

Ashdon Parish Council Records Storage and Retention Policies

Introduction

In fulfilling its duties and responsibilities the Parish Council needs to keep accurate and timely records covering areas such as, but not limited to, agendas and minutes of meetings, correspondence, financial transactions, legal agreements and policies. 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. Council records may be in both hard (paper) and soft (electronic) format. These need to be kept for the appropriate period of time, making sure that records can be easily accessed and that obsolete records are securely disposed of in an appropriate manner. This document provides the policy framework through which this effective management can be achieved and audited. It is supplemented by specific policies covering financial documents and personal data which are described in the relevant procedures:

Ashdon Parish Council Financial Regulations

Ashdon Parish Council Data Protection Policies

1. Responsibilities

- 1.1. The Clerk has overall responsibility for the maintenance, safe keeping and storage and ultimate disposal of all records of the Council.
- 1.2. Councillors may keep copies of Council records but may not retain originals of paper records or sole copies of electronic records.
- 1.3. All councillors shall apply the principles this document to any records, or copies of records that they hold.
- 1.4. Councillors shall ensure that any records generated or otherwise acquired by them are given to the Clerk for safe keeping.

2. Storage of Records

- 2.1. The Clerk shall establish and maintain a logical filing system for all records, suitably indexed by subject and or date so that said records can be easily retrieved.
- 2.2. Except where legally otherwise required records may be stored in either paper or electronic format.
- 2.3. When records are stored in paper form the Clerk shall apply the following safeguards:

(i) the records shall be stored in an environment which, as far as is practical, is free from the risk of damage by fire, flood or vermin;

(ii) the records shall be kept together and not intermingled with either the Clerk's personal papers or the records of other organisations;

(iv) where possible the records should be stored in a room to which access is limited;

(v) any records that are deemed confidential must be kept in a locked cabinet.

2.4. When records are stored in electronic format the Clerk shall apply the following safeguards:

(i) records must be kept on a dedicated computer;

(ii) records shall not be kept on a computer to which others have access or which is used for purposes other than for this Council or for other councils for which the Clerk may also be acting;

(iii) the computer in (ii) must be protected by a password known only to the Clerk and have up to date security software installed;

(iv) where a computer is shared with other councils, Ashdon Parish Council's records must be kept separate in clearly identified folders and files;

(v) records must be backed up at least once a week to either (a) a separate hard storage device which must be kept in a separate location to the computer, or (b) a cloud storage server to which access is password protected.

(vi) passwords used to protect access to the Council's records must be changed every 3 months;

(vii) where a computer or external storage requires use of a password(s) for access to the Council's records a note shall be made of the password(s) and shall be handed to and retained by the Chair in a sealed dated envelope. If the Clerk is unavailable for whatever reason and urgent access is needed to the Council's records this envelope may be opened in the presence of two other councillors. After the envelope has been opened, in any circumstances, the password(s) shall be changed as soon as practicable.

2.5. Councillors who store Council records on their personal computers should ensure that the devices are password protected and that up to date security software is installed.

3. Access to records

3.1. With the exception of any personal data the Clerk shall with 7 day's notice make available any record of the Council to:

- (i) any councillor
- (ii) the internal and external auditors
- (iii) Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council
- (iv) any government agency that has a legal or justified right to access such records

3.2. Any member of the public or other organisation may request access to the Council's records. Unless deemed confidential or covered by the regulations covered by the Data Protection Act, such access shall be granted.

3.3 Any request under Paragraph 3.3 shall be notified to the Chair.

4. Retention, Archiving and Disposal of records

4.1. The period of retention of Council records will depend on the type of record and in some cases is dictated by legal requirements.

4.2. For historical purposes it may be appropriate to archive documents within the care of the Parish Council. In other cases it may be appropriate to offer records to the Saffron Walden Library, the Gibson Library or an appropriate local history society for archive.

4.3. Archived documents within the care of the Parish Council shall be offered the same degree of protection as described in Paragraph 2.

4.4. Appendix A sets out recommended retention times, archive and disposal strategies for various categories of records.

5. Disposal of records

5.1. The Clerk will review on an annual basis all records held by the Council to assess whether they need to be retained, archived or destroyed. The Clerk will keep a permanent record of this review and inform the Council on its completion.

5.2. Records which meet the criteria for destruction will be permanently destroyed as follows;

(i) records stored in hard copy will be shredded using a cross cutting device or professional shredding service;

(ii) records stored electronically will be permanently deleted from all devices and servers on which they are stored.

5.3. Councillors will destroy all records if they resign from the Council or fail to be re-elected.

6. Audit

6.1. The internal auditor may request to audit all or any part of the record storage system at any time.

6.2. The Chair or Vice Chair or a councillor nominated by them may request to audit all or any part of the record storage system with 7 days' notice, with the proviso that only one such request shall be made in any 6 month period.

Appendix A

Timescales for Retention of Council Records

Document	Retention Timescale	Reason
Agendas, Minutes		
Agendas of Council meetings	Indefinite	Archive
Signed meeting minutes	Indefinite	Archive
Reports and other documents circulated with agendas	Until no longer required	Management
Correspondence		
Correspondence/ papers on important issues	Indefinite	Archive
Routine correspondence	1 year	Management
Planning		
Approved applications	Until development complete	Management
Refused applications	6 years	Management
Finance		
Budgets and forecasts	3 years	Audit
Receipts and payment records	Indefinite	Archive
Annual returns and audited accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Correspondence re audit	Last completed audit	Management / Audit
Cheque book stubs, payment authorisations	Last completed audit	Management / Audit
Deposit records	Last completed audit	Management / Audit
Bank statements	7 years	Management / Audit
Grant applications	7 years	Management

Quotations/ tenders successful	12 years	Legal requirement
Quotations/ tenders unsuccessful	2 years	Management
Paid invoices	7 years	Audit / HMRC
VAT records	7 years	Audit / HMRC
Tax / NI records	7 years	
Salary records	12 years after termination of service	Audit
Pension payments	12 years after termination of service	Audit
Assets register	Indefinite	Audit
Deeds and leases	Indefinite	Audit
Insurance		
Insurance policies	Whilst valid	Audit
Certificate of Public liability	40 years	Audit / Legal
Certificate of employers liability	40 years	Audit / Legal
Insurance claim records	7 years after settlement	Audit / Legal
Health and Safety		
Equipment inspection records	25 years	Management
Equipment repair and maintenance records	25 years or until equipment decommissioned	Management
Risk assessments	3 years from last assessment	Management
Councillors		
Register of member's interests	18 months after individual ceases to be member	Management
Declarations of acceptance	Term of office + 1 year	Management

Contact details	Whilst in office	Management / Data Protection
Application forms for co-option	Till applicant is co-opted or withdraws application	Management / Data Protection
Personnel		
Application forms (unsuccessful)	1 year after completion of recruitment	Employment Acts
Application forms (successful)	1 year after recruitment	Employment Acts
Personal files	12 years after termination of service	Management / Legal
Disciplinary and performance records	12 years after termination of service	Management / Legal
Personal Data		
Third Party personal data	Lesser of 5 years or when purpose for which data was supplied no longer exists	Management / Data protection
Subject access requests	5 years after closure	Management / Data protection
Documentation relating to security breaches	5 years after closure	Management / Data protection
Miscellaneous		
Byelaws and orders	Until superseded or no longer required	Management
Register of electors	Until superseded or no longer required	Management
Complaints	2 years after closure	Management
Information Requests	2 years after closure	Management
Press releases	5 years	Management
Public consultations	5 years	Management
Reports/ newsletters	As long as useful	Management