



COLNE TOWN COUNCIL

Document Retention Policy

Reviewed by: Gina Langley, Town Clerk / RFO

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Scope
3. Record Creation and Storage
4. Retention of Documents
5. Retention of Documents for Legal Purposes
6. Freedom of Information and Data Protection
7. Disposal of Records
8. Retention Schedule
9. Archiving and Historical Records
10. Responsibilities
11. Review

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Document Retention Policy is to provide a clear framework for the management, retention and disposal of documents and records created, received or maintained by Colne Town Council in the course of its business.

This policy ensures that records are:

- kept for as long as they are required for legal, financial, administrative or historical purposes,
- managed in line with statutory requirements and recognised best practice,
- disposed of securely and appropriately once they are no longer required.

This policy is informed by guidance from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Code of Practice on the Management of Records issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and relevant legislation including the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by Colne Town Council, regardless of format. This includes paper records, electronic documents, emails, databases, photographs, audio and visual recordings.

Records are defined as documents that provide evidence of the Council's activities, decisions, transactions and obligations.

A proportion of records may be identified for permanent preservation due to their historical, legal or administrative significance.

3 Record Creation and Storage

- 3.1 Records must be accurate, complete and stored in a manner that ensures their security, accessibility and integrity.

Electronic records should be stored on Council-approved systems only. Records must not be stored solely on personal devices, personal email accounts or personal cloud storage.

4 Retention of Documents

- 4.1 Certain documents must be retained to meet audit requirements, support staff management, demonstrate financial accountability, comply with statutory obligations and enable the Council to defend or pursue legal claims.

Minimum retention periods are set out in the Retention Schedule at Section 8 of this policy. Where there is uncertainty, records should be retained until advice has been obtained from the Town Clerk/RFO.

4.2 Where multiple retention periods apply, the longer period must be observed.

5 Retention of Documents for Legal Purposes

5.1 The Limitation Act 1980 (as amended) sets time limits for bringing legal claims. Common limitation periods include:

- Negligence (excluding personal injury): 6 years
- Personal injury: 3 years
- Defamation: 1 year
- Contract: 6 years
- Leases: 12 years
- Recovery of land: 12 years
- Rent arrears: 6 years
- Breach of trust: no limitation period

Where records may be relevant to actual or potential legal proceedings, they must not be destroyed until the matter is fully resolved.

6 Freedom of Information and Data Protection

6.1 Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Council must maintain a retention schedule and be able to locate and retrieve information efficiently.

Records containing personal data must be managed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data must not be retained for longer than necessary and must be disposed of securely.

7. Disposal of Records

7.1 Records that have reached the end of their retention period and are no longer required must be disposed of securely.

- Paper records containing confidential or personal information must be shredded or disposed of via confidential waste services.
- Electronic records must be permanently deleted from Council systems and devices.

Where appropriate, a record of disposal should be maintained.

8. Retention Schedule

8.1 The retention schedule below sets out the minimum periods for which key categories of records must be retained. This schedule reflects the services and activities undertaken by Colne Town Council and applies regardless of whether records are held electronically or in hard copy.

Where records contain personal data, retention must also comply with the Council's Data Protection Policy. Electronic records must be stored, managed and disposed of in accordance with the Council's IT Policy.

8.2 Council Governance and Democratic Records

- Minutes of Council and Committee meetings – **Indefinite (archive)**
- Agendas and supporting reports – **Indefinite (archive)**
- Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and policy documents – **Indefinite (archive once superseded)**
- Declarations of Interest – **6 years after term of office ends**
- Councillor correspondence relating to significant Council business – **Indefinite**
- Routine member correspondence – **When considered obsolete**

8.3 Employment and Staffing

- Employee personnel files – **7 years after employment ends**
- Contracts of employment – **7 years after employment ends**
- Payroll, PAYE and pension records – **3–12 years (statutory requirement)**
- Recruitment records (unsuccessful applicants) – **6 months**
- Disciplinary and grievance records – **7 years after case closure**
- Training records – **7 years**
- Health surveillance records – **40 years**

8.4 Finance and Audit

- Annual accounts and financial statements – **Indefinite**
- Bank statements and reconciliations – **Last completed audit year**
- Invoices, receipts and VAT records – **6 years**
- Grants awarded (applications, decisions, monitoring) – **6 years**
- Contracts, tenders and procurement records – **6 years**
- Asset registers – **Indefinite**

8.5 Property, Land and Assets

- Title deeds, leases and agreements – **Indefinite**
- Property maintenance records – **6 years**
- Building plans and specifications – **Lifetime of asset**
- Valuations – **6 years**

8.6 Allotments, Open Spaces and Amenities

- Allotment tenancy agreements – **6 years after tenancy ends**
- Allotment registers and site plans – **Indefinite**

- Recreation ground and facility hire records – **6 years**
- Parks, playground and open space inspection records – **6 years**

8.7 Events, Markets and Community Activities

- Event risk assessments and method statements – **6 years**
- Event licences and permissions – **6 years**
- Market trader applications and agreements – **6 years after agreement ends**
- Event booking and hire records – **6 years**

8.8 CCTV and Community Safety

- CCTV footage – **31 days (unless required for investigation)**
- CCTV incident logs and requests – **3 years**
- CCTV privacy impact assessments – **Review life of system**
- Speed Indicator Device (SPID) data (anonymised speed data) – **12 months**
- SPID data linked to a specific complaint, investigation, enforcement request or legal matter – **6 years after closure**

8.9 Planning and Consultation

- Planning consultation responses – **6 years**
- Neighbourhood or strategic planning documents – **As long as in force, then archive**
- Community consultation responses – **5 years**

8.10 Insurance and Risk Management

- Insurance policies – **For duration of policy plus claim period**
- Employers' liability certificates – **40 years**
- Insurance claims – **7 years after closure**
- Risk assessments (corporate and service-level) – **6 years**

8.11 Information Governance

- Freedom of Information requests and responses – **6 years**
- Data Subject Access Requests – **3 years after closure**
- Data breach records – **6 years**
- Information sharing agreements – **6 years after expiry**

9. Archiving and Historical Records

9.1 Records of historical or long-term value should be identified and preserved. Where appropriate, such records may be deposited with the relevant County Record Office in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.

10. Responsibilities

- 10.1 Overall responsibility for this policy rests with the Town Clerk/RFO, who is also responsible for ensuring alignment with the Council's IT Policy and Data Protection Policy.

All staff and Councillors are responsible for ensuring that records they create, store or manage are handled in accordance with this policy, the IT Policy (including electronic storage, email and system use) and the Data Protection Policy (including lawful processing and retention of personal data).

11. Review

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, and in-line with changes in legislation and guidance.