

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
<u>Administration</u>			
Minutes of Council/meeting (signed series)	P	Transfer to DHC 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 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	

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	

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)	
<u>Finance</u>			
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

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
<u>Miscellaneous</u>			
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	

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	