

# Blackwell Parish Council



## Records Retention Policy

**Approval Date:** May 2025

**Review Date:** Annually

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### Introduction

Blackwell Parish Council accumulates a vast amount of information and data during the course of its everyday activities. This includes data generated internally in addition to information obtained from individuals and external organisations. This information is recorded in various different types of document.

Records created and maintained by the Parish Council are an important asset and as such measures need to be undertaken to safeguard this information. Properly managed records provide authentic and reliable evidence of the Parish Council's transactions and are necessary to ensure it can demonstrate accountability.

Documents may be retained in either 'hard' paper form or in electronic forms. For the purpose of this policy, 'document' and 'record' refers to both hard copy and electronic records.

It is imperative that documents are retained for an adequate period of time. If documents are destroyed prematurely, the Parish Council could face prosecution for not complying with legislation and it could cause operational difficulties, reputational damage and difficulty in defending any claim brought against the Parish Council.

In contrast to the above, the Parish Council should not retain documents longer than is necessary. Timely disposal should be undertaken to ensure compliance with current legislation so that personal information is not retained longer than necessary. This will also ensure the most efficient use of limited storage space.

### **Scope and Objectives of the Policy**

The aim of this document is to provide a working framework to determine which documents are: Retained – and for how long; or Disposed of – and if so by what method. Security of documents – methods for both the Town Council and Councillors

There are some records which do not need to be kept at all or that are routinely destroyed in the course of business. This usually applies to information that is duplicated, unimportant or only of a short-term value.

Records should not be destroyed if the information can be used as evidence to prove that something has happened.

### **Roles and Responsibilities for Document Retention and Disposal**

Councils are responsible for determining whether to retain or dispose of documents and should undertake a review of documentation on an annual basis to ensure that any unnecessary documentation being held is disposed of.

## Document Retention Protocol

Councils are required to maintain their records in accordance with legislation and the Clerk to the Parish Council is required to manage the Council's records in such a way as to promote compliance with this policy so that information will be retrieved easily, appropriately and in a timely manner.

Councils are required to maintain a retention schedule. The retention schedule below provides guidance on the recommended retention periods for specific classes of documents and records.

Whenever there is a possibility of litigation, the records and information which are likely to be affected should not be amended or disposed of until the threat of litigation has been removed.

## Document Disposal Protocol

Documents should only be disposed of if reviewed in accordance with the following:

- Is retention required to fulfil statutory or other regulatory requirements?
- Is retention required to meet the operational needs of the service?
- Is retention required to evidence events in the case of dispute?
- Is retention required because the document or record is of historic interest or intrinsic value?

When documents are scheduled for disposal the method of disposal should be appropriate to the nature and sensitivity of the documents concerned.

Documents can be disposed of by any of the following methods:

- Non-confidential records: place in waste paper bin for disposal.
- Confidential records: shred documents.
- Deletion of computer records.
- Transmission of records to an external body such as the County Records Office.

## Review of Document Retention

It is planned to review, update and where appropriate amend this document annually.

## List of Documents

The full list of the Council's documents and the procedures for retention or disposal can be found below.

## Security

The Parish Council will need to ensure that all data (hard copy or electronic) is kept securely and access is available only to authorised personnel.

Councillors will need to assess how they manage the data they receive or generate on behalf of the Parish Council and identify and potential weaknesses.

## Official documents, forms and publications retention schedule

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason
Minute Books	Indefinite	Archive

Agendas	5 years	Management
Accident/incident reports	20 years	Potential claims
Scale of fees and charges	6 years	Management
Receipt and payment accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books of all kinds	6 years	VAT
Bank statements, including deposit and savings accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
VAT records	6 years generally, but 20 years for VAT on rents	VAT
Petty cash, postage and telephone books	6 years	Tax, VAT and Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Timesheets	Last completed Audit year – 3 years	Audit (requirement) and personal injury (best practise)
Wages books/Payroll	12 years	Superannuation
Insurance policies	As long as it is possible for a claim to be made under it	Management and legal proceedings
Certificates for insurance against liability for employees	Indefinitely	Future claims
Investments	Indefinite	Audit and management
Members allowances register	6 years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
<b>For halls, centres and recreation grounds</b>		
Application to hire, lettings diaries, copies of bills to hire, record of tickets issued	6 years	VAT
Playground inspections/reports	Indefinite	Legal
<b>Staff Management</b>		
Staff appraisals	Duration of employment	Management
Contracts of Employment	Duration of Employment plus 6 years	Legislation
Staff correspondence	3 years	Management
<b>Other documents</b>		

DALC circulars	1 year	Management
Deeds, leases, contracts and agreements	Indefinite	Legislation
Grant applications	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Local Historical Information	Indefinite	Benefit of the parish
Parish Magazine	Indefinite	Benefit of parish history
Magazines and journals	If relevant	Management
General correspondence	1 year	Management

To be reviewed annually.

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This policy is fully supported by the members of Blackwell Parish Council

Signed by the Chair of Blackwell Parish Council: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_