



HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL **DOCUMENT AND DATA RETENTION POLICY**

THIS DOCUMENT OUTLINES THE POLICY ADOPTED
BY HARWICH TOWN COUNCIL

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Introduction

Harwich Town Council is obliged to maintain and retain documentation and/or data for a number of purposes, including audit, tax liabilities and in the event of legal disputes and proceedings. Subject to those reasons, papers, records and data may be destroyed if they are no longer of use or relevance.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) require public bodies to manage information and its access in particular ways. The guidelines set out in this document support the Town Council's Data Protection Policy, IT Policy and Publication Scheme. It assists the Council in compliance with relevant associated legislation as well as the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, the SAPP Practitioner's Guide, NALC and SLCC Guidelines.

Scope and Purpose

The purpose of this policy on record management is to enable the Council to:

- Comply with the relevant legislation and codes of practice
- Create authentic, reliable and useable records
- Support the Council's business functions, including asset management
- Document the Council's decisions and activities
- Reduce storage costs
- Facilitates working towards a paperless office
- Enable the efficient and accurate retrieval of information
- Ensure personal data is retained no longer than necessary
- Dispose correctly of records and data no longer required

This policy applies to all documents and data held or processed by the Town Council including but not limited to:

- Emails sent and received via official .gov.uk addresses
- Financial records
- General council publications (minutes and agendas)
- Correspondence with the public
- Data processed for statutory and service delivery purposes

Documents and Data may be held in either 'hard' paper form or electronic form. For the purpose of this policy 'document' and 'record' refers to both.

Staff and Councillor Responsibility

The Town Clerk will be responsible for overseeing record management.

All staff are obliged to:

- Keep accurate records in an organised and accessible form
- Keep records only for as long as necessary
- Document actions and decisions in records
- Document reasons for the disposal of records
- Ensure all records created by the Town Council are relevant, complete and accurate, without any unsubstantiated or subjective commentary, and protected against unauthorised addition, deletion, alteration, use or concealment

All councillors are obliged to:

- Retain and dispose of council-related documentation or data, obtained from external sources, in accordance with this policy.

Periods of Retention

The minimum periods for which various types of records must be kept are set out in the Retention Schedule at Annex A. Where applicable, these reflect statutory requirements, codes of practice and recommendations published by professional and other bodies. In the absence of any guidance, it will be the responsibility of the Town Clerk to determine a suitable retention period. The council retains the right to adjust any **non-statutory** retention periods following a policy review.

At the end of the retention period, the record must be assessed to determine whether it should be retained for a further period. This is particularly relevant where the record has been the subject of a request for access to information under the GDPR or the FOIA this is the case even where access to information has been refused, as the record should be retained until the end of the period in which an appeal can be lodged or the appeals procedure exhausted.

Document Disposal

Documents designated for disposal must be securely disposed of to preserve confidentiality. Documents and data will be disposed of following the retention periods and methods laid out in Annex A. In the absence of any guidance, no document is to be disposed of without the approval of the Town Clerk. Reasons must be given for disposal, and a record of which documents are destroyed with their date of destruction.



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ANNEX A - RETENTION SCHEDULE

	Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason	Method of Disposal
1	Minutes	Indefinite	Archive	N/A. Original signed paper copies of council minutes of meetings must be kept indefinitely in safe storage.
	Meeting Notes	When minutes are approved	Management	Destroy, bin
2	Agendas & Meeting Papers	5 Years	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste (hard copies)
3	Recordings & Notes of Meetings	Immediately following approval of the minutes	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
4	Accident / Incident Reports	20 Years	Potential Claims	Destroy, shred confidential waste
5	Scales of Fees and Charges	6 Years	Management	Destroy, bin
6	Receipt & Payment Accounts	Indefinite	VAT, Audit & Archive	N/A
7	Receipt Books of all kinds	6 Years	VAT & Audit	Destroy, shred confidential waste
8	Bank Statements, including Deposit and Savings Accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit	Destroy, shred confidential waste
9	Bank Paying-In Books	Last completed audit year	Audit	Destroy, shred confidential waste
10	Cheque Book Stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit	Destroy, shred confidential waste
11	Quotations and Tenders	6 Years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)	Destroy, shred confidential waste
12	Paid Invoices	6 Years	VAT	Destroy, shred confidential waste

13	Paid Cheques	6 Years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)	Destroy, shred confidential waste
14	VAT Records	6 Years	VAT	Destroy, shred confidential waste
15	Petty Cash, Postage and Telephone Books	6 Years	Tax, VAT, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)	Destroy, shred confidential waste
16	Grants Given		Management, Audit	Destroy, shred confidential waste
	Hardcopy Applications	12 months after award given		
	Electronic Copy	3 Years		
17	Timesheets	Last completed audit year 3 Years	Audit Personal Injury	Destroy, bin
18	Wages Books/Payroll	12 Years	Superannuation (element)	Destroy, shred confidential waste
19	Insurance Policies	While Valid	Management	Destroy, bin
20	Insurance Company Name & Policy Number	Indefinite	Management	N/A
21	Certificates for insurance against liability for employees	40 Years from date on which insurance commenced or was renewed	The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations renewed 1998 (S12753) Management	Destroy, bin
22	Investments	Indefinite	Audit, management	N/A
23	Title Deeds & Trust Deeds	Indefinite	Audit, Management	N/A
24	Agreements & Contracts	6 Years	Audit, Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
25	Leases	12 Years	Audit, Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
26	Members Allowances Register	6 Years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)	Destroy, shred confidential waste
	Members Acceptance of Office	Term of office plus 6 months	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
	Members Declarations of Interest	Term of office plus 6 months	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
27	Attendance Register	Term of office plus 4 years	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
28	Elections Information	For duration of term of office	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
29	Employee Personnel File	12 Years after termination of employment unless through ill health or industrial tribunal case (keep until person aged 65 years)	Tax, Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
	Record of employees (name only), job role,	Indefinite	Management	N/A

	dates of employment			
30	Councillor Personal Details	Term of office plus 1 year	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
31	Income Tax Records	7 Years after termination of employment	The Income Tax (Employments) Regulations 1993	Destroy, shred confidential waste
32	Pension Records	7 Years after termination of employment	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
33	Prospective Employee & unsuccessful applicant Information (job applications/CVs)	Following completion of probationary period of successful candidate	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
34	Play Equipment Inspection Records	21 Years	Management	Destroy, bin (hardcopy following receipt of superseded)
35	Health & Safety Documents Any building reports (i.e. Structural, Asbestos or surveys)	3 Years or until superseded	RIDDOR	Destroy, bin
36	Risk Assessments	Until superseded	Management	Bin
37	Allotment Records, Register and Plans	Indefinite	Audit, Management	N/A – Former tenants' records securely archived
38	Chamber Hire Records and sign-in sheets	6 Years	VAT	Destroy, shred confidential waste
39	Event Documentation	6 Years	Management	Bin
40	Planning Applications (including appeals)	Until determined	Management	Bin
	Local/Neighborhood Plans	Whilst in force	Reference purposes	Bin
41	CCTV Review Requests	3 Years	Data Protection	Destroy, shred confidential waste
	Images/Footage	31 Days	Data Protection	Destroy, shred confidential waste
42	Complaints	3 years	Management	Destroy, shred confidential waste
43	General Correspondence (hardcopy & electronic)	12 Months	Data Protection, Management	Bin
44	Emails	24 Months	Data Protection, Management	Delete

45	Information from other bodies e.g. circulars from EALC, NALC, Principal Authorities	Whilst useful	Management	Bin
	Magazines & Journals	Whilst useful	Management	Bin
46	Newsletters – Harwich Headlines & Allotments	Indefinitely	Archive	N/A
47	Local/Historical Information	Indefinitely	Archive	N/A
48	Equipment Manuals, User Guides & Operational Procedures	Whilst in use	Management	Bin