

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY JUNE 9TH 2020

Item 12. Parish Council Document Retention Policy (and use of the Parish Council Website as a source for information on Parish Council matters)

Background

1. **Document Retention Policy** - As a Parish Council there is an obligation on us to have a defined policy on the retention of documents that are created by us or come into our possession.
2. **Website Information** - Separately, I have been asked to consider how much historical information on Parish Council activities should be available on our website.

Present Position

1. **Document Retention Policy** - Currently, we do not have a Document Retention Policy
2. **Website information** - Currently, minutes of full meetings and Planning Committee meetings dated back ten years are available on the website. In addition, supporting documents for full minutes dating back to 2017 are also available.

Actions taken

1. **Document Retention Policy** - The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has published a Legal Topic Note on Local Council Documents and Records (presented to Councillors as part of Item 18 at our November 2019 meeting). This has formed the basis of a Document Retention Policy that I am now presenting to Council for adoption. Some of the documents listed by NALC aren't relevant to Copythorne PC but I have included them within our Document Retention Policy for completeness.
2. **Website Information** – I have reviewed the information that is available on our website and also the other documentation that I inherited when I became Parish Clerk in April 2019. In addition to what is on our website I am holding minutes of council meetings that date back to 1993 together with various files and folders that contain accounting information and specific subject information on areas like Splitwind Pond; Flooding; and Local Plans. In considering my recommendation to Council below I have taken into account the number of requests that I have received to access the paper records I hold in the 13 months that I have been Clerk. These requests amount to none from members of the public and two from councillors.

As part of my research, I separated the minutes of the ten full Council meetings held in 1993 from a bundle containing others. Checked each for confidential items that might need redaction; redacted where required; scanned them; and created a file ready for uploading to our website. This task took at least 10 minutes for each meeting. At my hourly rate of pay this equates to £1.75 per set of minutes. No request has been made to our website provider (TLC Online) as to what cost might be incurred in uploading historic records. As your Parish Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer I do not feel that the number of requests made justifies the spending of local Council Tax payers money to digitise more of our records.

Recommendations

1. **Document Retention Policy** - That Council adopts the draft Document Retention Policy attached to this report as Appendix 1. In addition, the Clerk is authorised to undertake an ongoing task of reviewing the paperwork held and taking actions with it in accordance with the Document Retention Policy.
2. **Website Information** – That no further historic council records or papers be digitised. Instead, reference to sources of held or archived records - where relevant – be added to the website.

David Rigby, Parish Clerk
May 26th 2020

Copythorne Parish Council – Document Retention Policy

1. **Purpose:** Copythorne Parish Council requires a wide variety of documents for transacting its business and is committed to retaining these documents in a format and for periods of time that enables the Parish Council to meet its statutory obligations in respect of documents subject to legislation.

The document storage arrangements should:

- Ensure security of documents
 - Protect employee's privacy
 - Facilitate access to information
 - Optimise the use of storage space
 - Be cost effective
 - Facilitate the destruction of redundant documents
2. **Scope:** This policy applies to users of Copythorne Parish Council information records, both paper and electronic, it includes councillors and employees.
 3. **Statutory Requirements:** Documents subject to a statutory period of retention are identified by their associated legislation in Annex A.
 4. **Security of Documents:** Copythorne Parish Council records are held in paper and/or electronic format. To minimise the risk of accidental loss of valuable records, masters or copies (as deemed appropriate) will be stored off site.
 5. **Employee's privacy:** The privacy of personnel records will be appropriately assured.
 6. **Availability and Access:** All records necessary to Copythorne Parish Council' business will be retained for a period of time that reasonably assures the availability of records needed.
 7. **Storage space and cost:** Redundant records may be destroyed in order to reduce the cost of storage, indexing and handling the vast quantity of documents that would otherwise accumulate. Destruction of documents will be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of this policy to avoid any inference that a document was destroyed in anticipation of a problem.
 8. **Electronic storage:** Records maintained electronically will be subject to the same rules of retention and security as paper records.
 9. **Implementation of the Policy:** that Clerk will be responsible for the implementation of the policy.
 10. **Monitoring and Review:** the policy will be reviewed periodically to monitor its effectiveness.

Annex A

Document	Minimum retention period	Reason
Signed minutes of council meetings (Hard copy)	Indefinite (Copies from the previous 10 years held locally, older stored by District or County Council).	Archive
Scale of fees and charges	6 years	Management
Receipt and payment accounts (Hard copy)	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books of all kinds	6 years	VAT
Bank statements including deposit/savings accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit
Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
Paid cheques	6 years (held by Council bankers)	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
VAT records	6 years	VAT
Petty cash, postage and telephone books (where maintained)	6 years	Tax, VAT, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Wages books/Payroll records	12 years	Superannuation
Insurance policies	While valid	Management
Certificates for insurance against liability for employees	40 years from date on which insurance commenced or was renewed	The Employer's Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI. 2753), Management
Investments	Indefinite	Audit, Management
Title deeds, leases,	Indefinite	Audit, Management
Members allowances	6 years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980
Health and Safety		
Accident books	25 years from closure	Management
Equipment Inspection Records	25 years	Management
Premises Inspection records	25 years	Management
Risk assessment	3 years from last assessment	Management
Members		
Register of members interests	18 months after individual ceases to be a Member	Management
Miscellaneous		
Complaints	5 yrs. after closure of case	Management
Press releases	1 years	Management
Public consultation - survey and returns	3 years	Management
Reports, newsletters etc.	Retain as long as useful	Management
Parish Council Newsletter	Own copy as long as wish	Management
Correspondence	6 months	Management

Document	Minimum retention period	Reason
Planning		
Planning applications where granted, plans and decision letters	Held on NFNPA or NFDC planning portal	Planning and enforcement
Appeal decision notice	Held on NFNPA or NFDC planning portal	Planning and enforcement
Planning applications where refused, plans and decision letters	Held on NFNPA or NFDC planning portal	Planning and enforcement
Structure plans, Local Plans and similar	As long as in force	Management
Documentation for Legal purposes (unless extended)		
Negligence	6 yrs.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Defamation	1 yr.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Contract	6 yrs.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Sums recoverable	6 yrs.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Leases	12 yrs.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Personal injury	3 yrs.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
To recover land	12 yrs.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Rent	6 yrs.	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)

Adopted by Council xx/xx/xxxx
Reviewed by Council xx/xx/xxxx