

## Democratic Services: records management guidelines

This document is intended as guidance for the management (retention, archiving and destruction) of the various records held by Democratic Services (NB: because of the crossover of working arrangements, the guidelines also cover the work of Scrutiny). Those records lie at the heart of the outworking of the council's civic responsibilities, so it is important that an appropriate balance is attained between maintaining a proper account of the discharge of those functions and regularly destroying or archiving records that have become superfluous.

The guidance in this document is based on that produced for local authorities by the Records Management Society of Great Britain (RMS) and the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) Regulations 2012, plus advice from the council's own solicitors, and is in line with the records management policy agreed by Cabinet (Resources) Panel on 18 December 2012. The RMS offers the following as the purposes of such guidance:

- To assist in identifying records that may be worth preserving permanently as part of a local authority's archives.
- To prevent the premature destruction of records that need to be retained for a specified period to satisfy legal, financial and other requirements of public administration.
- To provide consistency for the destruction of those records not required permanently after specified periods.
- To promote improved Records Management practices within local government.

### Retention: onsite and archiving

The table below offers a simple summary of what the arrangements should be in respect of different sorts of records pertaining to different aspects of the team's work:

Record	Form	Retain on site	Archive	Destroy <sup>1</sup>
Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny and committee meetings <sup>2</sup>	Minutes	Current municipal year (or until the end of the current minute folder).	To be relocated at the beginning of a new municipal year or once a minute folder is full.	Never.
		Handwritten notes: until formal record is agreed.	Not required.	Once formal record is agreed.
Quasi-judicial meetings <sup>3</sup>	Minutes	Current municipal year (or until the end of the current minute folder).	To be relocated at the beginning of a new municipal year or once a minute folder is full.	Never.
		Handwritten notes: until formal record is agreed or for 12 months from date of meeting.	Not required.	Preferably once formal record is agreed, otherwise for 12 months from date of meeting.

<sup>1</sup> All records – handwritten or printed – will be destroyed using the Council's confidential waste destruction arrangements.

<sup>2</sup> This applies to external/partner meetings (e.g. West Midlands Passenger Transport Sub-committee) where the council is the data controller for the records.

<sup>3</sup> Licensing, planning, HR appeals and education appeals.

Record	Form	Retain on site	Archive	Destroy <sup>1</sup>
Other partnership and external meetings. <sup>4</sup>	Minutes, agendas, reports, etc.	Current municipal year (or until the end of the current minute folder).	Shouldn't be retained unless separate record is deemed to be required.	After three years.
		Handwritten notes: until formal record is agreed.	Not required.	Once formal record is agreed
Records of Mayoral activity (visits, etc.)	Diaries, correspondence, etc.	Current plus preceding years.	Not required.	After two years (i.e. 2011/12 records to be destroyed from April 2013).
Financial records.	Invoices, procurement papers, etc.	As required operationally, but probably not more than the current plus preceding years.	Files should be retained for six years.	After six years (i.e. 2006/7 records can be destroyed from April 2013).
		NB: it is not necessary to retain duplicate copies of records that will be held elsewhere (e.g. photocopies of approved invoices that have been paid).		
Charities (W H Jones Charity Fund and W H Jones Scholarship Fund).	Minutes and papers for meetings, records of decisions made and monies disbursed, etc.	Current municipal year (or until the end of the current minute folder).	To be relocated at the beginning of a new municipal year or once a minute folder is full.	Never.
		Handwritten notes: until formal record is agreed.	Not required.	Once formal record is agreed
Day-to-day operating papers.	Telephone messages, catalogues, trivial emails <sup>5</sup> , rejected invitations, requests for information/literature, outdated distribution lists, working papers for a report, superseded material.	For as long as operationally required.	Never.	Once they have no further operational use.

*NB1: at the time of writing, corporate guidance is awaited about marking of restricted/confidential reports, etc. and their transmission.*

*NB2: on some occasions, there will be no written notes of a meeting because the record is made direct into modern.gov or through some other electronic mechanism.*

*NB3: this document will be reviewed to include Electoral Services.*

<sup>4</sup> Where the council is not the data controller for the records.

<sup>5</sup> Meaning inconsequential correspondence such as setting-up meetings, providing information, etc. NB: this refers to any paper copies.