

Retention Guidelines for Parish Council Records

The schedule accompanying these guidelines lists the main types of parish and town council records and gives recommendations for their retention and 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.

Please recognise that storage at the Dorset History Centre has a cost to the County Council and that records which will duplicate those supplied by District Council Departments should not be included in records permanently retained.

Records to be preserved permanently at the Dorset History Centre (P)

Records in this category when no longer regularly consulted in the parish or town should be deposited in the Dorset History Centre. They are generally easy to identify; the obvious examples are the main series of signed council and committee minutes and the receipt of 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 needs to 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 Archives Service for possible permanent preservation (R)

Records in this category should be passed to the Dorset Archives Service 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 parish or town clerk (D)

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.

| Records | Action | Minimum Retention Period | Reason |
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| <u>Administration</u> | | | |
| Minutes of Council/meeting (signed series) | P | Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |

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| 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 | [Ballot papers are destroyed after 6 months (statutory) so presumably nomination forms do not need to be kept for any length of time] | |
| 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 as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |
| Property registers and terriers including registers of allotments | P | Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |
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| 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 <i>major controversial</i> developments; also planning appeal decisions | R with the view to D | Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |
| Planning applications [general] | D | 15 years | |
| 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 | |
| Playground assessments | D | Once replaced by new charges | |

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| Loan sanctions | D | 6 years after end of loan | Statute of Limitation |
| Staff files | D | 6 years after left employ unless through ill-health or industrial tribunal case (keep until person is 65) | |
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| <u>Finance</u> | | | |
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| 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 |
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| 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 |
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| <u>Miscellaneous</u> | | | |
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| 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 as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |
| Press cuttings book | R | Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |
| Photographs [annotated with date and event/place] | P | Transfer to DHC as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |
| Photographs [not annotated with dates and events/places] | D | | |
| Any records dating from before 1894 now held by the town or parish council (eg poor law, surveyors of the highway, enclosure awards etc) | 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 as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement | |

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| Records of other bodies such as burial boards, charities, fire brigades, home guard, local societies or 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 | |
| General reports, guides, handbooks etc, received by the parish council from other Dorset bodies | D | Replace with new guides as issued | |
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