

Wickham Skeith Parish Council

Document & Electronic Data Retention Policy

Adopted: 19 January 2026

Minute reference: 190126/43

Introduction

This Retention Policy applies to Wickham Skeith Parish Council (the 'council' and covers all records and documentation, whether analogue or digital and are subject to the retention requirements of this Policy. For the purpose of this Policy, the terms 'document' and 'records' include information in both hard copy and electronic form and have the same meaning whether referred to as Documents or Documentation.

This Policy will also aid paper records and electronic data storage issues identified and will eliminate the need to retain paper and electronic records unnecessarily. The council will ensure that information is not kept longer than is necessary and will retain the minimum amount of information that it is required to hold to meet its statutory functions and the provision of its services.

Any such system or policies relating to record management will include a review of council documentation on an annual basis.

Anything that is no longer of use or value can be destroyed but if the council is in any doubt it will seek advice from Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) and retain that document until that advice has been received.

Documents of historical importance, if not retained by the Council, will be offered first to the county record office.

Retention Of Documents

Attached is an Annex which indicates the appropriate retention period for audit and other purposes and the reasons for retention.

Other documents not mentioned in the Annex will be treated as follows:

Insurance Policies

- Insurance policies and significant correspondence will be kept for as long as it is possible to make a claim under the policy.
- Article 4 of the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI 2753) requires that local councils, as employers, retain certificates of insurance against liability for injury or disease to their employees arising out of their employment for a period of 40 years from the date on which the insurance is commenced or renewed.

Correspondence

- If related to audit matters, correspondence will be kept for the appropriate period specified to the Annex thereto.
- In planning matters correspondence will be retained for the same period as suggested for other planning papers.
- All other correspondence will be kept for as long as the matter contained therein is still of interest or use to the council and or the parish.

Personnel matters

Article 5 of GDPR provides “personal data must be 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”. This Policy will ensure that necessary records, documents and electronic data of the council are adequately protected, archived and disposed of at the correct retention period, and to provide all staff with clear instructions regarding the appropriate retention and disposal of such documentation.

Retention of Documents for Legal Purposes

Most legal proceedings are governed by 'the Limitation Acts' which state that legal claims may not commence after a specified period. The specified period varies, depending on the type of claim in question.

The table below sets out the limitation periods for the different categories of claim.

Claims under category	Limitation period
Negligence	6 years
Defamation	1 year
Contract	6 years
Leases	12 years
Sums recoverable by statute	6 years
Personal injury	3 years
To recover land	12 years
Rent	6 years
Breach of Trust	None

If a type of legal proceeding falls into two or more categories, the documentation will be kept for the longer of the limitation period.

As there is no limitation period in respect of trust, the Council will retain all trust deeds and schemes and other similar documentation.

For any information retained under this Policy that is in an encrypted format, consideration must be taken for the secure storage of any encryption keys. Encryption keys must be retained for as long as the data that the keys decrypt is retained.

Disposal of Documents or Documentation

Beyton Parish Council will keep a record detailing the document disposed of, the date, and the officer who authorised disposal. In particular, the record should be able to demonstrate that the disposal was in accordance with this policy or set out the reasons for departing from it.

Disposal of documents and documentation can be achieved by a range of processes:

- Any record containing confidential information must either be disposed of in a confidential waste bin or shredded using a cross-cut shredder.
- Disposal of documents that do not contain confidential information may be disposed of in the normal way or recycled.
- Deletion – where computer files are concerned
- Transfer of document to external body- this method of disposal will be relevant where documents or records are of historic interest and/or have intrinsic value. Such a third party could be the County Archivist or a local Museum.

Disposal of Electrical Hardware

IT equipment and devices that have the ability and capability to store personal data include:

- PC's
- Laptops
- Mobile Phones
- Multi-Functional Devices – printers / scanners
- Servers
- USB Memory Sticks and external hard drives.

IT equipment disposal must be managed by the Proper Officer.

All computer equipment, recycling or refurbishing must be disposed of in accordance with the Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013.

The table at Appendix 1 – 'Retention of Records Schedule' sets out the limitation periods for the different categories of claim.

The table at Appendix 2 – 'Retention of Digital Records' – provides the required retention periods for all digital Documents.

APPENDIX 1- RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE AUDIT OF PARISH COUNCILS

DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
MINUTES		
Approved minutes	Indefinite	Archive
Draft/rough/notes of minutes taken at meetings	Until minutes are approved	Management
FINANCE		
Receipts and Payment Accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Paid Invoices	6 years	VAT
VAT Records	6 years	VAT
Bank Statements	Last completed audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
Paying in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
Scales of fees and charges	5 years	Management
PLANNING		
Permissions	6 years	Compliance
Permissions – on appeal	Indefinite	Precedent
Permissions – commercial or development	Indefinite	Future compliance
Refusals	2 years	Appeals
INSURANCE		
Insurance Policies	2 years	Management
Certificates of Employers' Liability Insurance	40 years	Limitation period
OTHER		
Routine correspondence, papers and email	Until minutes are confirmed	Retain as long as useful
Quotations and tenders	12 years/indefinite	Statute of Limitations
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts,	Indefinite	Audit management

APPENDIX 2- RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED RELATING TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In all cases identify the documents that need to be retained in accordance with the Retention of records Schedule (attached at Appendix 1).

DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
Email	2 years	Satisfy customer complaint
Electronic Back Up Tapes	12 months	To protect records from loss, destruction or falsification
Electronic files	3 years from date last used	To protect records from loss, destruction or falsification
All portable/ removeable storage media	At end of work cycle / project	Data shall be copied or stored on removable media only by authorized users in the performance of official duties
Cryptographic keys: access limited to user/role	Encryption keys must be retained for as long as the data that the keys decrypt is retained	