



Retention and Disposal of Documents Policy

1. Introduction

The Parish Council has a corporate responsibility to maintain its records and record management systems in accordance with the regulatory environment and recognises that the efficient management of its records is necessary to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations and to contribute to the effective overall management of the Parish Council. The Parish Council needs to keep accurate and timely records for the appropriate period of time, making sure that obsolete records are securely disposed of in an appropriate manner. The aim of this document is to provide the policy framework through which this effective management can be achieved and audited, and to provide a consistent approach to the way the Parish Council handles its records and provide a clear set of guidelines.

This policy applies to all records created, received or maintained by the Parish Council in the course of carrying out its functions. Records are defined as all those documents which facilitate the business carried out by the Parish Council and which are thereafter retained (for a set period) to provide evidence of its transactions or activities. These records may be created, received or maintained in hard copy or electronically. A small percentage of the Parish Council's records will be selected for permanent preservation as part of the Council's archives and for historical research.

The person with overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy is the Clerk to the Parish Council, and s/he is required to manage the Council's records in such a way as to promote compliance with this policy so that information will be retrieved easily, appropriately and in a timely manner. The Clerk is expected to manage the current record keeping systems using the retention schedule and to take account of the different retention periods when creating new record keeping systems.

A Retention Schedule identifies records that may be worth preserving permanently as a part of a local authority archive as well as preventing the premature destruction of records that need to be retained for a specific legal, financial or statutory period. Many retention periods are determined by statute. It lists the records that need to be kept, details the function of each record, the type of records that may fall within this function and the length of time the Council should hold the record before taking disposal or archive action. It contains recommended retention periods for records created and maintained by the Parish Council and refers to all information regardless of the media in which it is stored, such as manual files, photographs, electronic files, tapes or microfiche.

2. Retention Schedule

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Parish Council is required to maintain a retention schedule listing the record series which it creates in the course of its business. The retention schedule lays down the length of time which the record needs to be retained and the action which should be taken when it is of no further administrative use. Documents that are no longer required for administrative reasons should be shredded and disposed of.



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This retention schedule refers to record series regardless of the media in which they are stored.

Document	Minimum	Retention Reason
Minute Books / Minutes	Indefinite	Archive
Accounts / Annual return	7 years	Audit
Bank statements	7 years	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit	Management
Paying in books	Last completed audit	Management
Tenders / Quotations	7 years	Audit
Paid invoices	7 years	Audit
VAT records	7 years	Audit
Salary records	7 years	Audit
Tax & NI records	7 years	Audit
Insurance policies	2 years	Audit
Certificate of Employers Liability	40 years	Audit / legal
Certificate of Public Liability	40 years	Audit / legal
Assets register	7 years	Audit
Deeds / Leases	Indefinite	Archive
Electoral Register	1 year	As replaced
Personnel records	6 years after employment ceases	Audit / management
Declaration of acceptance	Term of office + 1 year	Management
Register of interests	Term of office + 1 year	Management
Complaints	1 year	Management
General information	6 months	Management
Routine correspondence and emails	6 months	Management

3. Planning Applications

All planning applications and relevant decision notices are available at South Oxfordshire District Council. There is no requirement to retain duplicates locally. All Parish Council recommendations in connection with these applications are recorded in the Council Minutes and are retained indefinitely and are held on the SODC Planning Portal. Correspondence received in connection with applications will be retained as stated above.

4. Review

This document was approved for use at the meeting of the Parish Council on 11 December 2023, it shall be reviewed periodically.

Signed:

Dated: 11 December 2023

A Smith, Chairman



Posters and Signs Policy

1. Introduction

The Parish Council acknowledges the importance of advertising signs for village businesses and event organisers, but must also consider the impact upon the appearance of a rural village environment, wholly within the Chiltern's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This policy sets out the general principles and approach that the Parish Council will follow in respect of posters and signs in the Parish. At the end of this Policy we give General background information on advertising regulations based on *The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007*

2. Scope of the policy

There are several areas of advertising which the Parish Council seek to monitor for the benefit of the whole village/parish:

- fly posting,
- signs on premises,
- signage in public spaces,
- 'A Board' pavement signs.

3. Sign size limits

Temporary notices for a local and charitable event – this does not include commercial events - must not be more than 0.6m² in area – see Class 3(D) below - for reference, A1 size is 594mm x 841mm = 0.499m².

Larger banners may be allowed for specific events, but only if pre-authorized by the Clerk of the Parish Council.

2. Removal of posters and signs

The Parish Council will generally adopt a pro-active policy of removing posters and signs as appropriate.

The following posters, flyers and signs will be removed immediately:

- posters/flyers/signs that the Parish Council deems are considered to be a hazard or distraction to road users, specifically any at the cross roads of Wallingford Road with Reading Road, High Street and Elvendon Road
- posters/flyers/signs on trees
- posters/flyers/signs For events to be held outside of the Local Area (defined as Goring, Streatley, South Stoke, and Moulsoford)
- commercial posters, though sponsored boards are allowed if advertising charitable events and subject to the time limitations below.



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Organisers of events are reminded of the need to obtain the prior permission of the owners of relevant telegraph poles, other structures etc. Posters and signs for one-off events due to be held in the Local Area are permitted, subject to removal by organisers once the event is over. If this is not done posters displayed by those organisations may, on subsequent occasions, be removed immediately by the Parish Council. In particular the Parish Council may remove such material

- attached to telegraph poles, other structures, etc. more than 2 weeks prior to the event, or 7 days after the event.
- any that are up more than 21 days, or otherwise out of date.

3. Review of the policy

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Reviewed 11 December 2023

Signature

Chair A Smith



GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ADVERTISING REGULATIONS

from The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007

Outdoor advertisements are dealt with under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. The Local Planning Authority (South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC)) is responsible for deciding whether a particular advertisement should be permitted or not. The regulations cover the wide range of advertisements and signs which are commonly seen outdoors. Please see Appendix A below for the full list.

All advertisements, whether they require consent or not, are subject to the standard conditions in Schedule 2 to the Regulations. These are:

- no advertisement is to be displayed without the permission of the owner of the site on which they are displayed (this includes the highway authority, if the sign is to be placed on highway land);
- no advertisement is to be displayed which would obscure, or hinder the interpretation of, official road, rail, waterway or aircraft signs, or otherwise make hazardous the use of these types of transport;
- any advertisement must be maintained in a condition that does not impair the visual amenity of the site;
- any advertisement hoarding or structure is to be kept in a condition which does not endanger the public; and
- if an advertisement is required to be removed, the site must be left in a condition that does not endanger the public or impair visual amenity.

Under the Town & Country Planning Regulations 2007 there are 16 specified classes of advertisement that are 'deemed consent is granted' and that can be displayed without the need to make an application to SODC. These include the following that are relevant to our Parish.

Class 1 – Functional advertisement by public bodies – this would include the Parish noticeboard.

Class 2(c) – Notices or signs relating to Public Houses which are displayed at the premises- only one sign is allowed, without Planning Permission, on each frontage and must not be more than 2m² in area.

Class 3(d) –Temporary notices for a local and charitable event– this does not include Commercial events. The advert must not be more than 0.6m² in area.

Class 5 – Advertisement on business premises (not on public property) for goods or services - which are available at the premises. There are restrictions on the size of letters and location of the sign on the premises but these would not normally cause a problem for the business.

Class 6 –Advertisements on forecourts of business premises–adverts allowed under Class 5



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above are also allowed to be displayed on a private forecourt or boundary structure which encloses that forecourt.

There are also classes of advertisement to which certain restrictions do not apply though they may have specific conditions or limitations. Below are those that are most likely to be relevant for the Parish:-

Class A - An advertisement displayed on enclosed land is permitted without approval though it must not be visible from outside the enclosed land or from any place to which the public have right of access.

Class B - An advertisement displayed on or in a vehicle normally employed as a moving vehicle is permitted, as long as the vehicle is not used principally for the display of advertisements.

Class D - An advertisement displayed on an article for sale or on the container in, or from which an article is sold is permitted as long as 1) the advertisement refers only to the article for sale, 2) is not illuminated, and 3) does not exceed 0.1m².

Class E – An advertisement relating specifically to a pending election or referendum. This advertisement must be removed within 14 days after the close of the poll.

Class G – A traffic sign, authorised by the local Highways Authority.

Class H – A country's national flag; the flag of the Commonwealth, the European Union or United Nations, any English County or of any saint - though neither the flag nor flagstaff may display any advertisement additional to the design of the flag.

Class I – An advertisement displayed inside a building as long as it is not illuminated and not within 1m of any external door, window or opening through which it would be visible from outside the building.

APPENDIX A

The advertising control system covers a wide range of advertisements and signs including:-

- Posters and notices
- Placards and boards
- Fascia signs and projecting signs
- Pole signs and canopy signs
- Models and devices
- Advance signs and directional signs
- Estate agents' boards
- Captive balloon advertising
- Flag advertisements
- Price markers and price displays
- Traffic signs
- Town and village name signs



ENVIRONMENTAL & SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Goring-on-Thames Parish Council aims to carry out its activities with environmental efficiency, actively seeking to protect and enhance the local environment and biodiversity within its area of operation whilst endeavouring to ensure wider adverse environmental impact does not occur as a result.

2. Context

The Parish Council recognises that a climate emergency has been declared at national, regional and within some organisations, local level.

The Parish Council will consider the impact its activities have on both climate change and biodiversity issues and will endeavour to introduce measures that either mitigate negative outcomes or actively support beneficial outcomes, where this is practicable and affordable within the resources and financial capabilities of council.

The Parish Council will specifically consider the following:

1. the impact that operating its assets has on the environment,
2. the impact that the goods and services it procures, including the environmental commitment of its suppliers, has on the environment,
3. where possible and appropriate, replace environmentally inefficient assets with environmentally friendly alternatives
4. the impact that execution of the Parish Council's activities may have on the environment.

3. Aims

In all its activities the Parish Council will aim to;

1. Minimise the consumption of all resources used in its operations, particularly in respect of the buildings and equipment it uses and the administration of its activities.
2. Seek, wherever possible, to only use contractors and suppliers who have their own environmental policy, which is continually reviewed, up-dated and measured against recognised, best practice examples.
3. where possible, affordable and commensurate with Parish Council powers and duties, support local initiatives aimed at climate change and or, biodiversity protection or enhancement.



4. Principles

Goring-on-Thames Parish Council will:

1. Commit to the principles of stewardship, inclusivity, integrity, and transparency and leading by example in the field of sustainability.
 - a. Regularly update and improve standards in light of increased understanding and knowledge
2. Commit to the sustainability and environmental elements of all relevant legislation and regulations, including the Goring Neighbourhood Plan and the UN Paris Agreement.
3. Promote walking, cycling and public transport to visitors and residents.
4. Encourage use of local and sustainable products and services, especially food.
5. Respect and protect natural resources by practicing conservation and good management by
 - a. Improving utility consumption through investing in energy technology (e.g. low-power street lighting) and water efficiency (e.g. finding alternatives to tap water for watering council vegetation).
 - b. Recycling and reusing waste materials where possible.
 - c. Avoid the creation of unnecessary waste by adhering to a policy of considered, strategic purchasing
6. Commit to the prevention of pollution, and compliance with relevant legislation and other requirements such as using the services of sympathetic contractors, and lighting solutions that do not cause wildlife-disturbing light pollution and disposing of all necessary waste through safe and responsible methods
7. Send minimum organic waste to landfill, e.g. use compost heaps on GPC property for grass-cuttings, etc.
8. Commit to protecting the village's architectural and historic aspects including protecting the river from unsustainable development.
9. Encourage wildlife such as birds and bees via the use of suitable plants including perennials and self-seeding annuals.
10. Encourage its Members and employees to take responsibility for ensuring that the best environmental policy is used and adhered to at all times

5. Review

This document was approved for use at the meeting of the Parish Council on 11 December 2023, it shall be reviewed annually.

Signed:

Dated: 11 December 2023

A Smith, Chairman

RESPONSE TO THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY

30 October 2023

INTRODUCTION - STATUTORY DUTY

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the [Government guidance](#) requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting before the end of 2023.
- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Such steps may include:

- reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities, e.g. potential for jointly-supported wildlife corridors.
- making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
- carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area, potentially involving residents in a ["BioBlitz"](#)
- gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity, such as from [Caring for God's Acre](#) and the [Eco Church initiative](#) in respect of churchyards
- drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

All these steps may inform an agreed biodiversity policy for which a model example is attached. Guidance for town and parish councils on developing a [local nature action plan](#) has been published by South Gloucestershire Council, as well as a [field guide](#) for those with little or no ecological background.

MODEL BIODIVERSITY POLICY

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, [*insert council name*] (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

DEFINITION

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

The Full Council and any committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the *parish / town* to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

ACTIONS

Planning applications

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.

- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

Land and property management

The Council will:

- carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's [regulations for plant protection products](#).
- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Partners

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on **xx** (Minute reference **yy**) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate / each year at the Annual Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

DRAFT MODEL ACTION PLAN

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
Whole council area	Raise local awareness of biodiversity.	Gain local support for action.	Ongoing	Newsletter, social media, website
Protect and support biodiversity	Encourage suitable planting to support biodiversity.	Connect & diversify habitats to meet the needs of a variety of wildlife species	Ongoing	Mapping
Cemetery / churchyard	<p>Additional planting</p> <p>Maintain and renew bird boxes as required.</p> <p>Adopt a plan to support wildlife and diversity whilst maintaining the site in a way which enables visitors to experience quiet and calm remembrance.</p> <p>Leave leaf litter and dead vegetation wherever possible as a habitat for invertebrates.</p>	<p>Increased diversity of habitats and food sources</p> <p>Increased cover for invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals.</p> <p>Encouraging insects particularly butterflies and bees.</p>		
Recreation ground	<p>Sympathetically maintain hedging.</p> <p>Leave some areas unmown.</p> <p>Only use environment friendly pesticides where absolutely necessary and only in ideal weather conditions.</p>	<p>Food sources and cover</p> <p>Encourages insects.</p> <p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats.</p>		
Common / other open spaces	<p>Adopt a management plan.</p> <p>Encourage residents to remove litter and pick up after their dogs.</p> <p>Work with the county council on verge management, favouring biodiversity but noting which areas may need cutting for highway safety.</p> <p>Encourage residents to adopt areas to look after, making it clear what is expected e.g. peat free compost and no chemicals.</p>	<p>Sustain and enhance natural habitats.</p> <p>Protecting habitats</p> <p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Regular attention.</p>		

SITE / OBJECTIVE	ACTION	OUTCOME	TARGET (Years)	REPORTING / PUBLICITY
The Built Landscape	<p>Ensure that planning consultations are considered against the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan</p> <p>Encourage hedgehog/small animal highways with permeable boundaries</p>	<p>Protecting/enhancing habitats</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p>	Ongoing	
Increase community awareness of biodiversity	<p>Ask residents for their views on what they would like to be done to conserve biodiversity within the parish.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the importance of gardens as habitats for wildlife, with possible actions highlighted in the parish magazine.</p> <p>Create a page on the parish council website for photographs / information / links</p> <p>Encourage local farmers to contribute.</p> <p>Provide seed bombs / bulbs etc. for residents' use.</p> <p>Discourage floodlighting.</p>	<p>Engagement/ownership of biodiversity</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Protect nocturnal animals.</p>	Ongoing	Neighbourhood plan consultation
Support Community Projects	<p>Support hedge/tree planting in any appropriate areas.</p> <p>Work in partnership with the school to develop young people's awareness of the environment around them.</p> <p>Consider events and offer volunteering opportunities to support biodiversity, working with local organisations.</p>	<p>Extending habitats.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote biodiversity.</p>		