

DOCUMENT RETENTION & DISPOSAL POLICY

Purpose

Chearsley Parish Council is committed to maintaining accurate records, retaining documents for as long as necessary to fulfil legal, operational and regulatory requirements, and disposing of records securely when they are no longer required.

This Policy establishes the framework for the retention, storage and disposal of Council records in accordance with:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Local Government Act 1972
- Limitation Act 1980
- Relevant financial and audit regulations
- Good practice guidance issued to local councils

Scope

This Policy applies to all records held by Chearsley Parish Council, regardless of format, including:

- Paper records
- Electronic documents
- Emails
- Audio recordings
- Photographs
- Databases
- Website records
- Social media records where applicable

General Principles

The Council will:

- Keep records only for as long as necessary.
- Retain records to meet legal, financial, administrative and historical requirements.
- Ensure records containing personal data are handled securely.
- Dispose of records securely when retention periods expire.
- Review records periodically to ensure compliance.
- Preserve records of historical significance where appropriate.

Storage and Security

Paper records shall be stored in secure locations with appropriate access controls.

Electronic records shall be stored on secure systems with password protection and appropriate backup arrangements.

Access to records shall be limited to authorised persons who require access for legitimate Council purposes.

Retention Schedule

The following retention periods represent minimum periods and may be extended where litigation, audit requirements or other exceptional circumstances apply.

COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION

Minutes of Council Meetings
Retention Period: Permanent
Reason: Historical and legal record.

Agendas and Supporting Papers
Retention Period: 6 years
Reason: Administrative record.

Standing Orders, Policies and Procedures
Retention Period: Current version plus 6 years.
Reason: Governance and audit purposes.

Register of Members' Interests
Retention Period: Current register plus 6 years.
Reason: Statutory requirement.

Declarations of Interest
Retention Period: 6 years.
Reason: Governance and audit purposes.

CORRESPONDENCE

General Correspondence
Retention Period: 3 years after matter closed.
Reason: Administrative reference.

Significant Correspondence relating to major decisions
Retention Period: 6 years.
Reason: Governance and accountability.

Planning Consultation Responses
Retention Period: 6 years.
Reason: Planning and audit purposes.

FINANCIAL RECORDS

Annual Accounts

Retention Period: Permanent.

Reason: Statutory and historical record.

Accounting Records

Retention Period: 7 years.

Reason: HMRC and audit requirements.

Invoices

Retention Period: 7 years.

Reason: Financial audit requirements.

Bank Statements

Retention Period: 7 years.

Reason: Financial audit requirements.

VAT Records

Retention Period: 7 years.

Reason: HMRC requirements.

Payroll Records

Retention Period: 7 years after employment ceases.

Reason: HMRC and employment legislation.

Insurance Policies

Retention Period: 40 years.

Reason: Potential liability claims.

Insurance Claims Records

Retention Period: 40 years after settlement.

Reason: Limitation periods and legal protection.

EMPLOYMENT RECORDS

Personnel Files

Retention Period: 6 years after employment ends.

Reason: Employment law limitation periods.

Recruitment Records for Unsuccessful Candidates

Retention Period: 12 months.

Reason: Employment legislation and equality monitoring.

Training Records

Retention Period: Employment period plus 6 years.

Reason: Employment and governance purposes.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Accident Books and Reports

Retention Period: 3 years from date of last entry or longer where required by law.

Risk Assessments

Retention Period: Current assessment plus 6 years.

Health and Safety Records

Retention Period: 6 years.

PROPERTY AND ASSET RECORDS

Asset Register

Retention Period: Permanent.

Land Ownership Documents

Retention Period: Permanent.

Leases and Agreements

Retention Period: 12 years after expiry.

Contracts under Seal

Retention Period: 12 years after completion.

Contracts not under Seal

Retention Period: 6 years after completion.

WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletter Distribution Lists

Retention Period: Until consent withdrawn or subscriber removed.

Website Enquiries

Retention Period: 3 years.

Website Analytics Data

Retention Period: In accordance with website provider settings and Cookie Policy.

DATA PROTECTION RECORDS

Subject Access Requests

Retention Period: 3 years after completion.

Data Breach Records

Retention Period: 6 years.

Privacy Notices and Data Protection Policies

Retention Period: Permanent record of versions adopted.

Disposal of Records

At the end of the applicable retention period, records shall be reviewed and either:

- Securely destroyed;
- Permanently deleted; or
- Archived where they have continuing historical or legal significance.

Paper records containing personal or confidential information shall be cross-cut shredded or destroyed by an approved confidential waste contractor.

Electronic records shall be permanently deleted from live systems and, where reasonably practicable, from backups in accordance with system retention schedules.

Archiving

Records of historical significance may be retained permanently and transferred to an archive where appropriate.

Examples include:

- Council minutes
- Historic photographs
- Significant village projects
- Documents relating to major community developments

Archived records shall remain subject to appropriate security and access controls.

8. Suspension of Disposal

Where litigation, investigation, audit or Freedom of Information requests are ongoing or anticipated, destruction of relevant records shall be suspended until the matter has been concluded.

9. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or Council practice.

Approved by Chearsley Parish Council

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