

Title:	Retention Policy
Author:	Cllr Brian Flynn
Date Adopted:	4/3/2026
Version No:	v1.0
Last Reviewed:	4/3/2026
Next Review:	3 years

OSPRINGE PARISH COUNCIL: DOCUMENT RETENTION AND DISPOSAL POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy sets out Ospringe Parish Council's approach to the retention, archiving, and secure disposal of documents and records. It should be read and applied in conjunction with other Council policies, in particular the Data Protection Policy.

The Council recognises its obligations under:

- The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018
- The Local Government Act 1972 and related legislation
- The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Management of Records

The aim is to ensure that documents are:

- Retained for the appropriate statutory or operational period.
- Accessible when required.
- Securely disposed of when no longer needed.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all records held in any format (paper, electronic, audio, photographic) that are created, received, and maintained by the Council.

It covers:

- Minutes, agendas, reports
- Policies, correspondence, and contracts
- Financial, personnel, and administrative records
- Emails and digital files

3. Principles

- **Accountability:** Documents and records must be retained to demonstrate transparency and lawful decision-making. Documents and records must also be retained to ensure that information which might reasonably be required in the future

is preserved.

- Security: Personal and confidential information must be protected during storage and disposal.
- Proportionality: Records should be kept for no longer than necessary. Where two or more retention periods may apply to the same record, the longer period should be followed.
- Consistency: Staff, councillors, and contractors must follow the same procedures.

4. Correspondence

If related to audit matters, correspondence should be kept for the appropriate period specified in the Retention Schedule. In planning matters, correspondence should be retained for the same period as suggested for other planning papers. For other correspondence (unless relating to staff), no firm guidelines can be laid down, but must be retained to ensure that information which might reasonably be required in the future is preserved..

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- Parish Clerk: Responsible for managing records, implementing this policy, and maintaining the Retention Schedule.
- Chairman and Councillors: Ensure decisions about record retention and disposal are in line with policy.
- All staff and volunteers: Comply with procedures for handling and disposing of records.

6. Retention of Documents for Legal Purposes

- The below table lists the limitation periods of time where legal claims may be brought under the Limitation Act 1980 (as amended). The 1980 Act provides that legal claims may not be commenced after a specified period.

Category	Limitation Period
Negligence (and other 'Torts')	16 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

Where the limitation periods are longer than other periods attached in the Retention Schedule below, the documentation should be kept for the longer specified period.

7. Retention Schedule

Following is a table indicating the appropriate minimum retention periods for documents. Documents should be retained for audit, staff management, tax liabilities and the eventuality of legal disputes and legal proceedings. Documents and records must also be retained to ensure that information which might reasonably be required in the future is preserved.

Document	Minimum retention period	Reason
Minute books	Indefinite	Archive
Scales of fees and charges	Six years	Management
Receipt and payment account(s)	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books of all kinds	Six years	VAT
Bank statements, including deposit/savings 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	Six years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Paid invoices	Six years	VAT
Paid cheques	Six years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
VAT records	Six years generally but 20 years for VAT on rents	VAT
Petty cash, postage, and telephone books	Six years	Tax, VAT, and Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Timesheets	Three years (or last completed audit year)	Audit (requirement) and personal injury (best practice)
Wages books	12 years	Superannuation
Insurance policies	As long as a claim can be made under it. A	Management and legal proceedings

	record of all insurance company names and policy numbers should be kept indefinitely.	
Certificates for Insurance against liability for employees	Indefinitely	Future claims
Investments	Indefinite	Audit and management
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit and management
Members allowances register	Six years	Tax and Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
For halls, centre, and recreation grounds:		
Application to hire, lettings, diaries, copies of bills to hire, record of tickets issued	Six years	VAT
For allotments:		
Register of allotment holders and rents, allotment agreements, and plans	Indefinite	Audit and management

8. Disposal of Records and Audit

- Paper Records: To be shredded or placed in confidential waste.
- Electronic Records: To be permanently deleted, with backups also removed.
- Archiving: Records with historical or legal significance (e.g., signed minutes) should be offered for deposit with the Kent Archives Service or retained securely by the Council. The Parish Clerk will maintain a log of disposed records for accountability.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.