



DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY

Introduction

In the course of carrying out its various duties, powers and activities, the Town Council collects information from individuals and organisations and generates a wide range of documentation including letters, emails, reports, invoices, contracts and so on. Documents may be in paper or electronic format.

Retention of specific documents may be necessary to fulfil statutory or regulatory requirements, to meet operational needs, to preserve documents of historic value or to provide evidence.

It is important that documents be retained while they fulfil a specific purpose and remain relevant. The premature destruction of records could cause the Council difficulty in meeting operational requirements or in defending any future litigious claims.

However, documents should not be retained indefinitely. Storage space for both paper and electronic records is limited. Beyond that, data protection regulation requires that personal data “should not be stored for longer than is necessary”.

Scope/Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a corporate policy framework to govern decisions on whether a document or piece of information should be retained (and if so, for what period) or be disposed of (and if so, when and by what method).

The policy will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Responsibilities

Data protection legislation requires that data should be processed “in a manner that ensures appropriate security and protection”. Data must be accurate, kept up to date, stored safely and securely, and not retained for any longer than is necessary.

All Town Council employees and elected Members of the Town Council have a personal responsibility to adhere to data protection legislation.

Managers are expected to be pro-active in undertaking or instigating audits of information/documents to ensure that the Town Council is retaining or destroying information appropriately, as outlined in this policy.

If in doubt about the action to be taken, all queries should be referred to the Council's Data Protection Officer.

Storing of Documents

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that information is clearly labelled and saved/stored in the appropriate place, in order that colleagues may find documents in future. Electronic documents and emails should not be saved on an individual computer but onto the shared network drive. This is to ensure the information is backed up and also that it is accessible when required by any member of the Council.

Paper records should be stored in clearly labelled files or in clearly labelled archive boxes. Once no longer immediately relevant, archive boxes should be stored in the cellar archive room at the White House.

Before printing, saving and storing paper records, give careful consideration as to whether those records are actually required to be kept. An electronic copy may suffice in many cases. If in doubt, please seek guidance from a member of senior management team or the Data Protection Officer.

Disposal

Electronic records should simply be deleted. Be aware of where records may be saved: for example, something which is saved in your email folder may also be saved elsewhere on the system. If you are deleting the record, take care to delete all copies of it.

Paper records which contain any personal data (name, contact details etc) should be securely destroyed by shredding. The Town Council has a monthly collection for the destruction of confidential waste and receives certification to prove destruction has taken place. Where possible, please time any disposal of paper records to fit with the next monthly collection.

Paper records which are already available in the public domain and which do not contain any personal data do not need to be securely shredded.

While the Town Council rarely shares personal data with any third parties, in certain circumstances this may apply – for example, for payroll purposes. Where this is applicable, please ensure any third party organisation has been advised to destroy the record in question and keep a record of your request to them.

Considerations

Every employee has a responsibility to be aware of any statutory or regulatory requirements relating to the retention of data.

If there is no specific legislation advising otherwise, then the guidelines contained within this policy should be adhered to, unless there is a sound

operational reason for retention or the document or record is of historic interest or intrinsic value.

For items such as publicity material, programmes, marketing or photographs, consider whether these will be useful in future. Photographs should be labelled and their ownership clear in order to be useful in future.

While documents should be saved only on the shared network drive and not on the desktop or hard disk of a personal computer, any computers reaching the end of their life will automatically have all data removed prior to destruction.

Planning applications

Planning applications are retained by the planning authority, Central Bedfordshire Council. Copies received during consultation by the Town Council will be retained only until the application has been considered by the Council or its officers and for a maximum of three months from receipt.

In exceptional circumstances, for example significant development sites, planning records may be retained for a longer period for reference purposes.

Any correspondence with residents on planning applications will be retained in accordance with Town Council guidelines for general correspondence.

Retention schedule

1. DEMOCRATIC PROCESS			
1.1	Council agendas and reports	Indefinite	Archive
1.2	Council minutes	Indefinite	Archive
1.3	Rough notes from meetings	Until minutes are approved	
1.4	Councillor declaration of office & contact details	Two years after end of term of office	
1.5	Councillor register of interests	Two years after end of term of office	
1.6	Electoral register	Until new register is received from the local authority	Preserved by electoral authority
1.7	Public consultation responses	One year after consultation has ended	Data collected should be anonymised for longer term record.
1.8	Enquiries and complaints correspondence	Three years after last action	
1.9	Organisational information for a civic	Three years after last action	

	event		
1.10	Corporate plans, strategies, annual reports	Permanent archive after superseded	Archive
1.11	Members' allowances register	Six years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980
2. LEGAL			
2.1	Expressions of interest (contracts & tendering)	Two years after last action	
2.2	Evaluation of tender documentation	Six years after last action	Limitation Act 1980
2.3	Tender documents and quotations (successful)	Six years after last action	Limitation Act 1980
2.4	Tender documents and quotations (unsuccessful)	One year after start of contract	
2.5	Contracts and variations to contracts	Six years after last action	
2.6	Agreements	Six years after last action	
2.7	Legal advice	Three years after last action	
2.8	Litigation	Seven years after last action	
2.9	Byelaws	Retain permanently	
2.10	Trust deeds	Retain permanently	
3. HUMAN RESOURCES			
3.1	Personnel files including offer letter, references, contracts etc	Six years after termination of employment	
3.2	Application forms (unsuccessful candidates)	Six months from date of successful appointment to vacancy	
3.3	Equal Opportunities monitoring forms	Six months from receipt	Anonymise for statistical purposes
3.4	Disciplinary, grievance, complains, investigations	To be retained for a finite period as advised by HR and as specified to employee during process.	
3.5	Timesheets	Three years	
4. FINANCE			
4.1	Receipt and payment amounts	Indefinitely	Archive
4.2	Payroll records	Twelve years	Superannuation
4.3	Loan files	Seven years after loan has been repaid	
4.4	Inventories and stocktaking	Two years after administrative use is concluded	
4.5	Asset acquisition and	Six years (under £50k) or 12	

	disposal	years (over £50k)	
4.6	Annual budget		
4.7	Orders, invoices, cash books, receipts, journals, tax records, petty cash records, postage books	Six years	VAT, tax, Limitation Act 1980
4.8	Audit reports	Seven years	
4.9	Records of fees and charges	Six years	
4.10	Annual audited accounts	Retain permanently	
4.11	Insurance	Employers liability: 40 years Public liability: 21 years Insurance policies: 3 years	The Employers Liability (Compulsory) Regulations 1998
4.12	Investment records	Retain permanently	
4.13	Bank paying in book stubs, cheque book stubs, bank statements	Last completed audit year	
4.14	VAT records	Six years (but 20 years for vat on rents)	VAT
5. LAND AND PROPERTY			
5.1	Conveyancing records	Twelve years after last action	
5.2	Plans	Retain for life of property or building plus twelve years	
5.3	Legal documents relating to sale or write off of property	Fifteen years after conclusion	
5.4	Renovation works: project plans, specifications, manuals, certificates of approval	Retain for the life of the building	
5.5	Leases, licences, valuation	Fifteen years after expiry of lease	
5.6	Title deeds, contracts, wayleaves, maps, plans and surveys	Retain permanently	
6. VEHICLE MANAGEMENT			
6.1	Leases, contracts, quotes for acquisition or disposal of vehicles	Seven years after disposal of vehicle	
6.2	Maintenance of vehicles, log books & usage reports	Seven years after disposal of vehicle	
6.3	Insurance	Seven years after expiry of policy	
6.4	Claims records	Seven years after conclusion	

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY			
7.1	Playground equipment inspection records	Twenty-one years after destruction of equipment	
7.2	Equipment inspection records	Six years after destruction of equipment	
7.3	Property asbestos files	Forty years from last action	
7.4	Risk assessment records	Three years from last assessment	
7.5	Accident books for adults	Three years from closure	
7.6	Accident books for children	Twenty five years from closure	
7.7	Assessment under H&S regulations	Retain permanently	
8. CEMETERIES			
8.1	Register of interments & entombments	Retain permanently	Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977
8.2	Cemetery register	Retain permanently	
8.3	Cemetery plans	Retain permanently	
8.4	Permits for burial	Retain permanently	
8.5	Internal working documents	Destroy after interment has taken place	
9. FACILITIES			
9.1	Applications to hire, booking forms, lettings diaries, copies of bills to hirer	Six years	
9.2	Risk assessments from hirers	Six years after last action unless an accident/incident reported (then retain for 25 years)	
10. ALLOTMENTS			
10.1	Register and plans for allotments	Retain permanently	Audit
10.2	Allotment holder details, contracts, correspondence etc	One year after last action	
11. MARKET			
11.1	Market trader details, forms, records	Three years after ceasing to trade	
11.2	Financial performance records	Six years	
11.3	General correspondence, enquiries etc	One year after last action	
12. TEENAGE ADVICE AND INFORMATION CENTRE			
12.1	Attendance register	One year	
12.2	Young person files	Up to ten years (to ensure	

	(including one to one notes)	individual aged over 21 years)	
12.3	Agency, partner, supplier details & correspondence	Three years after last action	
12.4	Holiday and play scheme information	Three years after last action, except if any accidents reported (then follow H&S guidelines for retention)	
13. COMMUNITY EVENTS, COMMUNITY GRANTS, BEST BAR NONE, PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS, PROMOTIONS, PROJECTS, MAYORAL RECORDS, HONORARY BURGESS NOMINATIONS, ANY OTHER AREAS OF TOWN COUNCIL SERVICES			
13.1	General correspondence, tickets, receipts, queries, complaints, contact details, supplier details, maps, seating plans, & any other general administration	Up to three years *	Information may be anonymised for statistical purposes prior to archive/destruction
13.2	Four-year Guaranteed Grants scheme	Two years after conclusion of four year grant term	
13.3	General Grants or other one-off grant payments	Up to three years after grant given.	
13.4	Mayor's charity bank account – cash book, statements, etc	See Finance guidelines	
14. ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL (e.g. In Bloom, Town Twinning, P3, Community Forum steering group)			
14.1	Individual contact details	One year after leaving group	
14.2	General correspondence, queries, emails, notes, plans & general admin	One year after last action	
14.3	Meeting agendas and minutes	Retain permanently	

*employees are asked to apply common sense principles as well as data protection principles in determining which information to retain and for which period of time. For small, one-off events it may suffice to maintain records for six months after the event date. For larger, recurring events it may be prudent to maintain records for three years. Individuals have the right to request their personal data be deleted at any time.