

## **Policy Document**

### **Lost Property Procedures**



Adopted: Policy, Governance & Finance Committee Minute no:

Review Date:

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This Policy has been prepared to provide guidance to officers on the procedures to manage and control lost property in an open, fair and documented way, thereby protecting the interests of both employees and visitors to the Council's land, buildings and events.
- 1.2. The Council has a responsibility to provide safe custody of money and other personal property handed in by officers, visitors or public found on our premises or grounds. Any such items or objects, found on Council premises, or land regardless of value, are considered lost property and should be dealt with as detailed below.

#### **2. Definition of Lost Property**

- 2.1. 'Lost property' is a broad term used to identify items that do not belong to the Council and have been left (accidentally or otherwise) in our premises or on our land. 'Lost property' does not refer to items left in the care of officers at a venue/event for the duration of a visitor's stay, for example a pushchair.
- 2.2. 'Lost property' also relates to an item which has been reported lost in one of our venues or on our land but has not been found by or handed in to officers.
- 2.3. For the purposes of this policy lost property is separated into three classifications:
  - (a) Perishable items.
  - (b) Low value, non-perishable items.
  - (c) Valuable items.
- 2.4. If an officer is unsure about the value of an item (and therefore which processing method to follow), advice should be sought from the Line Manager.

#### **3. Finding and reporting lost property**

- 3.1. The purpose of our Lost Property Policy is to reunite lost belongings to their owners. Wherever possible, items should be returned to the people who have lost them. At Council run events if there is any identifying material e.g. a name on a debit card, a name on a medicine bottle within a bag this should be used to locate the owners by PA system. Mention of lost property should not be made, the named owner should be asked to make themselves known to a member of the event team who will then tell them the location of their property.
- 3.2. All items of lost property, including articles found at the Corn Exchange, 1863 Café, Burwell Hall, play areas, cemeteries, recreation grounds, Lake & Country Park etc., are to be collected into one designated area and stored at the Admin Office.
- 3.3. All items of lost property are to be recorded on the "Lost Property – Item Found" form. All parts of Section 1 must be completed. For ease of identification, lost property items should be placed into a bag/envelope which should then be sealed securely closed. The

bag/envelope should be clearly marked with a unique reference number (Location Name/Date/Time e.g. Leys/060910/1215).

- 3.4. Labelled items (complete with reference numbers) should be placed into a suitable receptacle in an ascending chronological order where possible. Reference numbers and item locations should be recorded on the associated “Lost Property – Item Found” form.
- 3.5. Items should be collected in a secure place away from public access. They should be collated by the month in which they were found and stored in these groupings.
- 3.6. When bags are searched, contents should be itemised as part of the item description on the “Lost Property – Item Found” form.
- 3.7. Any money that is handed in should be counted in the presence of at least two officers. If the money is in note form, then the serial number of each note should be recorded and documented. All monies should be placed in a sealed envelope and be secured in the safe. All details are to be recorded on the “Lost Property – Item Found” form. All parts of Section 1 must be completed.
- 3.8. All completed forms should be collected in a file kept at the Admin Office, or wherever visitor enquiries are directed. It is important to have this information close at hand to be able to efficiently reunite lost property with its owner.
- 3.9. If a member of the public wishes to report an item lost within our buildings and land, the “Lost Property – Item Reported Lost” form should be completed. All parts of Section 1 must be completed. A full description of the item(s) should be obtained, details of where and when the item was lost, approximate time and date and any distinguishing marks to support proof of ownership.
- 3.10. If in doubt about what to do with an item, contact the Police for guidance (non-emergency number is 101).

#### **4. Returning Lost Property**

- 4.1. Property should be returned to the owner if the officer is satisfied, they are the rightful owner.
- 4.2. A full description of the item(s) should be obtained, details of where and when the item was lost, approximate time and date and any distinguishing marks to support proof of ownership. This description should be matched to details given on “Lost Property – Item Found” forms. Identification of the visitor should also be sought. In the event of a dispute, a Senior Manager should be asked to make a final decision.
- 4.3. For record purposes it is important that the rightful owner signs, dates and supplies an address in the found property book when collecting the item. Section 2 of the “Lost Property – Item Found” form should be completed. This personal information is to be taken and protected in accordance with Data Protection Legislation.
- 4.4. It is recommended that the collection of valuable property be conducted or overseen by a Senior Manager.
- 4.5. Completed “Lost Property – Item Found” forms are to be removed from the general lost property paperwork file when the item has been claimed. Forms should be given to the Line Manager and filed securely in accordance with the Council’s Data and Retention Policy.

#### **5. Retention Periods for Lost Property**

- 5.1. Storage, notifications and disposal of specific items will be managed according to the table below.

## 6. Unclaimed Lost Property

- 6.1. At the start of each month, an officer should review the items that have been held from one to three calendar months previously and dispose of accordingly.

## 7. Lost Property Log

- 7.1 A lost property log for recording the following details should be kept within the Admin Office:

- Reference number.
- Date.
- Brief description of item.
- Location found or lost.
- Location of item while being stored.
- Status – Claimed or unclaimed.
- Date claimed or disposed of to Charity, the Police or otherwise disposed of.

## 8. Privacy Statement

- 8.1 Witney Town Council is committed to ensuring that the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 1998 are met. Please refer to the Council's data protection policy and privacy notice here:

[Witney Town Council Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice](#)

## LOST PROPERTY – ITEM FOUND

### Section 1

#### Item Description:

(What is the item? Colour, size, identifying marks. Be as thorough as possible.)

Location found: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time: \_\_\_\_\_

Found by: \_\_\_\_\_

Form completed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number and location: \_\_\_\_\_

(Location name/date/time e.g. Leys/060910/1215)

#### Additional notes:

(Enquiries about item made?)

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# DRAFT

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## Section 2: To be completed upon item claim

Name of claimant: 

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Address: 

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Signature: 

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Date and time: 

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ID provided? 

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Officer name: 

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## LOST PROPERTY – ITEM REPORTED LOST

### Section 1

#### Item Description:

(What is the item? Colour, size, identifying marks. Be as thorough as possible.)

Location lost: 

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Date and time: 

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Name of owner: 

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Contact details: 

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(Please provide a telephone number, address or email address.)

Additional notes: 

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# DRAFT

**Section 2: If this item has been located, please process as usual and enter reference number and location here:**

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**Please contact the owner to allow them to collect their property**

**Date owner contacted:**

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**Officer name:**

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## 9. Storage, notification and disposal guidance

Type of item	Period of retention	Notification and method of disposal
Credit/Debit cards	1 week	<p>Phone the telephone number on the back of the card and state you have found a card and follow their advice.</p> <p>Do not contact the person named on the card unless you know exactly who they are and have their direct contact details.</p> <p>Store the card in a secure location for a maximum of one week.</p> <p>Log the item on the lost property log with the name on the card, the first 6 digits of the card and the last 4 digits of the card.</p> <p>After a maximum of 1 week cut the card up into small pieces with scissors making, it difficult to reconstruct the card information. Ensure that the secure code, signature, card number, magnetic strip and electronic chip are cut in various directions (to make it harder to piece together).</p> <p>Dispose of the cut card in normal waste bins (if possible, divide the shards into several different waste bins).</p> <p>Update the lost property log.</p>
Passports and personal identification, keys, etc.	3 months	<p>If possible, owner to be contacted and asked if they wish to claim the goods or how they would like the Council to dispose of them.</p> <p>If it is not possible to contact the owner, report to the relevant authority immediately (Police, bank) and store in a secure location unless advised otherwise by Police or the issuer.</p> <p>Unless the issuer requests the Council to return the item to them, and if unclaimed after 3-month period, destroy and securely dispose of the item and update the lost property log.</p>
Items of potential or known value e.g. purse, money or jewellery	3 months	<p>If possible, owner to be contacted and asked if they wish to claim the goods or how they would like the Council to dispose of them.</p>

		<p>If it is not possible to contact the owner, report to the Police and store in secure location unless advised otherwise by Police.</p> <p>If unclaimed after 3 months, donate to the Mayor's charity. For purses, handbags, wallets etc. all personal information is to be destroyed and securely disposed of and the Lost Property Log is updated.</p>
<b>Low value items</b> <b>e.g. clothing, children's toys,</b> <b>single gloves.</b>	1 month	<p>If possible, owner to be contacted and asked if they wish to claim the goods or how they would like the Council to dispose of them.</p> <p>If it is not possible to contact the owner, store in a secure location. If unclaimed after 1 month, donate to local charity shops or dispose of in general waste and update the Lost Property Log.</p>
<b>Medicine</b>	1 month	<p>If possible, owner to be contacted and asked if they wish to claim the goods.</p> <p>Store securely for 1 month, unless perishable, and if unclaimed, take it to a pharmacy to dispose of safely and update the Lost Property Log. If medication is perishable, take it to pharmacy for safe disposal.</p>
<b>Food, perishables and items</b> <b>where hygiene is a</b> <b>consideration.</b>	1 day	<p>Where items are perishable or hygiene is a concern, items will be disposed of in general or food waste, unless claimed on the same day.</p>

## LOST PROPERTY LOG

[illegible]