

Freedom of Information Act 2000

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Retention and Disposal Protocol

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Preface

This Protocol is one of a series of Records Management Protocols and Guidelines for use by Stafford Borough Council in creating or holding public records.

Disposal does not just mean destruction. It also means the transfer of records to the Public Record Office, Archivist or to an approved place of deposit, the movement of records from one system to another or the transfer of custody of the records.

Disposal schedules promote control over the records of Stafford Borough Council, and enable records managers to dispose of records promptly when their retention period has ended, and ensure the retention of the minimum volume of records consistent with effective and efficient operations. The retention of too many records is expensive in staff, time, space and equipment.

Scope

This Protocol is a best practice benchmark for Stafford Borough Council in retention and disposal scheduling of records.

It provides guidance on the scheduling of records for disposal, whether this is by destruction or by transfer to the Public Record Office, Archivist or any other appointed establishment, for permanent preservation or by transfer to another institution.

It applies to all records - paper, microform and electronic records.

It applies to both general records of the Council and Departmental records schedules.

Definitions

Accountability.

The principle that Stafford Borough Council and individuals are required to account to others for their actions. The Councils Departments and its agencies must be able to account for their actions to the appropriate regulatory authority.

Appraisal.

The process of evaluating Stafford Borough Council's activities to determine which records should be kept, and for how long, to meet the needs of the Council, the requirements of The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the expectations of researchers and other users of the records.

Approved place of deposit.

A record office, which has been approved for the deposit of public records in accordance with the Public Records Act 1958.

Departmental Record Officer (DRO).

The person appointed by Stafford Borough Council as being responsible for the management of the records in a Department.

Disposal.

The implementation of appraisal and review decisions. These comprise the destruction of records and the transfer of selected records to the Public Record Office or Archivist. They may also include the movement of records from one system to another (for example, paper to electronic) or the transfer of custody of records.

Electronic records.

Records where the information is recorded in a form that is suitable for retrieval, processing and communication by a digital computer.

First Review.

The review of records no later than five years after they have ceased to be of active use.

Microform.

Records in the form of microfilm and microfiche, including aperture cards.

Department Manager.

A person responsible for a particular operation or function within a Department of Stafford Borough Council.

Paper records.

Records in the form of files, volumes, folders, bundles, maps, plans, charts, etc.

Public Records.

Records of, or held in, any department of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom or records of any office, commission or other body or establishment whatsoever under Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, as defined in paragraph 2 of the First Schedule to the Public Records Act 1958. Also records of organisations subsequently included in the table in the above Schedule or of those whose records have since been determined as public records by the Public Record Office.

Public Records Act 1958.

Legislation 6 & 7 Eliz. 2, Ch 51.

Retention.

The continued storage and maintenance of records for as long as they are required by Stafford Borough Council until their disposal. according to their administrative, legal, financial and historical evaluation.

Review.

The examination of records to determine whether they should be destroyed, retained for a further period or transferred to the Public Record Office or Archivist.

Scheduling.

The production of a schedule, or list of records, for which pre-determined periods of retention have been agreed between any Department Manager and Departmental Record Officer of Stafford Borough Council, and the Public Record Office or Archivist.

Second Review.

The review of records twenty-five years after their creation.

Transfer to the Public Records Office or Archivist.

Transfer for permanent preservation to the Public Record Office, Archivist or approved place of deposit.

Responsibilities

Department Managers and the Departmental Record Officers are responsible for examining the records of Stafford Borough Council to determine the disposal actions to be taken. Such action might be a destruction date or a review date. This should be done in accordance with the records' use and value to Stafford Borough Council's operations or legal obligations.

The Departmental Record Officer is also responsible for ensuring that disposal action specified in the schedules is undertaken and that the schedules are regularly monitored so that they are kept up to date.

The Council's Freedom of Information Officer will be responsible for giving advice to Departments on the make-up and operation of disposal schedules and for approving such schedules by the Departmental Record Officers.

Coverage

Each Department's disposal schedules should include all the records generated or held by that Department.

Separate Departmental disposal schedules should be drawn up for each operational area.

Format

A disposal schedule should contain all the following elements:

- name of the Department creating or holding the records described in the schedule
- schedule reference and version number
- reference numbers (where applicable) of the records

- descriptions of the records
- retention period and / or disposal action
- signatures of the Departmental Record Officer and Department Manager.
- date on which the schedule was agreed and signed
- date of implementation of the schedule

A model disposal schedule is shown as an Appendix.

Description of the Records

Disposal schedules should identify and describe each record collection, series or system, not individual records. By taking into account the physical organisation of records or the filing system in this way, disposal can be handled in blocks.

Disposal Instructions

There should be three elements to the disposal instructions:

- disposal action, for which there are three possibilities:
 - a) review
 - b) preserve permanently
 - c) destruction
- timing of disposal - a minimum period for which the records should be retained before disposal action is undertaken
- event which triggers the disposal action

The Departmental Record Officer is responsible for ensuring that disposal action is undertaken in accordance with the prescribed periods and in a manner commensurate with the sensitivity of the material.

Records Documentation (Metadata)

Records, which document records series, such as registers, databases, indexes, etc, require special attention. They should be kept at least until all the registered or indexed records have been disposed of, whether this is by destruction or by transfer to the Public Record Office or Archivist. Thereafter some of these records may themselves be transferred to the Public record Office or Archivist with the records they document or may be retained for a further period for business needs of Stafford Borough Council.

The documentation records should also be marked with any action that takes place on the records they document. This can usually be limited to the main item (usually the register or database). Indexes need not be annotated.

Monitoring

It is the responsibility of the Departmental Record Officer to monitor disposal schedules regularly and preferably review them once a year, to see that:

- retention periods and disposal actions are still appropriate in the light of experience
- records no longer generated are removed from the schedules after disposal action on them is complete
- newly created categories of records are added to the schedules
- records which are on schedules as needing retention are still in existence

Amendments and additions should be discussed and agreed with the Departmental Manager before updated versions of the schedules are issued.

Distribution

The Departmental Record Officer should maintain a master set of departmental disposal schedules. Copies should be provided for the Department Managers to whose departments each schedule relates and the Council's Freedom of Information Officer.

Disposal schedules should form an integral part of the records management strategy or information systems strategy of Stafford Borough Council.

Physical Destruction

The method of destruction of records will depend on their protective marking. Protectively marked waste, before destruction, should be clearly identified and kept separate from other waste.

Some Departments will have their own guidance on document destruction. Where this is not the case, the following methods are recommended as minimum requirements:

- non-sensitive (no protective marking)
Ordinary rubbish bins should only be used for public domain material. Records which otherwise would not be made available to the public should be torn into small pieces and placed in a rubbish bag for collection by an approved disposal firm.
- restricted
Waste should be strip-shredded and placed in paper rubbish sacks for collection by an approved disposal firm.

- confidential
Waste should be crosscut-shredded and placed in paper rubbish sacks for collection by an approved disposal firm. The material should be pulped or burnt.

- secret and top secret
Waste should be crosscut-shredded or disintegrated using a grille size no larger than 6mm and placed in paper rubbish sacks for collection by an approved disposal firm. The material should be burnt.

Appendix

MODEL DISPOSAL SCHEDULE

	Disposal Schedule	
		Ref: 4R/2003
	Resources/Assets & Facilities Man.	
Reference	Description	Disposal Action
4 / RAF	General policy files	Second Review
4 / RFM	Correspondence files: consultants and contractors	First Review
4/ RA&FL	Correspondence files: Local Authorities	First Review
	Photographic albums	Second Review
	Photographic prints and negatives	Destroy 10 years after completion of project
	Publicity material	Destroy 2 years after creation
	Test and statutory certificates	Permanent preservation
	Staff work diaries	Destroy 1 year after creation
	Historical narratives	Second Review
	Claim and arbitration files	Review 16 years after creation

Signatures.....(Head of A & FM Dep.)

.....((DRO))

Date.....

Date of Implementation.....