Halton Holegate with Halton Fenside Parish Council

Document and Records Retention Policy

July 2026

Contents

1. Introduction

Halton Holegate Parish Council is obliged to maintain and retain documentation for a number of purposes, including audit, tax liabilities and in the event of legal disputes and proceedings and 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 Council. Subject to those reasons, papers and records may be destroyed if they are no longer of use or relevance.

The Freedom of Information Act (2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) require public bodies to manage information and its access in particular ways.

2. Storing and Accessing Data

The Council's policy on record management will enable the Council to:

- Comply with the relevant legislation and codes of practice;
- Create authentic, reliable and useable records;
- Support the Council's business functions, including asset management;
- Document the Council's decisions and activities;
- Reduce storage costs;
- Facilitate the paperless Office;
- Enable the efficient and accurate retrieval of information; and
- Dispose correctly of records no longer required.

This Policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by the Council in the course of carrying out its functions. Records are defined as all those documents which facilitate the business carried out by the Council and which are thereafter retained (for a set period) to provide evidence of its transactions or activities. These records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically. A small percentage of the Council records may be selected for permanent preservation as part of the Council's archives and for historical research.

The Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record management systems in accordance with the regulatory environment. The Clerk has overall responsibility for this Policy. The person responsible for records management 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.

3. Staff Responsibility

Individual staff and employees must ensure that records for which they are responsible are accurate and are maintained and disposed of in accordance with the Council's records management guidelines. All staff are obliged to:

- Keep accurate records in an organised and accessible form;
- Keep records for as long as necessary;
- Document actions and decisions in records;
- Document reasons for the disposal of records; and
- Ensure all records created by the Council are relevant, complete and accurate, without any unsubstantiated or subjective commentary, and protected against unauthorised addition, deletion, alternation, use or concealment.

4. Periods of Retention

The minimum periods for which various types of records must be kept are set out in the Retention Schedule Annex A. These reflect statutory requirements, codes of practice and recommendations published by professional and other bodies. In the absence of any guidance, it will be the responsibility of the Clerk to determine a suitable retention period.

At the end of the retention period, the record must be assessed to determine whether it should be retained for a further period. This is particularly relevant where the record has been the subject of a request for access to information under the DPA or FOIA. This is the case even where access to information has been refused, as the record should be retained until the end of the period in which an appeal can be lodged or the appeals procedure exhausted.

5. Is Retention required to fulfil Statutory Obligations or other Regulatory Obligations?

Specific legislation setting out mandatory retention periods for documentation held by Local Government is very limited, but includes the following:

- Tax Legislation - minimum retention periods for certain financial information are stipulated by the VAT Act 1994 and the Taxes Management Act 1970.;
- Statutory Registers - Various Local Government statues require registers to be kept for a variety of functions;
- The Audit Commission Act 1998 - Provides auditors with a right of access to every document relating to the Council that appears necessary for the purposes of carrying out the Auditor’s function under the Act; and
- The Local government Act 1972, Part VA - Governs public access to certain documents relating to Council and Committee Meetings.

6. Record Disposal

Records designated for disposal must be securely disposed of to preserve confidentiality, preferably by shredding. No record is to be disposed of without the approval of the Clerk, reasons must be given for disposal.

7. Retention Schedule

ANNEX A

DOCUMENT	**MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD**	**REASON**
MINUTES		
Minutes of Council Meetings	Indefinite	Archive
Minutes of Committee Meetings	Indefinite	Archive
EMPLOYMENT		
Staff Employment Contracts	6 years after ceasing employment	Management
Staff References	6 years after ceasing employment	Management
Application Forms (Interviewed – unsuccessful)	6 months	Management
Application Forms (Interviewed – successful)	6 years after ceasing employment	Management
Disciplinary Files	6 years after ceasing employment	Management
Staff Appraisals	6 years after ceasing employment	Management
Staff Payroll Information	3 years	Management
Flexi Time Sheets	2 years	Audit
FINANCE		
Staff Payroll Records	3 years	HMRC
Scales of Fees and Charges	6 years	Management
Receipt and Payment Accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt Books of all kinds	6 years	VAT
Bank Statements	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	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Paid Invoices	6 years	VAT
Paid Cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
VAT Records	6 years	VAT
Petty Cash and Postage	6 years	Audit, Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Investments	Indefinite	Audit, Management
INSURANCE		
Insurance Policies	6 years after policy ends	Management
Certificates for Insurance against liabilities for Employees	6 years after policy ends	Management
Certificates for Public Liability	6 years after policy ends	Management

Insurance Claim Records	6 years after policy ends	Management
HEALTH AND SAFETY		
Accident Books	3 years from date of last entry	Statutory
Risk Assessments	3 years	Management
GENERAL MANAGEMENT		
Councillors Contact Details	Duration of Membership	Management
Title Deeds, Leases and Agreements	Indefinite	Audit, Management, Limitation Act 1980
Contracts	6 years	Limitation Act 1980
Correspondence	6 years or at the Clerk's Discretion	Management
Contracts	6 years	Limitation Act 1980
Email Messages	At end of useful life	Management
Consent Forms	5 years	Management
GDPR Security Compliance Form	Duration of Membership	Management