

Document Control

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Originator: **Anthony Sawyer, Senior Archivist – Records Management, Herefordshire Council**

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Records Management Policy

1. Introduction

Herefordshire Council recognises that efficient records management is a key factor in the effective and efficient administration of the daily business operations of the organisation. Ensuring that records are properly created and stored, and that records are easily accessible, helps staff to maintain and extend levels of high performance. This, in turn, gives the community confidence in the competency of Herefordshire Council. All records created by staff are the property of Herefordshire Council, and should be maintained in accordance with this policy.

2. Scope

This policy aims to ensure that records are managed in accordance with all relevant legislation, standards and official guidance, including:

- Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- BS 4783 British Standard for Storage, Transportation and Maintenance of Media for use in Data Processing and Information Storage
- BS 7799 British Standard for Information Security Management
- BS ISO 15489 International Standard for Information and Documentation – Records Management
- BSI BIP 0008 Code of Practice for Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically
- Performance and Innovation Unit Report on Privacy and Data-Sharing: The Way Forward for Public Services
- Retention Guidelines for Local Authorities: A Guide Produced by the Local Government Group of the Records Management Society of Great Britain 2003

This policy applies to all recorded information of Herefordshire Council, in any medium – paper, electronic, microform, audio or film.

This policy applies to all employees of Herefordshire Council, and those acting as its agents in the course of a Council activity who will be depositing records of the work with the Council to retain.

3. Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Herefordshire Council

- creates records that are authentic and reliable, and can therefore provide evidence for decisions and activities
- stores records securely and in such a way as to make them easy to search and retrieve
- protects confidential records, and vital records without which Herefordshire Council would be seriously inhibited in carrying out its business or statutory functions
- disposes appropriately of records that are no longer required for the business and/or statutory use of the authority

4. Roles and responsibilities

All staff are responsible for ensuring that the records they create and keep are maintained according to the record keeping and filing system for their section, transferred where appropriate to the Modern Records Unit or Herefordshire Archive Service following established transfer procedures, and destroy records in accordance with the Council's Records Retention Schedules, which are found on the Intranet Info Library under "Records Management".

The Senior Archivist - Records Management will provide advice, training and guidance on all aspects of records management, and is responsible for creating a corporate record keeping and filing system, and for maintaining the Records Retention Schedules.

The Information Policy Group is responsible for ensuring that records management is linked with other information management policies, practices and projects.

Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that records are managed in accordance with this policy, and that staff are aware of their responsibilities for keeping records.

The Chief Executive Management Team is responsible for approving the duties for records management as set out in this policy.

5. Record Creation

Each section of Herefordshire Council must have in place a system of keeping records that document its activities and decisions.

Each record of an activity or decision must be complete and accurate enough to

- allow current staff and their successors to undertake appropriate actions in the context of their responsibilities
- facilitate auditing
- protect the legal and other rights of Herefordshire Council, its clients, and any other person affected by its actions
- provide authenticity so that the evidence derived from them is shown to be credible and authoritative.

A corporate record keeping and filing system will be developed to ensure that records contain appropriate descriptions (metadata) to enable them to be understood and operated efficiently, particularly in the case of electronic records. Procedures for referencing, titling and indexing will be developed to accompany any security classification for records.

6. Record Storage

Records must be stored so that they can be easily located and retrieved. A system for monitoring the movement and location of records must therefore be in place in all sections of Herefordshire Council, which will provide an audit trail.

Records must be stored in areas that are secure, dry and easily accessible. Records must not be stored in areas where they could pose a danger to health and safety, where they risk being damaged by floods or leaks, or where they are difficult to retrieve (such as heaped in a box on the floor in a corridor). Records sent for storage in the Modern Records Unit or the Herefordshire Record Office must follow established procedures for transfer, including what records to send, how to box paper records correctly, and how to document what records are sent.

Records that are confidential must have controls on who accesses them to avoid them being seen by persons unauthorised to do so, particularly in the light of legislation such as the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. They must be marked as confidential following the authority's security classifications outlined in the Information Security policy, *Security and Confidentiality in Herefordshire Council*. Records of a sensitive nature should be locked away in the case of paper records, or password protected in the case of electronic records.

A register of vital records should be kept, and action to salvage vital records should be included in disaster recovery plans for each service. Vital records are those records which, if lost, would prevent a service or function from being able to resume activity for a considerable period of time including hindering and disadvantaging the Council in any Legal proceedings.

7. Record Retention and Disposal

Records must be closed as soon as they have ceased to be of active use other than for reference purposes. In order to ensure that paper files are manageable and their contents accessible, files must be closed before five years; after this time, if action continues, a further file must be opened. An indication that a record has been closed must be shown on the record itself, as well as being noted in any index or database of files.

The Senior Archivist – Records Management will carry out regular record surveys of all sections of Herefordshire Council in order to maintain the authority's Record Retention Schedule. The schedule must be used to annually review how long records need to be stored for, and to destroy or transfer records to the Herefordshire Record Office once they have reached the end of their retention period. A list must be kept of all records destroyed or transferred.

Confidential records must be destroyed in accordance with the authority's security classification guidelines outlined in the Information Security policy, *Security and Confidentiality in Herefordshire Council* – paper records must be shredded or incinerated, floppy disks and CDs destroyed by cutting in half, hard drives degaussed as arranged by IT Services only and certificates raised confirming the cleansing of hard drives.

In cases of investigation by Police, District or Internal Audit, staff responsible for the records concerned must be informed and all destruction procedures on these records must cease immediately regardless of storage format.

If a record due for destruction is known to be the subject of a Freedom of Information request, destruction must be delayed until disclosure has taken place, or, if the authority has decided not to disclose the information, until the complaint and appeal provisions of the Freedom of Information Act have been exhausted.

8. Record Management Responsibilities for Leavers

All records created by staff are the property of Herefordshire Council. When members of staff cease to work for the Authority, the records that they have created and been responsible for should be accessible and identifiable. This allows their successors to undertake appropriate actions for the business activities of Herefordshire Council, in the context of their responsibilities, based on the information contained in past records.

This checklist must be followed for ensuring that the records of a member of staff leaving work with the Council are properly managed, in conjunction with the Leaver Checklist in the Intranet Info Library under "Personnel".

i) Assess records

An evaluation of records should be made to decide which records should be removed for storage or destruction, and which records should stay at the place of work because they still need to be used by colleagues on a regular basis.

The Senior Archivist – Records Management surveys records of all departments of the Council and draws up *retention schedules* from these surveys to give guidance on how long to keep each class of record. (The amount of time for which a record needs to be kept before it is either destroyed or archived is called the *retention period*.) Surveys are carried out on an annual basis for each department, or can be requested at any time, and the retention periods are updated if necessary. Copies of the retention schedules are deposited with each department and made available on the Intranet.

ii) Destroy records where applicable

Records which can be destroyed from the office after they are no longer in use include the following:

- Duplicates of material which is preserved elsewhere (including in electronic form). For example:
 - i. copies of out-correspondence, invoices and timesheets
 - ii. copies of financial reports
 - iii. departmental or personal copies of committee minutes
- Out-of-date periodicals, trade literature and other commercial printed matter. For example:
 - i. magazines
 - ii. company brochures, reports, flyers and catalogues
 - iii. advertisements for conferences and training events
- Working papers, notes and drafts relating to projects or reports which have been completed and for which there is a final version available. For example:
 - i. hand-written notes which have been typed up for minutes of meetings
 - ii. drafts, written or typed, for reports, designs, presentations or correspondence
 - iii. working papers for building or community projects
- Records which no longer meet any legal requirements or organisational needs of the Council. For example:

- i. records at the end of their retention period
 - ii. records of no archival value
- Emails or written notes relating to trivial matters, such as ordering refreshments for a meeting.

Any destruction of records at the end of their retention period should be documented and passed to line managers. The record of destructions should indicate what types or “classes” of record have been destroyed (for example, “copies of invoices”, “project files”, “correspondence”), the dates that were covered by the records, and the date that they were destroyed.

When destroying any paper material of a confidential or commercial-in-confidence nature, ensure that it is placed for shredding or pulping (arrangements for which are made by Council offices directly, though the staff at the Modern Records Unit can advise on which companies are available).

Floppy disks and CDs should be destroyed by cutting them in half. Contact IT Services for cleansing all data from hard drives of computers.

iii) Store non-current records where applicable

Records in the office which need to be considered for deep storage, including storage in the Modern Records Unit, include the following:

- Records which may still need to be referred to, but on an irregular or occasional basis. These may include timesheets and payroll files.
- Records which need to be kept to meet legal requirements, such as child adoption records. These are records which have a value as proof of compliance with statutory requirements, and evidence to prove that something happened.
- Records which need to be kept to meet fiscal requirements, such as purchase order books. These are records which have a value in relation to financial matters, including auditing.
- Records which need to be kept to meet the organisational needs of the Council, to which enquiries may be made for at a later date, such as personnel files, project files or grant award files. These are records which have a value in relation to the role they play in the everyday operations of the Council, by providing information or aiding decision-making.
- Records which will have a lasting historical and/or informational value about the work of the Council, which may be suitable for preservation with the Herefordshire Record Office. Records which are of interest for archival purposes fall in to two categories:
 - i. those records which may be used for research on how the Council functioned, particularly policy documents or those that show how decisions were made;
 - ii. those records which may be used for research on how people lived and worked in Herefordshire; in other words, records of human and social interest.

The Modern Records Unit must be informed when employees leave and have previously deposited or accessed material there. This is to ensure that access restrictions to material are kept up to date.

iv) Make arrangements for current records

Arrange to leave current records with line managers, and ensure that they are easily identifiable. Clearly label paper records, and make sure that any electronic records are named meaningfully and categorised and arranged in folders. If you have a filing system, make sure that an appropriate colleague is familiar with it.

v) Electronic records

If you have an email account, forward any emails concerning ongoing work to an appropriate colleague, and set up your email to forward messages to them after you leave, until your email account has been shut down. Use the archive facility to store old emails as appropriate.

If you have a computer, assess any electronic documents on your hard disk using the same criteria for destruction or storage above. Delete or copy them to a shared network available to other staff in your section as appropriate. If you have no access to a shared network, copy the files to a floppy disk or CDROM and clearly record and label the contents, or else print out the files.

9. Further Information

For further information, contact the Senior Archivist – Records Management, telephone (01432) 260112 or email mru@herefordshire.gov.uk