



## Digital archiving

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## Taking control of our digital archives

### **The difference between back-up and preservation**

Contrary to popular belief, backing up is not the same as preservation! Backing up of digital files is used for short-term data recovery following loss or corruption and is not an appropriate solution for the long-term preservation of digital records.

### **Practical tips**

However there are still some practical steps you can take to support the longer term preservation of digital records.

Once finalised, a digital document that needs to be kept as part of a Council record should be closed down to further changes. This will maintain its integrity, reliability and authenticity. Convert finalised records of high informational and evidential value to Adobe PDF/A format to meet these requirements or apply read only permissions at document or folder level.

If you have files in old formats or media, e.g. floppy disks, microfilm, microfiche, identify any that need to be kept and contact IT to help convert these to the appropriate format and destroy the rest. The same applies to records stored on CD, videos etc. as these deteriorate over time and will become corrupted or unreadable within a few years of creation.

Ensure that you provide sufficient information about the file in the content of the document and in its file properties. This metadata is a part of the record, providing context and aiding future retrieval. When working on a document avoid the "Insert date" and other automatically generated text unless you can be sure that these will not be automatically updated each time they are opened.

### Digital records of archival value

Some of the Council's records need to be retained permanently because they have long term evidential or historical value. The Council's Records Retention Schedule helps to identify records that have archival value and provides two different disposal actions for these records.

**Retain for business or historical value:** under this disposal action the full record must be transferred to the Council archive service for permanent preservation.

**Review for business or historical value:** under this disposal action, a review process must be undertaken in consultation with the Council's Senior Information and Improvement Officer to decide what subset of the full record needs is worthy of permanent preservation in the Council's Archive. This is likely to be either a random sample or selected examples of particular significance or interest.

The Council does not yet have a digital archive for maintaining and providing access to those digital records of enduring value that need to be preserved permanently. However, as the majority of Council records are now digital rather than physical, it is important that we ensure that we are identifying and retaining digital records of archival value appropriately, in preparation for when the Council has a digital archive repository. This will also meet our obligations under the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 Model Records Management Plan, Element 7: Archiving and Transfer Arrangements.

The Council's records retention schedule identifies records that should either be retained or reviewed for enduring business and archival value.

The table below provides provides a summary that can be used as an initial checklist by Services to identify digital records of potential archival value, especially when rationalising shared network drives that may contain the authority copies of Council records for which your service or team is responsible.

Further advice will be provided on maintaining these until a digital archive system is available for their transfer.

1. History, Procedures and Functions	Records relating to the origins and history of the Council and predecessor bodies; its organisation and procedures; functions and dissolution
2. Annual Reports and other publications	Copies of annual and other major Council reports and publications, including published research
3. Policy	Principal policy documents together with drafts which evidence policy development
4. Decision making Policy Interpretation / Implementation:	Records relating to the implementation and interpretation of policy and to changes in policy; Record sets of minutes and circulated papers of Council, statutory Committee and senior management meetings
5. Organisation Activities	Records relating to Council accomplishments, or to obsolete activities or investigations, or aborted schemes initiated by the Department;
6. Statutory Work	Evidence of statutory rights or obligations, title to property, claims for compensation not subject to a time limit, and formal instruments such as awards, schemes, orders and sanctions;
7. Legislative Requirements	Records which must be permanently preserved in compliance with legislative requirements
8. Records of significant local, national or international interest	Documents relating to significant public events, people (e.g. Council and Executive Group members), major incidents which give rise to interest or controversy at local or national level
9. Statistics	Records relating to trends or developments in Council service delivery and improvement, particularly where they contain unpublished statistical or financial data covering a long period of time or wide area;
10. National Research and Development	Documents relating to the more important aspects of Council services scrutiny and improvement research and development, particularly where these had a wider application and affected the political, cultural, social, economic or other aspects of Scottish or Council area life;
11. Statistical Research for Decision Making:	Statistical and quantitative research either undertaken or sponsored by the Council sponsored or undertaken by outside bodies, where its findings affect Council

decision-making and the research reflects on the  
history of local government