



STURMINSTER MARSHALL

PARISH COUNCIL

**DOCUMENT RETENTION
POLICY**

Adopted on: 6TH FEBRUARY 2025

DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY

Introduction

The guidelines set out in this document supports the Parish Council Data Protection Policy and assists us in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) and other associated legislation. It is important that the Parish Council has in place arrangements for the retention and disposal of documents necessary for the adequate management of services in undertaking its responsibilities.

This policy sets out the minimum requirements for the retention of documents and sets out the requirements for the disposal of documents. However, it is important to note that this is a live document and will be updated on a regular basis.

Sturminster Marshall Parish Council will ensure that information is not kept for longer than is necessary and will retain the minimum amount of information that it requires to carry out its functions and the provision of services, whilst adhering to any legal or statutory requirements.

Aims and Objectives

It is recognised that up to date, reliable and accurate information is a vital to support the work that the Parish Council does and the services that we provide to our residents. This document will help us to:

- Ensure the retention and availability of the minimum amount of relevant information that is necessary for the Council to operate and provide services to the public.
- Comply with legal and regulatory requirements, including the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the GDPR.
- Save the Clerk and Councillors' time and effort when retrieving information by reducing the amount of information that may be held unnecessarily.
- Ensure archival records that are of historical value are appropriately retained for the benefit of future generations

3. Scope

For the purpose of this policy, 'documents' includes electronic, microfilm, microfiche and paper records. Where storage is by means of paper records, originals rather than photocopies should be retained where possible.

Standards of good practice

The Parish Council will make every effort to ensure that it meets the following standards of good practice:

- Adhere to legal requirements for the retention of information as specified in the Retention Schedule at Annex A.
- Personal information will be retained in locked filing cabinets within the Memorial Hall or on the secure online storage through and back-up copies held on portable storage devices, access to these documents will only be by authorised personnel (Clerk and Chair).
- Disclosure information will be retained in a locked cabinet in the Memorial Hall or on the secure online storage through and back-up copies held on portable storage devices.
- Appropriately dispose of information that is no longer required and to be securely destroyed.
- Appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that confidential and sensitive information is securely destroyed.
- Information about unidentifiable individuals is permitted to be held indefinitely for historical, statistical or research purposes eg. Equalities data.

Breach of Policy and Standards

Any employee who knowingly or recklessly contravenes any instruction contained in, or following from, this Policy may, depending on the circumstances of the case, have disciplinary action, which could include dismissal, taken against them.

Where there is a breach of the policy, the Council may need to consider whether there is also a breach of the GDPR.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Parish Council Clerk has responsibility for implementation of the policy under delegation of the Parish Council. The Parish Council Clerk and Chair are responsible for the maintenance and operation of this policy including ad-hoc checks to ensure compliance.

Retention

Timeframes for retention of documents have been set using legislative requirements, guidance from the National Association of Local Councils and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Professional Development (CIPD). Throughout retention the conditions regarding safe storage and controlled access will remain in place. Annex A shows the minimum requirements for the retention of documents as determined by Dorset

Council for the management of specific documentation types. The Clerk and Chair should exercise judgement as to whether they can be disposed of at the end of those periods.

Disposal

Documents/data no longer required by Parish Council for administrative purposes must be finely shredded/disposed of through specialist waste removal contractors and deleted entirely and securely from the Parish Council computer system(s).

Annex A – Retention Schedule

Records to be preserved permanently at the Dorset History Centre (P)

Records in this category when no longer regularly consulted in the parish or town should be deposited in the Dorset History Centre. They are generally easy to identify; the obvious examples are the main series of signed council and committee minutes and the receipt of payment books. Other records may be less easy to select, in particular correspondence files on important local issues and planning applications and papers for major or controversial developments. Here individual clerks and councillors should be best placed to judge which documents relate to significant or contentious local issues about which more detailed information needs to be preserved. The following points, however, may assist clerks. Firstly, where detailed minutes survive there should be less need to preserve large amounts of correspondence. Secondly a filing system arranged by subject can ease considerably the process of selecting material on important issues. Lastly, important files can often be overloaded with material of an ephemeral nature; it is a good idea therefore to remove such papers from the files at a regular interval.

Records to be reviewed for possible permanent preservation (R) Records

in this category should be reviewed, either when the prescribed minimum retention period is over, or when they are no longer required in the parish or town for administrative purposes. In conjunction with History Centre staff, any long-term historical value can be assessed, and items of particular historic interest should be selected from these files for permanent retention. The role of the local clerk and councillors are vital to identify material that is of particular local significance, but where this may not be obvious to an outsider. There may be cases where the History Centre does not consider an item to be of value, but the Parish Council still chooses to retain it in its own custody

Records that may be destroyed by the parish clerk (D)

A large number of parish council records, mainly financial, may be safely disposed of by the parish clerk, usually after a minimum retention period prescribed for audit or other

statutory purposes generally 6 years. Where no minimum period is given records in this category may be destroyed when they are no longer required in the parish or town council administrative purposes. We would recommend reviewing these files after 5 years or when an office holder retires if sooner. All documents should be treated as confidential waste and shredded. Prior to Deposit Material earmarked for deposit at the History Centre should be box-listed prior to being brought in, so that staff are aware of the potential quantity and types. The parish council retains ownership of the records; any items which following appraisal by DHC staff are deemed unsuitable for permanent preservation will be offered back to the council or destroyed securely, depending on what was agreed at time of deposit.

For any records not covered by the schedule below or for any material held in digital form, please ask History Centre staff for specific advice.

Records	Action	Minimum Retention Period	Reason
<u>Administration</u>			
Minutes of Council/meeting (signed series)	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Reports and other documents circulated with agendas	R, but D if copies are included with signed minutes	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	
Agendas	D, but P if minutes do not survive		
Councillors' declarations of office	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Register of Interests	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Grouping orders	R	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	
Nominations forms parish council elections	D	[Ballot papers are destroyed after 6 months (statutory) so presumably nomination forms do not need to be kept for any length of time]	
Byelaws and orders	P, one copy of each	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Policy documents	R	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	
Title deeds	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	

Property registers and terriers including registers of allotments	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Maps, plans and surveys of property owned by the council or meeting	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Correspondence and papers on important local issues or activities	R	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	Note: these files should be heavily weeded
Routine correspondence and papers	R with the view to D	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	Note: these files should be heavily weeded
Village/parish appraisals, plans and millennium projects	R with the view to P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Planning applications and related paper for <i>major controversial</i> developments; also planning appeal decisions	R with the view to D	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	
Planning applications [general]	D	15 years	
Leases, agreements, contracts and wayleaves	R	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	
Quotations and tenders (successful)	D	12 years	Statute of Limitation
Quotations and tenders (unsuccessful)	D	2 years	
Planning applications for minor works where permission is refused	D	6 years	Statute of Limitation
Scale of fees and charges	D	Once replaced by new charges	

Insurance policies and Risk assessments	D	7 years after expired	
Playground assessments	D	Once replaced by new charges	
Loan sanctions	D	6 years after end of loan	Statute of Limitation
Staff files	D	6 years after left employ unless through ill-health or industrial tribunal case (keep until person is 65)	
<u>Finance</u>			
Receipt and payment books	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Vouchers before 1950	D	6 years	VAT
Financial returns to district auditors	D, but P if the receipt and payment books have not survived	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Cash and petty cash books and rent books	D, but P if the receipt and payment books have not survived	6 years	Tax, VAT, Statute of Limitation
Receipt books of all kinds	D	6 years	VAT
Postage and telephone books	D	6 years	Tax, VAT, Statute of Limitation
Bank statements including deposit/saving accounts	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Bank paying-in books	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Paid invoices	D	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	D	6 years	Statute of Limitations
VAT records	D	6 years	VAT
Time sheets	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit

Wage books	D	12 years	Statute of Limitations
Members' allowances register	D	6 years	Tax, Statute of Limitations
Records relating to parish halls, centres and recreation grounds, applications to hire, letting diaries, copies of bills to hirers and records of tickets issued	D	6 years	VAT
Precept books and contribution orders	D	6 years	VAT
<u>Miscellaneous</u>			
Maps created under the provision of the Rights of Way Act 1932	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Community magazines newsletter	P one copy of each issue	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Press cuttings book	R	Items of particular historic interest should be selected for permanent retention.	
Photographs [annotated with date and event/place]	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Photographs [not annotated with dates and events/places]	D		
Any records dating from before 1894 now held by the town or parish council (e.g. poor law, surveyors of the highway, enclosure awards etc)	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	

Any records of the parish council dating to before 1920	R	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Records of other bodies such as burial boards, charities, fire brigades, home guard, local societies or ad hoc committees	P, but R ephemeral with view to D	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Burial ground records listed in Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 No 204 Section 12	R	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
General reports, guides, handbooks etc, received by the parish council from other Dorset bodies	D	Replace with new guides as issued	