MERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Document Retention and Disposal

Policy and Procedure

Retention of Documents Policy

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

A small percentage of the Parish Council's records will be selected 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 will be retrieved easily, appropriately and in a timely manner.

Retention Schedule

Introduction
A Retention Schedule is a list of records that need to be kept by Merton Parish Council for a specific length of time.

This schedule contains recommended retention periods for records created and maintained by the Parish Council and refers to all information regardless of the media in which it is stored, such as manual files, photographs, electronic files, tapes etc.

The aim of the Retention Schedule is to provide a consistent approach to the way the Council handles its records and provide a clear set of guidelines.

A Retention Schedule serves the purpose of identifying records that may be worth preserving permanently as a part of a local authority archive as well as preventing the premature destruction of records that need to be retained for a specific legal, financial or statutory period.

This Retention Schedule details the function of each record, the type of records that may fall within this function and the length of time the Council should hold the record before taking disposal or archive action.

Many retention periods are determined by statute.

In conclusion good Records Management is not difficult; simply put, the Council needs to keep accurate and timely records for the appropriate period of time, making sure that obsolete records are securely disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Retention of Documents Procedure
Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Parish Council is required to maintain a retention schedule listing the record series which it creates in the course of its business. The retention schedule lays down the length of time which the record needs to be retained and the action which should be taken when it is of no further administrative use.

The Clerk is expected to manage the current record keeping systems using the retention schedule and to take account of the different retention periods when creating new record keeping systems. This retention schedule refers to record series regardless of the media in which they are stored.

Document	**Minimum**	**Retention Reason**
Minute Books	Indefinite	Archive
Annual Accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Annual Return	Indefinite	Archive
Bank statements	7 years	Audit/management
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit	Management
Paying in books	Last completed audit	Management
Quotations	7 years	Audit
Paid invoices	7 years	Audit/VAT
VAT records	7 years	Audit/VAT
Salary records	7 years	Audit
Tax & NI records	7 years	Audit
Insurance policies	Whilst valid	Audit
Cert of Employers Liability	40 years	Audit/legal
Cert of public liability	40 years	Audit/legal

Document	Minimum	Retention Reason
Assets register	Indefinite	Audit
Deeds, leases	Indefinite	Audit
Electoral Register	1 year (once new one is issued destroy previous)	Management
Declarations of acceptance of office	Term of Office + 1 year	Management
Members register of interests' book	Term of office + 1	Management
Complaints	1 year	Management
General information	6 months	Management
Planning Applications	6 months (see below)	Management
Routine correspondence & emails	6 months	Management

Planning Applications
All planning applications and relevant decision notices are available at CDC. There is no requirement to retain duplicates locally. All Parish Council recommendations in connection with these applications are recorded in the Council Minutes and are retained indefinitely and are held on the CDC Planning Portal. Correspondence received in connection with applications will be retained as stated above.

Disposal procedures
All documents that are no longer required for administrative reasons should be shredded if confidential and disposed of.

This Policy was adopted at the Council meeting on **14 November 2022 (Minute Ref: M9/2022-2.6-d)** to be reviewed in two years or sooner if legislation dictates.

Review:
This Policy was reviewed and adopted at the Council meeting on **10 March 2025 (Minute Ref: M3/2025-8.6-d** to be reviewed in two years or sooner if legislation dictates.