Bath Record Office

Council Records

Bath has had its own corporation or council overseeing the affairs and needs of its citizens since the middle ages. Over time, the functions and responsibilities of the council have changed dramatically, as has the area which the city covers and the way in which Councillors are appointed. The medieval City of Bath covered a very small area, contained mainly within the city walls; by the 1960s, after centuries of expansion, the City covered a large area extending far beyond the city centre to include what had once been outlying villages such as Weston and Twerton.

Reorganisation of local government in 1974 and 1996 brought two significant changes to Bath. First, in 1974, with the creation of Avon County Council, Bath City became a 'second-tier' authority, with reduced functions - it was not responsible for education or social services, for example, which passed to Avon. Then in 1996, with the abolition of Avon County Council, the local authority of Bath & North East Somerset was created by amalgamating Bath City with Wansdyke District Council, the adjacent 'second-tier' authority covering north-east Somerset. Bath & North East Somerset Council is a unitary authority, responsible for all functions in its area. It includes Keynsham, Radstock and Midsomer Norton, as well Bath itself and numerous villages.

The Record Office holds the records of Bath City Council, in its various guises, of Bath & North East Somerset Council, and some records for Wansdyke District Council. Below is a summary of the most significant of these records; more detailed lists are available in the Record Office searchroom. Except where noted, these records are not included in the Record Office's online catalogues.

Bath City Charters		1189-1974
	Charters were used to give rights and freedoms – for example the right to hold markets, the right to self-government or exemption from tolls. Bath has 27 city charters, which the Record Office looks after on behalf of the Charter Trustees. The earliest charter was granted by Richard I in 1189, and the most recent by Queen Elizabeth II in 1974; most are written in Latin, and all have seals. The Record Office holds transcripts, translations and summaries of the charters. More detail on the charters can be found on the website of the City of Bath Mayor's Office at http://www.thecityofbath.co.uk/default.htm. and in the booklet *A History of the Mayors of Bath*, published by the Charter Trustees in 2006 (available from the Mayor's Office in the Guildhall).	
Council Minutes		**1631- date**
Bath Borough Corporation	The Record Office holds the original manuscript volumes of minutes. There is a typed transcript for the years 1631-1834 compiled by Rev Shickle, with a basic chronological index. Shickle also includes transcripts of the Minutes for 25th January 1613-30th September 1617; the present whereabouts of the originals are unknown, but are said to have been appended to the Charter of Queen Elizabeth I. There is a manuscript index to the minutes,1834-1895.	**1631-1895**
Bath City Council	Council Minutes printed and indexed in yearly bound volumes.	**1895-1974**

Bath City Council.	A ‘second-tier’ authority, under Avon County Council Council summons, agendas, minutes and reports	**1973-1996**
Wansdyke Council	A ‘second-tier’ authority covering the North East Somerset area except for the city of Bath. Council summons, agendas, minutes and reports.	**1974-1996**
Bath and North East Somerset Council	Council summons, agendas, minutes and reports. Minutes are also available on-line via the Bath and North East Somerset Council website from 1998 to date.	**1996 to date**
Council Committees		
Baths and Pump Room	Minutes from	1833
Borough Property	Minutes from	1837
Electric Lighting	Minutes from	1888
Finance	Minutes from	1851
Fire Brigade	Minutes from	1891
Gaol and Courthouse	Minutes from	1837
Housing of the Working Classes	Minutes from	1894
Markets	Minutes from	1837

Surveying	Minutes from	1851
Watch	Minutes from	1836
Waterworks	Minutes from	1796
Committee papers	Some supporting papers survive in the form of reports, correspondence etc. relating to these committees (mostly late 19th century). For details, see lists in the Record Office.	
Yearbooks Yearbooks give useful information on councillors and membership of committees.		**1894-1998**
Bath City Council	Yearbooks	1894-1974
Bath City Council	Yearbooks	1974-1996
Wansdyke Council	Yearbooks	1974-1996
Bath & North East Somerset Council	Yearbooks	1996-1998
Urban Sanitary Authority The Corporation acted as the Urban Sanitary Authority for Bath. Established in 1872, the Urban Sanitary Authority was responsible for drains and sewers, street lighting, paving, dangerous structures, public nuisances, and Hackney Carriage licensing.		**1872-1905**
	Minute books	1872-1905
	Letter books	1878-1905
	Report and order books	

Chamberlains' Accounts		1568-1865
Account rolls	Annual account rolls (5 missing, viz. 1570, 1571, 1572, 1574, 1591). Account rolls 1568-1602 reprinted in Somerset Record Society Vol 38 (1923). Account rolls 1568-1725 transcribed by Rev. Shickle in two typescript volumes (1904) including list of Freemen, list of alehouses in 1776.	**1568-1734**
Account books		**1733-1846**
Vouchers	9 boxes. Also part-series 1610-1622, 1678-9, 1683-4, 1690-1, 1820-9, 1864-5.	**1729-1798**
Records relating to Corporate Property		**13th century to date**
Ancient deeds	Nearly 600 items relating to property transactions in Bath. Transcribed by the Rev. Shickle and published as "Ancient Deeds" by Bath Record Society (1921).	**13th-15th century**
Surveys of corporate property	1641 and 1685 manuscript volumes; properties arranged by street. 1641 survey (transcribed and indexed). "Schedule of Corporate Property" printed 1836, 1849, 1862, 1877, 1890, 1898, 1908, 1926.	**1641-1926**
Rentals of Corporation property	Compiled annually, with properties listed under alphabetically arranged tenants' names.	**1746-1860s**
Corporation leases and deeds	• Approx. 2,500 Corporation leases 1581-1776, catalogued as BC152 • Corporation title deeds, 1623-1850, catalogued as BC153 • Council title deeds, 1850 to date Leases and deeds in series BC152 and BC153 can be found on our online catalogue at	**1581-to date**

	http://www.batharchives.co.uk/online_catalogues.aspx	
Property files	Files on the management of Council-owned property.	**1930s-1980s**
Rate Books		**1766-1950s**
Water rentals	Arranged alphabetically by street, showing fees collected by the Corporation for water supply	**1772-1926**
City Rate	• Established 1766, levied half-yearly on occupant (not owner). • Both occupant and owner shown from 1861 • Properties arranged by street, not in alphabetical order, but following a fixed route within each parish. • No house-numbering shown prior to 1812. • Walcot divided between "in" and "out" (within the city boundary, or outside). Very few gaps in series. These can usually be filled by Poor Rate books.	**1766-1950s**
Records of Council Officers and Departments		***c.*1800-1990**
Town Clerks' Papers: Philip George, father and son	The papers cover a wide range of subjects, and include papers of Philip George's private practice as solicitor, legal transactions on behalf of the Corporation, and cases brought before Quarter Sessions and Assizes. The papers are catalogued as BC134, and the catalogue is available online on the Access to Archives website (http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/).	**1800-1860**

Town Clerks' papers: uncatalogued	Include press cuttings, and files relating to particular functions of the Town Clerk, such as markets, bathing places, subscriptions and memorials and petitions.	**Later nineteenth century**
Building control files	Plans of new buildings and alterations which were submitted to the Council for approval under building control regulations	**1860s-1980**
Planning files	Plans of new buildings and alterations submitted to the Council for approval under Town and Country Planning Acts	***c.*1949-1996**
Conservation grants and listed building files	Files on the condition of, and grant-funded improvements to, listed buildings	**1980s-1990s**
Mayors' records		**1920s - date**
Records relating to the duties and activities of the mayors of Bath, which are mainly of a ceremonial nature		