

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT & DOCUMENT RETENTION PROCEDURE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This procedure describes how we will implement the Records Management policy with regard to:

- the day-to-day management of records, including the filing structure and naming conventions;
- the length of time we will retain individual records for, and the format in which they will be retained.

For details of our arrangements for off-site storage of records, see the Document Management (Offsite Storage) procedure.

1.2 As stated in the policy, effective records management is essential to the efficient conduct and delivery of the Association's business. It is also part of our obligations under the the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (applicable from 25 May 2018), together with any domestic UK laws on data protection. If records are not managed appropriately the Association will not function efficiently and we run the risk of failing to comply with our legal responsibilities.

1.3 The principles for record keeping listed below underpin these obligations and support our commitment to continuous improvement and quality:

#### **Principle 1: Facilitating the Association's business functions**

The Association is committed to sound record-keeping practices in all areas of activity. This will be demonstrated through staff induction and ongoing training, and assisted by detailed procedures for the management of paper-based and electronic records.

#### **Principle 2: Ensuring accountability**

We are committed to ensuring that the records we maintain fairly represent the decision-making trail. This means ensuring that there are adequate work practices and safeguards to create an auditable trail, enabling decisions to be recorded and linked to the documents or other source material relating to how a decision was arrived at.

#### **Principle 3: Ensuring legislative compliance**

We are committed to ensuring that we have the necessary resources to meet our statutory record keeping obligations, so that:

- there are appropriate record-keeping systems in place;
- no records are destroyed unless this is authorised by the relevant Manager in accordance with our current document retention and disposal arrangements;
- there are adequate methods in place for the secure disposal of records;

- all employees understand their roles and responsibilities regarding the process for disposing of records.

## **Principle 4: Ensuring continuous improvement**

We are committed to ensuring that our record keeping practices will continue to meet all current legislative, best practice and user requirements. This means that we will regularly review, revise and update our practices so that they are as effective as possible.

### **Definition of 'record'**

- 1.4 In the context of this procedure, a 'record' is any item of information held by the Association in any form (but primarily in paper, email or electronic format), whether created or received by the Association, and which is processed and maintained by our employees in the conduct of our business.
- 1.5 Records are created from information (data) collected at various points in the organisation (see Appendix 1).

## **2.0 RECORDS MANAGEMENT - PURPOSE**

- 2.1 Records are kept as evidence of our functions, activities and transactions. They are the basis of organisational accountability, compliance with legislative requirements and the development of a 'corporate memory'.
- 2.2 We need to keep comprehensive and accurate records:
  - to carry out the business of the Association;
  - to meet legal requirements;
  - for financial purposes;
  - as a record of the reasons for our decisions;
  - to be publicly accountable for our policies and decisions.
- 2.3 We aim to achieve effective records management not only to ensure that we comply with all current legislative requirements, but also achieve organisational benefits, including:
  - better use of physical and IT server space;
  - more effective and efficient use of staff time;
  - improved control of information sources;
  - compliance with current best practice and standards;
  - improved internal management processes from increased internal availability of information;
  - reduced costs.

### **Responsibilities**

- 2.4 All who create, receive and/or use records have records management responsibilities.

These can be summarised as a responsibility to:

- a) create records when required,
- b) capture and store records in the correct way in an appropriate record-keeping system;
- c) destroy records that are no longer required.

- 2.5 Managers and Heads of Section are responsible for ensuring that records controlled by their staff are managed in accordance with the Records Management policy and this procedure.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Association meets its statutory obligations with regard to records management (as well as in all other areas).

The Communications Officer is the Association's Data Protection Officer.

### **3.0 EMAILS**

- 3.1 Emails have the same status as an official communication as a letter, memo or fax. Emails may be disclosed in response to a subject access request under the Data Protection Act and in legal cases.

Emails can be legally binding, e.g. contracts or purchase decisions can be set up by email, or we may be held liable for defamatory statements in emails.

It is therefore vital that nothing is said in an email that would not be said in any other form of written communication.

- 3.2 If an email contains important information or an important decision it should be added to the relevant paper or electronic file, not left in an 'inbox'.
- 3.3 When working on group projects with several employees contributing to a draft or a discussion it is good practice to set up a shared email folder within Outlook. This enables those involved to save and access emails relating to the project and will reduce the amount of email duplication within personal inboxes.
- 3.4 Most emails are about short-lived matters and should be deleted as soon as they are out of date or no longer required. A backlog should not be allowed to build up as this becomes difficult to manage. Sent emails should also be deleted regularly.
- 3.5 Storing emails when no longer required is a drain on the Association's resources, both in taking up file space and in the time required to search them when we have to respond to a subject access request.

### **4.0 FILING STRUCTURE & NAMING CONVENTIONS**

#### **Filing structure**

- 4.1 The association's filing structure is based on the National Archives guidance on '*Managing digital records within an electronic management system*', which states that, "irrespective of the method used to create a filing structure, it must at the very least contain the following attributes:
- a structure that is easily interpreted and understood, and which discourages users from placing records in inappropriate locations;
  - simple names that identify the logical elements of the filing structure;
  - established responsibilities for folder management, to ensure the filing structure is well maintained."

- 4.2 The association's filing structure has four levels, the first three of which are for separating records into recognisable sections/sub-sections representing Almond's functions, activities and transactions in increasing detail as you move down through the levels.

Individual records (files) should not be saved in any of the top 3 levels but only in the last (fourth) level.

For an example of the filing structure see Appendix 2.

**[Note:** In some instances there may be more than 4 levels, but the principle will still apply that individual files must only be saved in the last level.]

- 4.3 At the top level – Level 1 - the filing structure is divided into four divisions (drives):
- a) Organisation wide – for the common folders and files shared by all staff.
  - b) Section specific – for the folders and files used by each Section, with each staff group only able to access their own folders/files.
  - c) Senior Management Team – accessed by the management team only.
  - d) Business photographs – following the same filing conventions as folders/files.

- 4.4 Within each division (drive), the top two levels are 'read only' for most employees, with only a small group of senior staff authorised to make changes at that level.

At level 3, each Head of Section will determine the level for 'read only' access and those with the authority to add new folders at this level.

All employees have full access to level 4, where all activity folders/files are saved.

- 4.5 Within each division, either at level 2 or level 3 (or both), date specific folders will be used (e.g. a financial or calendar year) so that the folders and files to be archived at the end of each year may be clearly identified.

Archived folders will remain in their current location but will be made 'read only' after a specified period to avoid accidental use of out-of-date information. Each Head of Section will decide when the 'read only' policy should be activated for their folders, and activation will be carried out automatically by the system.

### **Naming conventions**

- 4.6 Clarity and consistency with regard to the naming of folders and files is essential, both to save other staff time and frustration when searching for information, and to ensure that we comply with Data Protection legislation and current guidance regarding 'subject access requests', which requires us to be able to identify and retrieve all available information about a specific subject or individual.

- 4.7 The Association has adopted standard guidelines for naming all folders and files – see Appendix 3 for details.

All employees will comply with the guidelines at all times when creating and saving folders and files. If further advice is needed on what title should be given to a folder/file, employees should check with their line manager.

## **5.0 DOCUMENT RETENTION**

5.1 To comply with current legislation and statutory regulations, some records must be retained for designated periods. In addition there is a range of guidance and 'good practice' giving recommended timescales for the retention of non-statutory documents.

5.2 The table in Appendix 4 details:

- the documents we will retain;
- the retention period for each type of document;
- the format in which each document will be retained and whether it is retained onsite or offsite;
- the manager responsible for ensuring that each document is either deleted from the IT system or destroyed (hard copies) after the relevant retention period.

## **6.0 IMPLEMENTATION & REVIEW**

6.1 All employees will ensure that they comply with this procedure and that, when necessary, they seek additional advice on its implementation, to ensure consistency throughout the organisation.

Consistent failure to follow this procedure may result in disciplinary action being taken against the staff member concerned.

6.2 Each Head of Section is responsible for ensuring that their staff comply with the requirements of this procedure for those parts of the IT system they are allowed to access.

6.3 The Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring that this procedure is implemented throughout the Association, and that it is reviewed at least every 3 years.

<b>FIRST APPROVED IN</b>	<b>APRIL 2014</b>
<b>CURRENT VERSION 2.0 APPROVED IN</b>	<b>JULY 2015</b>
<b>NEXT REVIEW DUE BY</b>	<b>JULY 2018</b>

## DATA COLLECTION POINTS

Category	Collection point(s)
Housing applicants	Initial information is collected via the housing application form. Further details may be collected in response to follow-up contact/enquiries etc. by Common Housing Register/Almond HA staff as part of processing the application, arranging a property viewing etc.
Tenants	<p>In addition to the information on the housing application form, details about the tenant and household members are collected at the new tenancy 'sign-up' meeting.</p> <p>During the tenancy updated/new details may be collected by staff in each section as part of providing services and managing the tenancy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housing Management staff: Provision of housing management services, following up rent payments/rent arrears.</li> <li>○ Asset Management staff: Provision of reactive repairs and planned maintenance services.</li> <li>○ Finance staff: Processing rent details, following up outstanding charges such as rechargeable repairs.</li> <li>○ Corporate Services staff: Processing 'out of hours' answerphone messages and emails to the 'Enquiries' mail box, dealing with complaints, processing applications for Association membership.</li> </ul>
Former tenants	Where there are outstanding arrears or rent or other charges, additional details may be collected by Housing Management or Finance staff.
Factored owners	<p>Initial information is collected either when a tenant exercises the Right to Buy their property or when an existing factored owner sells on, and the new owner becomes part of the factoring service.</p> <p>Additional details may be collected by Housing Management or Finance staff as part of providing factoring services to each property.</p>
Association Members	Initial information is collected by Corporate Services staff via the Membership Application Form, and updated as required.
Board Members	Initial information is collected by Corporate Services staff via the Application form and Declaration of Interests form, and updated as required.
Other organisations	Personal information is collected manually and electronically by staff in all sections as part of their daily interaction with staff of other organisations, agencies etc.
Consultants, Contractors, suppliers	Personal information on staff of Consultants etc. is collected by staff in all sections as part of their daily interaction with those we do business with.

## FILING STRUCTURE - EXAMPLE

KEY: **LEVEL 1**    **LEVEL 2**    **LEVEL 3**    **LEVEL 4**

### Examples

#### Shared – Organisation wide

- **House\_Files**
  - Street Names, e.g. Etive\_Walk
    - Blocks
      - Numbers
    - Extenants
      - House number
    - Garages
      - Number
    - Owners
      - Number
    - Property
      - Number
    - Tenants
      - [To be agreed]
- **Board**
  - Board\_meetings
    - Year e.g. 2014
      - Monthdate e.g. 0306
  - Subcommittee\_meetings
    - Year e.g. 2014
      - Monthdate e.g. 1012
  - Away\_day
    - Year
  - AGM
    - Year
- **Policies\_Procedures**
  - Archived
    - Section
  - Live
    - Section
    - Master index
  - Review tables
    - Tables



## NAMING FOLDERS AND DOCUMENTS

**Key principles - to be followed by all employees when naming new folders and individual documents (files).**

- 1) There should be **no spaces** between words, dates or other parts of the title.

The three most common approaches are to:

- a) Join all the words e.g. auditfinancesubcommittee
- b) Use hyphens between each word e.g. audit-finance-subcommittee
- c) Use 'underscore' between each word e.g. audit\_finance\_subcommittee

Full stops **should not** be used as 'spacers'. It is recommended that a common approach be adopted within each Section to avoid confusion.

- 2) Do not use words such as 'and', 'of' or 'on' to link words in a title unless it is absolutely necessary to do so to make sense of the title. For example:

audit\_and\_finance\_subcommittee is not acceptable.

- 3) Do not include the name of the person creating the document unless it is absolutely necessary to make sense of the content.

Do not use anyone else's name in the title. A post title may be used, but should be written in full, not the initials only.

- 4) Always write the name of an organisation in full, unless an agreed abbreviation is used.

In general, do not use abbreviations or acronyms. They can have more than one meaning and can become obsolete over a period of time. Only use abbreviations that are in common use across the organisation, such as:

Cttee = Committee      Mins = minutes      SHR = Scottish Housing Regulator  
SFHA = Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.

- 5) From left to right, move from the most general to the specific, from level 1 to level 4, e.g.

Organisation\Board\Board\_meetings\2014\2014-03-06\_Mins.docx

- 6) Do not use words such as 'general' or 'miscellaneous' in folder/file titles. The name at every level should clearly describe the folder or document's contents.

- 7) **Versions:** Where a series of drafts or alternative versions are being produced, possibly for a short period until a final version is agreed, the description 'Draft\_1', Draft\_2' etc. or 'ver\_1', 'ver\_2' should be used to identify each version. Unless there is a clear need to keep earlier drafts/versions, they should be deleted once the final version is approved.

Organisation\Board\Policies\_Procedures\Drafts\Corporate\  
Use\_of\_Mobile\_Phones\_draft\_2.

- 8) **Dates:** If a series of folders or documents are to be in chronological order then the relevant date must either be at the start of the title, or be inserted at the appropriate point in the title.

The date format YYYY-MM-DD must be used, i.e. 24 April 2014 should read: 2014-04-24.

The date should be added at the start of a document title when saving letters in the same folder, or a series of minutes on the same subject, e.g.: a planned maintenance project, regular contractor reviews, staff team meetings etc.

As stated in the procedure, the year should be used as a sub-division where relevant to facilitate the archiving of folders after the end of each year (may be a calendar year or financial year as appropriate).

### Examples

Housing-Management\Administration\Staff-meetings\2014\2014-04-24-Mins.docx

Asset-Management\Contractors\Response\Review-meetings\2014-15\2014-05-26-Mins.docx

Corporate\Business-Plan\2014-15\HM-Section-Plan-draft-1.docx

## RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS - SCHEDULE

[See note at the end of the table on references and sources for retention periods]

(1) ITEM	(2) RETAIN FOR	(3) FORMAT	(4) RESPONSIBLE
<b>Governance</b>			
*Association Rules	Permanently	Electronic (may also be hard copy)	Chief Executive
Registration Certificates (I&P, SHR)	Permanently	Paper	Chief Executive
Annual returns: FCA, OSCR SHR	Permanently	Electronic (scan if required)	Head of Finance Head of Corp. Serv.
Annual returns – working papers	3 years	Electronic (scan if required)	Relevant Head of Section
*Register of Members & Share Certificates	Permanently	Electronic (Register) Paper (Certificates)	Head of Corp. Serv.
*AGM and any EGM minutes (signed copy)	Permanently	Paper (for current & previous years) then electronic (scanned)	Chief Executive
Register of Committee Members	Permanently	Electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
*Committee & any Sub-Committee or Working Group minutes (signed copies)	Permanently	Paper (for current & previous years) then electronic (scanned)	Chief Executive or relevant Head of Section
Management Team minutes	Permanently	Paper (for current year) then electronic (scanned)	Head of Corp. Serv.
*Declarations of Interest / Register of Interests Register of Benefits or Payments	Committee – permanent  Staff – for 6 years after leaving	Paper (may be electronic - scanned)	Head of Corp. Serv.
Register of Undertakings & Seal Register	Permanently	Electronic (scanned)	Head of Corp. Serv.
Gifts & Hospitality Register	Permanently	Paper (may be electronic - scanned)	Head of Corp. Serv.
Register of Disposals	Permanently	Paper	Head of Corp. Serv.
Complaints register	5 years (from final reply)	Electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
Business Plan	5 years	Paper (current year) then electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
Policies – previous (archived) versions	Permanently	Electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
CCTV images – following date of incident	2 years	Disc	Head of Asset Mgt

**RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS - SCHEDULE (2)**

<b>(1) ITEM</b>	<b>(2) RETAIN FOR</b>	<b>(3) FORMAT</b>	<b>(4) RESPONSIBLE</b>
<b>Insurance</b>			
*Policies – previous years	3 years after expiry	Electronic (scan if required)	Head of Finance
Annual insurance schedule	6 years	Electronic (scan if required)	Head of Finance
*Employer’s Liability Insurance Certificate	40 years	Electronic (scan if required)	Head of Finance
*Indemnities & guarantees	6 years after expiry	Electronic (scan if required)	Head of Finance
*Claims correspondence	3 years after settlement	Electronic (scan if required)	Head of Finance
<b>Finance, accounting &amp; tax</b>			
*Annual accounts – signed copy	Permanently	Paper	Head of Finance
*Financial records including purchase & sales ledgers, cash, VAT, journals etc.	6 years after the year end	Paper (current year) then electronic	Head of Finance
Budget papers & internal finance reports	2 years	Electronic	Head of Finance
HAG financial documentation	6 years after project end	Paper	Head of Finance
*Cheque books, pay-in books	6 years after last date used	Hard copy	Head of Finance
*Bank statements	6 years after year end	Paper	Head of Finance
<b>Contracts &amp; Agreements</b>			
*Contracts for the supply of goods & services, incl. professional services.	6 years after contract end	Paper (first year) then electronic (scanned)	Head of Finance
Loan agreements	12 years after last payment	Paper	Head of Finance
*Licensing, rental & hire purchase agreements	6 years after expiry	Paper	Head of Finance or Head of Corp. Serv.
*Indemnities & guarantees	6 years after expiry	Paper	Head of Finance
Documents relating to successful tenders	6 years after contract end	Paper or electronic per Head of Section	Relevant Head of Section
Documents relating to unsuccessful tenders	2 years after contract award	Paper [offsite storage]	Relevant Head of Section

**RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS - SCHEDULE (3)**

<b>(1) ITEM</b>	<b>(2) RETAIN FOR</b>	<b>(3) FORMAT</b>	<b>(4) RESPONSIBLE</b>
<b>Employment</b>			
*Former staff records including copy contracts, sickness & training records, references to other employers etc.	5 years after employment ends	Paper (first year) then electronic (scan if required)	Head of Corp. Serv.
*Unsuccessful applications, shortlists, interview notes	6 months after interview date	Paper	Head of Corp. Serv.
*General statements of Terms & Conditions	5 years from date replaced	Electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
Staff appraisal reports	6 months after termination	Electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
*Salary/wage details incl: PAYE, NI, P45, P60, SSP, Mat. Pay, expenses etc.	6 years after termination	Paper	Head of Finance
*Redundancy details, payments, refunds etc.	6 years (less than 20 redundancies)	Paper	Head of Corp. Serv.
<b>Pension schemes</b>			
*Actuarial valuations	Permanently	Paper	Head of Finance
*Annual reconciliations of fund contributions	Permanently	Paper	Head of Finance
<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>			
*Accident records, books & reports	3 years after accident	Paper	Head of Corp. Serv.
*Records relating to control of asbestos	40 years	Electronic	Head of Asset Mgt.
H&S assessments, risk assessments	Permanently	Electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
Consultations, safety meetings	Permanently	Electronic	Head of Corp. Serv.
*H&S statutory notices	6 years after compliance	Paper	Head of Corp. Serv.
<b>Tenancy records</b>			
Former tenant files <b>NB:</b> Data Protection requirements – not to keep 'personal data' no longer required for 'processing'.	5 years from end of tenancy	Paper [offsite storage]	Head of Housing Mgt.
Rent payments	6 years after year end	Electronic	Head of Housing Mgt.
Expired HMO license	Last valid copy - permanently	Electronic (scanned) [Paper copy destroyed at expiry of license]	Head of Housing Mgt.

#### RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS - SCHEDULE (4)

(1) ITEM	(2) RETAIN FOR	(3) FORMAT	(4) RESPONSIBLE
<b>Property records</b>			
Property maintenance records – reactive repairs, planned/cyclical maintenance, major repairs, tenant alterations etc.	Permanently (or 6 years after property no longer owned)	Electronic	Head of Asset Mgt.
Annual/statutory safety or maintenance checks	2 years	Electronic	Head of Asset Mgt.
*Development/refurbishment projects – general, apart from items below	12 years after all issues settled	Paper or electronic	Head of Asset Mgt.
Development/refurbishment projects – building plans, Health & Safety files	Permanently	Paper or electronic	Head of Asset Mgt.
*Consultants reports, professional opinions	6 years from receipt (unless required longer)	Electronic	Head of Asset Mgt.
*Lease of property from/to another agency/organisation	12 years after end of lease	Electronic (scanned) [Paper copy destroyed at end of lease]	Head of Housing Management

**Note:** The retention periods in column 2 are either:

- a) the minimum required under current legislation or to comply with regulations issued by statutory bodies, or
- b) the limitation period for legal proceedings, i.e. the maximum period in which a claim or other form of legal proceedings can be raised following the expiry of the contract, lease etc. or
- c) are based on recommended good practice issued by relevant professional organisations (see list below).
  - Registrar of Industrial & Provident Societies
  - HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)
  - National Federation of Housing Associations
  - Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
  - Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR)
  - Professional organisations, e.g. T C Young, Solicitors, The Internal Audit Association (TIAA)
  - Companies Acts 1985 & 2006
  - Data Protection Act 1998 and related guidance
  - Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and supporting Regulations
  - Limitation Act 1980
  - Taxes Management Act 1970
  - Pensions Acts 1995 & 2004
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Police Act 1997 (Part V)
  - SMP/SSP and related Regulations
  - Employer's Liability Regulations

The asterisked items (\*) are those where the minimum retention period is covered by legislation or regulations, or by a maximum legal limitation period. The remaining periods are 'best practice'.