

HOXNE PARISH COUNCIL

DATA AND ELECTRONIC DATA RETENTION POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 This Retention Policy applies to Hoxne Parish Council (the “Council”) and covers all records and documentation, whether analogue or digital, which are subject to the retention requirements of this Policy.

1.2 For the purpose of this Policy, the terms ‘document’ and ‘records’ include information in both hard copy and electronic form and have the same meaning whether referred to as Documents or Documentation.

1.3 This Policy will also aid paper records and electronic data storage issues identified and will eliminate the need to retain paper and electronic records unnecessarily.

1.4 The Council will ensure that information is not kept longer than is necessary and will retain the minimum amount of information that it is required to hold to meet its statutory functions and the provision of its services.

1.5 Any such system or policies relating to record management will include a review of Council documentation on an annual basis. Anything that is no longer of use or value can be destroyed but if the Council is in any doubt, it will seek advice from the Suffolk Association of Local Councils (SALC) and retain that document until that advice has been received. Documents of historical importance, if not retained by the council, will be offered first to the county record office.

2. Retention of Documents

2.1 Attached are two Appendices which indicate the appropriate retention period for audit and other purposes and the reasons for retention.

2.2 In respect of the retention of documents in case of a legal dispute, the Council's policy is set out under Section 3.

2.3 Other documents not mentioned in the Appendices will be treated as follows:

2.3.1 Planning Papers

- Where planning permission is granted, the planning application, any plans and the decision letter will be retained until the development has been completed, so that, if necessary, the Clerk can check that the development proceeds in accordance with the terms and conditions of the permission.
- Where planning permission is granted on appeal, a copy of the appeal decision will also be retained.
- Where planning permission is refused, the papers will be retained until the period within which an appeal can be made has expired. If an appeal is

made, and dismissed, the decision letter will be retained against further applications relating to that site.

- Copies of Structure Plans, Local Plans and similar documents will be retained as long as they are in force.

2.3.2 Insurance Policies

- Insurance policies and significant correspondence will be kept for as long as it is possible to make a claim under the policy.
- Article 4 of the Employers Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI 2753) requires that local councils, as employers, retain certificates of insurance against liability for injury or disease to their employees arising out of their employment for a period of 40 years from the date on which the insurance is commenced or renewed.

2.3.3 Information from other bodies

Circulars and legal topic notes from SALC, NALC and other bodies such as principal authorities will be retained for as long as the information contained therein is useful and relevant.

2.3.4 Correspondence

- If related to audit matters, correspondence will be kept for the appropriate period specified in the attached Appendices.
- In planning matters correspondence will be retained for the same period as suggested for other planning papers.
- All other correspondence will be kept for as long as the matter contained therein is still of interest or use to the Council and/or the parish.

2.3.5 Personnel matters

Article 5 of GDPR provides “personal data must be kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed”. This Policy will ensure that necessary records, documents and electronic data of the Council are adequately protected, archived and disposed of at the correct retention period, and to provide all staff with clear instructions regarding the appropriate retention and disposal of such Documentation.

2.3.6 Documentation relating to staff

Such documents should be kept securely and in accordance with the data protection principles contained in data protection legislation. The principles provide that personal data in relation to staff should not be kept for longer than is necessary for the purpose it was held. However even after an employment relationship has ended, or in some cases, when there is no employment relationship, a council may need to retain and access records for former staff for the purpose of giving references, payment of tax, national insurance contributions and pensions, and in respect of any related legal claims made against the Council. Such claims could be made for example by job applicants, so records of the selection process will need to be retained. The time limits within which a claim (and any appeal) may be lodged against an employer at an employment tribunal are set out in the legislation that contains the employment right in question or failing that by reference to the Limitation Act 1980 (as amended) considered in paragraph 3 below.

3. Retention of Documents for Legal Purposes

3.1 Most legal proceedings are governed by 'the Limitation Acts' which state that legal claims may not be commenced after a specified period. The specified period varies, depending on the type of claim in question.

3.2 The table below sets out the limitation periods for the different categories of claim.

Claims by Category	Limitation Period
Leases	12 years
Recovery of land	12 years
Contract	6 years
Negligence and other torts	6 years
Rent	6 years
Sums recoverable by statute	6 years
Personal injury	3 years
Defamation	1 year
Breach of trust	None

3.3 If a type of legal proceeding falls into two or more categories, the documentation will be kept for the longer of the limitation period.

3.4 The Council will retain all trust deeds and schemes and other similar documentation.

4. Retention of Encrypted Data

For any information retained under this Policy that is in an encrypted format, consideration must be taken for the secure storage of any encryption keys. Encryption keys must be retained as long as the data that the keys decrypt is retained.

5. Disposal of Documents or Documentation

5.1 Disposal can be achieved by a range of processes:

5.1.1 Any record containing confidential information must either be disposed of in a confidential waste bin or shredded using a cross-cut shredder.

5.1.2 Disposal of documents that do not contain confidential information may be disposed of in the normal way or recycled.

5.1.3 Deletion of computer files.

5.1.4 Transfer of documents to an external body. This method of disposal will be relevant where documents or records are of historic interest and/or have intrinsic value. Such a third party could be the County Archivist or a local Museum.

6. Disposal of Electrical Hardware

6.1 IT equipment and devices that have the ability and capability to store personal data include:

- Laptops
- Multi-Functional Devices such as printers and scanners
- Servers
- USB memory sticks and external hard drives

6.2 IT equipment disposal must be managed by the Chair of the Parish Council in conjunction with the Proper Officer.

6.3 All computer equipment, recycling or refurbishing must be disposed of in accordance with the Waste Electric and Electronic Equipment Regulations 2013.

7. Documenting Disposal

7.1 The Council will keep a record detailing the document disposed of, the date, and the officer who authorised the disposal. In particular, the record should be able to demonstrate that the disposal was in accordance with this policy or set out the reasons for departing from it.

7.2 The table at Appendix 1: Retention of Records Schedule sets out the limitation periods for the different categories of claim.

7.3 The table at Appendix 2: Retention of Digital Records provides the required retention periods for all digital documents.

APPENDIX 1: RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE AUDIT OF PARISH COUNCILS

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason
Bank statements	Last completed audit year	Audit
Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Supplier contracts	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
VAT records	6 years	VAT
Receipt books	6 years	VAT
Quotations/tenders	12 years/indefinite	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Insurance policies	For as long as a claim can be made under the policy	Management and legal proceedings
Minute books	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt and payment accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Certificates of insurance against liability for employees	Indefinite	The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance), Regulations 1998 (SI 2753), Management
Title deeds, leases, agreements	Indefinite	Audit, Management

APPENDIX 2: RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED RELATING TO INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

In all cases identify the documents that need to be retained in accordance with the Retention of Records Schedule (Appendix 1).

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason
Electronic files	3 years from date last used	Protect records from loss, destruction or falsification
Email	2 years	Respond to customer complaints
Electronic back up tapes	1 year	Protect records from loss, destruction or falsification
Portable or removable storage media	At end of work cycle or project	Data shall be copied or stored on removable media only by authorised users

Reviewed 25th March 2026

Next review due: March 2027