



Records Retention & Disposal Schedule

The schedule sets minimum periods. A record must be kept longer where it is subject to a legal hold, active audit, complaint, insurance claim, safeguarding concern, information request, investigation, litigation, grant condition or continuing operational need.

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1. Purpose and status

This policy explains how Stalham Town Council will retain, review, archive and securely dispose of the records it creates or receives. It applies to councillors, employees, volunteers and contractors handling Council information, regardless of whether the record is held on paper, in email, on a shared drive, in a line-of-business system, on a mobile device, in cloud storage or by a service provider.

The schedule supports the Council's duties under UK data protection law, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the statutory Code of Practice on records management issued under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act. It also helps preserve evidence of decisions, public accountability and Stalham's historical record.

2. Responsibilities and core rules

2.1 Responsibility

- Full Council approves this policy and any material amendments.
- The Town Clerk is the policy owner and authorises routine destruction or archival transfer.
- The Responsible Financial Officer ensures financial, payroll, audit and tax records are retained for the stated periods.
- All councillors, staff and authorised users must save official Council records in approved systems and must not rely on personal inboxes, devices or social-media accounts as the sole record.
- Contractors and cloud service providers must return, securely delete or preserve Council records in accordance with contract terms and this schedule.

2.2 Core retention rules

1. Keep the authoritative or signed version. Convenience copies and duplicates may be deleted when no longer needed.
2. Calculate the period from the end of the financial year, tax year, employment, contract, tenancy, project or case to which the record relates, unless the table says otherwise.
3. Pause all destruction immediately if a record may be relevant to a legal claim, audit, police matter, complaint, insurance matter, data breach, safeguarding concern, FOI/EIR request or subject access request.
4. Before destruction, check whether the record has enduring historical value. Permanent records should be preserved in stable formats and considered for deposit with Norfolk Record Office.
5. Dispose of confidential paper by cross-cut shredding or an accredited confidential-waste service. Securely delete electronic records, including relevant synchronised copies and managed backups where practicable.
6. Record every organised disposal or archival transfer in the disposal log. Routine deletion of transitory duplicates need not be individually logged.
7. Review high-risk personal data and CCTV more frequently than the annual schedule review.

3. Governance

Keep the definitive evidence of decisions permanently. Working material should be retained only while it remains operationally, legally or historically valuable.

Record		Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Signed minutes and minute books	Full Council, committee, sub-committee and annual parish/town meeting signed minutes; sealed decisions	Permanent	Archive. Core evidence of Council decisions and historical record.
Agendas and public reports	Final agendas, reports, appendices and public meeting packs	6 years; permanent if policy/historical significance	Review, archive significant material; otherwise securely destroy.
Draft minutes and working notes	Unapproved drafts, Clerk's notes and duplicated annotations	Until minutes approved + 1 year	Destroy unless needed for complaint, audit or legal hold.
Meeting audio/video recordings	Recordings made solely to assist minute preparation or public broadcast	Until minutes produced	Securely delete; retain longer only under published purpose/legal hold.
Standing orders, financial regulations and policies	Adopted versions and material superseded versions	Current + 6 years; key constitutional versions permanent	Archive constitutionally significant versions; destroy routine superseded copies.
Registers of interests/public office records	Published register links/copies, gifts and hospitality, member training and allowances	Current + 6 years	Review and securely destroy; retain allowances evidence with finance records.
Elections and co-option	Results, casual vacancy notices, co-option applications, eligibility and correspondence	Results/notices permanent; unsuccessful applications 6 months; successful member records term + 6 years	Archive results; securely destroy personal data at end of period. Returning Officer rules override.
Council seals and formal instruments	Sealed documents register, deeds register and executed resolutions	Permanent	Archive securely.
Strategic plans and major project records	Five-year plan, major consultations, business cases, project closure and evaluation	Final versions permanent; working records 6 years after closure	Archive records evidencing significant civic development.
General governance correspondence	Official correspondence evidencing decisions, advice or commitments	6 years after closure	File with relevant subject; securely destroy routine transitory messages sooner.

4. Finance

Six years is used as a practical baseline for most financial evidence, subject to longer tax, grant, capital scheme, audit or contractual requirements.

Record series		Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Annual Governance and Accountability Return	AGAR, annual return, audited accounts, external auditor reports and notices	Permanent	Archive the signed/final record.
Accounting records	Cashbook, general ledger, receipts and payments account, journals and year-end working papers	Permanent for principal summary records; supporting ledgers 6 years	Archive principal records; securely destroy supporting data after audit/retention period.
Invoices and credit notes	Supplier invoices, sales invoices, expenses and supporting evidence	6 years after financial year end	Securely destroy. Longer period may apply to capital/VAT schemes.
Banking records	Bank statements, paying-in records, reconciliations, mandates and cheque records	6 years after financial year end; mandates while current + 6 years	Securely destroy.
VAT records	VAT returns, calculations, invoices and partial exemption/capital goods records	6 years normally; 20 years where Capital Goods Scheme applies	Securely destroy after applicable HMRC period.
Budgets and precept	Approved budgets, precept calculations, tax-base correspondence and medium-term forecasts	Approved budget/precept permanent; working papers 6 years	Archive approved records; destroy working copies.
Internal and external audit	Reports, correspondence, evidence supplied and action plans	6 years; final annual reports permanent	Archive final reports; destroy supporting duplicates.
Procurement quotations and tenders	Requests, bids, scoring, declarations, award and unsuccessful submissions	6 years after contract end; 12 years if executed as deed	Securely destroy; preserve award decision in minutes/contracts register.
Grants made by Council	Applications, assessments, award letters, monitoring and evidence of use	6 years after closure	Securely destroy; retain permanent summary for significant community grants.
External grants and funding	Funding applications, agreements, claims, outputs and monitoring	Funder's requirement or 6 years after closure, whichever is longer	Archive significant final outcomes; securely destroy personal/supporting data.

Record series		Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Community Infrastructure Levy	Receipts, expenditure evidence, reports and project records	6 years after final expenditure; published annual reports permanent	Archive reports; destroy supporting records after audit period.
Asset and investment records	Asset register, investment register, valuations and disposals	Current register permanent; transaction evidence 6 years after disposal	Archive registers; destroy supporting records when no longer needed.
Members' allowances and expenses	Claims, approvals, register and payment records	6 years after financial year end	Securely destroy.
Fees, charges and bookings income	Adopted fees, till records, receipt books, ticket records and reconciliation	Adopted scales 6 years; transaction evidence 6 years	Securely destroy after audit and tax periods.

5. Employment

Employment records contain high-risk personal data. Access must be restricted, and unnecessary information should be removed at the end of employment even where a limited core file is retained.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Personnel file	Contract, variations, role history, appraisals, disciplinary/grievance outcomes and key correspondence	Employment + 6 years	Securely destroy; preserve only essential pension/reference record where justified.
Recruitment — unsuccessful	Applications, CVs, interview notes, scoring, equality monitoring and references	6 months after appointment; up to 12 months where justified and stated	Securely destroy or anonymise.
Recruitment — successful	Application, checks and appointment evidence	Transfer relevant records to personnel file; then employment + 6 years	Securely destroy duplicates.
Right to work checks	Prescribed identity and status evidence	Employment + 2 years	Securely destroy.
Payroll and PAYE	Pay records, deductions, RTI reports, tax codes, leave/sickness payroll evidence and HMRC payments	At least 3 years after end of tax year; Council standard 6 years	Securely destroy after longer Council period.
Wages books and superannuation history	Historic wages books and pensionable service/pay records	12 years; consider permanent archive for historic volumes	Review for pension and historical value before destruction.
Pension automatic enrolment	Membership, contributions, joining and scheme records	6 years; opt-out/leave requests 4 years	Securely destroy.
Working time and timesheets	Hours, overtime, flexi-time and working-time evidence	2 years statutory baseline; Council standard 6 years where linked to payroll	Securely destroy.
Maternity and family leave	Leave dates, payments and statutory calculations	3 years after end of tax year; Council standard 6 years	Securely destroy.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Sickness and medical information	Fit notes, occupational health, adjustments and sensitive absence details	Employment + 6 years, with annual necessity review	Restrict access; securely destroy. Separate from routine personnel access.
Training and qualifications	Mandatory training, certificates and continuing professional development	Employment + 6 years; H&S competence records may follow risk life	Securely destroy; retain anonymised organisational training statistics if useful.
Employee emergency contacts	Contact and next-of-kin details	While employed/current only	Delete promptly when employment ends or details are replaced.

6. Contracts, Property, Assets and Insurance

Property records must remain available for as long as the Council owns, occupies or has continuing rights in an asset. Limitation periods and long-tail insurance claims may require extended retention.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Title deeds and ownership	Conveyances, transfers, covenants, easements, land registry evidence and boundary agreements	Permanent	Secure archival custody; retain originals.
Leases and licences	Council as landlord or tenant; licences to occupy and wayleaves	Life of interest + 12 years	Archive significant property instruments; securely destroy duplicates.
Contracts under hand	Executed agreements, specifications, variations, performance and termination	6 years after completion/termination	Securely destroy unless continuing rights/claims remain.
Contracts executed as deeds	Building, land or other deed contracts	12 years after completion/termination	Securely destroy only after confirming no continuing rights.
Property and capital works	Plans, completion certificates, building regulations, warranties, O&M manuals and major works files	Life of asset + 12 years; key plans/certificates permanent	Transfer key documents into property record; destroy superseded working copies.
Maintenance and inspection	Routine servicing, checks, repairs, contractor reports and work orders	6 years; longer for safety-critical plant/assets	Securely destroy after risk and claim period.
Insurance policies	Policies, schedules, renewals and claims correspondence	Policy life + 6 years; claims until finally settled + 6 years	Retain longer where latent/personal injury claims may arise.
Employers' liability certificates	Certificates and policy evidence	Permanent Council standard	Archive securely for potential long-tail claims.
Insurance claims	Incident evidence, correspondence, expert reports and settlement	Closure + 6 years; personal injury/minor claims: until age 21 or closure + 6 years, whichever later	Legal hold applies; secure destruction when limitation risk ends.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Asset disposal	Authorisation, valuation, sale, transfer and write-off evidence	6 years after disposal; permanent summary in asset register/minutes	Securely destroy supporting material.
Keys, alarms and access	Keyholder lists, access codes, fob logs and alarm contacts	While current; access logs 12 months unless incident	Destroy immediately on replacement where no evidential need.

7. Council Services and Facilities

This section is tailored to services and projects undertaken by Stalham Town Council. Where another authority is the statutory record-holder, retain only the Council's own evidence for the stated business purpose.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Burial registers and plans	Registers of burials, purchased graves, grave-space plans, memorial registers and fees	Permanent	Archive under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977; preserve originals and reliable backups.
Burial applications and rights	Interment applications, disposal/copy certificates, memorial applications and grants of exclusive rights	Permanent	Archive securely; access restricted where records contain living-person data.
Allotment register and plans	Plot register, statutory/management plans and site history	Permanent	Archive principal register and plans.
Allotment tenancies	Applications, tenancy agreements, inspections, notices, complaints and termination	Tenancy + 6 years	Securely destroy personal records; preserve material site-history evidence.
Allotment waiting list	Applicant and contact details	While active + 1 year	Delete when no longer active unless dispute/legal hold.
Town Hall	Applications, agreements, diaries, invoices, tickets and incident records	6 years after booking; routine enquiry data 1 year	Securely destroy; incident/legal hold may extend.
Staithe, pontoon and moorings	Licences, inspections, maintenance, safety records, incidents and major project files	Operational records 6 years; capital/safety documents life of asset + 12 years	Archive significant project and ownership records.
Street lighting	Inventory, electrical certificates, inspections, faults, repairs and replacement programme	Asset register permanent; safety/maintenance 6 years or life of asset where needed	Archive register; securely destroy routine closed work orders.
Play areas and recreation facilities	Inspection logs, risk assessments, repairs, manufacturer information and incidents	Life of equipment + 6 years; incident files per insurance rule	Retain safety-critical history; securely destroy at end.
Events and markets	Applications, trader details, licences, risk assessments, road/highway liaison, bookings and evaluation	6 years after event; unsuccessful enquiries 1 year	Archive historically significant final programme/photos; destroy personal/admin data.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Major community projects	Skate park/Wild Park, Christmas lights, town map and other funded projects	Final business case, approvals and evaluation permanent; working records 6 years after closure	Archive key civic record; follow grant/funder periods where longer.
Highways and public-realm cases	Requests, reports, correspondence, photographs and outcome	6 years after closure	Securely destroy personal data; archive major scheme records.
Complaints about services	Case file, investigation, decision and remedy	Closure + 6 years	Securely destroy; retain anonymised learning where useful.
Public consultations and surveys	Responses, consent, analysis, final report and raw data	Raw identifiable data: report publication + 1 year; anonymised analysis/final report permanent for major projects	Delete or anonymise raw personal data; archive final evidence.

8. Information Rights and Personal Data

Personal data must not be kept longer than necessary. The periods below are standard starting points and must be shortened where the Council's purpose ends earlier.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
General enquiries	Routine resident enquiries and replies not forming part of another case	Closure + 2 years	Delete unless continuing issue, complaint or legal hold.
Casework and substantive correspondence	Correspondence evidencing Council action, advice, commitments or decisions	Closure + 6 years	File by subject; securely destroy when period ends.
FOI/EIR requests	Request, searches, response, review and related correspondence	Closure + 3 years	Securely destroy; retain longer for appeal, ICO case or recurring precedent.
Subject access and rights requests	Identity checks, searches, disclosure, erasure/objection decisions and correspondence	Closure + 3 years	Securely destroy; retain minimal suppression record where needed.
Data breaches	Incident report, assessment, notification, remedial action and correspondence	Closure + 6 years	Securely destroy; retain longer for ICO action or litigation.
Data-sharing agreements	Controller/processor arrangements, information sharing and DPIAs	Agreement/processing + 6 years	Securely destroy; archive key accountability evidence if significant.
Privacy notices and consent wording	Published versions and evidence of changes	Current + 6 years	Retain version history to evidence transparency.
Consent records	Photo, marketing, consultation or other consent and withdrawals	Duration of processing + 2 years	Delete after use ends; retain minimal withdrawal/suppression evidence where needed.
CCTV recordings	Routine footage from Council-controlled cameras	Normally 31 days	Automatically overwrite; isolate incident footage and retain only until case/claim concludes.
CCTV incident exports	Footage preserved for police, insurance, complaint or legal case	Until case concludes + applicable appeal/claim period	Securely delete and log release/handling.
Mailing lists/newsletters	Subscriber name, email and preferences	Until unsubscribe/inactivity + 30 days; suppression record as necessary	Delete from active list; retain minimal do-not-contact record.
Contact directories	Councillor, staff, contractor and stakeholder contact details	While current; review at least annually	Update or delete promptly.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Backups	Managed system backups and disaster-recovery copies	According to documented backup cycle, normally 3–12 months	Securely expire. Backups are not an archive and remain subject to legal hold.

9. Health, Safety and Safeguarding

These records may be needed to demonstrate safe systems of work or respond to long-tail claims. Sensitive health and safeguarding records require strict access controls.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Risk assessments	General, fire, event, lone working, display screen, play area and activity assessments	Current + 6 years	Keep superseded versions where needed to show controls at a past date.
Accident book and incident reports	Employee, volunteer, councillor and public accidents/near misses	At least 3 years from entry; Council standard 6 years	Restrict access and securely destroy; insurance/legal hold may extend.
RIDDOR records	Reportable injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences	At least 3 years; Council standard 6 years	Securely destroy after confirming no continuing claim/investigation.
Health surveillance	Statutory health records under COSHH or other exposure regimes	40 years from last entry where required	Confidential secure retention; obtain specialist advice before destruction.
Asbestos management	Surveys, register, management plan, works and exposure information	Life of premises/asset; exposure health records 40 years	Transfer to new dutyholder where applicable; archive key records.
Fire safety	Fire risk assessments, alarm/emergency-light tests, drills and servicing	Current assessment plus 6 years of superseded/inspection records	Retain longer where incident, enforcement or insurance matter.
Equipment inspection	LOLER, PUWER, electrical, gas, playground and other statutory/safety checks	Life of equipment + 6 years, or statutory period if longer	Securely destroy only after disposal and claim period.
Emergency and business continuity	Plans, contacts, tests, incident logs and recovery actions	Current plan + 6 years; major incident final report permanent	Destroy obsolete contact data promptly; archive significant incident reports.

10. Communications and publications

Public availability does not remove the need for retention control. The authoritative source record follows its own category even if a web copy is removed.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Website content	Pages, notices, news, accessibility statements and downloadable publications	Published while current; preserve master under underlying category; annual snapshot where historically useful	Remove outdated personal data promptly; archive significant snapshots.
Transparency publications	Payments, procurement, staffing, land/assets and other published datasets	Keep online for required publication period; source records follow finance/governance periods	Archive annual final datasets where they evidence accountability.
Social media	Official posts, direct messages, comments and moderation evidence	Routine posts 2 years; significant campaigns/decisions permanent; case messages follow case period	Export/archive selected civic record; securely delete personal case material.
Press releases and newsletters	Final issued copy, artwork and distribution	Permanent for final public editions	Archive as a record of Council activity.
Photographs and video	Events, projects, civic occasions and promotional media	Review every 3 years; significant civic archive permanent; identifiable promotional media while consent/public-task purpose remains	Delete duplicates and expired consent-based material; record archival basis.
Media enquiries	Request, approved response and coverage	3 years; significant/reputational matters 6 years	Archive historically significant coverage/responses.

Record series	Examples / scope	Minimum retention	Final action and rationale
Public notices	Statutory notices, consultations and certificates of posting	6 years; constitutional/property notices permanent where significant	Archive proof of publication where legal rights may depend on it.

11. Review, disposal and transfer process

11.1 Annual review

The Town Clerk should coordinate a documented review at least annually. A sensible cycle is shortly after completion of the annual audit, with higher-risk systems such as CCTV, recruitment folders, shared inboxes and mailing lists checked more frequently.

- Identify records that have reached the end of their retention period.
- Check for any legal hold, continuing operational need, statutory requirement, unresolved complaint, audit, insurance, safeguarding or historical value.
- Select the outcome: securely destroy, anonymise, retain for a documented extended period, or transfer to archive.
- Obtain the Town Clerk's authorisation, and specialist/legal advice for unusual or high-risk records.
- Complete the disposal log with enough detail to explain what was disposed of without reproducing personal information.
- Confirm destruction by the contractor/system owner and retain the disposal log permanently.

11.2 Email, messaging and personal devices

An email or message is retained according to its content, not its format. Official records must be moved to the relevant Council folder or case file. Transitory arrangements, alerts, duplicated attachments and informal messages may be deleted when no longer useful. Councillors and staff must return Council information and remove authorised local copies when their role ends, subject to legal hold.

11.3 Archival transfer

Before destroying a permanent or potentially historic record, the Clerk should consult Norfolk Record Office about transfer, format, cataloguing and access restrictions. Digitisation does not automatically justify destroying an original signed, sealed or otherwise evidential document.

11.4 Suspension of disposal

Legal hold — stop destruction immediately

If litigation, audit, an ombudsman/ICO matter, police enquiry, insurance claim, safeguarding issue, FOI/EIR request, subject access request or complaint is anticipated or underway, all potentially relevant records must be preserved until the Town Clerk formally lifts the hold.

11.5 Review of this policy

This schedule should be reviewed annually and whenever legislation, regulatory guidance, Council functions, systems or contractual requirements materially change. The Town Clerk may issue temporary operational instructions between formal reviews, but any material change to retention periods should be reported to Full Council.

Appendix A — Disposal log template

Keep the completed disposal log permanently. Do not include unnecessary personal details.

Date	Record series / date range	Outcome	Method / destination	Authority / reason	Approved by

Appendix B — Sources and statutory framework

This schedule was prepared with reference to the following sources current at 28 July 2026. Links should be checked when the policy is reviewed.

National Association of Local Councils. Local council documents and records, Advice Note, 2 April 2026.

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/local-council-documents-and-records.html>

Information Commissioner's Office. UK GDPR storage limitation principle: standard periods, regular review and deletion/anonymisation.

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-protection-principles/a-guide-to-the-data-protection-principles/storage-limitation/>

HM Government / The National Archives. Code of Practice on records management issued under section 46 Freedom of Information Act 2000 (2021).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-on-the-management-of-records-issued-under-section-46-the-freedom-of-information-act-2000>

HM Revenue & Customs. PAYE and payroll records: minimum three years from the end of the relevant tax year.

<https://www.gov.uk/payee-for-employers/keeping-records>

The Pensions Regulator. Automatic enrolment records: six years, with opt-out/leave requests kept four years.

<https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/en/ae-questions-and-answers/general/what-records-do-i-have-to-keep>

Health and Safety Executive. RIDDOR record requirements and health and safety guidance.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/what-must-i-keep.htm>

Legislation.gov.uk. Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (SI 1977/204).

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/1977/204/contents>

Legislation.gov.uk. Limitation Act 1980.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/58/contents>

Legislation.gov.uk. Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/36/contents>

Legislation.gov.uk. UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 framework.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents>

Use of the schedule

This is a governance template, not case-specific legal advice. Where a statutory officer, Returning Officer, insurer, auditor, funder, pension administrator or legal adviser specifies a longer period, their requirement takes priority.