

DOCUMENT RETENTION, DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT AND IT REQUIREMENTS.

Background

Over the years the Parish Council has amassed a huge volume of paper documents. Some date back to the 1950s. They are stored in the Clerk's garage. They fill 6 filing cabinets drawers, a cupboard and 5 plastic crates with various cardboard boxes containing planning applications.

The documents are not catalogued. Some are bundled with ribbon. The filing system has not been reviewed in the last 10 years with new files simply added as required or documents left to accumulate. The Clerk also has files on her computer dating back to 2003. These are not backed up.

The Clerk has been looking for a course through CAPALC or LCPAS on document storage and archiving but to date nothing has been offered. LAPC has kept more than it needs to. There is NALC guidance dated 2010 on statutory requirements and recommendations on what items should be stored and for how long.

Keeping so many paper records not only takes up space but there is a risk to the Parish Council that they could be destroyed in flood or fire. At some stage they will need to be handed on to a new Clerk. It is very difficult to access them to address queries. If there was a major catastrophe without a catalogue /and a more organised system it will be impossible to know what has been lost.

It is proposed that the Parish Council establishes a process for cataloguing and managing documents with a view to keeping only those that are required for statutory purposes or as recommended. The proposal is that these should be scanned and stored electronically.

A decision will be required at some stage on documents that do not meet these criteria. In some cases there will be alternative sources such as the SDCD planning database and Local Authority and government databases for key policy documents and other organisations' web sites for policy information. The Parish Council might want to retain some as historical records. The basis for this and their location would need to be agreed.

Looking forward.

- The majority of Parish Council correspondence and documentation is now electronic. If required this can be archived relatively quickly. .
- Public access: The Parish Council website provides a repository for meeting minutes and agendas. Space permitting meeting papers could be left on the website for 12 months. The parish council may wish to consider what else should be made publicly available linking this to FOI policies and the spirit of the transparency code
- Access the Parish councillors. What, if any, documents that are available via the website and will in future be made publicly available might parish councillors want to access in order to carry out their responsibilities as parish councillors?
- Older agendas and meeting papers, statutory items and items with a recommendation to store them could be archived electronically on a system such as Google Drive. Many will need to be scanned in.

The task: .

This will not be achieved overnight!

- **Improving security of existing electronic filing:** The Parish Council needs a robust method of backing up which it does not have at present. (See risk register) An immediate solution is urgently required. A longer term solution might be to consider i-Cloud archiving such as that offered through Google and Windows.
- **Cataloguing.** To be included in scope
- **Document destruction.** The parish council will need to agree an approach/ policy to document destruction. The majority of documents will have been public documents. It is unlikely that the Parish Council would need to consider the costs of disposal of confidential waste. The Clerk has access to a shredder for small volumes of paper.

Cost**1. IT Requirements**

- A reasonably specced computer
- Scanner capable of taking several pages rather than a single page as at present.
- Backup system

See attached WOC quotation to cover a laptop, backup device and a scanner. Note the Clerk may have part-time access to a suitable multipage scanner. It is proposed not to purchase one at present. **£818 exc VAT**

2. Clerk's Time.

This will be in addition to the Clerk's current hours (6 hours a week). If half a day (4 hrs) a week over 50 weeks is assumed the cost at the 2017 NALC hourly rate will be approximately **£2300**. I suggest that it is recorded separately. We will need to consider how best to manage payroll and tax consequences. Possibly paid quarterly based on records. The 2017-18 budget plan does not allow for any additional Clerk time. Options are to update the budget plan or to agree to allocate some funds from reserves specifically for this project plus. The allocated reserve might also cover some contingency for admin support. I suggest £3000 in 2017-18

3. Archiving System

The options will need to be considered. Google Drive or Microsoft One drive have had good reports. Free for 5GB with monthly charges for more memory. Windows 365 is another option.

Other considerations/assumptions.

- The Clerk has time to take on this extra task
- The Clerk has space in her home to accommodate sorting and filtering a large volume of papers.
- Until the job is started it is hard to estimate how long it will take. Assuming the work starts in 2017-18 there may be budget consequences into 2018-19

The Parish Council asked to agree

1. To purchase a new computer and backup system. The Parish Council's IT fund stands at £889.71
2. To investigate and agree on the use of electronic archiving such as Google I drive
3. To budget £3000, from allocated reserves for additional time in 2017-18 for this project.

4. To adopt the best practice guidance from NALC dated 2010 (unless superseded. Reply from CAPALC awaited) as the basis of its document retention policy.
5. Clerk to continue looking out for relevant courses on document retention and document management.

Genevieve Dalton
Clerk
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