



1. Introduction

This policy sets out the minimum retention periods for the various types of records held by Highwood Parish Council. It is based on guidance from the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC), statutory requirements, and best practice for local councils. The Council maintains records in both hard copy and digital formats and commits to managing all records in compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data will not be retained longer than necessary and will be securely destroyed or anonymised at the end of the retention period.

2. Retention Periods for Key Records

Document Type	Hard Copy	Digital	Minimum Retention Period	Reason / Notes
Agendas - Council Meetings	✓	✓	2 years	Management and audit purposes
Agendas - Non Council Meetings	✓		<i>Not retained beyond meeting</i>	No statutory requirement to retain
Asset Register	✓		Indefinite	Audit, management, and insurance
Bank Statements	✓		6 years	Audit, tax, VAT compliance
Bank Paying-in Books	✓		6 years	Audit, tax, VAT compliance
Cheque Book Stubs	✓		6 years	Audit, tax, VAT compliance

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Document Type	Hard Copy	Digital	Minimum Retention Period	Reason / Notes
Cheques Paid	✓		6 years	Statute of Limitations
Surveys (results only)	✓		3 years	Management
Football Annual Agreements	✓		1 year after end date	Contractual
Gifts Received Register	✓	✓	Indefinite	Transparency and audit
Grant Applications (to WF&BPC)	✓		6 years	Audit and management
Invoices Paid	✓		6 years	VAT and tax compliance
Investments	✓		Indefinite	Audit and management
Insurance Policies (WF&BPC)	✓		6 years after expiry	Management and claims
Insurance Policies (Other)	✓		While valid	Management
Letters - General Correspondence	✓		3 years	Management
Members Allowance Register	✓		6 years	Tax and statute of limitations
Declaration of Office	✓		Indefinite	Transparency and governance
Members Declaration of Interest	✓		Indefinite	Transparency and governance

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Document Type	Hard Copy	Digital	Minimum Retention Period	Reason / Notes
Minutes & Minute Books	✓	✓	Indefinite	Governance and legal record
Minutes/Notes Handwritten (incl. by members)	✓		Until minutes agreed	Temporary working notes
Planning Applications	✓		At least 5 years	Statutory requirement
Petty Cash Records	✓		6 years	Tax, VAT, statute of limitations
Postage Records	✓		6 years	Tax, VAT, statute of limitations
Quotations & Tenders - Successful	✓		12 years or Indefinite	Statute of limitations; indefinite if property-related
Quotations & Tenders - Unsuccessful	✓		Life of tender	Management
Receipt & Payments Book	✓		Indefinite	Archive and audit
Risk Assessments	✓	✓	25 years	Public liability and health & safety
Scales of Fees & Charges		✓	5 years	Management
Standing Orders	✓		Indefinite	Governance
Timesheets (Clerk)	✓		2 years	Audit and Working Time Regulations

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Document Type	Hard Copy	Digital	Minimum Retention Period	Reason / Notes
Title Deeds, Leases, Agreements, Contracts	✓		Indefinite	Audit and management
VAT Records	✓		6 years	VAT compliance

3. Personnel and Employment Records

Document Type	Minimum Retention Period	Reason / Notes
Employment Contracts	6 years after employment ends	Statute of limitations and employment law claims
Payroll Records	6 years	Tax and National Insurance compliance
Disciplinary and Grievance Records	6 years after case closure	Employment law and potential tribunal claims
Training Records	6 years after training date	Health & safety and professional development
Recruitment Records (unsuccessful)	1 year after recruitment decision	Data protection and fairness

4. Data Protection and Confidentiality

- All personal data held by the Council will be processed and retained in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Personal data will be retained only as long as necessary for the purpose it was collected and securely destroyed or anonymised thereafter.

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- Sensitive information will be handled with appropriate confidentiality and security measures.

5. Disposal and Destruction of Records

- At the end of the retention period, records will be securely destroyed to protect confidentiality and comply with data protection legislation.
- Paper records will be shredded or incinerated.
- Digital records will be permanently deleted using secure methods.
- Records retained indefinitely will be archived securely and managed to ensure ongoing accessibility and preservation.

6. Digital Records Management

- Digital records will be backed up regularly and stored securely with controlled access.
- The Council will ensure digital records remain accessible and readable over time through appropriate file formats and migration strategies.

7. Archiving

- Records retained indefinitely but no longer actively used will be archived in a secure location.
- Archived records will be catalogued and accessible for audit, legal, or historical purposes.

8. Review and Maintenance

- This policy will be reviewed at least every two years or sooner if legislative or operational changes require it.
- Version control will be maintained to document amendments and review dates.

For further information or assistance with records management, please contact the Parish Clerk.