**EAST COTTINGWITH PARISH COUNCIL**

**RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**This Records Management Policy was adopted by East Cottingwith Parish Council, at a meeting held on Thursday 10th January 2019, and recorded in the Minutes of that meeting.**

1. **CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF RECORDS**

Under Section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Code of practice on the management of records), it is recommended that the Council should adopt the following practice in respect of the **retention, management and disposal of the Council’s documents and records.**

Good records and information management benefits those requesting information because it provides some assurance that the information provided will be complete and reliable. It benefits those holding the requested information because it enables them to locate and retrieve it easily within the statutory timescales or to explain why it is not held. It also supports control and delivery of information promised in the Council’s Publication Scheme or required to be published by the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (the EIR) and in accordance with Standing Orders.

1. **GOOD PRACTICE IN RECORDS MANAGEMENT IS MADE UP OF A NUMBER OF KEY ELEMENTS**
2. The Council should have in place a formal records management policy, with organisational arrangements in place to support that policy.
3. The Council should ensure it keeps the records it needs for business, regulatory, legal and accountability purposes.
4. Records should be kept in systems that enable the records to be stored and retrieved as necessary.
5. The Council should know what records it holds, where they are and that they remain usable for as long as they are required (i.e. that they can be retrieved, used and relied upon).
6. Records should be stored securely, with access to them controlled.
7. The Council should define how long it needs to keep particular records, should dispose of them when they are no longer needed and should be able to explain why records are no longer held (i.e. they have been disposed of or transferred to a third party).
8. Records shared with other bodies or held on their behalf by other bodies should be managed in accordance with the FOIA Code of Practice.
9. The Council should monitor compliance with the FOIA Code of Practice and assess the overall effectiveness of the records management policy.
10. The policy should be kept up-to-date so that it reflects the current needs of the Council, by reviewing it at agreed intervals, e.g. every year or after major organisational or technological changes.
11. The Council should publish the policy so that members of the public can see the basis on which it manages its records.
12. **REQUESTS MADE UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS (EIR)**

As a matter of good practice, the Information Commissioner’s Office recommends that any requested information should be kept for at least 6 months after the date of the last communication about the request, to allow appeals to the Information Commissioner (Source: ICO Practical Guidance: Destruction of Requested Information).

1. **ANONYMOUS COMMUNICATIONS**

Any communication received anonymously will be reported to the Council and action taken, if appropriate. Any anonymous letter or e-mail received will then be destroyed.

1. **PAPER FILING AND OTHER SYSTEMS**
2. Records titles used on the Council’s paper filing system should reflect their specific nature and contents, so as to facilitate retrieval.
3. Records that are no longer required for frequent reference, but need to be retained indefinitely, should be ‘archived’ to a secure location after two years; they will be kept labelled and stored in an orderly manner.
4. Records to be removed from the Council’s website after four years, e.g. Minutes (which will still be held electronically and in hard copy archived files).
5. The Council’s records system is documented to facilitate officer training, maintenance of the system and reconstruction in the event of an emergency. It also helps the Clerk and the Council to know the whereabouts and movement of files, at all times.
6. Daily backups are taken of all data on the Clerk’s laptop, with a further backup of all system files/folders taken regularly. Backups are taken on an external flash-drive, which is kept in a secure location at the Clerk’s home address.
7. All Agenda Supporting Documents (ASD) are now available electronically, as are all relevant/key emails. As these are accessible and backed up regularly, hard copies do not need to be retained.
8. **DISPOSAL OF RECORDS**
9. In general, records should be kept for as long as they are needed by the Council, for reference or accountability purposes, to comply with regulatory requirements or to protect legal and other rights and interests.
10. Destruction at the end of the period ensures that office and computer space are not used and costs not incurred in maintaining records that are no longer required. Any personal data (e.g. CVs submitted for job vacancies) should only be kept for as long as it is needed.
11. Once the minimum retention period has passed, records should be destroyed in a rolling programme, taking into account security of the information contained in the records and confidentiality needs.
12. The Clerk will be responsible for all disposals and destruction of records, in as secure a manner as required by the level of confidentiality. Digital records will be over-written to ensure that the data is destroyed completely.
13. Details of the destruction of records will be kept by the Clerk, as part of the audit trail.
14. If any records are not included in the retention and disposal schedule, the Clerk will be responsible for reviewing the records and deciding whether they can be destroyed or archived for indefinite preservation. Such decisions should be documented and kept to provide evidence of which records have been identified for destruction, when the decision was made, and the reasons for the decision, where this is not apparent from the overall policy.
15. Ephemeral material should be disposed of on a routine basis, e.g. print-outs of electronic documents should not be kept after the meeting for which they were printed.
16. Trivial emails should be deleted immediately after being read.
17. Keeping multiple or personal copies of documents should be discouraged.
18. **RETENTION AND DISPOSAL SCHEDULE**
19. Retention and disposal of Council documents/records shall be in accordance with the attached schedule.

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| **Document**  **Minutes of the Council**  Agendas and supporting papers  Annual Parish Meeting  (meeting of the electorate)  **Note:** Informal records of the Council, in connection with the preparation of the Minutes, to be destroyed following completion of the relevant Minutes  **Annual Reports:**  **Policies:**  **Financial Records:**  Assets  Audit and Annual Returns  Budget  Precept demands  Grant applications  Tenancies  Receipts and payments accounts (Cash Book)  Receipt books  Bank statements  Bank paying-in books  Cheque book stubs  Quotations and tenders  Paid invoices  VAT Returns  Wages/pensions records  PAYE/NI contributions  Insurance policies  Insurance claims  Investments  Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts  Members’ Interests  Members’ Code of Conduct  matters | **Minimum retention period**  Indefinite  18 months  Indefinite  Indefinite  6 years or as long as relevant  Indefinite  Indefinite  Indefinite  Indefinite  6 years  6 years  Indefinite  6 years  Last completed audit year  Last completed audit year  Last completed audit year  12 years  6 years  6 years  12 years  3 years from end of year to which records relate  While valid  6 years  Indefinite  Indefinite  Duration of service  Duration of service | R**eason**  Archive  Admin purposes  Archive  Archive  Archive  Audit, Management  Archive  Archive  Archive  Audit  Audit  Archive  VAT  Audit  Audi  Audit  Statute of Limitations  VAT  VAT  Superannuation  Audit  Management  Audit, Management  Audit, Management  Audit, Management  Management  Management, Subject Access  Requests |
| **Document**  **Human Resources:**  Personnel papers – current and former employees  Staff Development Review  Job applications – vacancies and speculative  **Journals:**  Local Council Review; ERNLLCA publications; NALC Legal Topics  All other journals  I**nformation from other Bodies:**  Miscellaneous papers  **Planning:**  Planning applications, application details, decision notices and appeals  Statutory documents, development plans and consultations  **General Correspondence:**  Paper copies and/or emails  Traffic Regulation Orders  (TROs) etc. | **Minimum retention period**  Indefinite:  Paper/electronic copies -stored securely  6 years  6 months or as long as relevant  12 months or as long as relevant  6 months  As long as relevant  Computerised records –  As long as relevant  As long as relevant  As long as relevant | **Reason**  Management  Management  Admin purposes  Reference  Reference  Reference  Retained on flash-drive and ERYC’s website and Planning Portal  Reference  Admin purposes/Reference |