

RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS POLICY

1. Introduction

The Town Council recognises that 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 Town Council.

This document provides the policy framework through which this effective management can be achieved and audited.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by the Town Council while carrying out its functions. Records are identified as all those documents which facilitate the business carried out by the Town Council and which are thereafter retained, (for a set period), to provide evidence of transactions or activities. Records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically, within Microsoft 365.

A pertinent amount of the Town Council's records will be selected for permanent preservation as part of the Council's archive and for historical research.

3. Responsibilities

The Town Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record management in accordance with regulations.

The person with overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy is the Town Clerk who is required to manage the Council's records in such a way as to promote compliance with this policy so that information may be retrieved easily and appropriately as and when required.

4. Retention Schedule

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, the Town Council is required to maintain a retention schedule listing the record series created during its business. The retention schedule sets out the length of time for the retention of each series of records and the action to be taken when records are of no further administrative use.

The Town Clerk is expected to manage the current record keeping systems in accordance with the retention schedule and to take account of different retention periods when creating new systems.

The retention schedule refers to record series irrespective of the media in which they are stored.

Schedule

Document	Minimum Retention	Reason
Minute Books	Indefinite	Archive
Annual Accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Annual Return	Indefinite	Archive
Bank Statements	Last completed audit year	Audit/Management
Cheque Book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit/Management
Paying in books	Last completed audit year	Audit/Management
VAT records	6 years	Audit/HMRC
Paid invoices	6 years	Audit/VAT
Petty cash records	6 years	HMRC/VAT
Salary records	6 years	Audit
Tax & NI records	6 years	Audit
Insurance Policies	Whilst valid	Audit/Management
Assets register	Indefinite	Audit/Management
Deeds, Leases	Indefinite	Audit/Management

Booking records	6 years	Audit/VAT
Allotment records	Indefinite	Audit/Management
Declarations of Acceptance Of Office	Mayor – attached to Minutes, Members – Term of Office + 1 year	Management
Members Register of Interests	Term of Office + 1 year	Management

5. Planning Applications

The Town Council is consulted by West Suffolk District Council on all developments in the parish.

Town Council comments on applications are recorded in the Minutes of the relevant meeting and attached to the application documents, which are retained

for a period of 2 years, except for applications related to listed buildings or other significant buildings in the town, such applications are retained for permanent preservation as part of the parish archive and for historical research.

6. General Correspondence

General and routine correspondence including emails is retained as below:

Complaints	1 year	Management
General Information	1 year	Management
Routine Correspondence and emails	2 years	Management
Rough notes from Meetings	Until adoption of Minutes	Management



7. Disposal Procedures

All documents no longer required for administrative reasons should be shredded and disposed of securely.

Appendix A: List of Documents for Retention or Disposal

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason	Disposal
Minutes	Indefinite	Archive	Original signed paper copies of Council minutes of meetings must be kept indefinitely in safe storage.
Agendas	Indefinite	Archive	Same as above.
Accident/incident reports	20 years	Potential claims	Confidential waste
Receipt books of all kinds	7 years	VAT	Bin
Bank statements including deposit/savings accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit	Confidential waste
Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit	Confidential waste
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit	Confidential waste
Credit card records	7 years	Audit	Confidential waste
Quotations and tenders	7 years	Limitation Act (as amended)	Confidential waste
Paid invoices	7 years	VAT	Confidential waste
Paid cheques	7 years	Limitation Act (as amended)	
VAT records	7 years	VAT	Confidential waste



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Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason	Disposal
Wages books/payroll	7 years	Superannuation	Confidential waste
Insurance policies	While valid (but see the next two items below)	Town Clerk	Bin
Health & Safety Documentation	Indefinite	Legal reasons	N/A
Insurance company names and policy numbers	Indefinite	Town Clerk	N/A
Certificates for insurance against liability for employees	40 years from the date on which insurance commenced or was renewed	The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI 2753) Management	Bin
Insurance Claims	Indefinite	Legal reasons	N/A
Specialist consultant reports	7 years	Legal	Confidential waste
Playground equipment inspection reports	21 years		Bin
Investments	Indefinite	Audit, Town Clerk	N/A
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit, Town Clerk	N/A



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Members' allowances register.	6 years	Income tax act 2007 (as amended)	Confidential waste
Local/historical information	Indefinite – to be securely kept for the benefit of the Town	Councils may acquire records of local interest and accept gifts or records of general and local interest to promote the use of such records.	N/A
To ensure records are easily accessible it is necessary to comply with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A list of files stored in cabinets will be kept. • Electronic files will be saved using relevant file names 	All files are kept in the cloud and backed up daily.	Town Clerk	Documentation no longer required will be disposed of, ensuring any confidential documents are destroyed as confidential waste.
General correspondence	Unless it relates to specific categories outlined in the policy, correspondence, both paper and electronic, should be kept. Records should be kept for as long as they are needed for reference or accountability purposes, to comply with regulatory requirements.	Town Clerk	confidential waste



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Grant Applications	7 years from finance year end	Town Clerk	Confidential waste
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Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason	Disposal
Employee Contracts	5 years from end of Employment	References	Confidential waste
Employee Expenses	7 years from Finance Year End	Legal Purposes	Confidential waste
Employee Payroll	7 years from Finance Year End	Legal Purposes	Confidential waste
Employee Pensions	Indefinite	Legal Purposes	N/A
Employee Records	5 years from the end of Employment	Legal Purposes	Confidential waste
Employee Timesheets	7 years from Finance Year End	Legal Purposes	Confidential waste
<p>Documents from legal matters, negligence, and other torts Most legal proceedings are governed by the Limitation Act 1980 (as amended). The 1980 Act provides that legal claims may not be commenced after a specified period. Where the limitation periods are longer than other periods specified the documentation should be kept for the longer period specified. Some types of legal proceedings may fall within two or more categories. If in doubt, keep for the longest of the three limitation periods.</p>			
Negligence	6 years		Confidential waste
Defamation	1 year		Confidential waste
Contract	6 years		Confidential waste
Leases	12 years		Confidential waste



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Sums recoverable by statute	6 years		Confidential waste
Personal injury	3 years		Confidential waste
To recover land	12 years		Confidential waste
Rent	6 years		Confidential waste
Breach of trust	None		Confidential waste
Terms and Conditions	6 years	Town Clerk	Bin

All cemetery documents	Indefinite	Archives, Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (SI 204)	N/A
Applications	1 year	Management	Bin
Appeals	1 year	Management	Bin
Trees	1 year	Management	Bin
Local Development Plans	Retained as long as in force	Reference	Bin
Local Plans	Retained as long as in force	Reference	Bin
Photographs/digital prints	31 days	Data protection	Confidential waste