PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL RECORDS

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

V 3 - 2011

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 Cornwall Records Office (P = Preserve)

Records in this category, when no longer regularly consulted in the parish or town, should be deposited in the Cornwall Records Office (CRO). 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.

Further information on how to deposit archives at the Cornwall Records Office can be found on the County Council website www.cornwall.gov.uk

Records to be reviewed by the Cornwall Records Office for possible permanent preservation (R = Review)

Records in this category should be passed to the Cornwall Records Office 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:

The Cornwall Record Office, Old County Hall, Truro, Cornwall Tel 01872 323129 email cro@cornwall.gov.uk

Cornwall Association of Local Councils, 6 Penstraze Business Centre, Penstraze, Truro, Cornwall, TR4 8HY Tel 01872 562053 email enquiries@cornwallalc.gov.uk

Records	**Action**	**Minimum Retention Period**	**Notes**
ADMINISTRATION			
Minutes of Council/meeting (signed series)	P	Transfer to CRO 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 CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Agendas	P with copies of minutes	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Councillors' declarations of office	P	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Forward copies to the Monitoring Officer
Register of Interests	P	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Forward copies to the Monitoring Officer
Grouping orders	R	Transfer to CRO 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 CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Include in the Members' Information Pack for future reference.
Policy documents	R	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Include in the Members' Information Pack for future reference.
Title deeds	P	Transfer to CRO as soon when no longer required to prove title or for administrative need	
Property registers and terriers including	P	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no	

registers of allotments		longer an administrative requirement	
Records	**Action**	**Minimum Retention Period**	**Notes**
Maps, plans and surveys of property owned by the council or meeting	P	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Correspondence and papers on important local issues or activities	R	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Consider the future social historic importance for of some documents
Village/parish appraisals, plans and millennium projects	R with the view to P	Transfer to CRO 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 CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	These may be held by another authority in which case D
Leases, agreements, contracts and wayleaves	P / R	Transfer to CRO 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 CRO 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 – but D if records held by the Planning Authority
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)*	
<u>FINANCE</u>			
Records	**Action**	**Minimum Retention Period**	**Notes**
Loan sanctions	D	6 years after end of loan	Statute of Limitation
Receipt and payment books	P or R	6 years for VAT purposes	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement as a community archive
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 CRO 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	D	6 years	VAT

and records of tickets issued			
Precept books and contribution orders	D	6 years	VAT
<u>MISCELLANEOUS</u>			
Records	**Action**	**Minimum Retention Period**	**Notes**
Maps created under the provision of the Rights of Way Act 1932	P	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Community magazines newsletter	P one copy of each issue	Transfer to CRO when no longer an administrative requirement	
Press cuttings book	R	Transfer to CRO when no longer an administrative requirement	Web pages are not a permanent record
Photographs	P	Transfer to CRO 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 CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Any records of the parish council dating to before 1920	R	Transfer to CRO 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 CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Archives, Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (SI 204)
Burial ground records listed in Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 No 204 Section 12	R	Transfer to CRO as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	
Reports, guides, handbooks etc, received by council from other outside bodies	R / D	Transfer to CRO 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 Cornwall Records Office and the Cornwall Association of Local 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 9 for suppliers]
- Check storage area s regularly to make sure they are well maintained and regularly cleaned.
- Use acid free wrapping paper and folders and NOT brown paper, newspaper or other poor quality wrapping;
- Avoid using paper clips, bulldog clips, sticky tape, adhesive labels, 'Blu-tak' or rubber bands as they will rust or cause staining;
- Protect photographs with inert polyester or silversafe paper;
- Tie bundles and books with unbleached cotton tape and;
- Watch out for silverfish and other paper, parchment and leather-eating insects and beware of rodents!

For more information on the work of the Cornwall Record Office Conservation Unit, please contact the Senior Conservator on 01872 323 566.

CREATING NEW DOCUMENTS FOR PERMANENT RETENTION

Many records kept by parish and town clerks and councils will be transferred to the Cornwall Records Office 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 Cornwall Records Office 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

Preservation Equipment Ltd Vinces Road, Diss, Norfolk IP22 4HQ 01379 647400 Email: info@preservationequipment.com

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