



# **PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL RECORDS**

**Guidance on retention, disposal and care of  
parish and town council and parish meeting  
records**



# **RETENTION GUIDELINES LOCAL COUNCIL RECORDS**

The schedule accompanying these guidelines lists the main types of parish and town council records and gives recommendations for their retention and/or disposal. The following notes provide an explanation of the terms used in the schedule and give additional guidance to clerks on how to assess the records in their care.

## **Records to be preserved permanently at the Dorset History Centre**

**(P = Preserve)**

Records in this category, when no longer regularly consulted in the parish or town, should be deposited in the Dorset History Centre (DHC). They are generally easy to identify; the obvious examples are the main series of signed council and committee minutes and the receipt and payment books. Other records may be less easy to select, in particular correspondence files on important local issues and planning applications and papers for major or controversial developments. Here individual clerks should be best placed to judge which documents relate to significant or contentious local issues about which more detailed information should be preserved. The following points, however, may assist clerks. Firstly where detailed minutes survive there should be less need to preserve large amounts of correspondence. Secondly a filing system arranged by subject can ease considerably the process of selecting material on important issues. Lastly, important files can often be overloaded with material of an ephemeral nature; it is a good idea therefore to remove such papers from the files at a regular interval.

## **Records to be reviewed by the Dorset History Centre for possible permanent preservation**

**(R = Review)**

Records in this category should be passed to the Dorset History Centre for review, either when the prescribed minimum retention period is over, or when they are no longer required in the parish or town for administrative purposes.

## **Records that may be destroyed by the Council (D = Destroy)**

A large number of parish and town council records, mainly financial, may be safely disposed of by the parish or town clerk, usually after a minimum retention period prescribed for audit or other statutory purposes generally 6 years. Where no minimum period is given records in this category may be destroyed when they are no longer required in the parish or town council administrative purposes. We would recommend reviewing these files after 5 years or when an office holder retires if sooner. All documents should be treated as confidential waste and shredded.

### **Sources of advice:**

Dorset History Centre  
Bridport Road  
Dorchester  
Dorset DT1 1RP

Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils  
Colliton Annexe  
Colliton Park  
Dorchester  
Dorset DT1 1XJ

Tel: 01305-250550

Fax: 01305-257184

Email: [archives@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:archives@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

Tel: 01305 260972

Fax: 01305 260972

Email: [daptc@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:daptc@dorsetcc.gov.uk)

<b>Records</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Minimum Retention Period</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b><u>ADMINISTRATION</u></b>			
Minutes of Council/meeting (signed series)	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Reports and other documents circulated with agendas	R, but D if copies are included with signed minutes	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Agendas	D, but P if minutes do not survive	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Councillors' declarations of office	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Register of Interests	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Grouping orders	R	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Nominations forms parish council elections	D	Destroy after end of term of election	
Byelaws and orders	P, one copy of each	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Policy documents	R	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Title deeds	P	Transfer to DHC as soon when no longer required to prove title or for administrative need	
Property registers and terriers including registers of allotments	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	

Maps, plans and surveys of property owned by the council or meeting	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Correspondence and papers on important local issues or activities	R	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Village/parish appraisals, plans and millennium projects	R with the view to P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Planning applications and related paper for major controversial developments; also planning appeal decisions	R with the view to D	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Liaise with DHC which may hold other authority's copies
Leases, agreements, contracts and wayleaves	R	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Quotations and tenders (successful)	D	12 years	Statute of Limitation
Quotations and tenders (unsuccessful)	D	2 years	
Routine correspondence and papers	R with the view to D	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Planning applications for minor works where permission is refused	D	6 years	Statute of Limitation
Scale of fees and charges	D	Once replaced by new charges	
Insurance policies and Risk assessments	D	7 years after expired – unless Asbestos involved then minimum 40 years	
Playground assessments	D	Once replaced by new assessments	
Staff files	D * Unless ill health retirement may be Asbestos related. Then keep until person 100 years of age	6 years after left employ unless through ill-health or industrial tribunal case (keep until person is 65)*	

<b>FINANCE</b>			
Loan sanctions	D	6 years after end of loan	Statute of Limitation
Receipt and payment books	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Vouchers before 1950	D	6 years	VAT
Financial returns to district auditors	D, but P if the receipt and payment books have not survived	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Cash and petty cash books and rent books	D, but P if the receipt and payment books have not survived	6 years	Tax, VAT, Statute of Limitation
Receipt books of all kinds	D	6 years	VAT
Postage and telephone books	D	6 years	Tax, VAT, Statute of Limitation
Bank statements including deposit/saving accounts	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Bank paying-in books	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Paid invoices	D	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	D	6 years	Statute of Limitations
VAT records	D	6 years	VAT
Time sheets	D	Last completed Audit year	Audit
Wage books	D	12 years	Statute of Limitations
Members' allowances register	D	6 years	Tax, Statute of Limitations
Records relating to parish halls, centres and recreation grounds, applications to hire, letting diaries, copies of bills to hirers and records of tickets issued	D	6 years	VAT
Precept books and contribution orders	D	6 years	VAT
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			
Maps created under the provision of the Rights of Way Act 1932	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	

Community magazines newsletter	P one copy of each issue	Transfer to DHC when no longer an administrative requirement	
Press cuttings book	R	Transfer to DHC when no longer an administrative requirement	
Photographs	P	Transfer to DHC when no longer an administrative requirement	
Any records dating from before 1894 now held by the council (eg poor law records, surveyors of highways accounts, enclosure awards)	P	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Any records of the parish council dating to before 1920	R	Transfer to DHC when no longer an administrative requirement	
Records of other bodies such as burial boards, charities, fire brigades, home guard, local societies, ad hoc committees	P, but R ephemeral with view to D	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Burial ground records listed in Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 No 204 Section 12	R	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Reports, guides, handbooks etc, received by council from other Dorset bodies Except circulars from the DAPTC	R  D	Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Allotments Registers & Plans	R	As above	Management/Audit
Halls/Centres/Recs. - Hire Forms - Letting details - Invoices, Etc.	D	6 Years	VAT

## **PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL RECORDS HOW TO MANAGE AND LOOK AFTER THEM**

### **Introduction**

Parish and Town Council clerks create a wide range of records in order to fulfil the duties of their Councils. Some of these are of long-term historical interest and should

be preserved permanently after their administrative usefulness has been served. Many, however, should be disposed of after a number of years.

These guidelines have been drawn up in response to regular requests for advice and assistance over the years. They should also serve to help parish and town clerks manage their records, which is a basic element of being able to meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The guidelines aim to help clerks to decide which records should be kept and which can be safely destroyed in the parish. The Dorset History Centre (formerly the Dorset Archives Service or Dorset Record Office) and the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils are always pleased to help with further advice or particular queries or other problems about the storage and disposal of records that fall outside these guidelines.

## **STORAGE AND CARE OF RECORDS**

### **STORAGE**

The key to successful safe storage is to:

- Keep the records in a cool, clean and dry environment and out of direct sunlight and non UV-filtered artificial light as much as possible.
- Keep records away from outside walls which may be damp, windows and pipes that might leak and off the floor where flood water might reach them.
- Also keep records away from sources of heat such as radiators which will dry them out.
- Reasonable ventilation is also desirable.
- Records held in unsuitable conditions can be quickly and badly damaged by mould and pest infestations that thrive in warm, damp conditions and by accelerated chemical reactions.
- Use acid free storage materials. [see page 8 for suppliers]
- Check storage areas regularly to make sure they are well maintained and regularly cleaned.

### **CREATING NEW DOCUMENTS FOR PERMANENT RETENTION**

Many records kept by parish and town clerks and councils will be transferred to the Dorset History Centre for permanent preservation in due course. It is desirable that these should be created using good quality archival materials where possible, as well as being kept in sound conditions. A few basic guidelines about materials are given below. Further advice can be obtained from the Dorset History Centre and its Conservation Unit.

#### *Paper*

- Many modern papers are made from wood pulp: they are acidic by nature and become brittle and darken when exposed to air pollution.
- Archival quality paper is available and, if possible this should be used for key records which will be preserved permanently, such as council minutes.

#### *Inks*

- Use good quality ink with a high carbon content.
- These are described as 'permanent', 'pigment', 'document', 'Indian', 'Calligraphers' and 'archival'.
- Local art and newsagent shops may keep some of these inks.

### *Holding sheets together*

- Brass or plastic paper clips are better than staples which are prone to rusting.
- Do not use Sellotape or glues most of which are acidic and will cause problems in the future.
- Rubber bands perish and shrink causing damage to the papers.

### *File Covers*

- File covers can cause a lot of damage because they are often made from acidic boards, chemically unstable plastics and metals which can rust.
- Buy archival covers which consist of acid free board, inert plastics and avoid metals.

### *Plastic enclosures and lamination*

- Only inert plastics such as polyester and polypropylene should be used.
- NEVER laminate documents.

### *Electronic records*

- Hard copies should be made because computer hard and soft ware soon becomes obsolete rendering the records potentially unreadable in the future.

### *Boxes*

- Should be acid free where possible but a good strong box with a lid will protect documents from dust and physical damage.

## **SUPPLIERS**

Suppliers include:

**Conservation Resources UK Ltd**, Unit 1, Pony Road, Horspath Industrial Estate, Cowley, Oxon OX4 2RD (Tel 01865-747755)

**Conservation by Design**, Timecare Works, 5 Singer Way, Woburn Road Industrial Estate, Kempston, Bedford MK42 7AW (01234) 853555 Email: [info@conservation-by-design.co.uk](mailto:info@conservation-by-design.co.uk)

**Preservation Equipment Ltd** Vincas Road, Diss, Norfolk IP22 4HQ 01379 647400 Email: [info@preservationequipment.com](mailto:info@preservationequipment.com)

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