. <i>Note that any relating to the Clerk should be in the custody of the Chairman</i>	as 1A above
1.2	Agenda	Retain, either attached to minutes, or in separate agenda book – permanent records	as 1A above
1.3	Reports and other papers circulated with agenda	Permanent records Retain – attach to minutes	Transfer to Archives at regular intervals
1.4	Committee and sub-committee minutes	Permanent records	Transfer to Archives at regular intervals
1.5	Committee papers (including agenda)	Retain – attach to minutes	as 1.4 above
1.6	Draft/rough minutes	Note that any retained may be required to be produced in response to a Freedom of Information request.	Destroy once minutes are approved and signed
1.7	Use-copy minutes and reports (retained to assist ready reference)		Destroy once admin use ceases
1.8	Procedural Standing Orders and Committee Terms of Reference	Permanent records	Transfer to archives when superseded or otherwise no longer relevant
1.9	Annual Parish Meeting reports	Treat as Council papers – permanent records	Transfer to archives
1.10	Annual report to Parish Meeting	Permanent record	Transfer to archives with minutes of annual meetings

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
2 The democratic process: code of conduct			
2.1	Councillors' declarations of acceptance of office	Clerk acts as agent for Monitoring Officer	Transfer to archives three years after Councillor ceases to serve/ declaration superseded upon election of new Council
2.2	Councillors' register of interests	Clerk acts as agent for Monitoring Officer	Transfer to archives after admin use concluded (three years after councillor ceases to serve)
2.3	Declaration of interests record		If there is a separate recording mechanism over and above the minutes transfer to archives three years after newly elected Council.
2.4	Chairman's declarations of acceptance of office	Clerk acts as agent for Monitoring Officer	Transfer to archives three years after Chairman ceases to serve/declaration superseded
2.5	Standards Board: notifications of complaint, process papers		As these records are retained by the Standards Board & Committees, Council copies can be destroyed once they are no longer required
2.6	Standards Board: decisions		As in 2.5
3 The democratic process: elections and casual vacancies			
3.1	Notices of elections/vacancies	minutes will note that notices have been posted	Destroy after relevant 4-year council life
3.2	Co-option application papers		Destroy after end relevant council life
3.3	Co-option criteria sheet		Destroy after end relevant council life
3.4	Co-option ballot papers		Destroy after end relevant council life
4 Boundary plans, bye-laws and orders, policies and strategic plans (Parish Council or partnership)			
4.1	Notices and plans relating to warding and boundary changes		Transfer to archives when superseded
4.2	Byelaws and orders		Transfer to archives when superseded

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
4.3	Policy documents and strategic plans (including Publication Scheme)		Transfer to archives when superseded
4.4	Parish Plan and action plan		Transfer to archives when superseded
4.5	Consultation papers, drafts relating to above		Destroy 5 years after completion
5 Public relations and publications			
5.1	Publications, including parish newsletter	retain a set for admin use (good practice)	Transfer one copy to archives at regular (5-year) intervals
5.2	Press releases and press reports		Transfer to archives
5.3	Press cuttings books		Offer to archives
5.4	Guides, handbooks and reports received from other authorities		Destroy when no longer of local significance
6 Legal, contracts and insurance			
6.1	Proceedings against/litigation to defend the authority	Permanent	Transfer to archives 2 years after last action
6.2	Contracts	Is this a major matter? Y/N	Y – transfer to archives 2 years after expiry N – destroy one year after expiry
6.3	Major works: specification, evaluation criteria, successful tender documents	Statute of Limitations	Retain for 7 years from expiry of any contractual obligation or relationship (eg retention, guarantee); then offer to archives
6.4	Minor works: specification, evaluation criteria, successful tender documents		Retain for 7years as above, then destroy
6.5	Unsuccessful tender applications		Retain for 7 years as above
6.6	Contracts for services: specification, evaluation criteria, successful tender documents		Retain for 7 years as above

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
6.7	Leases of property, wayleaves	Permanent retention	Transfer to archives
6.8	Licence agreements for use of property	to defend against adverse possession –	Destroy 13 years after cessation of use pursuant to licence
6.9	Insurance policies – public and third-party liability	Seek the advice of your insurer	Destroy according to Insurer's advice
6.8	Insurance policies – property	Seek the advice of your insurer	Destroy according to Insurer's advice
6.9	Claims against the authority - correspondence	Seek the advice of your insurer	Destroy according to Insurer's advice
7 Staff records (Note records for any one staff member may be kept on a file – if so, treat file in same manner as contract below)			
7.1	Recruitment: adverts, applications, interview papers (unsuccessful candidates)		Destroy 1 year after appointment made
7.2	Application and interview papers, successful candidate	Statute of limitations	Destroy 7 years after termination of contract
7.3	Contract of employment	Statute of limitations, (tax)	Destroy 7 years after termination of contract
7.4	Staff performance monitoring	Statute of limitations, (tax)	Destroy 7 years after termination of contract
7.5	Leave records		Destroy after 2 years
7.6	Attendance records	Are there concerns about attendance? Y/N	Y – destroy 7 years after termination of contract N – destroy after two years
7.7	Time sheets		Destroy after 2 years
7.8	Training record		Destroy 7 years after termination of contract
7.9	Pay records		Destroy 7 years after termination of contract

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
7.10	Income tax etc records		Destroy 7 years after termination of contract
7.11	Pension/related payment		Destroy 7 years after termination of contract or payments whichever is the later
8 Finance			
8.1	Annual return and accounts	Permanent records	Transfer to archives at regular intervals
8.2	Receipt and payment books or other principal accounting books	Permanent records	Transfer to archives at regular intervals
8.3	Precept papers	Audit regulations require that precept can be justified. Permanent records	Transfer to archives at regular intervals
8.4	Reconciliations and summaries of accounts		Destroy after end of audit period
8.5	Tax (VAT) records		Destroy 7 years after end of financial year in which created
8.6	Orders, invoices, receipts, bank statements and cheque books, VAT records		Destroy 7 years after end of financial year in which created
8.7	Register of councillors' allowances	Taxation Statute of limitations (6 years from event becoming known)	7 years
8.8	Loan files	Minutes will record	Destroy 7 years after repayment
8.9	Grants to local bodies - papers	Minutes will record	Destroy 7 years after application
8.10	Scales of fees and charges		Destroy after 7 years
8.11	Cash, petty cash, receipt and rent books	Tax, VAT, Statute of Limitations	Destroy after 7 years
c/r	<i>for pay and pension records, see section 7, for insurance see section 6</i>		

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
9 Property and other assets			
9.1	Asset register including property registers and terriers (council's record of land holdings)	continuously updated	Transfer copy at 5-year intervals to archives
9.2	Title deeds and land registry certificates	Create working copies as necessary for ready access, annotated with references to stored copies	Retain securely during ownership of property. After disposal or registration offer to archives any deeds returned from Land Registry
9.3	Title deeds: epitomes, lists and transcripts		Retain securely during ownership of property. After disposal offer to archives
9.4	Legal papers relating to sale	Is this a significant property? Y/N	Destroy 15 years after all obligations/entitlements concluded. Y - Offer papers relating to significant properties to archives
9.6	Plans, surveys, installation manuals, certificates of approval	Is this a significant property? Y/N	Retain for life of building/property. Thereafter: N - destroy. Y – offer to archives
9.7	Parish buildings, recreation grounds etc: hire conditions, applications to hire, lettings diaries and related papers		Destroy 22 years after end of use (based on possible 21 years for child injury claim)
9.8	Correspondence and papers relating to maintenance and improvements		TBC
c/r	<i>for insurance, leases, wayleaves, see section 6</i>		

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
10 Health and Safety			
10.1	Equipment safety inspection records		Destroy 22 years after disposal of equipment
10.2	Monitoring records		Destroy 22 years after disposal of equipment
10.3	Accident book		Destroy 26 years after last entry
11 Allotments			
11.1	Registers and plans		Transfer to archives after admin use concluded
11.2	Regulations		Transfer to archives after superseded/admin use concluded
11.3	Correspondence relating to lettings, enforcement of regulations		Destroy after 7 years
12 Cemeteries and Burial Grounds			
12.1	Registers and plans	Permanent records	Transfer to archives after admin use concluded
12.2	Papers relating to regulation of burials: permits, applications, orders, grants of rights of burial	Cemeteries Orders and Regulations	Transfer to archives after admin use concluded
<i>c/r</i>	<i>for scales of fees and charges and financial records, see section 8 Finance</i>		

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
13 Commons, Village Greens, Rights of Way, Tree Preservation Orders, statutory designations			
13.1	Papers relating to initial registration	Retain copy as long as administratively useful	Offer to archives when registration effected
13.2	Commons/Village Green register entry and plan	Statutory copy retained by County/Unitary Council as permanent record	Retain for local use
13.3	Rights of Way map	Statutory copy retained by County/Unitary Council as permanent record	Retain for local use until superseded
13.4	Tree Preservation Orders	Statutory copy retained by County/Unitary Council as permanent record	Retain for local use
13.5	Countryside Access schemes	Statutory copy retained by County/Unitary Council as permanent record	Retain for local use
13.6	Designation of Areas of Special Scientific Interest	Statutory copy retained by originating body as permanent record	Retain for local use
14 Planning			
14.1	Regional, county and local frameworks/plans	Statutory copy of final document retained by originating authority as permanent record	Retain for local use; destroy when superseded
14.2	Consultation relating to 14.1 above: papers and responses	Was comment significant? Y/N	Y – offer to archives after end of local relevance N – destroy 2 years after publication of final document
14.3	Planning applications, permission notices	Statutory copies retained by local planning authority Appeal and judicial review periods	Where permission is granted, retain until development complete and conditions discharged. Where permission is not granted, destroy after 1 year (or longer if of local importance). If appealed, destroy 1 year after decision and judicial review period

Item no	Function/records	Other notes	Recommendation
14.4	Comment upon planning applications (statutory consultee)	Retained by local planning authority	Retain front summary sheet; index by street to provide parish planning history for admin use
15 General administration			
15.1	Correspondence and papers relating to local issues of lasting or major significance	File separately, issue by issue	Review after 3 years. Offer to archives 3 years after significance ceases
15.2	Correspondence and papers relating to local issues of small significance		Review after 3 years. Destroy if issue is not ongoing
15.3	Complaints about service provision by the Council	Is this a major issue Y/N	Y – retain for 7 years after satisfaction; offer to archives N – destroy 3 years after satisfaction
15.4	Complaints about service provision by others, and related correspondence	Is this a major issue Y/N	Y – retain for 7 years after satisfaction; offer to archives N – destroy 3 years after satisfaction
15.5	Circulated papers	Discard immediately those not of local significance	Review every three years and destroy those no longer of use/relevance
15.6	Photographs	Ensure identification	Offer to archives when no longer of local use
16 Information and Records management			
16.1	Receipts for records transferred to archives	Permanent. Assist with FOI enquiries Archives service will retain copy.	Retain securely locally
16.2	Records management schedule	Assist with FOI enquiries	Lodge copy with archives upon each review. Destroy local copies after 20 years
16.3	Register of disposals as per records management schedule	Good practice and convenience may suggest that this forms part of the schedule	If retained separately from records management schedule, transfer to archives 20 years after last entry
16.4	File index log-book	See introduction – provides disposal register for	Transfer to archives upon completion of book or

		individual files	if held electronically, at 10-year intervals
--	--	------------------	--