

GAWCOTT with LENBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Document Retention Policy

Introduction

The Council accumulates a vast amount of information and data during the course of its everyday activities. This includes data generated internally in addition to information obtained from individuals and external organisations.

Records created and maintained by the Council are an important asset and as such measures need to be undertaken to safeguard this information. Properly managed records provide authentic and reliable evidence of the Council's transactions and are necessary to ensure it can demonstrate accountability.

Documents may be retained in either 'hard' paper form or in electronic forms. For the purpose of this policy, 'document' and 'record' refers to both hard copy and electronic records.

It is imperative that documents are retained for an adequate period of time. If documents are destroyed prematurely the Council and individual officers concerned could face prosecution for not complying with legislation and it could cause operational difficulties, reputational damage and difficulty in defending any claim brought against the Council.

In contrast to the above the Council should not retain documents longer than is necessary. Timely disposal should be undertaken to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations so that personal information is not retained longer than necessary. This will also ensure the most efficient use of limited storage space.

Scope and Objectives of the Policy

The aim of this document is to provide a working framework to determine which documents are:

- Retained – and for how long; or
- Disposed of

There are some records that do not need to be kept at all or that are routinely destroyed in the course of business. This usually applies to information that is duplicated, unimportant or only of a short-term value. Unimportant records of information include:

- 'With compliments' slips.
- Catalogues and trade journals.
- Non-acceptance of invitations.
- Trivial electronic mail messages that are not related to Council business.
- Requests for information such as maps, plans or advertising material.
- Out of date distribution lists.

Duplicated and superseded material such as stationery, manuals, drafts, forms, address books and reference copies of annual reports may be destroyed.

Records should not be destroyed if the information can be used as evidence to prove that something has happened. If destroyed the disposal needs to be disposed of under the General Data Protection Regulations.

Roles and Responsibilities for Document Retention and Disposal

Councils are responsible for determining whether to retain or dispose of documents and should undertake a review of documentation at least on an annual basis to ensure that any unnecessary documentation being held is disposed of under the General Data Protection Regulations.

Schedule of Documents

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the parish council is required to maintain a retention schedule which lays down the length of time certain records need to be retained. The parish council have adopted a policy in line with the National Association of Local Council's legal topic note LTN40 – Local Council documents and records.

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason
Minutes	Indefinite	Archive
Agenda	Indefinite	Archive
Asset register	Indefinite	Management
Accident/incident reports	20 years	Potential claims
Scales of fees and charges	6 years	Management
Receipt and payment accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books of all kinds	6 years	VAT
Bank statements including deposit/savings accounts	6 years	Audit/Management
Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
VAT records	6 years generally but 20 years for VAT on rents	VAT
Employees' records	Employment period + 6 years	Management
Insurance policies	While valid	Management
Certificates for insurance against liability for employees	Indefinitely	Future claims
Park equipment inspection reports	21 years	Future claims
Title deeds, leases, agreements & contracts	Indefinite	Audit/Management
Electoral Register	1 year (once new one is issued destroy previous)	Management

Parish Councillors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for co-option • Declarations of acceptance of office • Members register of interests 	Term of Office + 1 Year	Management
Information from other bodies e.g. circulars from county associations, NALC, principal authorities	Retained for as long as it is useful and relevant	Management
Local/historical information	Indefinite – to be securely kept for benefit of the Parish	Councils may acquire records of local interest and accept gifts or records of general and local interest in order to promote the use for such records (defined as materials in written or other form setting out facts or events or otherwise recording information).
Routine correspondence and emails	6 months after relevant issue is completed	Management
Planning applications	1 year or until development is complete	Management
Planning – Appeals	1 year unless significant development	Management

Adopted at 14th December 2023 meeting