

# **East Williamston Community Council**

## **Data Retention & Storage of Documents**

The time that documents have to be kept depends on what the legal status of the document and how much space is available. It is good practice to keep all papers in files or folders according to subject matter and similarly this will apply to computer files. Files that are no longer current should be kept ready to hand. Older files can be archived. Those papers which are no longer of use, nor of any historical interest can be destroyed. Confidential or personal papers should be shredded before being disposed of.

### **1. Legal Documents**

Minute books need to be kept forever. These are legal documents and must not be destroyed. Previous years Minute books will be stored at the Community Hall at East Williamston. The Community Council will keep more recent Minute books to hand in case there is a need to refer to them. Deeds leases and other similar documents also need to be kept whilst the Council owns/occupies the property/land. Correspondence relating to land/buildings the Council owns for as long as it remains in the Council's ownership should be kept. Recent and up to date documents will be stored in the filing cabinet at the Community Hall as will all documents older than 5 years .

### **2. Inland Revenue and VAT**

All pension details should be kept until two years after the former employee dies. Otherwise Inland Revenue and VAT papers should be kept for 6 years as a minimum. A council would normally expect to have a VAT inspection once every ten years; VAT papers should be kept from one inspection to the next. Annual returns and statements of accounts should be kept indefinitely; background papers need not be kept. Audit papers are kept for five years. Councils should keep as complete a record as possible of its Employers Liability Insurance and retaining these Certificates may be a sensible precaution notwithstanding the change in the law. Public Liability Insurance policies and receipts for premiums (and certificates if issued) should be retained for 21 years. These documents where practicable should be stored in the fireproof safe.

### **3. Planning applications**

There is no legal requirement for the Community Council to keep copies of planning applications but for the sake of reference six month's worth of applications are to be kept. There is no requirement to keep Planning documents referred to the council as consultee, but for reference they should be kept for 6-12 months. It is sensible to keep copies of controversial plans for longer than that. If the public want to refer to old applications, you can refer them to the Planning Authority. Planning applications and grants of permission for council property should be kept indefinitely. Pembrokeshire County Council have made their planning records available online so there is little need to keep the paper applications

### **4. Contract Documents and Related Receipts etc**

Contracts should be retained for at least six years after the end of the contract term so that they are available should a claim under the contract be brought within that period. Keeping them for seven years will be enough.

### **5. Handwritten Notes from Meetings etc**

Any jottings or handwritten notes which are simply intended as a personal aide memoire should be destroyed immediately after they have served their purpose. If this is not done, there is a risk

that they may be the subject of a Freedom of Information Act request and may have to be disclosed.

## **6. Audio and Video Recordings**

These can be treated in exactly the same way as transcripts.

## **7. Computer Hard Drives etc**

Data on PC and laptop computers should be retained until the computer reaches the end of its useful life. When you come to dispose of an old computer you need to decide whether or not to copy the data from the old computer to the new one. Either way it is important to destroy the hard drive of the old computer to prevent the council's data falling into the wrong hands.

## **8. Other Material**

It is a matter of judgement how long you keep other material. Some material may be of historical interest, and it may be worth keeping a box with papers relating to things such as the Millennium Celebrations or a visit from a VIP. All other material should be reviewed every couple of years and a decision made as to whether or not it is worth keeping. If there is a controversial issue that just keeps rumbling on you should keep hold of papers.

## **9. Storing Documents**

Archived material is only useful if you know what you have got so all material should be boxed, labelled with an itemised list as to the contents in the box. A detailed record of what is in each box is to be kept. In some cases you may not need to keep the original document and a photographic copy may suffice, but you do need to have sufficient evidence should the document ever be the subject of a legal challenge or dispute. Data on PC should be backed up daily to the server which will then be backed up to the Microsoft google drive cloud on a daily basis.