St Buryan & Lamorna Parish Council

Town and Parish Councils: document retention schedule and guidance

This retention schedule sets out the main types of town and parish council records and describes how long they should be retained and what should happen to them thereafter. It includes those which should be preserved and deposited with the Archives and Cornish Studies Service at Kresen Kernow, and those which should be destroyed. It supersedes the Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) guidance from 2022 (version 5). Further general guidance can be found on page 5.

Documents and information transferred to Kresen Kernow will remain available to the council and for public inspection. This schedule is produced as a guide only; retention locally will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Retention periods

- These start from the date of the last entry in the record and documents should be retained for the number of years listed as a minimum.
- The retention time for most documents is standardised to at least four years, but assessment will need to be done on a case-by-case basis, with finance documents retained for at least seven years to reflect legal and audit requirements.

Actions

- **Preserve** - these records should be transferred to Kresen Kernow for permanent preservation. They will need weeding first to remove duplicate copies or insignificant documents.
- **Review/sample** - records marked for review/sample should be reviewed and weeded prior to transfer. If you are unsure about sampling, please ask for advice from the ACSS.
- **Destroy** - records can be retained locally but would not be considered for permanent preservation as part of the collection held at Kresen Kernow. Where no minimum retention period is given, things may be destroyed when no longer required for administrative purposes. Documents should be treated as confidential waste and shredded.
- Only one copy of any document should be transferred unless any copies are significantly different.
- Clerks are often best placed to identify documents that relate to important or controversial local issues and developments.

Minutes

- Minutes should be signed if possible and in date (or reverse date) order.
- Agendas should not be kept unless they contain significant information not in the minutes or the minutes do not exist.
- Reports/significant correspondence should be kept. If there are detailed minutes, large amounts of correspondence may not need to be kept.
- Only keep annual accounts, unless these do not survive, in which case keep interim accounts.
- Make sure you know where all the minutes are – they are important records.

Digital and audio-visual records

- If any of the material on the schedule is in a digital format (other than Word, Excel, pdf, mp3 or mp4), please speak to the team at Kresen Kernow about their preservation.
- Any video or sound recordings should be weeded, sampled and digitised before transfer.

Kresen Kernow is unable to take collections of press cuttings, objects or memorabilia.

For advice and to arrange transfers contact:
kresenkernow@cornwall.gov.uk, tel. 01872 32433

For general council advice contact:
Tel. 01872 272648

	Type of record	Keep in Council custody (years)	Final decision
	Administration		
1	Minutes of council and committees (signed)	4	Preserve
2	Reports (only those not attached or duplicated within council minutes)	4	Preserve
3	Councillors' declarations of acceptance of office	Term of office + 4	Preserve
4	Correspondence and other papers on routine administration	4	Destroy
5	Papers relating to major developments not duplicated in minutes but associated with decisions (if unsure seek advice from ACSS)	4	Preserve
6	Maps of authority boundaries (if held seek advice from ACSS)	4	Preserve
7	Copies of replies to important questionnaires about major developments (if unsure seek advice from ACSS)	4	Preserve
8	Grouping Orders	Transfer to KK as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Preserve
9	Byelaws and Orders	Transfer to KK as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Preserve
10	Council/Member Register of Interests	Destroy 12 months after Councillor / Member ceases role	Destroy
	Burial grounds (as per Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, No. 204, Section 12):		
11	Plans, registers of graves and graves purchased	4 or when complete, Council to have copy	Preserve
12	Burial registers	When complete, Council to have a copy	Preserve
13	Records of disinterments and applications for interment	4	Preserve
14	Records of memorial applications and those removed from graves	4	Preserve
15	Agreements concerning maintenance of ground, graves and memorials	4	Preserve
16	Papers for minor works (e.g. grass-cutting, repairs to property)	4	Destroy
	Rights of way:		
17	Consultation papers, surveys	4	Preserve
18	Maps (ACSS to check for duplicates)	4	Preserve
	Allotments:		
19	Registers of tenants, plot maps	4	Preserve
20	Rent records and registers	7	Sample to preserve
	Village greens, commons:		
21	Registration records, consultation papers	4	Preserve

	Financial records		
22	Annual audited accounts	7	Preserve
23	Ledgers (historic)	7	Preserve
24	Cash books, bills, vouchers, bank statements, other subsidiary financial records	7	Destroy
25	Insurance policies and associated risk assessments (As per National Association of Local Councils Legal Policy where it is noted that records should be kept for this duration from commencement of policy or renewal as mentioned in the Employer's Liability Compulsory Act 1969)	40	Destroy
26	Poor rate ledgers (historic)	Transfer to KK	Preserve
27	Receipt and payment books	7	Preserve
	Legal records		
28	Deeds, statutory documents, title deeds, other documents relating to title, acquisition, purchase, disposal or rights over Council property; statutory notices, orders, plans, surveys, leases, agreements and contracts etc	Transfer to KK as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Preserve
29	Charities: deeds, schemes, orders, minutes, accounts, distribution lists, benefactions	Transfer to KK as soon as there is no longer an administrative requirement	Preserve
	Publications		
30	Town/parish magazines and newsletters	4	Preserve
31	Town/parish histories, scrapbooks, photographs with captions, publicity material (not press cuttings)	4	Preserve (or sample if large number)
	Inherited or historic records which should be transferred to Kresen Kernow		
32	Tithe maps and apportionments	Transfer to KK	Preserve
33	WWII war/invasion books, action plans and associated papers	Transfer to KK	Preserve
34	Vestry minutes	Transfer to KK	Preserve
35	Overseers' records	Transfer to KK	Preserve
36	Any records dating from before 1945 held by the Town or Parish Council (e.g. poor law records, surveyors of highways and enclosure awards)	Transfer to KK	Preserve
37	Records from other organisations (e.g. burial boards, Rural District Councils, fire brigades, home guard, local societies, charities, trusts and other committees) National Association of Local Councils Legal Policy states that there is 'no limitation period in respect of trusts; councils are advised never to destroy trust deeds and schemes and other similar documentation.	Seek advice from ACSS (ephemera to be reviewed)	
38	Village/parish appraisals, plans and millennium projects	Seek advice from ACSS (ephemera to be reviewed)	Preserve (or sample if large number)

	Other administrative and finance records that can be destroyed		
	Planning applications and related papers not held by the Planning Authority	After completion of the development	Review (with the view to Destroy)
	Quotations and tenders (successful)	Completion of the contract + 1	Destroy
	Quotations and tenders (unsuccessful)	Retain in line with Privacy Statement in tender documents	Destroy
	Scales of fees and charges	Once replaced by new charges	Destroy
	Staff files - keep for 6 years after left employ unless through ill-health or industrial tribunal case, then keep until person is 65, unless ill-health retirement may be asbestos related, then keep until person 100 years of age.	6 or until age 65yrs or age 100yrs	Destroy
	Loan sanctions	4 (after end of loan)	Destroy
	Receipt books of all kinds	7	Destroy
	Bank statements including deposit/saving accounts, bank paying-in books, cheque stubs	Last completed audit year	Destroy
	Paid invoices and cheques	7	Destroy
	VAT records	7	Destroy
	Time sheets	Last completed audit year	Destroy
	Wage books	7	Destroy
	Members' allowances register	7	Destroy
	Records relating to parish halls, centres and recreation grounds, applications to hire, letting diaries, copies of bills to hirers and records of tickets issued	7	Destroy
	Precept books and contribution orders	7	Destroy

Sources of information and schedule guidelines

National Association of Local Councils Policy
Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977, No. 204, Section 12
Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1972
Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) guidance from 2022 (version 5)
ACSS Town and Parish Council records: document retention schedule 2025

Creating new documents for permanent retention

As many records kept by parish and town clerks and councils will be transferred to Kresen Kernow for permanent preservation, it would be useful if they could be created using good quality archival materials where possible, as well as being kept in sound conditions. A few basic guidelines about materials are given below.

Please ensure that all staples, clips, plastic wallets and folders are removed wherever possible before transferring documents to Kresen Kernow.

Paper

Many modern papers are made from wood pulp; they are acidic by nature and become brittle and darken when exposed to air pollution. Archival quality paper is available and, if possible, this should be used for key records which will be preserved permanently, such as council minutes.

Inks

Use good quality ink with a high carbon content. These may be described as permanent, pigment, document, Indian, calligraphers or archival. Art suppliers may stock some of these inks.

Holding sheets together

Brass or plastic paper clips are better than staples which are prone to rusting. Do not use Sellotape or glues, most of which are acidic and will cause problems in the future. Rubber bands perish and shrink causing damage to papers.

File covers

File covers can cause a lot of damage because they are often made from acidic boards, chemically unstable plastics and metals which can rust. If possible, use archival covers which consist of acid free board, inert plastics and avoid metals.

Plastic enclosures and lamination

Avoid storing documents in plastic folders, covers and wallets. If essential, only inert plastics such as polyester and polypropylene should be used. Never laminate documents.

Boxes

Should be acid free where possible but a good strong box with a lid will protect documents from dust and physical damage.

Electronic, digital, computer and audio-visual records

Most common digital records are safe to transfer these days, such as Word documents, pdfs and digital images (e.g. jpegs). If you have records in unusual file formats, or that have been created with older hardware or software, please seek advice from the ACSS on which formats are acceptable. All video or sound recordings should be weeded, sampled and digitised before transfer.

Storage and care of records

- Keep records in a cool, clean and dry environment and out of direct sunlight and non-UV-filtered artificial light as much as possible.
- Keep records away from outside walls which may be damp, windows and pipes that might leak, and off the floor where flood water might reach them.
- Keep records away from sources of heat, such as radiators, which will dry them out. Good ventilation is also important.
- Records held in unsuitable conditions can be quickly and badly damaged by mould and pest infestations that thrive in warm, damp conditions and by accelerated chemical reactions.

- Check your storage areas regularly to make sure they are well maintained and regularly cleaned.
- Use acid free wrapping paper and folders, if possible, but not brown paper, newspaper or other poor quality wrappings. Although they are practical in the short term, avoid using plastic wallets for long term storage.
- Avoid using paper clips, bulldog clips, sticky tape, adhesive labels, 'Blu-Tak' or rubber bands as they will rust or cause staining. Tie bundles and books with unbleached cotton tape instead.
- Protect photographs with inert polyester sleeves or other archival photograph envelopes or paper.
- Watch out for silverfish and other paper, parchment and leather-eating insects and beware of rodents.

Suppliers

- Conservation Resources UK Ltd: Conservation Resources (UK) Ltd
- Conservation by Design**:** Conservation & Archival Products & Supplies | CXD
- Preservation Equipment Ltd: Preservation Equipment Ltd - Archival and conservation products and supplies for museums, galleries, libraries and archives - Preservation Equipment Ltd
- G Ryder & Co Ltd: Archival, Preservation and conservation supplies – GRyderCo