



Data Protection & Information Governance Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how the Parish Council complies with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, ensuring that personal data is processed lawfully, fairly, transparently, securely, and only for legitimate council purposes.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All councillors
- The Parish Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer
- Any contractors or volunteers acting on behalf of the Council

It covers all personal data processed by the Parish Council, whether held electronically or in paper form.

3. Data Controller and Responsibilities

The Parish Council is the Data Controller.

The Parish Clerk is the named officer responsible for:

- Day-to-day data protection compliance
- Acting as the first point of contact for data protection matters
- Handling subject access requests and data breaches

Given the size and nature of the Parish Council's activities, a formal Data Protection Officer is not required.

4. Data Audit and Data Mapping

The Parish Council maintains an understanding of:

- What personal data it holds
- Why it holds the data
- How the data is stored
- Who has access to it
- How long it is retained

This understanding is reviewed periodically and when council activities change. Data awareness and review are embedded within this policy and normal council operations.

5. Lawful Basis for Processing

The Parish Council processes personal data only where one or more of the six lawful bases under UK GDPR apply:

1. Legal obligation – where processing is required to meet statutory or regulatory duties
2. Public task – where processing is necessary for the Council to perform its official functions
3. Contract – where processing is necessary to fulfil a contract or pre-contract obligations
4. Consent – where clear and informed consent has been given and can be withdrawn
5. Vital interests – where processing is necessary to protect life or prevent serious harm
6. Legitimate interests – where processing is necessary for the Council's legitimate interests and does not override individuals' rights

The Parish Council will not rely on legitimate interests where another more appropriate lawful basis applies.

Where special category data is processed, an additional lawful condition under UK GDPR will be identified and applied.

6. Data Protection Principles

The Parish Council processes personal data in accordance with the following principles:

- Lawfulness, fairness and transparency

- Purpose limitation
- Data minimisation
- Accuracy
- Storage limitation
- Integrity and confidentiality
- Accountability

7. Data Retention

Personal data is retained only for as long as necessary for the purpose it was collected and to meet legal, audit, and statutory obligations.

The Parish Council aims to follow retention periods recommended by NALC / SLCC records management guidance, along with statutory audit and financial regulations.

The Parish Council currently holds a large collection of electronic records (documents, spreadsheets, emails, scanned files etc.) and historical paperwork. In order to bring these in line with the recommended retention periods, the Clerk will conduct a phased review of old electronic and paper files, beginning with categories likely to be subject to legal, audit, or Freedom of Information (FOI) / Subject Access Request (SAR) interest (e.g. financial files, planning correspondence, personnel records). The aim is to complete the review and alignment with the retention schedule within 5 years. Files still needed under the retention schedule will be retained; files no longer required under the retention schedule will be securely deleted, ensuring complete removal where practicable (e.g. overwriting backups, removing from obsolete storage media).

All planning applications and relevant decision notices are available from South Oxfordshire District Council. There is no requirement to retain duplicates locally. Parish Council recommendations in connection with these applications are recorded in the Council Minutes and, as a result, are retained indefinitely. Correspondence received in connection with applications will be retained as 'routine correspondence and emails'.

A detailed Data Retention Schedule is set out in Appendix A.

8. Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information (FOI)

Individuals have the right under UK GDPR to:

- Access their personal data
- Request correction or erasure
- Restrict or object to processing

Subject Access Requests must be made in writing (including email).

The Parish Council will:

- Verify identity
- Respond within one calendar month
- Provide information free of charge unless requests are manifestly excessive

The Parish Council is also subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Freedom of Information requests must be made in writing (including email).

The Parish Council will:

- Confirm whether it holds the requested information
- Respond within 20 working days
- Provide information unless a statutory exemption applies
- Apply exemptions in accordance with the Act where appropriate

The Clerk is responsible for managing all information rights requests. A record of all information rights requests and responses will be maintained by the Parish Council.

9. Data Sharing

Personal data will be shared only where:

- Required by law
- Necessary for council business
- Appropriate safeguards are in place with contractors or partners

The Parish Council does not sell or use personal data for commercial purposes.

10. Data Security

The Parish Council takes proportionate security measures including:

- Password-protected devices and systems
- Limited access to personal data
- Secure storage of paper records
- Use of trusted software and systems

Council business conducted via email, social media platforms or electronic messaging services (such as Facebook or WhatsApp) may constitute Council records and could be subject to disclosure under the UK GDPR or Freedom of Information Act 2000. Relevant communications should be recorded or archived in line with the Council's Data Retention Schedule (Appendix A).

11. Data Breaches

A personal data breach is any incident resulting in loss, unauthorised access to, or disclosure of personal data.

In the event of a breach, the Parish Council will:

- Record the breach
- Take immediate steps to contain and mitigate it
- Assess whether it must be reported to the ICO within 72 hours
- Notify affected individuals where there is a high risk to their rights

All breaches, whether reportable or not, will be documented.

12. Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA)

The Parish Council will consider whether a DPIA is required for new or significantly changed activities involving:

- New technologies or systems
- Special category data
- Children or vulnerable individuals
- Data sharing with third parties
- Large-scale or systematic processing

Where required, the Clerk will:

- Describe the processing and lawful basis
- Assess necessity and proportionality
- Identify risks and mitigating actions
- Record the outcome

If high risk cannot be mitigated, the Council will consult the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) before proceeding.

13. Training and Awareness

Councillors and staff are expected to be aware of their data protection responsibilities and to handle personal data in accordance with this policy. All employees and councillors will be encouraged to undertake regular training on data protection to support ongoing compliance.

14. Review and Adoption

This policy will be reviewed as required, when legislation or council activities change.

Adopted by the Parish Council: 12 March 2026

Minute reference: 12032026 5.h)

Appendix A – Data Retention Schedule

Document	Minimum retention period	Reason
Minute books	Indefinite	Archive
Scales of fees and charges	Six years	Management
Receipt and payment account(s) / AGAR	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books of all kinds	Six years	VAT
Bank statements, including deposit/savings accounts	Six years	Audit
Bank paying-in books	Six years	Audit
Cheque book stubs	Six years	Audit
Quotations and tenders	Six years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Paid invoices	Six years	VAT
Paid cheques	Six years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
VAT records	Six years generally but 20 years for VAT on rents	VAT
Petty cash, postage, and telephone books	Six years	Tax, VAT, and Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Timesheets	Six years	HMRC / employment records
Wages books	12 years	Superannuation
Employment Contracts	6 years after employment ends	Limitation Act 1980 – contractual claims
Insurance policies	As long as a claim can be made under it	Management and legal proceedings
Certificates for Insurance against liability for employees	Indefinite	Future claims
Investments	Indefinite	Audit and management
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit and management
Members allowances register	Six years	Tax and Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Members register of interests	Term of Office + Six years	Transparency / Conduct
Planning and correspondence:		
Planning consultation responses	3 years	Local management/audit trail
Planning correspondence and emails	2 years	Routine correspondence
Routine correspondence and emails	2 years	Administrative record
Information rights and GDPR:		
FOI Requests	3 years	ICO guidance / audit trail
Subject Access Requests	3 years	ICO compliance
Data breach records	3 years	ICO requirement
For halls, centre, and recreation grounds:		
Application to hire lettings diaries copies of bills to hires record of tickets issue	Six years	VAT
For allotments:		
Register and plans	Indefinite	Audit and management
For burial grounds:		
Register of fees collected, register of burials, register of purchased graves, register/plan of grave spaces, register of memorials, applications for interment, applications for right to erect memorials, disposal certificates, and copy certificates of grant of exclusive right of burial.	Indefinite	Archives and Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (SI. 204)

Records are securely destroyed once retention periods expire unless required for legal, audit, or historical purposes.