

COUNCILLOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Everything produced by this Council could potentially end up in the public domain. Authors of documents and correspondence should take this into account. Therefore, all material produced should be both accurate and observe accepted standards of courtesy and respect.
2. Information is contained in documents, correspondence and other formats (such as audio tapes, notebooks or microfiche) either electronically or physically (such as on paper). Information kept in such a permanent form is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Therefore, the arrangements for keeping and deleting information in these formats must be managed.
3. No piece of information can be deleted once a Freedom of Information request has been received for that information *even if you know that someone else has it*. **This rule overrides all others**. You will be notified when a request is received and told how you are personally affected.
4. Subject to paragraph 3 above, all information should be kept for as long as *you* think you need it in your role of Councillor. However, if you have the *only* copy of any external information (for example, a letter to you from a constituent or an external body) which *you think* should form part of an official record, you should ask the relevant officer to put it in the Council's files.
5. For **internal documents** it is the originator who has to keep the original of the document or correspondence (subject to paragraph 4 above); recipients can deal with it as they see fit. This means that you do not need to keep anything sent to you by an officer. For **external documents** coming into the organisation (to officers or Councillors) it is the principal recipient who *may* need to keep the original of the document or correspondence (see paragraph 4 above). Other recipients can deal with it as they see fit. Please note that the provisions of this paragraph would be superseded by paragraph 3; if the document becomes subject to a Freedom of Information request, you must not destroy it, regardless of its status.
6. Drafts of reports or other matters cannot be requested under the Freedom of Information Act *whilst still in draft form*. It is good practice to clearly label drafts through file naming and / or watermarking in electronic documents or labelling of paper or other tangible formats. If you wish to keep drafts after completing a document, apply the tests in paragraphs three and four to them. Otherwise, destroy them on completion of the final version.
7. The Council is archiving and publishing all committee papers (agendas, reports and minutes for Councillor meetings) both electronically and in a central store at the Borough Offices. Therefore, Councillors will only need to apply the tests in paragraphs 3, 4 and 5 above when deciding whether or not to keep their own personal copies of committee papers.

8. Training will be available on how to use electronic tools for managing information more effectively, based on demand. Tools include: automatic delete of e-mails, archiving of e-mails, and reviewing tool on word documents, file structure and naming guidance.
9. Publishing information (documents and correspondence) on the website (www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk) or through the computers in the main receptions is encouraged and should become a regular occurrence. If you are repeatedly asked for the same information, ask where and how you could publish it to reach the target audience.
10. When a Member ceases to represent their ward they have a duty to hand back any information they have been holding on behalf of the Council in whatever format it is contained. If a Member retires, loses their seat at an election, or is disqualified they should arrange with the Council to return the information or have it collected within thirty days of ceasing to be a Member. If a Councillor is suspended following a Standards investigation, this policy continues to apply during the period of suspension. If a Councillor dies while in office, their executors, next of kin or representatives will be contacted at an appropriate time in order to arrange collection or disposal of any Council information held by the councillor.