RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

RETENTION AND DISPOSAL SCHEDULE
1. **Introduction**

1.1 The aims of the Schedule are to:

- Assist in identifying records that may be worth preserving permanently as part of Ringwood Town Council’s archives
- Prevent the premature destruction of records that need to be retained for a specified period to satisfy legal, financial and other requirements
- Provide consistency for the destruction of those records not required permanently after specified periods

1.2 The Schedule is intended to cover the continuation of records and information from creation through to destruction or for retention for historical or research purposes and is equally applicable to all record formats, including paper, microfilm and electronic. Records identified for permanent preservation can be retained in any format providing that evidential requirements and future retrieval is ensured.

1.3 Records identified for destruction under the Schedule may be destroyed in accordance with the provisions of the Schedule. Backup copies stored on alternative media (server/microfilm/paper) should also be destroyed. This is vital to ensure compliance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

1.4 Some records for permanent preservation will be passed to Hampshire Records Office (Sussex Street, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8TH, telephone 01962 846154), which will act as Ringwood Town Council’s archivist.

1.5 The Records Management Policy and Retention and Disposal Schedules have been approved by the Town Council.

2 **Reviewing the Schedule**

2.1 The Schedule provides guidance on minimum and permanent retention periods. The Schedule will be kept under review and updated accordingly. Authority for this will lie with the Town Clerk through the Council’s Policy & Finance Committee.

3 **Explanation of Schedule Headings**

3.1 **Record Types**
3.1.1 The major classes of record specifically relating to each function have been identified and recommendations are given for each. However, the list of record types provides examples only and is not exhaustive. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk shall advise on any matters of interpretation.

3.2 Minimum Retention Period

3.2.1 This column gives the minimum period for which the record should be retained before it is destroyed or reviewed.

3.3 Disposal Action

3.3.1 Disposal actions fall into three basic categories:

(i) Destruction (D), where records should be destroyed after the specified number of years.

(ii) Review (R) records marked for review are where there may no longer be a legal requirement to retain, but where the decision to destroy is not clear and therefore requiring an assessment of their continuing administrative or historic worth. This decision should be made by Officers of appropriate seniority who are familiar with the content of the record and its likely future usefulness.

The content of general subject based filing systems should be regularly reviewed in line with the Schedule to remove or delete correspondence, circulars and other papers which are no longer useful. The Lord Chancellor’s Code of Practice on The Management of Records Under S46 of The Freedom of Information Act 2000 states that ‘as a general rule, files should be closed after five years and, if action continues, a further file should be opened’. The destruction of closed files should take place in accordance with the guidelines.

The basic guideline for the retention of general correspondence is three years, however at the end of this period, it may be necessary to review the contents of the correspondence and retain longer where an action arises or until its administrative use is concluded.

(iii) Permanent (P), these records need to be retained permanently for statutory reasons, or are deemed to be worthy of long term retention because of their administrative or historical significance, this may include record types that succinctly record the past policies and activities of the authority.

3.4 Reason/Notes

3.4.1 Where the retention period is set or influenced by legislation this is noted in the final column. Those records of particular historical interest are flagged as ‘archive’.
4 Legal Admissibility of Copy and Electronic Documents

4.1 The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 allows for the use in court of electronic documents, subject to the use of a set procedure. Additionally the Civic Evidence Act 1995 allows for the use by local authorities of copy and electronic documents in civil cases. In order to ensure the integrity of electronic records and before the destruction of the original paper document regard will be had to the British Standards: BS6498:2002 Guide to preparation of microfilm and other microforms that may be required as evidence; and BIP 0008:2004 Code of Practice for Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored on Electronically.