

Records Retention & Disposal Policy

Policy Statement

The Authority will ensure that information is not kept for longer than is necessary, and will retain the minimum amount of information that it requires to carry out its statutory functions. This policy supports the Authority's Publication Scheme and its Plans and Strategies and is designed to provide clarity and consistency in records management.

Introduction

Retention periods are given in whole years and are from the end of the financial year to which the records relate. Records should be disposed of by arranging for collection of confidential waste for destruction or shredding, including all copies on whatever format.

Aside from the standard procedure, set out below, whenever there is a possibility of litigation or a request under the Freedom of Information Act the records that are likely to be affected should not be amended or disposed of until the threat of litigation has ended or the appeal processes under the Freedom of Information Act have been exhausted. In these circumstances the Monitoring Officer (the Chief Executive) should be consulted.

A record of disposals in accordance with this policy should be completed and maintained by the Authority on an electronic database.

Freedom of Information Act

The Act introduced new rights of access to information from 1 January 2005 which inevitably impacted on the Authority's records management and Publication Scheme. The public has a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, subject to certain exceptions (providing the public interest in disclosure does not outweigh the public interest in maintaining exemption).

Information is exempt from the provisions of the Act if it is accessible by other means. If the information is already covered in the Authority's Publication Scheme and is available via the website there will not be a requirement to provide that information in response to an individual request.

Aims and Objectives

It is recognised that information is a vital asset of the Authority, which depends on reliable, up-to-date information systems to support the work that it does and the services provided to the citizens of Cheshire. This policy and standards will help the Authority to:-

- Ensure the retention and availability of the minimum amount of relevant information that is necessary for the Authority to operate.
- Comply with legal and regulatory requirements, including the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations.
- Save employees' time and effort when retrieving information by reducing the amount of information that may be held unnecessarily.
- Minimise the administrative overhead to the Authority and save money in terms of storage costs where hard copy information is taking up office space and electronic documents are using excessive storage capacity on computer equipment such as network servers.
- Ensure archival records that are of historical value are appropriately retained for the benefit of future generations.

Standard Procedure

This procedure applies to records which do not need to be retained. Information which is duplicated, unimportant or of short term use can be destroyed under the this standard procedure, including:

- compliment slips
- catalogues and trade journals
- telephone message slips
- non-acceptance of invitations
- messages or notes not related to Authority business
- requests for standard information provided by the Authority
- out of date distribution lists
- working papers which lead to a final report (including Authority and Committee etc papers)
- duplicated and superseded material such as stationery, manuals, drafts, address books and reference copies of annual reports
- e-copies of documents where a hard copy has been printed and filed

The attached Schedules set out the retention periods for particular records.

Mark Sellwood
Chief Executive
31 December 2008

Police Authority - Function	Records	Retention
Authority, committee & panel meetings	Minutes	Permanent
	Agendas & reports	Permanent (Authority) 10 years (all other)
Working Groups/ Ad hoc groups	Minutes	10 years
	Agendas & reports	3 years
Corporate planning & reporting	Policing Plans Annual Reports Strategies Business Plans Statement of Accounts	Permanent
Partnership agendas and external meetings	Minutes, agendas & reports	Not retained – originals to be kept by host authority
Appointment of ACPO officers	Advertisements Application forms Interview notes	6 years (or until appointment of replacement, whichever is the later)
	Personnel files	Retained whilst in office After retirement, destroyed after 10 years
Complaints against Chief Officers	Correspondence	10 years

Complaints against Members	Correspondence	10 years
Independent Custody Visiting	Notes, agendas & reports	6 years
	Record of visits	8 years
	Custody Visitor details	2 years after end of appointment
	Handbook	Until superseded
Statutory inspection reports	Audit Commission HMIC	6 years

Members - Function	Records	Retention
Appointment (independent members only)	Application forms Interview notes	3 years after end of appointment
Attendance records	Attendance sheets	3 years
Register of Members interests & hospitality	Register of interests Register of hospitality	Permanent

Management - Function	Records	Retention
Policy development	Policies Standing Orders Financial Regulations Instructions & procedures	When superseded
Staff recruitment	Application forms (unsuccessful) Interview notes Completed Vetting forms	Destroyed after interview
	Application forms (appointed candidates)	Retained for three years after end of employment
Review & assessment of Police Authority	Action plan	6 years
	Evidence audit trail	When superseded
Information management	General correspondence	3 years
	Disposal record	12 years
	Chairman's approvals	Permanent
Media relations	Press releases	3 years
Marketing material	Information about the Police Authority	When superseded
Diaries & calendars	Electronic & manual	Deleted at year end