**Bradwell with Pattiswick Parish Council**

**Retention of Documents**

**and Records Policy**

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**Contents**

[SCOPE OF THIS POLICY 3](#_Toc439234869)

[Responsibilities 3](#_Toc439234870)

[Retention Schedule 3](#_Toc439234871)

[Disposal 5](#_Toc439234872)

The Parish Council 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 Bradwell with Pattiswick Parish Council.

This document provides the policy framework through which this effective management can be achieved and audited. It covers:

* Scope
* Responsibilities
* Retention Schedule

## SCOPE OF THIS POLICY

This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by the Parish Council in the course of carrying out its functions.

Definition of “records”

Records are defined as all those documents, including financial information, that facilitate the business carried out by the Parish Council and which are thereafter retained (for a set period) to provide evidence of its transactions and activities. These records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically. All documents and files that relate to the business of the Parish Council whether received electronically or in hard copy are deemed to be the property of the Parish Council.

Some Parish Council records may be selected and deposited with the Essex Records Office for permanent preservation as part of the Council’s archives and for historical research.

## Responsibilities

The Parish Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record management systems in accordance with the regulatory environment. The person with overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy is the Clerk to the Parish Council, who is required to manage the Council’s records in such a way as to promote compliance with this policy so that information can be retrieved easily, appropriately and in a timely manner.

Parish Councillors are required to pass all documents and records whether received electronically or in hard copy to the Parish Clerk for retention in accordance with this policy and in the event of a Parish Councillor resigning or failing to retain their post as a result of an election, it is the Parish Councillor’s responsibility to ensure anything that remains within their possession but is related to the business of the Parish Council is passed to the Parish Clerk within 10 working days of ceasing to hold the position of a Parish Councillor.

## Retention Schedule

The retention schedule refers to any record, regardless of storage method: hardcopy or electronically. A back-up copy of all electronic files and documents will be created weekly and stored securely.

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| **Document/file** | **Minimum retention** | **Reason** |
| Advertising materials for display on noticeboards | For as long as it is useful or relevant | Information |
| Annual Accounts | Indefinite | Parish Archives |
| Annual Return | Indefinite | Parish Archives |
| Assets Register | Indefinite | Audit/Parish Archives (after 10 years) |
| Bank statements | 7 years | Audit/management |
| Certificate of Employer’s Liability | 40 years | Audit/legal |
| Certificate of Public Liability | 40 years | Audit/legal |
| Cheque book stubs | 24 months from last completed audit | Audit/Management |
| Complaints | 3 years from clearance | Management |
| Correspondence | 2 years | Management |
| Correspondence relating to staff | Term of employment plus 7 years | Management |
| Deeds, leases, agreements and contracts | Indefinite | Audit/Parish Archives (5 years after cessation of document period) |
| Documents for legal purposes | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Category** | **Limitation period** | | Breach of Trust | None | | Contract | 6 years | | Defamation | 1 year | | Leases | 12 years | | Negligence | 6 years | | Personal injury | 3 years | | Rent | 6 years | | Sums recoverable by statute | 6 years | | To recover land | 12 years | | Legal |
| Documents, plans, maps or articles having local or historical interest | For as long as they are useful | Archives  (Essex Records Office will advise on what should/could be retained in their archives.) |
| E-mails not covered above | 6 months | Management |
| General information | 6 months | Management |
| Insurance policies | Whilst valid plus 1 year or for as long as it is possible for a claim to be made under them | Audit/management |
| Magazines and journals published by or on behalf of the Parish Council | For as long as they are useful | (The Legal Deposits Libraries Act 2003 requires local councils that have published works n print (including pamphlet, magazines, newspapers, map, plan, chart or table) to deliver a copy to the British Library Board which manages and controls the British Library. |
| Members’ and employees’ allowances and expenses | 7 years | Audit/tax/management |
| Minute books/files | Indefinite | Parish Archives |
| Newsletters – legal briefings and advisory notices | 5 years | Management |
| Newsletters, general | For as long as relevant or useful | Management |
| Paid invoices | 7 years | Audit/VAT |
| Paying in book stubs | 24 months from last completed audit | Audit/management |
| Planning application correspondence received from residents | 2 years | Management |
| Planning applications | All planning applications and relevant documentation and decision notices are retained by and available from Braintree District Council | |
| Quotations and tenders | 7 years | Audit |
| Receipt and payment accounts (financial statements) | Indefinite | Parish Archives |
| Salary records | 7 years | Audit |
| Structure Plans, Parish Plans and similar documents | For as long as they are in force + 2 years | Management |
| Tax and NI records, including Pension | 7 years | Audit |
| Training records | Term of office or period of employment + 6 months | Management |
| Trust documents | Indefinite | Audit/Parish Archives (after 25 years) |
| VAT records | 7 years | Audit/VAT |

## Disposal

Electronic documentation and e-mails may be deleted by Councillors **only** when they are confident that a copy has been passed to or is already held by the Parish Clerk. Appropriate checks must be carried out in the event of any uncertainty. Other records may be disposed of in accordance with the retention schedule and only when the minimum retention period has expired.

In the case of any doubt, e–mails and attached documentation should be passed to the Parish Clerk for saving within Parish Council records or disposal in accordance with the retention schedule.

All records and documents held by a Councillor in hardcopy and no longer required must be shredded and disposed of securely. Any record thought to have business value should be passed to the Parish Clerk for retention or disposal as appropriate.

The Parish Clerk may delete electronic documentation and e-mails in accordance with the retention schedule and only when the minimum retention period has expired. All attachments must be retained according to the retention schedule and will determine whether the e-mail may be deleted. In all cases the minimum retention period of the attachment will take precedence over the content of the e-mail.

Any e-mails, attachments or documents that form part of an on-going enquiry or legal procedure must be retained until the completion of that action and may be disposed of only when that enquiry or legal procedure has been completed in accordance with the minimum retention period only.