

Barlaston Parish Council

Document Retention Schedules

Legal Documents

Minute books and burial records need to be retained indefinitely. These are legal documents and must not be destroyed.

Inland Revenue and VAT

If a pension is payable salaries details should be kept until two years after the former employee dies. Otherwise Inland Revenue and VAT papers should be kept for 6 years as a minimum. But, as a Council would normally expect to have a VAT inspection once every ten years, it is probably sensible to keep VAT papers from one inspection to the next.

Annual returns and statements of accounts should be kept indefinitely. Although background papers need not be kept, it is suggested Audit papers are kept for five years.

As regards Insurance documents, there is no longer a legal requirement to keep out-of-date Certificates of Employers Liability Insurance and retaining these Certificates may be a sensible precaution notwithstanding the change in the law. Public Liability Insurance policies and receipts for premiums (and certificates if issued) should be retained for 21 years.

Planning Applications

There is no requirement to keep Planning documents referred to the Council as consultee, but for your own ease of reference you may like to keep them for two or three years if you have space. It is sensible to keep copies of controversial plans for longer than that. If the public want to refer to old applications, you can refer them to the Planning Authority. Planning applications and grants of permission for Council property should be kept indefinitely.

Contract Documents and Related Receipts etc

It is sensible to retain these for at least six years after the end of the contract term so that they are available should a claim under the contract be brought within that period. Keeping them for seven years will be enough.

Handwritten Notes from Meetings etc

Any jottings or handwritten notes which are simply intended as a personal aide memoire should be destroyed immediately after they have served their purpose. If this is not done, there is a risk that they may be subject to a Freedom of Information Act request and may have to be disclosed.

Audio and Video Recordings

These can be treated in exactly the same way as transcripts.

Computer Hard Drives etc

Date on PC and laptop computers is usually retained until the computer reaches the end of its useful life. When you come to dispose of an old computer you need to decide whether or not to copy the date from the old computer to the new one. Either way it is important to destroy the hard drive of the old computer to prevent the Council's data falling into the wrong hands.

Other Material

It is a matter of judgement how long you keep other material. Some material may be of historical interest and it may be worth keeping a box with papers relating to things such as the Millennium Celebrations or a visit from a VIP. But remember that if there is a controversial issue that just keeps rumbling on you should keep hold of papers.

Storing Documents

Archived material is only useful if you know what you have got so it should be boxed, labelled and stored away somewhere where it will not become a fire hazard. It is sensible to keep a detailed record of what is in each box.

In some cases you may not need to keep the original document and a photographic copy may suffice, but you do not need to have sufficient evidence should the document ever be the subject of a legal challenge or dispute.

Local Government Act 1972, sections 225 – 229, section 234

SLCC Clerk's Manual: Storing Books and Documents