

Parish Council documents

Report by the Clerk to Fringford Parish Council – meeting on 19th February 2018.

In May 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation come into effect, and the Parish Council will have specific duties with regard to processing the data of individuals. Part of the recommendations for implementing these changes is that the first action the Council undertakes is an audit of the information it currently holds.

I have noted that on 19th June 2017 the Parish Council agreed its Data Protection Policy (which also covered the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental information regulations) , in which the Council agreed that “Data is not kept longer than it is needed “. An initial inspection of documents currently held by the Parish Council suggests that much documentation that is currently retained is old and has probably been retained by chance. Currently , among other things, there are some old Cherwell District Council local plan policies, some handwritten draft minutes (?) - considerably water damaged- and some invoices to the Parish Council from the 1970s. Should the Parish Council currently receive a Data Protection, Freedom of Information or Environmental Information request it may be necessary to sift through all these documents before providing a response. Best practice recommendations (both in respect of the existing legislation and in respect of the GDPR) is that , to support the policy referred to above the Parish Council agrees a retention schedule which clarifies how its documentation will be managed going forward –(a copy of a draft retention Schedule is attached at Appendix A to this report).

There remains the issue of management of the documents currently held by the Parish Council. The Oxfordshire Records Office will provide safe storage in an optimum environment, and facilities for members of the public to have access to documents in an appropriate manner, but the only documents it will accept are those detailed in their guidance note (attached at Appendix B to this report). A request to the Record Office to store documentation will not reduce the majority of the paperwork currently stored by the Parish Council, and it does seem to me that there is a need to the current records to be sifted, as, while retention by the Parish Council does not accord with current guidance on data compliance, they may contain some information that is historically interesting to the Village. The Parish Council may therefore consider passing control of all the documents other than those to be retained in accordance with the retention Schedule to the Village History Society with a request that they sift the existing collection and retain any that are perceived to be of historical interest to the village. If this route is acceptable, an option at the end of the sifting exercise would be for the Parish Council to then scan documents of historical interest and make them publically available via the Council’s web site.

Recommendations:-

A. The Parish Council agrees to adopt the Document Retention Schedule attached in Appendix A to this report

B. The Parish Council asks the village History Society to sift documents other than those referred to in the Retention Schedule, and advises the Parish Council on the future management of these documents.

C. The Parish Council passes to the Oxfordshire County record office the documents the Record Office is prepared to accept on the basis that the Record Office will provide an expert resource to maintain documents in their optimum state, and is also organised such that supervised public access can be made available.

Appendix A

Fringford Parish Council

Retention of Documents and Records

This policy details the minimum retention time required for council documents before disposal in order for the council to comply with the Council's Freedom of Information Act 2000 Publication Scheme. Where variable times are indicated the Council will review storage after the minimum period has elapsed.

Document	Minimum Period	Reason
MINUTES		
Approved minutes	Indefinite	Archive
Draft/rough/notes of minutes taken at meetings	Until minutes are approved	Management
FINANCE		
Receipt and Payment Accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
VAT records	6 years	VAT
Bank Statements	Last completed audit year	Audit
Paying in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
Cheque stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
Scales of fees and charges	5 years	Management
Members allowances register	6 years	Tax, Statute of Limitations
INSURANCE		
Insurance policies	2 years	Management
Certificates of Employers' Liability Insurance	40 years	Limitation period
OTHER		
Quotations and tenders	12 years /indefinite	Statute of Limitations
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit, Management
Routine correspondence, papers & emails	Retain as long as useful	
Notes from meetings	Until minutes are confirmed	Minutes are signed

Appendix B

Oxfordshire History Centre: Guidelines for parish councils on retention and deposit of records

This guidance is for parish clerks and other officers wishing to transfer their council's archives to Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC) for long-term preservation of and general access to the documents. It assumes that the records under consideration are no longer required by the parish council for legal or administrative purposes.

Due to factors of available storage space and staff time, documents in the schedule marked 'destroy' should be disposed of by the parish council. Material earmarked for deposit at the History Centre should be box-listed prior to being brought in, so that staff are aware of the potential quantity and types. The parish council retains ownership of the records; any items which following appraisal by OHC staff are deemed unsuitable for permanent preservation will be offered back to the council or destroyed securely, depending on what was agreed at time of deposit.

For any records not covered by the schedule below or for any material held in digital form, please ask History Centre staff for specific advice.

Type of record	Action	Notes
Minutes of council meetings (signed)	Transfer to OHC for permanent preservation	
Draft minutes	Destroy	
Reports and other documents circulated with agendas	Destroy	Unless copies are not included with signed minutes, in which case transfer to OHC for appraisal
Councillors' declarations of office	Destroy	
Nomination forms for elections to council	Destroy	
Registers of electors	Destroy	Already held by OHC
Byelaws and orders	Transfer to OHC for permanent preservation	
Policy documents	Transfer to OHC for appraisal	
Title deeds and leases	Transfer to OHC for	

	appraisal	
Property registers and terriers	Transfer to OHC for permanent preservation	
Maps and plans of council property	Transfer to OHC for appraisal	
Significant correspondence and related papers on local issues & projects	Transfer to OHC for appraisal	
Routine correspondence	Destroy	
Planning applications	Destroy	Copies held by District Councils
Press-cuttings books	Transfer to OHC for appraisal	
Precept books	Destroy	
Receipt and payment books	Transfer to OHC for permanent preservation	
Cash/petty cash books	Destroy	
Receipts and vouchers	Destroy	
Cheque book stubs	Destroy	
Accounts	Destroy	Unless receipt and payment books do not survive; in which case transfer to OHC for appraisal
Bank statements	Destroy	
Records dated pre-1894, now in the custody of the parish council	Transfer to OHC for appraisal	
Photographs	Transfer to OHC for appraisal	
Insurance policies	Destroy	

Contact details:

Oxfordshire History Centre

St Luke's Church

Cowley

Oxford OX4 2HT
tel. 01865 398200

e-mail: oxhist@oxfordshire.gov.uk