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## **CORSHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

### **RETENTION OF RECORDS**

**Guidance on retention, disposal and care  
of Town Council records**

# RETENTION GUIDELINES TOWN COUNCIL RECORDS

The schedule accompanying these guidelines lists the main types of Town Council records whether or when and how they should be disposed of. The following notes provide an explanation of the terms used in the schedule. The guidelines should be used in conjunction with the legal topic note (LTN 40) August 2022 from NALC.

## **Records to be preserved permanently at the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre**

Records in this category, when no longer regularly consulted, should be deposited in the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre (WSHC). They are generally easy to identify; the obvious example is the signed council and committee minutes. 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. Best judgement should be used as to which documents relating to significant or contentious local issues should be preserved. The following points, however, may assist. Where detailed minutes survive there should be less need to preserve large amounts of correspondence. The filing system is arranged by subject within each service area to ease the process of selecting material on important issues. Important files can become overloaded with material of a short-lived nature; therefore such papers are removed from the files at a regular interval.

## **Records to be reviewed for possible permanent preservation Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre**

Records in this category should be passed to the Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre for review, either when the prescribed minimum retention period is over, or when the Town Council no longer requires them for administrative purposes.

## **Records that may be destroyed by the Council**

A large number of Town Council records, mainly financial, may be safely disposed of, 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 for administrative purposes. These should be reviewed after 6 years or when an office holder leaves if sooner. **All documents shall be treated as confidential waste and shredded unless otherwise specified.**

### **Sources of advice:**

#### **Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre**

Cocklebury Road  
Chippenham  
Wiltshire  
SN15 3QN  
Tel: 01249 705500

**Website:** <http://wshc.eu/>

**Email:** [heritageadmin@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:heritageadmin@wiltshire.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 01249 705500

**Wiltshire Association of Local Councils**

Unit C2, Beacon Business Centre  
 Hopton Park  
 Devizes  
 Wiltshire  
 SN10 2EY

**Website:** <https://www.wiltshire-alc.org.uk/>

**Email:** office@wiltshire-alc.org.uk

**Telephone:** 01380 729549

**Society of Local Council Clerks**

Collar Factory  
 Suite 2.01  
 112 St. Augustine Street  
 Taunton  
 Somerset  
 TA1 1QN

**Website:** <http://www.slcc.co.uk/>

**Email:** contact form on website

**Telephone:** 01823 253646

**NOTES:** WSHC – Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre  
 CTC – Corsham Town Council  
 WC – Wiltshire Council

Records	Action	Minimum Retention Period	Notes and method of disposal
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>			
Minutes of Council/meeting (signed series)	Preserve	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement – usually 5 years	
Reports and other documents circulated with agendas	Destroy	5 years	Only confidential if stated on Report
Agendas	Destroy	5 years	Not confidential - bin
Councillors' declarations of acceptance of office	Preserve	Transfer to WSHC once book is full and there is no longer an administrative requirement	In safe
Nominations forms/applications for Town Council elections/co-options	Destroy	Destroy after end of term of election	Treat as confidential

<b>Records</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Minimum Retention Period</b>	<b>Notes and Method of disposal</b>
Byelaws and orders	Preserve, one copy of each	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Keep in safe
Title deeds	Preserve	Transfer to WSHC when no longer required to prove title or for administrative need	Keep in safe
Property and asset registers including registers of allotments	Preserve	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Maps, plans and surveys of property owned by the council or meeting	Preserve	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Keep in safe
Correspondence and papers on important local issues or activities	Review with view to destroy	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement, usually 5 years	Review for confidentiality
Village/parish appraisals, plans	Review with the view to Preserve	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Not confidential
Planning applications and related paper for major controversial developments within parish boundary	Review with the view to Destroy	Available on line at Wiltshire Council website	Review for confidentiality
Planning applications for minor works and non-contentious	Destroy	Available on line at Wiltshire Council website	Not confidential
Planning appeal decisions	Destroy	Available on line at Wiltshire Council website	Not confidential
Planning – general correspondence	Destroy	Keep for 2 years	Shred in confidential waste
Local Plan	Destroy	10 years from publication	Not confidential

Quotations and tenders (successful)	Destroy	6 years (or long if still under guarantee)	Statute of Limitations. May be needed indefinitely.
<b>Records</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Minimum Retention Period</b>	<b>Notes and Method of Disposal</b>
Quotations and tenders (unsuccessful)	Destroy	2 years	Treat as confidential
Routine correspondence and papers	Destroy	Maximum 14 months	Shred confidential waste. Bin other waste
Scale of fees and charges	Destroy	5 years	Management. Not confidential
Title Deeds, Leases, agreements, contracts and wayleaves, tenancy agreements (flats)	Review	12 years	Keep in safe
Insurance policies	Preserve	40 years	Treat as confidential
Risk Assessments	20 years	Minimum 20 years. Certificate of public liability and employers liability keep forever	Keep forever
Playground inspections and assessments	Destroy	20 years	Potential claims. Treat as confidential
Accident/Incident Reports	Destroy	20 years	Potential claims. Treat as confidential
Staff files	Destroy. *Unless ill health retirement may be Asbestos related. Then keep until person 100 years of age	6 years after left employ unless through ill-health or industrial tribunal case (keep until person is 65)*	Treat as confidential
Job Applicants	Destroy	1 month – those not shortlisted  3 months – those shortlisted (except successful candidate)	Treat as confidential
<b>FINANCE</b>			
Loan sanctions	Destroy	6 years after end of loan	Statute of Limitations
Receipt and payment books	Destroy	6 years	VAT

<b>Records</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Minimum Retention Period</b>	<b>Notes and Method of Disposal</b>
Financial returns to auditors	Destroy, but Preserve if the receipt and payment books have not survived	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Audit
Petty cash books	Destroy, but Preserve if the receipt and payment books have not survived	6 years	Tax, VAT, Statute of Limitations
Receipt/payment of accounts	Destroy	6 years	VAT
Bank statements including deposit/saving accounts	Destroy	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Bank paying-in books	Destroy	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Destroy	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Orders	Destroy	6 years after payment made	VAT, Statute of Limitations
Paid invoices	Destroy	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	Destroy	6 years	Statute of Limitations
Pay	Destroy	6 years	Tax, Audit
VAT records	Destroy	6 years	VAT
Time sheets – lieu etc.	Destroy	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Salary records	Destroy	12 years	Statute of Limitations, Superannuation. Treat as confidential.
Members' allowances register	Destroy	6 years	Tax, Statute of Limitations. Refers to Chairman as no other allowances made. Travel & subsistence kept with paid accounts records
Records relating to Methuen Hall and recreation grounds, applications to hire, letting diaries, special events agreements and copies of bills to hirers.	Destroy	6 years	VAT

Records	Action	Minimum Retention Period	Notes and Method of Disposal
Investments	Preserve	Indefinitely	Audit/Management
<b><u>MISCELLANEOUS</u></b>			
Emails	Review with view to Destroy	<i>No minimum retention period. The Data Protection Officer has agreed a maximum of two years for email retention unless there is a valid, lawful reason under the GDPR to retain the information for longer. If a legitimate reason for keeping an email longer than two years it must be saved in a folder on the email system (Outlook) or main filing system (I: drive or other appropriate drive).</i>	<p>Management</p> <p><i>The data we are concerned about is that which contains personal information such as personal email addresses, home addresses and phone numbers.</i></p> <p><i>To ensure emails containing personal information are not kept for longer than necessary, old emails to be deleted by staff who hold the information, either manually or by setting up a rule in Outlook. Remember an Outlook rule would delete all old emails, not just those affected by the GDPR. If you set up automatic deletion, then emails older than two years which are still required will need to be moved to the I:drive or other appropriate drive.</i></p> <p><i>Set up a reminder to carry out the task by monthly recurring task or diary entry. Be sure to delete sent items before deleting them from the deleted folder.</i></p>
Community newsletter	Preserve one copy of each issue	Transfer to WSHC when no longer an administrative requirement	Not confidential
Information Sheet	Preserve one copy, Review attachments with a view to Destroy	Transfer to WSHC when no longer an administrative requirement	Not confidential

Photographs	Preserve	Transfer to WSHC when no longer an administrative requirement	Not confidential
Public Consultations with the public concerning service delivery and minor policies	Preserve	6 Years	Shred confidential waste
Halls/Centres/Recs. - Hire Forms - Letting details - Invoices, Etc.	Destroy	6 Years	VAT/Audit/Management
Maps created under the provision of the Rights of Way Act 1932 (if applicable)	Preserve	Transfer to WSHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	CTC only keeps copies of the Maps – originals kept by WC. Not confidential
Allotments Registers & Plans	Preserve	6 years	Management/Audit
Allotment Tenancy Agreements	Destroy	2 years after expiry of tenancy	Management
Records of other bodies such as charities, fire brigades, local societies, ad hoc committees	Review temporary records/notes with view to Destroy	6 months	Not confidential

<b>Records</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Minimum Retention Period</b>	<b>Notes and Method of Disposal</b>
Burial ground records listed in Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 No 204 Section 12	Preserve	Keep indefinitely.	To be retained by CTC until burial ground has been full for several years due to reopened graves



# **TOWN COUNCIL RECORDS HOW TO MANAGE AND LOOK AFTER THEM**

## **Introduction**

Town Councils create a wide range of records in order to function. Some of these are of long-term historical interest and should be preserved permanently after their administrative usefulness has been served. Many, however, should be disposed of after a number of years.

These guidelines have been drawn to help manage these records, which is a basic element of being able to meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The guidelines aim to help decide which records should be kept and which can be safely destroyed.

## **STORAGE AND CARE OF RECORDS**

### **STORAGE**

The key to successful safe storage is to:

- Keep the records in a cool, clean and dry environment and out of direct sunlight and non UV-filtered artificial light as much as possible.
- Keep records away from outside walls that may be damp, windows and pipes that might leak and off the floor where floodwater might reach them.
- Also keep records away from sources of heat such as radiators which will dry them out.
- Reasonable ventilation is desirable.
- Records held in unsuitable conditions can be quickly and badly damaged by mould and pest infestations that thrive in warm, damp conditions and by accelerated chemical reactions.
- Check storage areas regularly to make sure they are well maintained and regularly cleaned.

How to store digital records

Digital records can be easily damaged or lost if proper care is not given to their storage.

- Keep digital records secure using passwords.
- Avoid storing digital records on tapes or disks as the ability to read these is quickly becoming obsolete.
- Back up records on a server and/or the cloud.
- Keep metadata with the records so other people can understand what it means (for example, noting the file format, date of creation, name of person creating).
- Keep more important digital records as PDFs rather than Word.

### **CREATING NEW DOCUMENTS FOR PERMANENT RETENTION**

Some records will be transferred to the WSHC for permanent preservation in due course. It is desirable that these should be created using good quality archival materials where possible, as well as being kept in sound conditions. A few basic guidelines about materials are given below:

#### *Paper*

- Many modern papers are made from wood pulp: they are acidic by nature and become brittle and darken when exposed to air pollution.
- Archival quality paper is available and, if possible this should be used for key records which will be preserved permanently, such as council minutes.

#### *Inks*

- Use good quality ink with a high carbon content.
- These are described as 'permanent', 'pigment', 'document', 'Indian', Calligraphers' and 'archival'.

- Local art and newsagent shops may keep some of these inks.

#### *Holding sheets together*

- Brass or plastic paper clips are better than staples, which are prone to rusting.
- Do not use Sellotape or glues most of which are acidic and will cause problems in the future.
- Rubber bands perish and shrink causing damage to the papers.

#### **File Covers**

- File covers can cause a lot of damage because they are often made from acidic boards, chemically unstable plastics and metals which can rust.
- Buy archival covers which consist of acid free board, inert plastics and avoid metals.

#### *Plastic enclosures and lamination*

- Only inert plastics such as polyester and polypropylene should be used.
- NEVER laminate documents.

#### *Boxes*

- Should be acid free where possible but a good strong box with a lid will protect documents from dust and physical damage.

David J Martin  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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