



Records Management Policy

Adopted at Council Meeting on 12th December 2023

Introduction

Local Authorities are encouraged to follow the guidance set out in the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on "the management of records issued under S.46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000". This sets out clear and useful recommendations on good practice, of which the following is a summary. Authorities should:-

- have in place organisational arrangements that support records management
- have in place a records management policy, either as a separate policy or as part of a wider information or knowledge management policy
- ensure they keep the records they will need for business, regulatory, legal and accountability purposes
- keep their records in systems that enable records to be stored and retrieved as necessary
- know what records they hold and where they are, and should ensure that they remain usable for as long as they are required
- ensure that records are stored securely and that access to them is controlled
- define how long they need to keep particular records, dispose of them when they are no longer needed and be able to explain why records are no longer held
- ensure that records shared with other bodies, or held on their behalf by other bodies, are managed in accordance with the Code
- monitor compliance with the Code and assess the overall effectiveness of the programme.

Cinderford Town Council has adopted the following organisational arrangements in compliance with this advice.

a) Records Retention Policy

Cinderford Town Council will retain important records for the minimum periods shown in the table below. If held, records may be made available in response to a Freedom of Information request in accordance with the requirements of the Council's Freedom of Information Act Schedule of Publications. While records are in active use, we will have well-organised and indexed storage and retrieval systems for both paper and electronic records that allow us to access, on demand, any document that is required for our own use or as a result of a request made under the Freedom of Information Act. Appropriate secure storage facilities will be in place for both active and archived records. Administering and monitoring the retention of Council's records is the responsibility of the Clerk to the Council.

Paper and Electronic Records	Minimum retention period	Purpose
Minutes of Council and Committees	Indefinite	Archive
Personnel matters: all documentation relating to staff	Retained securely for as long as it would be possible for a claim to be made against the Council	Archive
Receipt and payment ledger	Indefinite	Archive
Bank statements	6 complete financial years	VAT inspection
Cheque book stubs	6 complete financial years	VAT inspection
Paid invoices	6 complete financial years	VAT inspection
VAT records	6 complete financial years	VAT inspection
Insurance policies	While valid	In case of claim
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Archive for audit and management
Declarations of councillors' acceptance of office	Term of office	Management
Magazines, journals, consultations and general information.	As long as they are relevant and useful.	Management
Routine correspondence.	Minimum of 1 year and as long as they are relevant and useful.	Management

- b) **Archive policy** Administering and monitoring the appropriate archiving of Council's records is the responsibility of the Clerk to the Council.

Paper records

- A minimum permanent archive of paper records should be maintained. This will include :-
 - o Minutes of Council and committees.
 - o Personnel records (secure)
 - o Receipt and payment ledgers
 - o Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts (secure)
 - Some categories of papers that have a limited and fixed retention period , require to be stored in a temporary, rolling, archive. These include:-
 - o Receipt and payment ledgers
 - o Bank statements
 - o Cheque book stubs
 - o Paid invoices
- Electronic records

The Clerk is working with Forest IT regarding movement from Google Drive to Office 365 and with regard to the backing up of documents stored electronically.

c) **Records Destruction Policy**

Administering and monitoring the appropriate destruction of Council's records is the responsibility of the Clerk to the Council.

Paper records

- At the end of their retention period, paper records will need to be physically destroyed. All records relating to finance, personnel, councillors' interests, and any 'commercial-in-confidence' material must be security bagged and shredded by a commercial contractor. Opportunities should be explored of sharing a service with another local authority which may have an established, larger contract.
- Other paper records that are not confidential or that have been in the public domain, e.g. routine correspondence, should be recycled.

Electronic records

To be reviewed with Forest IT.

d) **Monitoring**

- Day to day monitoring and management of these policies and procedures are the responsibility of the Clerk to the Council.
- These policies and procedures, written in an abbreviated form, can only be a guide to the complex laws and practices of records management. Where doubt exists as to the correct course of action, reference should be made to statutory sources and to governmental guidance.
- The Council will ensure that the Council fulfills its statutory responsibilities in respect of records management, and has the operational effectiveness required to deliver its business.