

DOCUMENT RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION POLICY

RATIONAL

A local council can accumulate a lot of documents over time and should have in place a system for filing current papers, storing those that need to be preserved and destroying those that are no longer required. Current papers are normally kept in files by subject in a filing cabinet. Where there are a large number of files an index should be maintained to facilitate the location of papers. This is particularly useful when there is a change of clerk. It is good practice to review the current files on an annual basis and remove those papers that are no longer required for current use. Papers so removed should be dealt with as follows:-

1. Retained on a permanent basis as they are important local records:

Minute Books, title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts, investments, receipt and payment accounts, income and expenditure accounts and allotment registers.

It is good practice to deposit these documents with the County Archive Service when they are no longer required for use on a regular basis by the local council. This also facilitates easy access by members of the public who may wish to inspect them. It also ensures that they are not lost or destroyed by accident when there is a change of clerk.

All documents archived at the County Archive Service should be recorded in the Archive Documents Register.

2. To be destroyed when they are over six years old:

Treasurer's books; cash books and petty cash books; wages and salaries books; receipts, invoices and cheques; VAT records; contracts for works (except where there are special reasons for preservation); financial statements and loan statements; stock and store-books and rental books.

These may all be destroyed as they will no longer be required for VAT purposes and the Limitation Act will preclude actions relating to these documents.

3. To be destroyed on expiration of twelve months from the completion of the audit of the last entry:

Counterfoil books; order books; agenda books; postage books; pay cards and time sheets; tenders for goods, etc.

4. Planning applications can be destroyed once decisions on them have been taken and the development completed. Past applications can be inspected at the Planning Authority's offices.
5. Documents that will be stored by a larger organisation can be destroyed after twelve months after the last period of business relating to the document.
6. All documents that are destroyed should be recorded in the Destroyed Documents Record. Documents for destruction should be shredded or burnt.