



**Un Llais Cymru  
One Voice Wales**

## Community & Town Councils Digital Guidance

### Considerations for Document Retention

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## Data Retention for Welsh Councils

Community and town councils in Wales have significant responsibilities regarding data retention, driven by legislation promoting transparency, accountability, and compliance with data protection regulations. These responsibilities are not just about how long data must be kept, but also how it is managed and stored.

## General Principles of Record Keeping

Good record keeping is vital for community councils, as records provide evidence of activities, explain decisions, promote accountability, and enable verification of actions. Records are also essential for corporate memory and for complying with information rights legislation.

Managing records in the public sector is a core corporate function and a statutory obligation.

## Statutory Requirements and Guidance

**Electronic Publication:** Community councils are legally required to publish various documents electronically, including meeting minutes, annual audited accounts, and registers of members' interests. These electronic records must be accessible via the council's website.

**Retention of Website Documents:** Councils should have procedures for keeping their websites in good order, with past documents archived for a reasonable period but easily accessible from the front page. While legislation does not state a specific time, it indicates that data should be retained for a reasonable period of time.

**Access to Information:** The public has the right to access a range of information held by community councils. This includes meeting agendas, minutes, and reports. Community and town councils must ensure that these documents remain accessible.

## Financial Records

**Annual Audited Accounts:** Councils are legally required to publish their annual audited accounts electronically. These must remain accessible on the council's website.

**Transparency in Reporting:** Financial information should be easily accessible on the council's website, including annual accounts, budget updates, and expenditure details.

## Data Protection and GDPR

**Compliance with UK GDPR:** Community councils must comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) as implemented by the Data Protection Act 2018.

**Secure Storage:** Records should be stored securely and readily accessible when needed. Councils must implement appropriate technical and organizational measures to ensure data security.

**Data Subject Rights:** Community and Town councils do not typically keep extensive data about individuals but where individuals are interacting with Councils then their rights regarding their personal data must be respected, including the rights to access, rectify, and erase their data.

## Specific Types of Records

**Meeting Minutes and Documents:** Minutes of meetings and documents referred to in the minutes must be published electronically after the meeting. These records should be available to the public for a reasonable period.

**Public Notices:** Public notices must be published electronically .

**Registers of Members' Interests:** These registers must be published electronically.

**Training Plans:** Community councils are required to prepare and publish training plans for their members and staff.

**Annual Reports:** Councils must prepare and publish an annual report detailing their priorities, activities, and achievements. This report must be published on the council website.

**Biodiversity Plans:** Community councils must prepare and publish a plan every three years setting out what they propose to do to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

**Well-being Reports:** Some larger community and town councils (if their gross income or expenditure was at least £200,000 for each of the three financial years prior to the local well-being plan for their area being published) are required to publish an annual report on progress made in meeting local well-being objectives.

## Practical Considerations

**Archiving:** Councils should develop procedures for archiving past documents while ensuring contemporary documents are easily accessible from the main website.

**Accessibility:** Community needs, including language, communication and accessibility, must be considered when managing and publishing data.

**Review and Disposal Policies:** Councils should develop policies for reviewing and securely disposing of records that are no longer needed, to comply with data minimisation principles.

**Regular Review:** Councils should regularly review their data retention policies to ensure they remain compliant with the latest legislation and best practices.

## Recommendations for Community and Town Councils

1. **Develop a Data Retention Policy:** Create a formal policy that outlines how long various types of records will be kept, in line with legal requirements and best practices.

2. **Implement Secure Storage:** Ensure that all records, whether electronic or paper, are stored securely and protected from unauthorized access, loss, or damage.

3. **Establish Clear Procedures:** Develop clear procedures for how records are created, managed, stored, archived, and disposed of.

4. **Provide Training to Staff:** Ensure all staff members and councillors are aware of their data retention responsibilities and are trained on the appropriate procedures.

5. **Regularly Audit Data:** Conduct regular audits of data to ensure compliance with your own policies and relevant laws.

6. **Stay Informed:** Keep up to date with any changes in legislation or guidance that may impact data retention requirements.

By adhering to these principles and guidelines, community and town councils in Wales can effectively manage their data retention responsibilities, ensuring both compliance and transparency. It is advisable to seek guidance from resources such as the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and One Voice Wales to support data management practices.

Version History

	Date	Issuer	Reason	Review Date
V1	14/2/25	Digital Project Manager	Initial Version	14/2/26



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