DATA AND RECORDS RETENTION POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Diss Town Council is committed to managing its records in an efficient, consistent, secure and lawful manner.

The Council recognises that records are a valuable asset and are required to support transparency, accountability, effective decision-making, legal compliance and the provision of Council services.

The Council will retain records only for as long as necessary to meet legal, regulatory, operational and historical requirements and will ensure that records are disposed of securely when no longer required.

This policy applies to all Council records regardless of format, including paper records, electronic documents, emails, photographs, scanned records, databases, audio recordings and information stored within Council-approved cloud services.

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2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure records are managed consistently throughout their lifecycle.
- Comply with legal and statutory obligations.
- Protect personal and confidential information.
- Support transparency and accountability.
- Reduce unnecessary storage and administrative burden.
- Ensure records of historical significance are appropriately preserved.
- Establish clear arrangements for retention, archiving and disposal.

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3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Councillors;
- Employees;
- Volunteers;
- Contractors acting on behalf of the Council; and
- All records created, received or maintained in connection with Council business.

The policy applies equally to records stored:

- In physical form;
- On Council devices;
- Within Microsoft 365 services;
- In SharePoint;
- In OneDrive;
- Within approved software systems; and
- In archive storage.

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4. Legal Framework

This policy supports compliance with:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR);
- Data Protection Act 2018;
- Freedom of Information Act 2000;
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004;
- Limitation Act 1980;
- Local Government Act 1972;
- Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
- Other relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

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5. Principles of Records Management

The Council will ensure that records are:

5.1 Accurate

Records shall be maintained accurately and updated where necessary.

5.2 Accessible

Records shall be organised to allow prompt retrieval when required for operational, legal or statutory purposes.

5.3 Secure

Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be used to protect records from:

- Unauthorised access;
- Loss;
- Damage;
- Alteration; and
- Unauthorised disclosure.

5.4 Retained Appropriately

Records shall be retained only for legitimate business, legal or historical purposes.

5.5 Disposed of Securely

Records no longer required shall be securely destroyed in accordance with this policy and the approved retention schedule.

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6. Responsibilities

6.1 Full Council

The Council is responsible for:

- Adopting this policy;
- Ensuring adequate resources are available to implement it; and
- Reviewing the policy periodically.

6.2 Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is responsible for:

- Overall implementation of this policy;
- Maintaining the retention schedule;
- Authorising disposal and archiving arrangements where appropriate;
- Ensuring staff are aware of retention requirements; and
- Monitoring compliance.

6.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- Creating and maintaining accurate records;
- Managing records in accordance with this policy;
- Following retention requirements; and
- Reporting any information governance concerns.

6.4 Councillors

Councillors shall ensure Council records held by them are managed appropriately and disposed of securely when no longer required.

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7. Storage and Security

Council records shall be stored within approved Council systems and locations.

Personal or confidential records shall be protected through appropriate access controls, permissions and security measures.

Where records contain personal data, storage and processing must comply with the Council's Data Protection Policy and Information Security Policy.

Council records should not routinely be stored within personal email accounts, personal cloud storage services or unauthorised systems.

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8. Electronic Records

Electronic records shall be stored within approved Council systems wherever practicable.

These may include:

- Microsoft 365;
- SharePoint;
- OneDrive;
- Finance systems;
- Cemetery management systems;
- Asset management systems; and
- Other approved Council platforms.

Reasonable measures shall be taken to ensure electronic records remain accessible for the duration of their retention period.

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9. Email Management

Emails that form part of the Council's official business record shall be retained in accordance with the approved retention schedule.

Staff should ensure important emails are retained within appropriate Council filing systems where necessary.

Routine, duplicated, transitory or non-business emails should be deleted when no longer required.

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10. Retention of Records

Records shall be retained in accordance with the Council's approved Records Retention Schedule.

Retention periods are based upon:

- Legislative requirements;
- Regulatory requirements;
- Operational needs;
- Financial obligations;
- Limitation periods for legal claims; and
- Historical significance.

The retention schedule shall form Appendix A to this policy.

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11. Disposal of Records

Records shall not be retained indefinitely without justification.

Once the applicable retention period has expired, records shall be:

- Securely destroyed;
- Permanently deleted; or
- Archived where there is an identified historical, legal or administrative requirement.

Paper records containing confidential information shall be shredded or disposed of through an approved confidential waste service.

Electronic records shall be securely deleted in accordance with Council procedures.

Where litigation, audits, investigations, insurance claims or information requests are ongoing, disposal shall be suspended until the matter is concluded.

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12. Archiving

Records of historical significance may be permanently retained as part of the Council archive.

Examples may include:

- Signed minutes;
- Deeds;
- Legal agreements of continuing significance;
- Historic photographs;
- Significant project records; and
- Documents that contribute to the history of Diss.

Archived records should be clearly identified and stored appropriately.

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13. Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests

Records required for:

- Freedom of Information requests;
- Environmental Information Regulations requests;
- Subject Access Requests;
- Internal reviews;
- Investigations; or
- Legal proceedings

shall be preserved until the matter has been fully concluded.

No records shall be altered, deleted or destroyed where their retention may be required for such purposes.

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14. Breaches

Failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the Council's Information Governance arrangements and may result in disciplinary action where appropriate.

Serious breaches must be reported to the Town Clerk immediately.

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15. Monitoring and Review

The Town Clerk shall periodically review the effectiveness of this policy and the accompanying retention schedule.

This policy shall be reviewed every four years or sooner if required by legislative, regulatory or operational changes.

Appendix A - Records Retention Schedule

This Retention Schedule forms part of the Diss Town Council Data and Records Retention Policy and should be read alongside that policy.

Where a statutory requirement exists, the statutory period shall take precedence over this schedule.

Records subject to ongoing litigation, insurance claims, audits, investigations, Freedom of Information requests, Environmental Information Regulations requests or Subject Access Requests must not be destroyed until the matter has been fully concluded.

A1. Governance and Democratic Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Signed Council and Committee Minutes	Permanent	Archive
Agendas and supporting reports	6 years	Secure disposal
Councillor declarations of acceptance of office	Term of office + 6 years	Secure disposal
Register of Members' Interests	Current version plus 6 years after ceasing office	Secure disposal
Code of Conduct complaints	6 years after closure	Secure disposal
Election documents received from Returning Officer	As directed by Returning Officer	Secure disposal
Parish Poll records	6 years	Secure disposal
Committee papers not incorporated into formal records	6 years	Secure disposal

A2. Financial Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Annual accounts and AGAR documentation	Permanent	Archive
VAT records	6 years plus current year	Secure disposal
Bank statements	6 years plus current year	Secure disposal
Invoices received	6 years plus current year	Secure disposal
Paid invoices issued	6 years plus current year	Secure disposal
Payroll records	6 years	Secure disposal
Pension records	12 years after employment ends	Secure disposal
Expense claims	6 years plus current year	Secure disposal
Grant application records	6 years after final decision	Secure disposal

Insurance claims files	7 years after closure	Secure disposal
Asset Register	Permanent	Archive

A3. Personnel and Employment Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Personnel files	6 years after employment ends	Confidential destruction
Contracts of employment	6 years after employment ends	Confidential destruction
Recruitment records (successful applicant)	Transfer to personnel file	N/A
Recruitment records (unsuccessful applicants)	12 months	Confidential destruction
Right to work checks	Employment plus 2 years	Confidential destruction
Training records	Employment plus 6 years	Confidential destruction
Disciplinary records	6 years after closure	Confidential destruction
Grievance records	6 years after closure	Confidential destruction
Sickness records	6 years after employment ends	Confidential destruction
Occupational health records	6 years after employment ends	Confidential destruction

A4. Health and Safety Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Accident books and accident reports	3 years from last entry (adults)	Confidential destruction
RIDDOR reports	3 years from date of report	Confidential destruction
Risk assessments	Current plus 6 years	Secure disposal
COSHH assessments	Current plus 6 years	Secure disposal
Fire Risk Assessments	Current plus 6 years	Secure disposal
Asbestos surveys and registers	Permanent while premises held	Archive
Equipment inspection records	6 years	Secure disposal
PAT testing records	6 years	Secure disposal
Training records relating to H&S	Employment plus 6 years	Secure disposal

A5. Property, Buildings and Asset Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Property deeds	Permanent	Archive
Leases and licences	Term plus 12 years	Archive where significant
Building plans	Permanent	Archive
Planning permissions relating to Council assets	Permanent	Archive
Maintenance records	6 years	Secure disposal
Inspection records	6 years	Secure disposal
Utility records	6 years	Secure disposal
Vehicle records	Life of vehicle plus 6 years	Secure disposal

A6. Contracts and Procurement

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Tender documents (successful)	Contract term plus 6 years	Secure disposal
Tender documents (unsuccessful)	2 years	Secure disposal
Procurement evaluations	6 years after award	Secure disposal
Contracts and service agreements	Contract term plus 6 years	Secure disposal
Contractor insurance documentation	Contract term plus 6 years	Secure disposal

A7. Cemetery Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Burial registers	Permanent	Archive
Grave ownership records	Permanent	Archive
Burial applications	Permanent	Archive
Memorial permits	Permanent	Archive
Cemetery maps and plans	Permanent	Archive
Cemetery administration records	Permanent where linked to graves	Archive

A8. Market Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Trader applications	Duration of licence plus 6 years	Secure disposal
Market agreements	Duration of agreement plus 6 years	Secure disposal
Market payment records	6 years plus current year	Secure disposal

Enforcement records	6 years after closure	Secure disposal

A9. Data Protection and Information Governance

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Subject Access Request files	3 years after closure	Confidential destruction
Freedom of Information requests	3 years after closure	Secure disposal
Environmental Information Regulation requests	3 years after closure	Secure disposal
Personal data breach records	6 years after closure	Confidential destruction
Information Asset Register	Current plus 6 years	Archive
Data Protection Impact Assessments	Life of activity plus 6 years	Secure disposal
Privacy notices	Current plus 6 years	Archive

A10. CCTV Records

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Routine CCTV footage	30 days unless required for investigation	Secure deletion
CCTV footage retained for investigation	Conclusion of investigation plus 6 years	Secure deletion
CCTV maintenance records	6 years	Secure disposal

A11. Communications and Public Relations

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Press releases	Permanent	Archive
Newsletters	Permanent	Archive
Public consultation responses	6 years after project completion	Secure disposal
Website records of historical significance	Permanent	Archive
Routine social media content	As required operationally	Secure deletion

A12. Electronic Records and Emails

Record Type	Retention Period	Disposal Action
Routine administrative emails	Up to 2 years	Secure deletion
Emails forming part of official Council business	Retain in line with relevant record category	Secure deletion

Duplicated electronic records	Until superseded	Secure deletion
Back-up copies	In accordance with ICT arrangements	Automated deletion
Shared drive and SharePoint records	In line with relevant record category	Secure deletion

A13. Historic Archives

The following shall normally be retained permanently:

- Signed Council and Committee Minutes.
- Annual accounts and AGAR records.
- Burial registers.
- Property deeds.
- Civic and ceremonial records.
- Historic photographs.
- Significant project and town history records.
- Documents identified by the Town Clerk as having permanent historical value.