



DOCUMENT RETENTION POLICY

Re-Adopted: 5th May 2026

Review Date: May 2027

1. Policy Statement

Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council recognises that the efficient management of its records is necessary to comply with legal and regulatory obligations and to support the effective management of the Council.

This policy sets out the Council's approach to the retention, storage and disposal of records, ensuring compliance with the **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**, the **Data Protection Act 2018**, the **Freedom of Information Act 2000**, and other relevant legislation.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all records created, received, or maintained by the Council, in whatever format, including paper documents, electronic files, emails, photographs, and audio recordings.

A proportion of records will be selected for permanent preservation as part of the Council's archive and for historical research.

3. Responsibilities

The Council has overall responsibility for ensuring that records are managed in accordance with this policy and relevant legislation.

The **Parish Clerk** is responsible for:

- Day-to-day records management
- Ensuring compliance with retention periods
- Secure storage and disposal of records
- Maintaining and reviewing this policy

All Councillors and staff are responsible for ensuring that records they create or handle are managed in accordance with this policy and the Council's Data Protection and Information Governance policies.

4. Relationship with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Information and Data Protection Policy
- General Privacy Notice
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Internal Controls Policy
- Financial Regulations

Retention and disposal decisions must be consistent with these policies.

5. Retention Principles

The Council will:

- Retain records only for as long as necessary to fulfil their purpose or to meet legal requirements
- Ensure records are accurate, up to date, and securely stored
- Dispose of records securely when no longer required
- Maintain records in a manner that supports transparency and accountability

Retention periods are determined by legal, regulatory, and operational requirements and are based on guidance from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), including Legal Topic Note LTN40.

6. Retention Schedule

The following table sets out the minimum retention periods for key Council records:

Document	Minimum Retention Period	Reason
Minute books	Indefinite	Archive / historical record
Asset register	Indefinite	Management
Scales of fees and charges	6 years	Management
Receipt and payment accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books	6 years	VAT
Bank statements	6 years	Audit / financial
Paying-in books	6 years	Audit
Cheque stubs	6 years	Audit
Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
VAT records	6 years	VAT
Petty cash records	6 years	VAT / Limitation Act
Insurance policies	While valid	Management
Employers' liability insurance	40 years	Statutory requirement

Investments	Indefinite	Audit / management
Contracts, leases, agreements	Indefinite	Audit / legal
Members' allowances register	6 years	Tax / audit
Local plans	Until obsolete	Management
Newsletters	Indefinite	Archive
Routine correspondence/emails	6 months after completion	Management
Councillor records	Term of office + 1 year	Management
Employee records	Employment + 6 years	Management

Where there is any conflict between this schedule and legal requirements, the legal requirement shall take precedence.

7. Disposal of Records

When records reach the end of their retention period, they shall be disposed of securely:

- Paper records: shredded or securely destroyed
- Electronic records: permanently deleted from all systems, including backups where appropriate

A record of disposal may be kept where appropriate.

8. Data Protection Compliance

All records containing personal data shall be handled in accordance with **UK GDPR** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

The Council will ensure that:

- Personal data is not retained longer than necessary
- Data is securely deleted when no longer required
- Retention decisions align with the Council's Privacy Notice

9. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed at least annually to ensure it remains up to date with legislation, guidance, and Council practices.