



Scarisbrick Parish Council

Document and Electronic Data Retention Policy

Date of Policy: September 2023 (reviewed)

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1. Introduction

This Retention Policy applies to Scarisbrick Parish Council (SPC) and covers all records and documentation, whether analogue or digital, that are subject to the retention requirements of this Policy.

For the purposes 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 and will eliminate the need to retain paper and electronic records unnecessarily. SPC 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 Lancashire Association of Local Councils (LALC) 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 archive office.

2. Retention of Documents

- 2.1 Appendix 1 indicates the appropriate retention period for audit and other purposes and the reasons for retention. Appendix 2 indicates the appropriate retention period for documentation relating to information technology.
- 2.2 In respect of the retention of documents in case of a legal dispute, Council's policy is set out under Section 3.
- 2.3 Other documents not mentioned in the Appendices will be treated as follows:

Planning Papers:

- Where planning permission is granted, the planning application, any plans and the decision letter will be retained until the development has been completed, so that, if necessary, the Clerk can check that the development proceeds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the permission.
- Where planning permission is granted on appeal, a copy of the appeal decision will also be retained likewise
- Where planning permission is refused, the papers will be retained until the period within which an appeal can be made has expired. If an appeal is made, and dismissed, the decision letter will be retained against further applications relating to that site.

Copies of Structure Plans, Local Plans and similar documents will be retained for as long as they are in force.

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.

Circulars and legal topic notes from LALC, NALC, and other bodies such as principal authorities will be retained for as long as the information contained therein is useful and relevant.

Correspondence:

- If related to audit matters, correspondence will be kept for the appropriate period specified at Appendix 1.
- 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 SPC are adequately protected, archived, and disposed of at the correct retention period, and to provide clear instructions regarding the appropriate retention and disposal of such Documentation.

3. Retention of Documents for Legal Purposes

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

3.2 The limitation periods for the different categories of claim are as follows:

Negligence (and other Torts) 6 years

Defamation 1 year

Contract 6 years

Leases 12 years

Sums recoverable by statute 6 years

Personal injury 3 years

Recovery of land 12 years

Rent 6 years

Breach of Trust None

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

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

4. Retention of Encrypted Data

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

5. Disposal of Documents or Documentation

Safe disposal 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. A certificated confidential shredding and disposal service can be used.
- 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.

6. Disposal of Electronic Hardware

6.1 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.

6.2 IT equipment disposal must be managed by the Chair of the Parish Council in conjunction with the Proper Officer.

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

7. Documenting Disposal

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

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

APPENDIX 1:

RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE AUDIT OF PARISH COUNCILS

| DOCUMENT | MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD | REASON |
|--|--|---|
| Minutes Books | Indefinite | Archive |
| Receipt and payment Account(s) | Indefinite | Archive |
| Receipt books | 6 years | VAT |
| Bank Statements | Last completed audit year | Audit |
| Bank paying-in books | Last completed audit year | Audit |
| Cheque book stubs | Last completed audit year | Audit |
| Supplier Contracts | 6 years | Limitation Act 1980 (as amended) |
| Quotations/tenders | 6 years | Limitation Act 1980 (as amended) |
| Paid invoices | 6 years | VAT |
| Paid cheques | 6 years | Limitation Act 1980 (as amended) |
| VAT records | 6 years | VAT |
| Timesheets | Last completed audit year | Audit |
| Insurance policies | While valid | Management |
| 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 |
| Title deeds, leases, Agreements, contracts | Indefinite | Audit, Management |
| Staff attendance records | Indefinite | Health & Safety Act 1974 |
| Members Allowances Registers | 6 years | Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended) |

APPENDIX 2:

RETENTION OF ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS

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 | To satisfy customer complaints |
| 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 authorised users in the performance of official duties |