

Parish and town council records: guidance for retention and transfer of records to archives

Record storage

- Town and parish councils must keep certain records by law.
- It is vital that these records are kept safely and securely to ensure they can be accessed when needed.
- It is also important to keep the records in good storage conditions.
- When the records have reached the end of their administrative use, it is recommended that the retention guidelines (below) are consulted to see what needs to be kept and what should be destroyed.
- Wiltshire & Swindon Archives (WSA) will safely store any records that are to be kept permanently and catalogue them where possible.
- These records will be held on deposit, so the council retains ownership as well as copyright (where applicable).
- Wiltshire & Swindon Archives is not a records management service, so please ensure that where possible you only deposit items no longer required by the council. However, the council may withdraw records temporarily for anniversaries and other special events.

How to store paper records

Please try and store your paper records in as good condition as possible:

- Store records in a cool, clean and dry environment.
- Keep records out of direct sunlight.
- Avoid using files with metal parts, plastic bags, rubber bands, adhesive tape and metal staples/clips.
- Keep records in strong boxes and do not overfill them.
- Make lists of what is in each box so you can easily find what you need.
- Keep the storage area locked if possible.
- If possible, keep the records in a parish or town council office rather than someone's home.

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 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.

Record retention and transfer

Where appropriate, it is completely acceptable to retain records permanently as archives, to preserve our nation's memory and provide public accountability for decision-making. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not mean that all records containing personal data should or need be destroyed, redacted or removed.

Article 5 of the UK GDPR states that personal data must be:

b) collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes; **further processing for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes shall not be considered to be incompatible with the initial purposes;**

e) kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed; **personal data may be stored for longer periods insofar as the personal data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes** subject to implementation of the appropriate technical and organisational measures required by the GDPR in order to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals; and

f) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including **protection against** unauthorised or unlawful processing and against **accidental loss, destruction or damage**, using appropriate technical or organisational measures.”

Article 9 states that special category data (ie sensitive data eg relating to race, sexuality, health, beliefs, etc) can only be processed under strict conditions including:

“(j) processing is necessary for **archiving purposes in the public interest**, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1) (as supplemented by section 19 of the 2018 Act) based on domestic law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject.”

The following table provides our guidance for the retention and transfer of records and can be used in conjunction with the NALC LTN 40 guidance on Local Council Documents and Records with the distinction that once no longer required to be retained by law or for audit purposes, records may be stored permanently for ‘archiving purposes’ as in above stated exemptions:

Type of record	Minimum retention period	Final action	Notes
Administration			
Signed council and committee minutes	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Draft council and committee minutes	End of administrative use	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if minutes do not survive
Agendas	End of administrative use	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if minutes do not survive
Reports/documents circulated with agendas	End of administrative use	Review	Transfer to WSA ONLY if copies are not included within the minutes
Councillors' declarations of office	2 years from end of term of office	Transfer to WSA	If declarations are made online, no transfer required
Councillors' registers of interest	2 years from end of term of office	Transfer to WSA	If registers are made online, no transfer required
Correspondence and papers on important local issues or activities	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Routine correspondence and papers	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Planning applications for minor works	15 years	Destroy	
Planning applications for major works or controversial developments	15 years	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Planning appeal decisions	6 years	Destroy	
Village/parish appraisals, plans and millennium projects	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Elections			
Ballot papers for parish/town council elections	6 months from close of poll	Destroy	To comply with Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (amendment) Rules 2004 Sec48(1)

Nomination forms for candidates for election to parish/town council	6 months from close of poll	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if minutes do not survive
Register of electors	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Legal and property			
Byelaws and orders	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Title deeds	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	If deeds are still required to prove title, council must retain
Contracts, wayleaves, agreements or other legal documents	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Insurance policies	40 years from end of policy	Destroy	
Property registers and terriers, including allotment books	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Maps, plans and surveys or property owned by the council	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Maps created under the provisions of the Rights of Way Act 1932	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Tenders and quotations (successful) for contracts under hand	6 years after term of contract has expired	Destroy	
Tenders and quotations (successful) for contracts under seal	12 years after term of contract has expired	Destroy	To comply with Statute of Limitations
Tenders and quotations (unsuccessful)	1 year after start of contract	Destroy	To comply with Statute of Limitations
Loan sanctions	6 years after end of loan	Destroy	To comply with Statute of Limitations
Scales of fees and charges	End of charge period	Destroy	
Finance			
Account books/year end accounts	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	
Receipt and payment books	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	

Precept books and contribution orders	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Financial returns to district auditors	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	WSA may destroy depending on quality of annual accounts
Rent books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if general accounts do not survive
Cash and petty cash books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	Transfer to WSA ONLY if general accounts do not survive
Vouchers	6 years from end of current financial year	Transfer to WSA	WSA will weed the files for preservation of a representative sample
Receipt books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Postage and telephone books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Bank statements, including deposit and saving accounts	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Bank paying in books	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Cheque book stubs	1 year from last complete audit year	Destroy	
VAT records	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Paid invoices	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Staffing			
Wage books	12 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	To comply with Statute of Limitations
Time sheets	1 year from last complete audit year	Destroy	
Members' allowance registers	6 years from end of current financial year	Destroy	
Staff files	6 years from end of employment	Review	If employee has left through ill health or industrial tribunal, keep until person is 65 then destroy. Otherwise destroy
Records of other bodies / predecessor bodies			

Records of bodies such as burial board, charity, fire brigade, Home Guard unit, local society or ad hoc committee	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Any records dating from before 1894 now held by the council such as poor law, surveyors' records or enclosure documents	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Reports, guides and handbooks received from other organisations	End of administrative use	Destroy	
Other records			
Community magazines and newsletters	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	These will be added to Wiltshire Local Studies if copies not already held, otherwise destroyed
Press cuttings books	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Photographs (annotated with dates and places)	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Photographs (not annotated with dates and places)	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	WSA may dispose of any photographs not labelled or identified
Condolence books	End of administrative use	Transfer to WSA	
Ephemera	End of administrative use	Destroy	

Depositing records with Wiltshire & Swindon Archives

We encourage potential depositors to make an appointment prior to bringing in any material. Please email us at archives@wiltshire.gov.uk or phone 01249 705500 to make an appointment.

We accept deposits during our open hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9:30-5pm. If these times are difficult, an archivist will explain alternative days and times.

We are easily accessible by car and public transport and have a free car park onsite. Our address is the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Cocklebury Road, Chippenham SN15 3QN.

When we arrange your appointment, we will ask you how much material there is to bring in. There is no need to be specific, but it is useful for us to have an idea of how much to expect. We will also try and get an idea of what is being deposited or donated. Again, there is no need for detail or a box list, but it is helpful for us to get a sense of the complexity of the material being brought in. If there is a lot, it may be that we allow more time to process your material before the next appointment we make.

If there is a sizeable amount of material, or if we think it might be a good idea to appraise it prior to it being brought in, we may offer to come to you to have a better look at the items. We can also come to you to collect material if you find it difficult to get to us.

If you would like more information regarding onsite appraisal and collection, please contact our archive team at archives@wiltshire.gov.uk who will be more than happy to discuss this with you.

When you bring in the records, we will ask you to fill out a form that specifies what you would like done with anything we decide not to keep. There are three options: dispose of unwanted items responsibly; return unwanted items to you; transfer unwanted items to another service.

We will process the material and send out a formal receipt, which we ask you to sign one copy of and return to us for safekeeping. Depending on the amount of material, this may take a few months.

We do not charge for storage of items at Wiltshire & Swindon Archives. However, if the material is in bad condition (for example if it is mouldy or severely damaged) we may discuss for the Council to contribute towards conservation work to repair.

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