GNOSALL PARISH COUNCIL
(Including the Wards of Moreton and Knightley)

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DOCUMENT RETENTION & DISPOSAL POLICY

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Next Review:	**June 2026**

QUALITY PARISH COUNCIL

Introduction

The Council accumulates a vast amount of information and data during the course of its everyday activities. This includes data generated internally in addition to information obtained from individuals and external organisations. This information is recorded in various different types of document.

Records created and maintained by the Council are an important asset and as such measures are undertaken to safeguard this information. Properly managed records provide authentic and reliable evidence of the Council's transactions and are necessary to ensure it can demonstrate accountability.

Documents may be retained either in printed paper form referred to as 'Hard Copy' or in electronic forms. For the purpose of this policy, 'document' and 'record' refers to both hard copy and electronic records.

It is imperative that documents are retained for an adequate period of time. If documents are destroyed prematurely, the Council and individual officers concerned could face prosecution for not complying with legislation and it could cause operational difficulties, reputational damage and difficulty in defending any claim brought against the Council.

In contrast to the above, the Council should not retain documents longer than is necessary. Timely disposal should be undertaken to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations so that personal information is not retained longer than absolutely necessary.

Scope and Objective of the Policy

The aim of this document is to provide a working framework to determine which documents are:

- retained – and for how long; or
- disposed of – and if so by what means.

There are some records that are not needed to be kept at all or that are routinely destroyed in the course of business. This usually applies to information that is duplicated, unimportant or only of a short-term value. Unimportant documents and records of information include:

- 'With compliments' slips.
- Catalogues and trade journals.
- Non-acceptance of invitations.
- Trivial electronic mail messages that are not related to Council business.
- Requests for information such as maps, plans or advertising material.
- Out of date distribution lists.

Duplicated and superseded material such as stationery, manuals, drafts, forms, address books and reference copies of annual reports may be destroyed.

Records should not be destroyed if the information is considered material which could be used as evidence to prove that something has happened. Any disposal should comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Roles and Responsibilities for Document Retention and Disposal

Gnosall Parish Council is responsible for determining whether to retain or dispose of documents and will therefore undertake a review of documentation, at least on an annual basis, to ensure that any unnecessary documentation being held is disposed of under the General Data Protection Regulations.

The Council will ensure that all employees are aware of the retention/disposal schedule.

Document Retention Protocol

Gnosall Parish Council has in place a system for documenting the activities of its service, taking into account the legislative and regulatory environments in which it functions.

The Council endeavours to ensure that records of each activity are complete and accurate enough to allow employees and their successors to undertake appropriate actions in the context of their responsibilities to:

- Facilitate an audit or examination of its services by anyone so authorised.
- Protect the legal and other rights of the Council, its clients and any other persons affected by its actions.
- Verify individual consent to record, manage and record disposal of their personal data.
- Provide authenticity of the records so that the evidence derived from them can be shown to be credible and authoritative.

To achieve the above the Council has adopted the following principles:

- Records created and maintained are arranged in a record-keeping system that enables quick and easy retrieval of information under the General Data Protection Regulations.
- Documents that are no longer required for operational purposes but need to be retained are placed in either an archive for hard copies and/or an electronic copy archive.

Original documents required for HM Revenue and Customs Tax purposes are to be retained for six years.

Document Disposal Protocol

Before disposal of any documents they will be reviewed in accordance with the following:

- Is retention required to fulfil statutory or other regulatory requirements?
- Is retention required to meet the operational needs of the Council?
- Is retention likely to be required as evidence in the event of a dispute?
- Is retention desirable because the document or record is of historic interest or intrinsic value?

When documents are scheduled for disposal, the method of disposal should be appropriate to the nature and sensitivity of the documents concerned. A record of the disposal will be kept to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.

Documents can be disposed of by any of the following methods:

- Non-confidential records - place in waste bin for disposal.
- Confidential records or records giving personal information - shred documents.
- Deletion of computer records by secure means.
- Transmission of records to an external body such as the County Records Office or local heritage group.

A Record Book should be maintained of appropriate disposals and contain the following information:

- The name of the document destroyed.
- The date the document was destroyed.
- The method of disposal.