

TRIMDON PARISH COUNCIL

DOCUMENT RETENTION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

Trimdon Parish Council recognises that 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.

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

- Scope
- Responsibilities
- Relationships with existing policies
- Retention Schedule

1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by Trimdon Parish Council in the course of carrying out its functions. Records are defined as all those documents which facilitate the business carried out by the parish council and which are thereafter retained (for a defined period) to provide evidence of its transactions and activities.

These records can take many different form, for example:

- Letters received from third parties
- Copy letters that have been sent out
- File attendance notes
- Invoices
- Minutes
- Completed application forms
- Financial records
- Registers
- Contracts/Deeds
- E-mail communications (including attachments)
- Photographs

Retention of specific documents may be necessary to:

- Fulfil statutory or other regulatory requirements
- Evidence events/agreements in the case of disputes
- Meet operations needs
- Ensure the preservation of documents or historic or other value

The untimely destruction of documents could cause the parish council:

- Difficulty in defending litigious claims
- Operational problems
- Embarrassment
- Failure to comply with the Freedom of Information or Data Protections Acts

A small percentage of the parish council's records may be selected for permanent preservations as part of the council's archives or for historical research.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

The parish council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record management systems in accordance with the regulatory environment. The person with overall responsibility for this Policy is the Parish Clerk.

The Parish Clerk will give guidance for good records management practice and will promote compliance with this policy so that information will be retrieved easily, appropriately and timely. The Parish Clerk must also ensure that records are accurate and are maintained and disposed of appropriately.

3. CONFIDENTIAL WASTE

Fundamentally, any information that is required to be produced under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Protection Regulations, is available on the website or is open to public inspection should NOT be treated as confidential waste.

However, any information that is protected by the Data Protection Act or is deemed to be Confidential should be treated as confidential waste for disposal purposes.

Examples of what constitutes confidential waste includes:

- Exempt information contained within committee reports
- Files containing the personal details of an individual and files that predominantly relate to a particular individual or their circumstances, for example, completed application forms and letters
- Materials given to us on a 'confidential' or on a limited use basis e.g. material provided by contractors of the Police

Examples of what does not constitute confidential waste includes:

- Documents that are available to the public via our web site or by submitting an appropriate search request to ourselves for general information
- All reports and backgrounds papers of matters taken to Committee in public session, unless specifically exempt

Confidential waste which clearly shows any personal information or information which can be identified using the parameters set out above should be shredded and disposed.

4. RETENTION SCHEDULE

The retention schedule lays down the length of time for which the records needs to be retained and the action which should be taken when it is of no further administrative use.

5. STORAGE AND ACCESS

Disclosure information is kept in securely lockable, non-portable cabinets with access strictly controlled and limited to the Parish Clerk.

RECOMMENDED DOCUMENT RETENTION TIMESCALES

The retention period should be the number of years specified plus the current financial period (i.e. three years plus the current period, therefore at least three years documentation will always be retained at any given point in time).

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason
General Administration		
Signed minutes of council meetings (hard copy)	Indefinite	Legal requirement
Reports and papers	Indefinite	For reference
Correspondence	One year, unless considered of a historical nature or judged to be relevant to the parish council business	For reference
E-mails	Clerk assesses and follows procedure outlined in this document. If not considered needed then other e-mails are deleted on a monthly basis	Reference only
Finance		
Invoices	Six years	VAT inspections/audit
VAT records	Six years minimum	VAT inspection
Employee financial information	Two years after employee leaves	Recommended by SLCC
Management receipts/payments	Six years	Future reference
Annual Returns	Indefinite	Legal requirement
Published annual accounts	Indefinite	Reference/historical archive
Cheque stubs/bank statements	Six years	Recommended by SLCC
Contracts	Ten years	Should a claim be brought
Audit budgetary control	Ten years	For reference
Quotations and tenders	Five years	For reference only
Precept	Indefinite	Reference/historical archives
Scales of fees and charges	Five years	For reference
Payroll	Minimum three years	HMRC
Grant awards	Ten years unless advised further by funder	Audit/funder requirement
Health and Safety		
Insurance certificates and policies	While valid	Should a claim arise
Insurance claim records	Indefinite	Should a claim arise
All inspection records	Indefinite	Should a claim arise
Cemeteries		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of fees collected 	Indefinite	Statutory requirement/historical reference

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of burials • Register of purchased graves • Register/plan of grave spaces • Register of memorials • Applications for interment • Applications for right to erect memorial • Disposal certificates • Copy of certificates of Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial 		
Other		
Title, deeds etc.	Indefinite whilst owned by council	Legal requirement
Members Register of Interests	Destroyed after Member ceases to be a Member	Only current information required
Planning applications	Retained as long as useful	For reference only
Employee records	Duration of employment plus five years	Should a claim arise