



Document retention policy

1. Introduction

1.1. In the course of carrying out its various functions and activities, the Council collects information from individuals and external organisations and generates a range of recorded information. These records are of various kinds including:

- Letters received from third parties
- Correspondence with residents, local government officials or councillors, project partners, potential or actual contractors etc.
- Invoices
- Completed application forms
- Plans/drawings
- Financial records
- Registers
- Contracts
- E-mail communications, and any attachments
- Photographs.

1.2. Most of these records can be retained as 'hard' paper records or in electronic form, or both.

1.3. **Retention of specific documents may be necessary to:**

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

1.4. The **untimely destruction of documents** could cause the Council to:

- Have difficulty in defending litigious claims
- Experience operational problems
- Fail to comply with Freedom of Information or Data Protection regulations.

1.5. Conversely, the permanent retention of all documents is undesirable, and **appropriate disposal** is encouraged for the following reasons:

- Indefinite retention of personal data may be unlawful
- There is a shortage of storage space
- Disposal of existing storage use can free up space for more productive use
- Reduction of fire risk.

2. Scope and purpose

2.1. This policy offers a corporate framework to govern decisions on whether a particular document (or set of documents) should either be:

- Retained – in what format and for what period, or
- Disposed of – if so when and by what method.

3. Retention period and reasons

3.1. The retention periods for the different types of documentation and information held is set out in the table below, along with the reason for retention.

3.2. In the event a decision is taken to dispose of a particular document or set of documents in accordance with the table below, consideration should also be given to the method of disposal.

4. Method of disposal

4.1. Disposal can be achieved by a range of processes:

- Confidential waste – *i.e.* making available for collection by a designated refuse collection service.
- Physical destruction on site – *e.g.* shredding paper records.
- Deletion (and emptying from trash) where computer files are concerned.
- Migration of document to external body, for example with regard to storage of a historical archive.

5. Retaining personal data

5.1. Personal data should be retained for **no longer than is necessary** for the purpose for which it was originally obtained.

- ‘Personal data’ is any information relation to an identified or identifiable person
 - *E.g.* name, identification number, location number, an online identifier, factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural, or social identity, IP addresses and mobile device IDs.

- The act does not set out any specific minimum or maximum periods for retaining personal data.
 - ‘Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes’.

5.2. QPCC will therefore:

- review the length of time that personal data is kept;
- consider the purpose or purposes for which the information is held in deciding whether (and for how long) to retain it;
- securely delete information that is no longer needed for this purpose or these purposes; and
- update, archive or securely delete information if it goes out of date.

5.3. **Decisions to be taken about retaining personal data**

- On a regular basis we will review the personal data we hold and delete anything that is no longer needed;
- Archive, or store offline, any information that is still needed but that is not accessed regularly;
- Standard **retention periods** for different categories of information will be applied.¹

5.4. **Criteria for determining the retention period:**

- The current and future value of the information
- The cost, risks, and liabilities associated with retaining the information
- The ease or difficulty of making sure it remains accurate and up to date
- What the information is used for and what was the purpose for which the information was obtained originally.
 - **Personal data should not be kept** indefinitely ‘just in case’.

¹ Guidance for data retention for local authorities:

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/19342/response/54053/attach/3/Records%20Management%20Retention%20Guidelines%20for%20LG.pdf> (see pages 14 – 80); https://www.archivems.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Record_Retention_Guide.pdf

6. Document retention schedule²

Several of the suggestions below are customary rather than statutory requirements.

Staff data and recruitment	Delete after...	Statutory?
Application forms and interview notes for unsuccessful candidates.	6 months to 1 year – recommended, not statutory.	N
Assessments under health and safety regulations and records of consultations with safety representatives and committees.	Store permanently.	Y
Personnel files and training records (including disciplinary records and working time records).	6 years after employment ceases.	N
SSP records, calculations, certificates, self-certificates.	No statutory obligation, should be kept to best suit business needs, advisable to keep for at least three months after the end of sick leave in case of a disability discrimination claim. If there were to be a contractual claim for breach of an employment contract it may be safer to keep records for 6 years after employment ceases.	N
Wage/salary records (including overtime, bonuses, expenses)	6 years.	Y
National minimum wage records	3 years after the end of pay reference period following the one that the records cover.	Y
Records relating to working time	2 years from the date on which they were made.	Y

² Source:

<https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/19342/response/54053/attach/3/Records%20Management%20Retention%20Guidelines%20for%20LG.pdf>

Financial data		Statutory?
Accounting records	6 years.	Y
Income Tax and NI returns, income tax records and correspondence with HMRC.	Not less than 3 years after the end of the financial year to which they relate	Y
Identification of the receipt, expenditure and write offs of public monies – <i>e.g.</i> allowances, work orders, invoices, credit card statements, cash books, receipts, cheque counterfoils, bank statements, subsidiary ledgers (annual), journals (annual), vouchers.	6 years after the conclusion of the financial transaction that the record supports.	Y
Taxation records	5 years after the end of the financial year in which the records were created.	Y
Payroll – accountable processes relating to the payment of employees (<i>e.g.</i> authority sheets, payroll deduction authorities, payroll disbursement, employee pay records, employee taxation records).	7 years after the conclusion of the financial transaction that the record supports.	Y
Payroll – non-accountable processes, relating to payment of employees (<i>e.g.</i> summary employee pay records).	Common practice to destroy after administrative use is concluded.	N
Budgets	Final version to be archived, draft budgets to be deleted 2 years after the annual budget is adopted by local authorities.	N
Loans (<i>e.g.</i> loan files)	7 years after the loan has been repaid.	Y
Rent Payments (<i>e.g.</i> rent books, correspondence concerning payment, requests for payment).	7 years after the end of the financial year in which it was created.	Y

Contracts with suppliers		Statutory?
The process of calling for expressions of interest (<i>e.g.</i> expression of interest).	2 years after decision not to proceed with contract.	N
The process involved in the development and specification of a contract (<i>e.g.</i> tender specification).	Ordinary contracts- 6 years after terms of contract have expired. Contracts under seal – 12 years after terms of the contract have expired.	Y
The process involved in the issuing and return of a tender (<i>e.g.</i> opening notice, tender envelope).	1 year after the start of the contract.	N
Evaluation of tender (<i>e.g.</i> evaluation criteria).	Ordinary contracts- 6 years after terms of contract have expired. Contracts under seal – 12 years after terms of the contract have expired.	Y
Successful tender documents (<i>e.g.</i> tender documents, quotations).	Ordinary contracts- 6 years after terms of contract have expired. Contracts under seal – 12 years after terms of the contract have expired.	Y
Unsuccessful tender documents	1 year after the start of contract	N
The process in negotiation of a contract after the preferred tender is selected (<i>e.g.</i> clarification of contract, minutes).	1 year after the terms of the contract have expired .	N
The process of awarding of contract (<i>e.g.</i> signed contract).	Ordinary contracts- 6 years after terms of contract have expired. Contracts under seal – 12 years after terms of the contract have expired.	Y
Management and amendment of contract (<i>e.g.</i> minutes and papers of meetings, changes to requirements, variation forms, extension of contract, complaints, disputes on payment).	Ordinary contracts- 6 years after terms of contract have expired. Contracts under seal – 12 years after terms of the contract have expired.	Y

Property and land management		Statutory?
The process of insuring local authority officers, property, vehicles and equipment against negligence, loss or damage (<i>e.g.</i> insurance policies, correspondence).	7 years after the terms of the policy have expired.	N
The process that records insurance claims against the local authority or local authority officers (<i>e.g.</i> claims records, correspondence).	7 years after all obligations / entitlements are concluded.	N

Health and safety		Statutory?
Process to assess the level of risk.	3 years from last assessment.	Y
Process that records injuries (<i>e.g.</i> accident books).	3 years from closure for adults, 25 years for children.	Y

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