Holme Low Parish Council

Retention of Documents Policy

1. Introduction

The Parish Council recognises that the efficient management of its records is essential to the proper conduct of its business, compliance with legal and regulatory obligations, and the maintenance of public confidence. Effective records management supports transparency, accountability, and good governance.

This policy sets out the framework by which the Parish Council will manage, retain, and dispose of its records in accordance with statutory requirements, best practice, and Assertion 10 of the Practitioner's Guide 2025.

2. Scope of the Policy

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

Records include all documents and information, whether held in paper or electronic form, that facilitate the business of the Council and provide evidence of its decisions, transactions, or activities. A proportion of records will be identified for permanent preservation as part of the Council's archives and for historical or research purposes.

3. Responsibilities

The Parish Council has a corporate responsibility to ensure that records are managed in accordance with this policy and the relevant legislative framework.

The Clerk to the Parish Council has overall responsibility for:

- Implementing this policy;
- Maintaining appropriate record-keeping systems;
- Ensuring records are retained, stored, and disposed of correctly;
- Ensuring records can be retrieved easily, appropriately, and in a timely manner.

The Clerk will review this policy and the retention schedule at least every three years, or sooner if legislative or operational changes require it, and will report any recommended amendments to the Parish Council.

4. Data Protection and Confidentiality

The retention and disposal of records will be carried out in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Personal data will be:

- Collected only for lawful purposes;
- Retained only for as long as necessary for those purposes;

- Stored securely; and
- Disposed of securely and lawfully at the end of the retention period.

5. Retention Schedule

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Parish Council is required to maintain a retention schedule listing the types of records it creates and the length of time they are retained.

The retention schedule:

- Applies regardless of the format in which records are held;
- Specifies minimum retention periods;
- Identifies records that are to be retained permanently as part of the Council's archive.

The Clerk will manage record-keeping systems in accordance with the retention schedule and take account of retention requirements when creating new systems or processes.

6. Disposal of Records

Records will be disposed of when they reach the end of their retention period and are no longer required for administrative, legal, financial, or audit purposes.

Disposal will be carried out as follows:

- **Paper records** containing confidential or personal data will be cross-shredded or disposed of via a secure waste contractor.
- **Electronic records** will be permanently deleted and, where appropriate, removed from backups and storage systems.
- **Records identified for permanent preservation** will be transferred to the Council's archive arrangements.

No records will be destroyed if they are:

- Subject to an ongoing or anticipated audit;
- Required for a complaint, investigation, insurance claim, or legal proceedings;
- Requested under the Freedom of Information Act or data protection legislation.

A destruction log will be maintained, recording the type of record destroyed, the date of destruction, and the authority for disposal. This log will be retained for audit purposes.

7. Retention of Documents Schedule

Document	Minimum Retention	Reason
Minute Books	Permanent	Archive
Annual Accounts	Permanent	Archive
Annual Return	Permanent	Archive
Bank Statements	Last completed audit year	Audit/management

Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit/management
Paying in books	Last completed audit year	Audit/management
Quotations	7 years	Audit
Paid invoices	7 years	Audit/VAT
VAT records	7 years	Audit/VAT
Petty cash	7 years	Audit/VAT
Salary records	12 years	Superannuation
Tax & NI records	7 years	Audit
Personal data of employees	6 years after employment terminates	In accordance with statutory or best practice guidance
Recruitment paperwork	1 year for all except successful candidate	In accordance with statutory or best practice guidance
Insurance policies	Whilst valid	Audit
Employers' Liability Certificates	40 years	Legal requirement
Public Liability Certificates	40 years	Legal requirement
Insurance claim records	7 years after all obligations are concluded	Management
Risk Assessments	12 years	Statute of Limitations
Accident Books/reports	3 years or if a child/young adult, until that person reaches 21	RIDDOR
Asset register	Permanent	Audit
Deeds, leases	Permanent	Audit
Declarations of Acceptance	Term of office +1 year	Management
Member's register of interests	Term of office + 1 year	Management
Formal Complaints	2 years after closure	Management
Freedom of Information requests	7 years	Management
Adopted Council Policy Documents	Permanent (archive when superceded)	Management
General information	3 months	Management

Routine correspondence & emails	6 months	Management
Local/historical information – including records of local interest gifted to the Council	Permanent	Archive

8. Planning Applications

Planning applications and decision notices are available from the principal authority. The Parish Council is not required to retain duplicate copies.

Parish Council recommendations and decisions relating to planning applications are recorded in the Council's minutes and are retained permanently. Correspondence relating to planning applications will be retained in accordance with this policy and retention schedule.