

DOWNSWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

DOCUMENT RETENTION SCHEME

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The council recognises the need to retain documentation for audit purposes, staff management, tax liabilities and the eventuality of legal disputes and proceedings.
- 1.2 In agreeing a document retention scheme, the council has addressed these needs, and taken into account its obligations under the Local Government Act 1972, the Audit Commission Act 1998, the Public Records Act 1958, the Data Protection Act 1998, the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998, the Limitation Act 1980, the Employment Rights Act 1996, the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, the Local Government (Records) Act 1962, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records Code 2002.

2. Retention of documents for legal purposes

- 2.1 Most legal proceedings are governed by the Limitation Act 1980. The 1980 Act provides that legal claims may not be commenced after a specified period. The specified period varies, depending on the type of claim in question. The table below sets out the limitation periods for the different categories of claim.

Category	Limitation Period
Negligence (and other torts)	6 years
Defamation	1 year
Contract	6 years
Leases	12 years
Sums recoverable by statute	6 years
Personal Injury	3 years
To recover land	12 years
Rent	6 years
Breach of trust	None

- 2.2 Some types of legal proceedings may fall into two or more categories. In these circumstances, the documentation should be kept for the longest of the differing limitation periods.
- 2.3 As there is no limitation period in respect of trusts, the council will never destroy trust deeds and schemes and other similar documentation.
- 2.4 Some limitation periods can be extended. Examples include:
- where individuals first become aware of damage caused at a later date (e.g. in the case of personal injury);
 - where damage is latent (e.g. to a building);
 - where a person suffers from a mental incapacity;
 - where there has been a mistake or where one party has defrauded another or concealed relevant facts.

2.5 In such circumstances, the council will weigh up (i) the costs of storing relevant documents and (ii) the risks of:

- claims being made;
- the value of the claims; and
- the inability to defend any claims made should relevant documents be destroyed.

3. Document retention schedule

3.1 The council has agreed a minimum document retention schedule, based on the obligations under the previously named acts, codes, orders and regulations.

DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
Minute books	Indefinite	Archived
Scale of fees and charges	6 years	Management
Receipt and payments account(s)	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books of all kinds, including ledgers	6 years	VAT
Bank statements, including savings/deposit accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit
Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
Quotations and tenders	6 years after completion of contract	Limitation Act 1980
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980
VAT records, P60s and P45s	6 years	VAT, Tax
Petty cash, postage and telephone books	6 years	Tax, VAT, Limitation Act 1980
Timesheets	Last completed audit year	Audit
Wages books	12 years	Superannuation
Insurance policies	While valid	Management
Certificates for insurance against liability for employees	40 years from date on which the insurance commenced or was renewed	Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998, Management
Investments	Indefinite	Audit, Management
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit, Management
Members allowances register	N/A	Tax, Limitation Act 1980
Correspondence and emails	2 years, unless there is a specific need to retain longer	Limitation Act 1980
Accident book	3 years	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Act 2013
Annual accounts and asset registers	Indefinite	Archive
Pension contribution records	6 years	Pensions Act 2014
Personnel records, including SSP and maternity records	6 years	Limitations Act 1980

Freedom of Information Requests	1 year	Reviewed annually with documents either destroyed or archived
Job applications	Until the vacancy has been satisfactorily filled	Management
Previous versions of policies, standing orders, schemes of delegation	3 years	Data Protection Act 1998

3.2 The need to retain any documents not included in the above schedule should be considered on an individual basis. As a guide, and in the absence of any prevailing act, code, order or regulation to the contrary, documents may be destroyed if they are no longer of use or relevant. If in any doubt, advice should be sought from the Clerk.