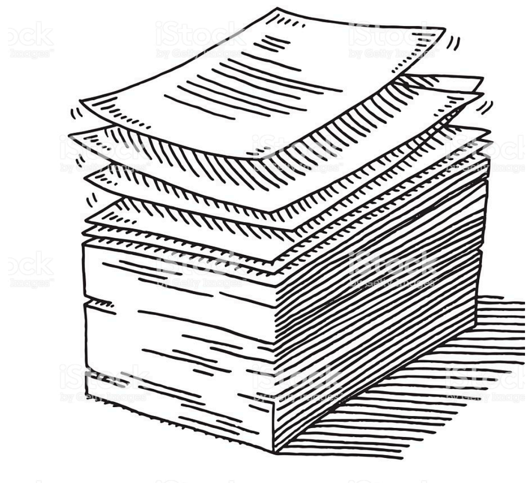
2026

LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME GOLD

WOOTTON PARISH COUNCIL

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF DOCUMENTS POLICY



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Version History

Version	Reviewed at	Approved at
Version 1.00	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11th July 2018	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11th July 2018
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 15th May 2019	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 15th May 2019
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 5th May 2021	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 5th May 2021
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11th May 2022	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11th May 2022
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 17th May 2023	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 17th May 2023
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 8th May 2024	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 8th May 2024
Version 1.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 14th May 2025	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 14th May 2025
Version 2.00	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11th March 2026	Full Council meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 11th March 2026
Version 2.00	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13th May 2026	Annual Meeting of Wootton Parish Council on 13th May 2026

To be reviewed at each Annual Council Meeting

Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy

Introduction

Wootton 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 Wootton 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 Wootton 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 Wootton Parish Council and individual officers concerned could face prosecution for not complying with legislation and it could cause operational difficulties, reputational damage and difficulty in defending any claim brought against Wootton Parish Council.

In contrast to the above Wootton Parish Council should not retain documents longer than is necessary. Timely disposal should be undertaken to ensure compliance with the GDPR 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.

There are some records that 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. Unimportant records of information include:

- 'With compliments' slips.
- Catalogues and trade journals.
- Non-acceptance of invitations.
- Trivial electronic mail messages that are not related to Council business.
- Requests for information such as maps, plans or advertising material.
- Out of date distribution lists.

Duplicated and superseded material such as stationery, manuals, drafts, forms, address books and reference copies of annual reports may be destroyed.

Records should not be destroyed if the information can be used as evidence to prove that something has happened. If destroyed the disposal needs to be disposed of under the GDPR.

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 at least on an annual basis to ensure that any unnecessary documentation being held is disposed of in accordance with the GDPR.

Councils should ensure that all employees are aware of the retention/disposal schedule.

Document Retention Protocol

Councils should have in place an adequate system for documenting the activities of their service. This system should take into account the legislative and regulatory environments to which they work.

Records of each activity should be complete and accurate enough to allow employees and their successors to undertake appropriate actions in the context of their responsibilities to:

- Facilitate an audit or examination of the business by anyone so authorised.
- Protect the legal and other rights of Wootton Parish Council, its clients and any other persons affected by its actions.
- Verify individual consent to record, manage and record disposal of their personal data.
- Provide authenticity of the records so that the evidence derived from them is shown to be credible and authoritative.

To facilitate this the following principles should be adopted:

- Records created and maintained should be arranged in a record-keeping system that will enable quick and easy retrieval of information under the GDPR.
- Documents that are no longer required for operational purposes but need retaining should be placed at the records office.

The retention schedules in Appendix One:

> List of Documents for Retention or Disposal provide guidance on the recommended minimum retention periods for specific classes of documents and records. These schedules have been compiled from recommended best practice from the Public Records Office, the Records Management Society of Great Britain and in accordance with relevant legislation.

Whenever there is a possibility of litigation, the records and information that 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. A record of the disposal will be kept to comply with the GDPR.

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

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

The following principles should be followed when disposing of records:

- All records containing personal or confidential information should be destroyed at the end of the retention period. Failure to do so could lead to Wootton Parish Council being prosecuted under the the GDPR.
- the Freedom of Information Act or cause reputational damage.
- Where computer records are deleted, steps should be taken to ensure that data is 'virtually impossible to retrieve' as advised by the Information Commissioner.
- Where documents are of historical interest it may be appropriate that they are transmitted to the County Records office.
- Back-up copies of documents should also be destroyed (including electronic or photographed documents unless specific provisions exist for their disposal).

Records should be maintained of appropriate disposals. These records should contain the following information:

- The name of the document destroyed.
- The date the document was destroyed.
- The method of disposal.

Data Protection Act 1998 – Obligation to Dispose of Certain Data

The Data Protection Act 1998 ('Fifth Principle') requires that personal information must not be retained longer than is necessary for the purpose for which it was originally obtained. Section 1 of the Data Protection Act defines personal information as:

> Data that relates to a living individual who can be identified:
> a) from the data, or
> b) from those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of the data controller.
> It includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of Wootton Parish Council or other person in respect of the individual.

The Data Protection Act provides an exemption for information about identifiable living individuals that is held for research, statistical or historical purposes to be held indefinitely provided that the specific requirements are met.

Councils are responsible for ensuring that they comply with the principles of the under the GDPR namely:

- Personal data is processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless specific conditions are met.
- Personal data shall only be obtained for specific purposes and processed in a compatible manner.
- Personal data shall be adequate, relevant, but not excessive.
- Personal data shall be accurate and up to date.

- Personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary.
- Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of the data subject.
- Personal data shall be kept secure.

External storage providers or archivists that are holding Council documents must also comply with the above principles of the GDPR.

Scanning of Documents

In general once a document has been scanned on to a document image system the original becomes redundant. There is no specific legislation covering the format for which local government records are retained following electronic storage, except for those prescribed by HM Revenue and Customs.

As a general rule hard copies of scanned documents should be retained for three months after scanning.

Original documents required for VAT and tax purposes should be retained for six years unless a shorter period has been agreed with HM Revenue and Customs.

Review of Document Retention

It is planned to review, update and where appropriate amend this document on a regular basis (at least every three years in accordance with the *Code of Practice on the Management of Records* issued by the Lord Chancellor).

This document has been compiled from various sources of recommended best practice and with reference to the following documents and publications:

- *Local Council Administration*, Charles Arnold-Baker, 12th edition, Chapter 11.
- Local Government Act 1972, sections 225 – 229, section 234.
- SLCC Advice Note 316 Retaining Important Documents.
- SLCC Clerks' Manual: Storing Books and Documents.
- *Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records* issued under Section 46 of the *Freedom of Information Act 2000.*

List of Documents

The full list of Wootton Parish Council's documents and the procedures for retention or disposal can be found at Appendix One.

This policy should be considered alongside Wootton Parish Council's suite of Data and IT policies.

Appendix One

List of Documents for Retention or Disposal

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason	Location Retained	Disposal
Minutes	Indefinite	Archive		**Original signed paper copies of Council minutes of meetings must be kept indefinitely in safe storage. At regular intervals of not more than 5 years they must be archived and deposited with the Higher Authority**
Agendas	5 years	Management		**Bin (shred confidential waste)**
Accident/incident reports	20 years	Potential claims		**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Scales of fees and charges	6 years	Management		**Bin**
Receipt and payment accounts	Indefinite	Archive		**N/A**
Receipt books of all kinds	6 years	VAT		**Bin**
Bank statements including deposit/savings accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit		**Confidential waste**
Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit		**Confidential waste**
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit		**Confidential waste**
Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)		**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT		**Confidential waste**
Paid cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)		**Confidential waste**
VAT records	6 years generally but 20 years for VAT on rents	VAT		**Confidential waste**
Petty cash, postage and telephone books	6 years	Tax, VAT, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)		**Confidential waste**
Timesheets	Last completed audit year 3 years	Audit (requirement) Personal injury (best		**Bin**

		practice)		
Wages books/payroll	12 years	Superannuation		**Confidential waste**
Insurance policies	While valid (but see next two items below)	Management		**Bin**
Insurance company names and policy numbers	Indefinite	Management		**N/A**
Certificates for insurance against liability for employees	40 years from date on which insurance commenced or was renewed	The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI 2753) Management		**Bin**
Recreation area equipment inspection reports	21 years	Potential claims		**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Employee Information	6 years from term of employment	Taxes Management Act 1970		**Confidential waste**
Investments	Indefinite	Audit, Management		**N/A**
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit, Management		**N/A**
Members' allowances register	6 years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)		**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Information from other bodies e.g. circulars from county associations, NALC, principal authorities	Retained for as long as it is useful and relevant			**Bin**
Local/historical information	Indefinite – to be securely kept for benefit of the Parish	Councils may acquire records of local interest and accept gifts or records of general and local interest in order to promote the use for such records (defined as materials in written or other form setting out facts or events or		**N/A**

		otherwise recording information).		
Magazines and journals	Council may wish to keep its own publications For others retain for as long as they are useful and relevant.	The Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 (the 2003 Act) requires a local Council which after 1st February 2004 has published works in print (this includes a pamphlet, magazine or newspaper, a map, plan, chart or table) to deliver, at its own expense, a copy of them to the British Library Board (which manages and controls the British Library). Printed works as defined by the 2003 Act published by a local Council therefore constitute materials which the British Library holds.		**Bin if applicable**
Record-keeping				
To ensure records are easily accessible it is necessary to comply with the following: • **A list of files stored in cabinets will be kept** • **Electronic files will be saved using relevant file names**	The electronic files will be backed up periodically on a portable hard drive and also in Backblaze	Management		**Documentation no longer required will be disposed of, ensuring any confidential documents are destroyed as confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
General correspondence	Unless it relates to specific categories outlined in the policy, correspondence, both paper and electronic, should be kept.	Management		**Bin (shred confidential waste)** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**

	Records should be kept for as long as they are needed for reference or accountability purposes, to comply with regulatory requirements or to protect legal and other rights and interests			
Correspondence relating to staff	If related to Audit, see relevant sections above. Should be kept securely and personal data in relation to staff should not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purpose it was held. Likely time limits for tribunal claims between 3–6 months Recommend this period be for 3 years	After an employment relationship has ended, a Council may need to retain and access staff records for former staff for the purpose of giving references, payment of tax, national insurance contributions and pensions, and in respect of any related legal claims made against Wootton Parish Council		**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Documents from legal matters, negligence and other torts **Most legal proceedings are governed by the Limitation Act 1980 (as amended). The 1980 Act provides that legal claims may not be commenced after a specified period. Where the limitation periods are longer than other periods specified the documentation should be kept for the longer period specified. Some types of legal proceedings may fall within two or more categories.** **If in doubt, keep for the longest of the three limitation periods.**				
Negligence	6 years			**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Defamation	1 year			**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Contract	6 years			**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**

Appendix One

Leases	12 years			**Confidential waste**
Sums recoverable by statute	6 years			**Confidential waste**
Personal injury	3 years			**Confidential waste**
To recover land	12 years			**Confidential waste**
Rent	6 years			**Confidential waste**
Breach of trust	None			**Confidential waste**
Trust deeds	Indefinite			**N/A**
For Halls, Centres, Recreation Grounds				
• **Application to hire** • **Invoices** • **Record of tickets issued**	6 years	VAT		**Confidential waste** **A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
Lettings diaries	Electronic files linked to accounts	VAT		**N/A**
Terms and Conditions	6 years	Management		**Bin**
Event Monitoring Forms	6 years unless required for claims, insurance or legal purposes	Management		**Bin. A list will be kept of those documents disposed of to meet the requirements of the GDPR**
For Allotments				
Register and plans	Indefinite	Audit, Management		**N/A**
Minutes	Indefinite	Audit, Management		**N/A**
Legal papers	Indefinite	Audit, Management		**N/A**
For Burial Grounds				
• **Register of fees collected** • **Register of burials** • **Register of purchased graves** • **Register/plan of grave spaces** • **Register of memorials** • **Applications for interment** • **Applications for right to erect memorials** • **Disposal certificates** • **Copy certificates of grant of exclusive right of burial**	Indefinite	Archives, Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (SI 204)		**N/A**

Appendix One

Planning Papers				
Applications	1 year	Management		**Bin**
Appeals	1 year unless significant development	Management		**Bin**
Trees	1 year	Management		**Bin**
Local Development Plans	Retained as long as in force	Reference		**Bin**
Local Plans	Retained as long as in force	Reference		**Bin**
Town/Neighbourhood Plans	Indefinite – final adopted plans	Historical purposes		**N/A**
CCTV				
Daily notes	Daily	Data protection		**Confidential waste**
Radio rotas	1 week	Management		**Confidential waste**
Work rotas	1 month	Management		**Confidential waste**
Observation sheets	3 years	Data protection		**Confidential waste**
Stats	3 years	Data protection		**Confidential waste**
Signing in sheets	3 years	Management		**Confidential waste**
Review requests	3 years	Data protection		**Confidential waste**
Discs – master and working	For as long as required	Data protection		**Confidential waste**
Internal Operations Procedure Manual	Destroy on renewal Review annually	Management		**Confidential waste**
Code of Practice	Destroy on renewal Review annually	Management		**Confidential waste**
Photographs/digital prints	31 days	**Data protection**		**Confidential waste**