

# Thornley Parish Council

## Retention of Documents and Records Policy & location of information.

Reviewed & Approved 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018

Thornley Parish Council recognises that the efficient management of its records is necessary to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the Parish Council.

This document provides the policy framework through which the effective management can be achieved and audited. It covers:

- Scope
- Responsibilities
- Relationships with existing policies
- Retention Schedule

### **1. Scope of the policy**

This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by the Parish Council in the course of carrying out its functions. Records are defined as all those documents which facilitate the business carried out by the Parish Council and which are thereafter retained (for a set period) to provide evidence of its transactions or activities.

These records can take many different forms e.g.

- Letters received from third parties
- Copy letters which have been sent out
- File attendance notes
- Invoices
- Minutes
- Completed application forms
- Plans/drawings
- Financial records
- Registers - including electoral register
- Contracts/deeds
- e-mail communications (and any attachments)
- Photographs

### **Retention of specific documents may be necessary to:**

- Fulfil statutory or other regulatory requirements.
- Evidence events/agreements in the case of disputes.
- Meet operational needs.
- Ensure the preservation of documents of historic or other value.

### **The untimely destruction of documents could cause the Council:**

- Difficulty in defending litigious claims.
- Operational problems.
- Embarrassment.
- Failure to comply with the Freedom of Information or Data Protection Acts

A small percentage of the Parish Council's records will be selected for permanent preservation as part of the Council's archives and for historical research.

## **2. Responsibilities**

The Parish Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record management systems in accordance with the regulatory environment. The person with overall responsibility for this policy is the Clerk. The parish clerk will give guidance for good records management practice and will promote compliance with this policy so that information will be retrieved easily, appropriately and timely. The Clerk must also ensure that records are accurate, and are maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Parish Council's records management guidelines.

## **3. Confidential Waste**

Fundamentally any information that is required to be produced under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations, is available on the website or is open to public inspection should **NOT** be treated as confidential waste. However, any information that is protected by the Data Protection Act or as Confidential under the Councils Constitution should be treated as confidential waste for disposal purposes.

### **Examples of what constitutes confidential waste:**

- Exempt information contained within committee reports.
- Files containing the personal details of an individual and files that predominantly relate to a particular individual or their circumstances. For example completed application forms and letters.
- Materials given to us on a 'confidential' or on a limited use basis e.g. material provided by contractors or the police.

### **Examples of what does not constitute confidential waste:**

- Documents that are available to the public via our web site, or by submitting an appropriate search request to ourselves for general information.
- All reports and background papers of matters taken to Committee in public session unless specifically exempt.

## **Disposal of Documentation**

Confidential waste which clearly shows any personal information or information which can be identified using the parameters set out above will be shredded or be placed in the confidential bags provided by the Council's appointed disposal contractor.

## **4. Retention Schedule**

The retention schedule lays down the length of time which the records need to be retained and the action which should be taken when it is of no further administrative use. The retention schedule refers to record series regardless of the media in which they are stored.

## **5. Storage and Access**

Disclosure information is kept separately from personnel files and in a secure lockable, non-portable cabinet with access strictly controlled and limited to the Clerk.

### **Recommended Document Retention Timescales**

The retention period should be the number of years specified plus the current financial period (i.e. three years plus the current period, therefore at least three years documentation will always be retained at any given point in time).

**6. Location** identifies where documents are held. Paper copies of non-confidential documents can be provided at a cost of 10p per sheet by contacting the Parish Clerk.

## Document/ Min Retention/ Reason/Location

### General Admin

Minutes	Indefinite	Legal Requirement/archive	Web site/ computer/cloud
Correspondence	One year, unless considered of a historical nature or judged to be relevant to Parish Council business	For reference.	Parish Office
Reports and papers	Indefinite	For reference.	Parish Office
Notes from meetings	Shredded after type up	These are not legal record and could be requested under FOI.	From Parish Clerk
E mails	Clerk assesses and follows procedures outlined in this document, If not considered needed then other e mails are deleted each week	Reference only.	Office Computer

### Finance

Invoices	Six years	VAT inspections / audit.	Parish Office
VAT Records	Six year's minimum	Vat inspection.	Parish Office
Employee financial info	Two years after employee leaves	Recommended by SLCC.	Parish Office personnel files
Members Allowances Register	6 Years	Tax Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)	Currently members do not claim any allowances.
Receipt/payments accounts	Indefinite	Audit, Archive	Parish Office
Bank Statements inc deposit/savings accounts, paying in books, cheque book stubs.	Last Completed audit year	Audit	Parish Office
Annual Returns	Indefinite	Legal Requirement.	Web site
Published Annual Accounts	Indefinite	Reference/ Historical archives.	Web site
Cheque stubs / Bank Statements. Receipt	Six years	Recommended by SLCC/Vat	Parish Office

books of all kinds			
Contracts, quotations and tenders	10 years	Should a claim be brought. Limitations act 1980 ( as amended)	Parish Office
Audit budgetary control	Ten years	For reference.	Parish Council
Quotations and tenders	Five years	Reference only.	Parish Office
Precept	Indefinite	Reference/ Historical archives	Parish Office
Scales of fees/charges	6 years	Management	Parish Office
Payroll	Minimum three years	HMRC	Parish Office
Grant awards	10 years unless advised by funder	Audit/ Funder requirement.	Parish Office

### Health and Safety

Insurance certificates and policies	Indefinite	Should a claim arise.	Parish Office
Insurance claim records	Indefinite	Should a claim arise.	Parish Office
All inspection records	Indefinite	Should a claim arise	Parish Office
Accident books	3 years after the date of the last entry	Should a claim arise.	Parish Office

### Cemeteries

register of fees collected, register of burials, register of purchased graves, register/plan of grave spaces, register of memorials, applications for interment, applications for right to erect a memorial, disposal certificates, copy of certificates of grant of Exclusive right of Burials	Indefinite.	Historical, Reference. Archives, Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 ( S1204).	Parish Office. Computer/Cloud
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### Other

Title, deeds etc	Indefinite whilst owned by council	Legal requirement.	Parish Office
Electoral Register	Ongoing updates via DCC	Reference	Parish Office
For Village Centre, Recreation Grounds, Allotments. Registers, Hire Agreements, Lettings Diary, Consent Forms.	Information will be held for as long as individuals/groups are using our services.	Reference	Parish Office/data bases. Village Centre Office.
Photographs	Will be retained as long as necessary. Destroyed/deleted	Reference Promotional items Parish Newsletters,	Parish Office. Village Centre Office.

	when no longer required.	social media.	Office Computers.
Members register of interests	Destroyed after member ceases to be a member, or after each election.	Legal requirement. Only current info required.	DCC web site.
Newsletters from outside bodies	Retained as long as useful.	For reference.	Parish Office
Planning applications	Not retained – items for minutes only, full details available from external source.	For minute purposes only.	DCC planning.
Council newsletters	Indefinite	For reference.	Parish Office. Parish Web site
Employee records	Duration of employment plus five years	Should a claim arise.	Parish Office – personnel files.

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