



Congleton Town Council

Historic market town

Town Clerk: **BRIAN HOGAN**



10th September, 2015

Dear Councillor,

Town Council Meeting – Thursday 17th September, 2015

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the Council, to be held in the Town Hall, Congleton on **17th September, 2015** commencing at **7.00pm**.

The Public and Press are welcome to attend the meeting. There may be confidential items towards the end of the meeting which the law requires the Council to make a resolution to exclude the public and press.

Yours sincerely,

B. Hogan
TOWN CLERK

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence. (Members are respectfully reminded of the necessity to submit any Apology for absence in advance and to give a reason for non attendance).

2. Minutes (enclosed)

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2015.

3. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

Members are requested to declare both “non pecuniary” and “pecuniary” interests as early in the meeting as they become aware of it.

4. Outstanding Actions

None.



Congleton
beartown
where friends are made

Congleton Town Council, Town Hall, High Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 1BN

Tel: **01260 270350** Fax: **01260 280357**

Email: info@congletontowncouncil.co.uk www.congleton-tc.gov.uk

5 Questions from Members of the Public

To receive any questions from Members of the Public at the meeting and, notified in advance in writing.

6 Mayor's Announcements (enclosed)

To receive any announcements by the Town Mayor and to receive a list of the Mayor's Engagements.

7. Planning Committee (enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 18th June and 16th July 2015.

8. Community, Environment & Services Committee (enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2015.

9. Finance and Policy (enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 4th June 2015.

10. Urgent Items

Members may raise urgent items but no discussion or decisions may be taken at the meeting.

11. Cheshire East Councillors' Reports

To suspend Standing Orders to allow Councillors from the principal authority to report on relevant issues and to receive questions from members.

12. Youth Committee (enclosed)

a) To deal with Questions from Members of the Youth Committee present at the meeting.

13. Congleton Partnership

To receive and consider a presentation by Steve Foster Chairman of Congleton Partnership on its activities and plans.

14. Local Council Award Scheme (enclosed)

To consider whether or not to apply for the Local Council Award Scheme and at what level.

To: All Members of the Town Council, Press 3, Burgesses (5), Mayor's Chaplain,
 Members of the Youth Committee
 MP, Library, Congleton TIC.

Congleton Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday,
9th July 2015 in the Town Hall, Congleton.

PRESENT: Councillors

L. D. Barker
R Boston
C Booth
P Broom
D T Brown
G R Edwards (Chair)
G P Hayes
Mrs S A Holland
Mrs A M Martin
Mrs A E Morrison
Mrs J D Parry
H Richards
G S Williams

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence. (Members are respectfully reminded of the necessity to submit any apology for absence in advance and to give a reason for non-attendance).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Adams, Mrs S Akers Smith, Mrs D S Allen, Mrs A L Armitt, J G Baggott, P Bates and Mrs E Wardlaw.

2. **MINUTES**

CTC/20/1516 RESOLVED- That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 11th June 2015 be approved and signed by the Mayor.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST**

Members are requested to declare both "non pecuniary" and "pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become aware of it.

Cllrs D T Brown, G P Hayes, and G S Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Cheshire East Council.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

None.

5. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question from G Allen

The schedule of CTC Grant Commitments lists two grant commitments to the Carnival Committee totalling £7500 to "underwrite shortfall".

It is my understanding that this was allocated funding to underwrite any losses that the carnival had made and would be released only if the carnival accounts showed a loss.

A previous question asked if the money had been released since, if the carnival had not lost money, the allocated money could be available for other worthy causes.

When this was raised on 16th April meeting, Councillor Bates, in his capacity as chairman of the Carnival Committee, advised Council that the accounts were at the auditors and that the carnival had been one of the most successful in recent years.

That was the situation more than 10 weeks ago and my question is twofold:

1. Have the carnival accounts now been audited and issues to the Council and do the accounts require that the grant funding from the Council be taken up?
2. Does the fact that a sum of £664.60 has already been paid out from the allocated money indicate that the carnival audited accounts have been made available to the Council?

Response by the Town Mayor Cllr. E Wardlaw

The Carnival Committee is an independent organisation and the Town Council has no jurisdiction whatsoever over such an organisation. Nor are we in a position to request a copy of their accounts unless the Carnival Committee were to make a request that they wish to take up the grant funding from 2014, which to date they have not done so.

The £664.60 that you refer to was part of £750 of the remaining grant allocated to the Carnival Committee for the 2012 Carnival and was written back into the General Fund. The treasurer subsequently requested that two invoices were paid from this balance, so it was allocated to the Carnival Ear Marked Reserve in our accounts.

Question to the Town Mayor, Cllr. E Wardlaw

The YU Property Group signboard currently displayed at the former Grove Inn in Lower Heath confirms that the site was acquired by YU Developments in January 2015. Various publically accessible company information sites, eg. "Due Dil", "Company Check" and "Companies in the UK", who list information from Companies House, confirm that, in January 2015, Larry Dennis Barker was a director of YU Properties, YU Trading, YU Developments and Lower Heath Stores Ltd at the same time as he was also Chairman of CTC Planning Committee. At the time that the site was acquired there was nothing on Councillor Barker's Declaration of Interests showing that he held directorships of these companies. Whilst Councillor Barker resigned his directorships of these companies in May of this year, would the council agree that Councillor Barker exposed himself to potential criticism and showed poor judgement in not advising the council and the electorate of his directorships in these companies when, at the same time, he was Chairman of the Planning Committee?

Response by the Town Mayor

The short answer is no, he did not show poor judgement.

Cllr Barker's employer, BL&C Services Limited, have from time to time been instructed by its clients to form a number of companies including those referred to by Mr Goodwin.

This is a common method for registering companies.

As Cllr Barker is a nominee director of a number of companies, some of which are dormant, it was agreed with his employer that it is not necessary for him to register an interest.

For the avoidance of doubt Cllr Barker did not chair nor was he present at any of the planning meetings when the matters appertaining to either company were agenda items.

Supplementary Question from Mr G Goodwin

Mr Goodwin asked a supplementary question and asked are all Councillors provided with a Declaration of Interest Form, copies of which are held on the Cheshire East Council and Congleton Town Council websites and should forms be completed honestly and completely and are such declarations mandatory?

6. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Town Mayor drew attention to the various engagements that he and the Town Mayor had fulfilled since the last Council meeting.

7. PLANNING COMMITTEE

CTC/21/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 4th June 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

8. COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT & SERVICES COMMITTEE

CTC/22/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

9. URGENT ITEMS

It was requested that the Committee membership should be included on all agenda papers sent to Councillors.

10. **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCILLORS' REPORTS**

Cheshire East Council members attended a briefing from officers on Thursday 9th July 2015 for an update on progress of the Congleton Link Road.

There were some minor changes, namely the new road has been re-aligned by about 20m further towards Radnor Park Trading Estate to give further protection to the area of ancient woodland following consultation feedback. As a consequence of this, the opportunity was taken to re-configure the spur from the new link road to this industrial estate. This allows more effective development to the estate's expansion.

Additional pathways have been created on other sections and other minor alterations to the positioning of the road have been made. A significant amount of mitigation measures have been added to the project to further reduce the environmental impact. A lot of the feedback from the last consultation has been acted upon.

Councillor G S Williams offered to arrange a fuller, more detailed update to Town Councillors from Cheshire East Officers. Planning approval will be being sought in September.

11. **YOUTH COMMITTEE**

The Youth Committee items were postponed to the next meeting of the Town Council.

12. **DIGITAL DISPLAY SYSTEM**

The reports relating to the Digital Display System were considered and it was pointed out that care needs to be taken when spending public money.

CTC/23/1516 RESOLVED that the External Auditors' Report and recommendations produced by BDO be received and approved.

CTC/24/1516 RESOLVED that the statement relating to the Digital Display System and accompanying apology be approved.

CTC/25/1516 RESOLVED that the report concerning the receivership of Simnet Ltd be received.

CTC/26/1516 RESOLVED that the amendments proposed to the Financial Regulations be approved and adopted into the Constitution. .

13. **TOWN TRUST**

The Council considered the notion of appointing a representative for the Town Trust.

CTC/27/1516 RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs S Akers Smith be appointed to the Town Trust.

14. **HONORARY BURGESS**

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr D T Brown presented Mr G Baxendale with a certificate confirming him as an Honorary Burgess of the Town Council.

D T Brown
DEPUTY MAYOR

TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

2015

20 th July	In Bloom – Congleton Park
21 st July	In Bloom – Tatton Park
23 rd July	Sandbach Rugby Club
25 th July	Family Fun Day – Bromley Park
26 th July	Sandbach Civic Service
1 st August	Bosson's Meeting
1 st August	Tennis Club Tournament
2 nd August	Leek Civic Service
9 th August	Team Congleton Prizegiving
11 th August	Congleton Park – Flag Raising
15 th August	Fire Station Open Day
15 th August	SOL Theatre
16 th August	Service at Macclesfield
22 nd August	Flashmob
23 rd August	Rugby for Bosley
25 th August	Duck Race Promotion
2 nd September	Cloud Group W I
8 th September	Disabled Club Evening
12 th September	Presentation at Sandbach
13 th September	New Life Church Service
13 th September	Duck Race

DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

11 th July	Congleton Youth Orchestra
12 th July	Macclesfield Civic Service
12 th July	Biddulph Civic Service
18 th July	Mossley Old School Celebration
18 th July	Choral Society Concert
18 th July	Poynton Civic Service

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 18th JUNE 2015

PRESENT Councillor L. D. Barker - Chairman
J G Baggott
P Bates
R. Boston
C Booth
P Broom
G R Edwards
Mrs S A Holland
Mrs A M Martin
Mrs A E Morrison
Mrs. J. D. Parry
Mrs E Wardlaw

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Mrs S Akers Smith, Mrs D Allen, Mrs A L Armit, D. T. Brown, G. P. Hayes, H. Richards, G. S. Williams.

2. **MINUTES**

PLN/3/1516 RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4th June 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded to declare both "non pecuniary" and "pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

Councillors Bates and Wardlaw declared a "non pecuniary" interest due to their membership of Cheshire East Council.

4. **OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

There were none.

5. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

PLN/4/1516 RECOMMENDED: That the following comments be made to Cheshire East Borough Council:

Week ended 5th June 2015

15/2438C	Diglake Farm, Buxton Road, Congleton, CW12 3PE	NO OBJECTION
15/2471C	1 Park Lane, Congleton, CW12 3DN	NO OBJECTION
15/2524C	2 – 4 Moody Street, Congleton, CW12 4AP	NO OBJECTION
15/2534C	8 – 10 West Street, Congleton, CW12 1JS	NO OBJECTION
15/2567C	16A Lawton Street, Congleton, CW12 1RP	NO OBJECTION
15/2447T	Buckingham House, 3 West Street, Congleton	NO OBJECTION

Subject to usual conditions

Week ended 12th June 2015

15/2265C	Daven School, New Street, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/2566C	36B Sandbach Road, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/2691C	124 Biddulph Road, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/2639D	20 Rood Hill, Congleton	NO OBJECTION

6. PLANNING APPEALS

None to report.

L D Barker (Chairman)

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 16th JULY 2015

PRESENT Councillor L. D. Barker - Chairman
J G Baggott
Mrs S Akers Smith
C Booth
P Broom
G R Edwards
Mrs S A Holland
Mrs A M Martin
Mrs A E Morrison
Mrs. J. D. Parry

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors N. Adams, D. Allen, Mrs A L Armitt, P. Bates, R. Boston, D. T. Brown, G. P. Hayes, Mrs E. Wardlaw, G. S. Williams.

2. **MINUTES**

PLN/5/1516 RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 18th June 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were reminded to declare both "non pecuniary" and "pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

4. **OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

There were none.

5. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

PLN/6/1516 RECOMMENDED: That the following comments be made to Cheshire East Borough Council:

Week ended 19th June 2015

15/2736T	The Rectory, 14 Chapel Street, Congleton, CW12 4AB	NO OBJECTION Subject to usual conditions
15/2702D	30 William Street, Congleton, CW12 2EY	NO OBJECTION

Week ended 26th June 2015

15/2896C	6 Boundary Lane, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/2899C	46 High Street, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/2843T	Newlands, 36 Park Lane, Congleton	NO OBJECTION Subject to usual conditions
15/2890D	Land Between 1 and 1A Wharfedale Road, Congleton	NO OBJECTION

Week ended 3rd July 2015

15/2946C	4 Eaton Bank, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/3070C	Siemens House, Varey Road, Congleton	NO OBJECTION

Contributions towards the delivery of the Congleton Link Road.

Contributions towards complimentary highway measures on the existing highway network.

Pedestrian and cycle links set in green infrastructure to new and existing employment, residential areas, shops, schools, health facilities the town centre.

The provision of a network of open spaces for nature conservation and recreation.

The timely provision of physical and social infrastructure to support development at this location.

The delivery of appropriate public transport links to connect with employment, housing and retail / leisure uses in the town.

To enable construction of the proposed new footpath along the full length of the road, as proposed by the developer will require the purchase of additional land. Cheshire East to ensure that appropriate conditions are in place to ensure safety of pedestrians until such time as the aforementioned land has been purchased and the footpath built at the developers cost.

15/2973C	27 The Parklands, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/2982C	8 Bridge Row, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/3002C	19 Lower Meadow Drive, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/2860T	5 Cedar Court, Congleton, CW12 3JP	NO OBJECTION
		Subject to usual conditions

Week ended 10th July 2015

15/3039C	Threeways, Pedley Lane, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
Councillor Holland declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3039C		

6. PLANNING APPEALS

None to report.

L D Barker (Chairman)

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 25TH JUNE 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs S Akers Smith
 Mrs D S Allen
 Mrs A L Armitt
 P Bates
 P Broom
 G R Edwards
 Mrs S A Holland
 Mrs A M Martin
 Mrs A E Morrison
 Mrs J D Parry
 G S Williams

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs N Adams and C Booth.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

CES/01/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th March 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are requested to declare both "pecuniary" and "non-pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

Cllrs P Bates and G S Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Cheshire East Council.

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Clerk updated the members on actions taken since the last Committee meeting was held.

5. CHESHIRE POLICE

There were no members of Cheshire Police present at the meeting.

6. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP

CES/02/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 3rd March and 19th May 2015 were received.

7. FLORAL ARRANGEMENT WORKING GROUP

CES/03/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 9th March, 13th April, and 26th May 2015 were received.

8. PEARL IZUMI TOUR SERIES CYCLE RACE

Peter Akers Smith and Bob Norton provided an overview of the benefits of holding the Pearl Izumi Tour Series Cycle Race 2015 in Congleton. It was noted that the host town is required to make a contribution of £60,000 to the race organisers and can expect benefits to the Town of around £240,000. Any route proposed for the race would require closure possibly up to 17 hours on the day of the race.

CES/04/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. Congleton Town Council to approach Cheshire East Council to see if they are prepared to apply to hold the race in 2016.
2. The Police to be consulted about the feasibility of the road closure.

9. STREETSCAPE REPORT

The Committee considered a report on Streetscape activities and proposed that the member's thanks be passed onto the Team for all of their efforts.

CES/05/1516 RESOLVED that the report be received.

10. SAFETY IN GREEN MILL

A letter from a resident concerning installing an additional pedestrian crossing at Mill Green was considered.

CES/06/1516 RESOLVED that no further action be taken on this issue.

11. DIRTY DOGS

The problem of dog waste left on the streets of Congleton was considered.

CES/07/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. Dog waste disposal bags be provided in key areas.
2. Set up a Task and Finish Group to examine the problem and to prepare appropriate remedies. Members to include Cllrs Mrs S A Holland, Mrs S Akers Smith and Mrs A E Morrison.

12. GM HILARY AVENUE ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

A report provided by the Hilary Avenue Allotment Association was considered and noted.

13. PFRA AGREEMENT

An agreement to control the number of fund raising activities in the Town Hall was discussed.

CES/08/1516 RESOLVED that the Committee welcome the introduction of control on "Chuggers" operating in the Town.

14. CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

A report provided by the Cheshire Fire Authority outlining their 5 year strategy for a "Safer Cheshire" was considered. .

CES/09/1516 RESOLVED that the report be received.

Mrs S A Holland
Chairman (In the Chair)

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 4th June 2015

PRESENT

Councillors

N Adams
Mrs S Akers Smith
Mrs D S Allen
Mrs A L Armitt
J G Baggott
L D Barker
P Bates
C Booth
P Broom
G R Edwards (Chair)
Mrs S A Holland
Mrs J D Parry (Vice Chairman)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R Boston, D T Brown and Mrs. E Wardlaw.

2. MINUTES

FAP/01/1516 RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 26th March 2015 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are requested to declare both "pecuniary" and "non-pecuniary" interests as early in the meeting as they become known.

Cllr P Bates declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Cheshire East Council and in item 5 ii).

4. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

There are no outstanding actions.

5. GRANT APPROVALS AND COMMITMENTS 2015-16

A summary of grant approvals and commitments was considered by the Committee and it was noted that £15,000 is available for grants in 2015-16.

FAP/02/1516 RESOLVED that the grant summary be received.

6. NEW APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

FAP/03/1516 RESOLVED that:-

i. GR 1/1516 –Congleton Sling Library

Refused

Suggested that the applicant approach other funding providers in the Town, including the Town Trust and William Dean Trust.

ii. GR 2/1516 – Congleton Jazz and Blues Festival

A grant of £500 be approved.

iii. GR 3/1516 – Congleton Harriers

A grant of £250 be approved.

Subject to promoting the Town Council and for the Council to be able to nominate a suitable charity for any surplus profits to be sent to.

iv. GR 4/1516 – Congleton Choral Society & Children's Choir

A grant of £250 be approved.

v. GR 5/1516 – Plus Dane Group

A grant of £450 be approved.

7. NEW GRANT ACTIVITIES MONITORING FORMS

It was noted that a Grant Activities Monitoring Form was received from Congleton CSI Basics.

8. MANAGEMENTS ACCOUNTS FOR APRIL 2015

FAP/04/1516 RESOLVED that the Managements Accounts for April 2015 be received.

9. BANK RECONCILIATION

FAP/05/1516 RESOLVED that the bank reconciliation for 31st April 2015 be received.

10. LIST OF PAYMENTS

FAP/06/1516 RESOLVED that the Payments List between 1st March 2015 and 30th April 2015 be received.

11. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Internal Audit Report (Final) for 2014-15 was considered, it was noted that once again there were no remedial actions required.

FAP/07/1516 RESOLVED to that the Internal Audit Report be received and approved.

12. ASSET REGISTER

The updated Asset Register for the year ending 2014-15 was considered.

FAP/08/1516 RESOLVED that the Asset register be approved and signed by the Chairman.

13. SIMNET

Correspondence from Milner Buchanan & Partners concerning the voluntary liquidation of Simnet Ltd was considered. It was noted that there will be a meeting of Creditors at 2.30pm on 8th June 2015 in Hale, Cheshire.

FAP/09/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. The correspondence be received and noted.
2. Cllr Mrs J D Parry and the Town Clerk will attend the Creditors Meeting.

Mr. G.R. Edwards
Chairman

Brian Hogan

From: Mike Smith
Sent: 03 August 2015 13:17
To: Steve Foster
Cc: Brian Hogan
Subject: Full Council Presentation 17th Sept 2015

Hi Steve,

I have discussed the idea of a Partnership Presentation to the full council.

Brian will look to allocate 10 mins on the of the September meeting (17th Sept, same week as AGM)

Hope this is okay,

Regards,

Mike

Mike Smith.

Project Coordinator

*The Congleton Partnership
01260 270350 Ext 3*

ms@congletontowncouncil.co.uk



Regenerating our town

www.congletonpartnership.co.uk

Brian Hogan

From: Charlotte Eisenhart <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 28 August 2015 14:15
Subject: Dates for reaccrediting after the free Foundation year

To: Councils with the Foundation Award free year
CC: County Associations

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this email finds you well.

You will be aware that the 'free foundation year' is flying by and your minds may slowly be turning to getting formally accredited under the scheme before your free year expires. This email has some information to help you keep your unbroken accreditation history. If you miss these dates you can still be accredited under the Local Council Award Scheme in the future, however you will have a gap in your accreditation 'history'.

Key dates

- 1st October – latest that councils can register with NALC, if they wish to keep an unbroken accreditation record. The registration form is the same as when you registered for the foundation year and can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/lcawardscheme>
- 1st November – the latest councils can submit their completed application forms to the local panel to keep an unbroken accreditation record.
- 31st January – the latest that you will have confirmation of the outcome of your application.

Top tips

- **Please consider registering with NALC as soon as possible.** You don't need to have the criteria in place when you do this. It would be a big help to us and your local panels to be able to plan workloads. It won't take long! Maybe put the kettle on, fill out the form in the time it takes the kettle to boil, and you will have peace of mind that you have registered – and a cup of tea!
- When you register with NALC you will be sent an application form that you will need to complete and send in to your local panel coordinator – another reason to register early
- I would highly recommend contacting your county association to confirm local deadlines for accreditation applications.
- When filling out the application form make sure you provide **a direct web page link or evidence for every single criteria**. The panels will be busy accrediting a large number of councils towards the end of the year, so make it clear and easy for them. It would be a real shame to miss out on an award because the panel couldn't find a document that did exist but was hard to find.
- Read the explanation of the award criteria in the award scheme guide carefully. You can download a pdf or word doc version from <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/improvement-and-development/local-council-award-scheme>
- The 12 continuous professional development points at the Foundation level are based on the guidance produced earlier this year. This can be found, alongside a template recording sheet, at <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/improvement-and-development/national-training-strategy> under the 'continuous professional development for clerks' heading

Thank you

Whatever you decide about your future involvement in the Local Council Award Scheme I would like to express my and NALC's gratitude for your involvement and input to date. 555 councils took up the free foundation year (out of the 665 who were eligible) making the first year of the scheme a great success. It has been interesting and useful to

hear from you, meet some of you at various events, have you involved in the scheme, and generally to learn from you all. I do hope to see a good proportion of you in the Local Council Award Scheme in 2016 and beyond!

And finally - visits from the Department of Communities and Local Government

Officers at the Department of Communities and Local Government are planning to arrange a number of visits to town and parish councils over 2015 and 2016. They would like to learn more about how these councils operate and to see examples of best practice in the sector. To help with this, NALC has agreed with DCLG that the councils approached to host these visits will be drawn from those that have taken part in the Local Council Award Scheme. If your council has received an award under the Local Council Award Scheme (including the free Foundation year), then your council will be included in the list given to DCLG for potential visits.

This does not mean you will be guaranteed contact or a visit from the Department, but it reflects the calibre of the councils that have chosen to take part in the scheme as well as the Department's involvement in set up and design of the Local Council Award Scheme. I hope in future that more opportunities of this nature can be arranged where we can highlight the very best councils in the sector to Government and other national stakeholders.

If you would like any other information then please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes,

PS if this email has reached you in error please do let me know and we will update our records accordingly

Charlotte Eisenhart
Improvement & Development Manager
National Association of Local Councils



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The New Local Council Award Scheme

The new Local Council Award Scheme has been designed to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils, and to provide a framework to support all local councils to improve and develop to meet their full potential. The scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and to put in place the conditions for continued improvement.

The Award Scheme has been designed to provide the tools and encouragement to those councils at the beginning of their improvement journeys, as well as promoting and recognising councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector. It is only through the sector working together, to share best practice, drive up standards and supporting those who are committed to improving their offer to their communities that individual councils and the sector as a whole will reach its full potential.

There are a range of reasons why a council could benefit from taking part in the award scheme. For those councils who are already confident that they perform to a high standard the scheme provides assurance to the council that it is up-to-date and progressive by the standards set by the sector. For those who wish to improve, it provides a framework to plan and make the first steps. Helping the council improve performance and confidence, with policies in place for continuous development. And for all councils winning the award should be celebration for councillors and officers, as their commitment and hard work is recognised and respected.

The award is a tool that councils can use when working with the local community or other local partners. Giving them confidence that the council is delivering to a national professional standard.

And finally, the scheme will contribute to the national reputation of local councils demonstrating achievements and a commitment to improvement.

How to Apply

1. The first step is to **register** online with NALC. You will then be charged a £50 registration fee by NALC.

Tip: You do not need to have all the criteria in place at this stage, you are simply registering your interest in taking part in the scheme

Tip: You can apply for any award level - you don't need to start at Foundation

2. When you have the criteria prepared and in place, confirm this in a public meeting
3. You should then notify your local accreditation panel co-ordinator and provide the **application form** including links to online documents. At this stage you will also

pay an accreditation fee to your local County Association. This fee depends on the award level you are applying for and the size of your council (full information in the Local Council Award Scheme Guide)

4. Your local panel co-ordinator will contact you with the result of your application.

Foundation Level

The Foundation award is for councils who want to show they meet a set of minimum standards to deliver effectively for their communities. To meet this award the council demonstrates that it has the required documentation and information in place for operating lawfully and according to standard practice. The council also has policies for training for its councillors and officers and so has the foundations for improvement and development in place.

The Foundation award allows you to benchmark your performance as well as challenging you to consider your councils continuing development and improvement.

Quality Award

The Quality Award demonstrates that a council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement. Quality councils go above and beyond their legal obligations, leading their communities and continuously seeking opportunities to improve and develop even further.

To achieve the Quality Award a council demonstrates that it meets all requirements of the Foundation Award and has additional evidence of good governance, effective community engagement and council improvement. Due to the level of this achievement, a council with a Quality Award can also be eligible to use the general power of competence.

Gold Award

The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development. Quality Gold councils provide leadership for their communities, bring people together, and have excellent business planning processes, ensuring value for money as well as constantly seeking new innovations and opportunities to improve. They highlight the very best we, as a sector, can achieve for our communities.

A guide to the Local Council Award Scheme



THE LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME EXISTS TO CELEBRATE THE SUCCESSES OF THE VERY BEST LOCAL COUNCILS, AND TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT ALL LOCAL COUNCILS TO MEET THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

All local councils want to serve their local communities and make a real difference to the lives of the people that live there. The scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and to put in place the conditions for continued improvement.

The Award Scheme has been designed to both provide the tools and encouragement to those councils at the beginning of their improvement journeys, as well as promoting and recognising councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector. It is only through the sector working together to share best practice, drive up standards and supporting those who are committed to improving their offer to their communities that individual councils and the sector as a whole will reach its full potential.

The scheme was created in 2014 and is managed on behalf of local councils by the Improvement and Development Board (IDB).

Councils can apply for an award at one of three levels:

The Foundation Award demonstrates that a council meets the minimum requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice.

The Quality Award demonstrates that a council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement.

The Quality Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development.

The scheme sets out criteria to meet at each level covering selected aspects of the council's work. Councils can seek to progress through the tiers over time thereby raising standards. Councils of any size can aspire to an award appropriate for their budget and level of activity.

To support transparency, councils achieving an award at any level must use an online facility for publishing documents and information. In all instances the council confirms that the required documents, information and conditions are in place (whether published or not) by resolution in public at a full council meeting. For Quality Gold, councils also provide statements for submission to the panel demonstrating excellence in their activities. The panel may ask for additional information to check the accuracy of claims.

CONTENTS

06 AWARD CRITERIA

This section sets out in brief what is required for each award and then explains in more detail the evidence that the accreditation panel is looking for. Councils should find this additional guidance helpful in identifying what is required.

18 ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The Local Council Award Scheme is a form of peer review. Councils are reviewed by experienced peers through the work of an accreditation panel.

The aim of this accreditation process is to be as simple, efficient and flexible as possible. It also seeks to ensure that every council that wishes to take part in the scheme is able to, and is assessed in a reasonably consistent way.

This section outlines guidance for County Associations (CALCs) managing the process for accreditation. These are not strict rules, and CALCs can tailor this to local need in consultation with NALC.

21 FEES

There are two fees:

- A registration fee paid to the NALC
- An accreditation fee paid to the organisation responsible for administering the local or regional accreditation process.

EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

- 22 The aim of the evaluation and improvement process is to allow the sector to feel ownership of the scheme, and to see the scheme changing to meet the feedback and needs expressed by the sector. This section outlines the evaluation and improvement process that will allow the scheme to be dynamic and respond over time to changes in the sector, national policy and other relevant issues.

A COUNCIL CAN REGISTER TO TAKE PART IN THE
LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME BY VISITING
WWW.NALC.GOV.UK/OUR-WORK/LOCAL-COUNCIL-AWARD-SCHEME

THE STEP BY STEP PROCESS FOR APPLYING TO THE AWARD
SCHEME CAN BE FOUND IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS
SECTION ON PAGE 18.

TO ACHIEVE A FOUNDATION AWARD A COUNCIL DEMONSTRATES THAT IT HAS THE MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION IN PLACE FOR OPERATING LAWFULLY AND ACCORDING TO STANDARD PRACTICE. THE COUNCIL ALSO HAS POLICIES FOR TRAINING COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS AND IS BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT.

The council confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it publishes online:

GOVERNANCE

Criteria demonstrating good governance in managing the business and finances of a council

Its standing orders and financial regulations

Its Code of Conduct and a link to councillors' registers of interests

Its publication scheme

Its last annual return

Transparent information about council payments

A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors

Minutes for at least one year of full council meetings and (if relevant) all committee and sub-committee meetings

Current agendas

The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year

Its complaints procedure

COMMUNITY

Criteria representing a council's role in the community and how it engages with the community

Council contact details and councillor information in line with the Transparency Code

Its action plan for the current year

Evidence of consulting the community

Publicity advertising council activities

Evidence of participating in town and country planning

DEVELOPMENT

Criteria representing council improvement through the management and development of staff and councillors

The council also confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it has:

GOVERNANCE

Criteria demonstrating good governance in managing the business and finances of a council

A risk management scheme

A register of assets

Contracts for all members of staff

COMMUNITY

Criteria representing a council's role in the community and how it engages with the community

DEVELOPMENT

Criteria representing council improvement through the management and development of staff and councillors

Disciplinary and grievance procedures

A policy for training new staff and councillors

A record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year

A clerk who has achieved 12 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points in the last year

The council notifies the accreditation panel co-ordinator when the resolution has been agreed and provides a link to its website.

WHAT IS THE ACCREDITATION PANEL LOOKING FOR?

The panel seeks assurance that a council acts lawfully and according to standard practice. Unless it is a matter of law, the panel is not making a judgement on the quality of the evidence at this level; it simply carries out spot-checks to confirm that the documentation and information is in place, up-to-date and complies with the guidance below. For those documents that are not posted up online, the panel will ask to see the evidence if it is considered necessary.

- All policies should comply with current legislation and guidance and note the date of the next review.
- Standing orders, financial regulations, the Code of Conduct, publication scheme and complaints procedure are public documents tailored to the specific council. Standing orders or financial regulations explain procedures for contracts and internal controls. All policies and procedures should demonstrate compliance with The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 including an open media policy which does not restrict engagement with the press. For councils with an annual turnover of less than £25,000 they also demonstrate compliance with the upcoming Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities once this comes into effect.
- The council does not need to publish the councillors' registers of interests on their own website provided that there is a working link to the complete register of all councillors' interests on the principal authority's website.
- The council's website should include the name of the clerk and contact details (address, phone, email) for the council as a corporate body.

It should also publish the names of councillors and councillors' responsibilities in compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code.

- The council posts up a scanned copy of the last annual return. The panel checks that the council has a limited assurance (unqualified) opinion from the external auditor; the opinion may contain recommendations for consideration as long as a qualified opinion is not given. The panel checks the arrangements for internal audit and internal controls. From 2017, councils with an annual turnover of less than £25,000 will not be required to complete an annual return. Panels check that these councils comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities once this comes into effect.
- Information on all payments must be transparent and in accordance with financial regulations and statutory proper practices. The panel will check the minutes of meetings, financial regulations, the annual return (if relevant) and compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code.
- The calendar (in any format) includes the Annual Meeting of the Council and the Annual Parish/Town Meeting and both meetings must be held during the correct statutory period. The calendar also shows that the council has at least four full council meetings a year.
- Similarly, the minutes for full council meetings over the last year include the Annual Meeting of the Council. If relevant, the council also posts up the minutes of its Finance Committee to demonstrate transparency according to statutory regulations and of its Planning Committee showing that procedures for reviewing planning

applications are correct. The panel checks that minutes and agendas demonstrate the lawful convening of meetings and decision-making and that all meetings allow the public to make representations to the council.

- The council can post up the current or next year's budget (or both). Budget documents would normally show columns comparing the year in question with the two previous years; they include information on income and expenditure (or receipts and payments) and show how the precept was calculated.

- The council must publish an action plan; as a minimum this is a one-page document listing the council's objectives for the current year. It is not a parish plan which is a plan for the future of the community; the council can extract objectives for action from the parish plan depending on its areas of responsibility.

- The panel seeks at least one piece of evidence from council publicity that it consults and actively serves its community. Publicity might include an annual report, web material or news bulletins. The information gives a flavour of any council activity such as lobbying principal authorities, giving grants to community groups, the provision of a service or helping with community events. For guidance, councils can refer to The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. Similarly any form of consultation is suitable, including surveys, online polls, focus groups or public meetings.

- Council documents demonstrate that the

council participates in the planning system by, for example, commenting on planning applications or working on a neighbourhood plan. Decisions on planning matters must be made in properly convened meetings and, if required, by delegation to a committee. Some decisions may be delegated to an officer.

- Contracts, disciplinary/grievance procedures, a risk management policy and register of assets can be based on a model but tailored to the specific council. They are not published.

- A training policy for new staff and councillors can be a short statement of intent while a training record gives dates, titles and providers of development activities undertaken by named individuals in the last year, including, for example, updating events, online courses, CPD activity and qualifications. Councillors should note that they should undertake training on financial management for which they are all responsible. In particular, the clerk's training record includes evidence of CPD such as training, conference attendance, mentoring and studying for qualifications. CPD points are allocated according to a system published by the IDB.

TO ACHIEVE THE QUALITY AWARD A COUNCIL DEMONSTRATES THAT IT MEETS ALL REQUIREMENTS OF THE FOUNDATION AWARD AND HAS ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION AND INFORMATION IN PLACE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE, EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT. A COUNCIL WITH A QUALITY AWARD ALSO MEETS THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE.

The council confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it meets all requirements for the Foundation Award and that it also publishes on its website:

GOVERNANCE	COMMUNITY	DEVELOPMENT
Criteria demonstrating good governance in managing the business and finances of a council	Criteria representing a council's role in the community and how it engages with the community	Criteria representing council improvement through the management and development of staff and councillors
Draft minutes of all council and committee meetings within four weeks of the last meeting	A community engagement policy involving two-way communication between council and community	
A Health and Safety policy	Councillor profiles	
Its policy on equality	A grant awarding policy	
	Evidence showing how electors contribute to the Annual Parish or Town Meeting	
	An action plan and related budget responding to community engagement and setting out a timetable for action and review	
	Evidence of community engagement, council activities and the promotion of democratic processes in an annual report, online material and regular news bulletins	
	Evidence of helping the community plan for its future	

The council also confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it has:

GOVERNANCE	COMMUNITY	DEVELOPMENT
Criteria demonstrating good governance in managing the business and finances of a council	Criteria representing a council's role in the community and how it engages with the community	Criteria representing council improvement through the management and development of staff and councillors
A scheme of delegation (where relevant)	At least two-thirds of its councillors who stood for election	A qualified clerk
Up-to-date insurance policies that mitigate risks to public money	A printed annual report that is distributed at locations across the community	A clerk (and deputy) employed according to nationally or locally agreed terms and conditions
Addressed complaints received in the last year		A formal appraisal process for all staff A training policy and record for all staff and councillors

The council notifies the accreditation panel's co-ordinator when the resolution has been agreed and provides a link to its website.

WHAT IS THE ACCREDITATION PANEL LOOKING FOR?

The accreditation panel checks that the criteria for the Foundation Award are in place if the award was granted more than one year ago. It then considers the additional criteria for the Quality Award.

The panel assesses the quality of documents and information with a light touch, seeking reassurance that the council is acting lawfully and according to good (rather than best) practice. The panel carries out spot-checks to confirm that the documentation and information is in place and up-to-date and complies with the guidance below. For those documents that are not posted on the website, the panel will ask to see the evidence if it is considered necessary.

- All council policies should comply with current legislation and guidance and note the date of the next review.
- Draft minutes (marked Draft) of all council and committee meetings keep people up-to-date with decisions and action should be posted up as soon as possible after the meeting and within at least four weeks. The minutes will show that the council monitors its actions, internal controls and performance against the budget at least every three months.
- A community engagement policy demonstrates the council's commitment to hearing what people in the community think and communicating its own actions and decisions. The council also gives grants to community organisations and publishes a grant awarding policy.
- Councillor profiles normally contain a photo and reference to the ward represented (if relevant) but personal contact details are not required.
- The panel seeks evidence that the council has in place light touch policies for managing Health

and Safety, including its duty of care to staff and promoting equality in compliance with legislation. For example, evidence might include employment documents or statements on agendas.

- Evidence that electors can contribute to the Annual Parish or Town Meeting can come in any form; for example, it could be an invitation to attend and participate in discussions or a record of how community groups spoke about their use of grant funding over the last year.
- The action plan (or similar forward plan) summarises findings from community engagement and sets out aims and objectives that respond to community views. The action plan includes a timetable for actions to be completed with dates for reviewing the plan. The council's budget shows how the action plan is put into practice and manages risks to public money.
- The council is expected to produce an annual report, online material and regular news bulletins throughout the year. The annual report and news bulletins must be online even if they were also distributed in hard copy such as in printed newsletters or village magazines. If the council uses social media such as Facebook or Twitter, this will be evident from the council's website. The accreditation panel will read the materials looking for evidence of community engagement, council activities and promoting democratic processes. The panel expects to see that the council consults the community in at least three different ways (such as surveys, focus groups, online or street polls and community workshops) and engages with other organisations, including community groups and the principal authority(ies). It will look for at least three positive actions for the community in the last year.

- The annual report should be distributed widely. It is accepted that it cannot always be distributed to all households, but copies can be left at prime locations in a community, including a library, doctors' surgeries, schools, pubs, shops or residential homes.
- The panel seeks evidence from council documents and online information that it supports the community in planning for its future. This can include at least one contribution to creating, implementing or reviewing a parish or town plan, a design statement or a neighbourhood plan, holding community planning events, facilitating debate in the community about planning applications or registering community assets.
- The panel also seeks evidence of promoting elections and the value of the democratic process; this might include explaining how the system works, advising people of election dates and promoting the value of being a councillor.
- At the time of making the resolution, at least two-thirds of the seats on the council must be filled by councillors who stood for election at either the last ordinary elections or a by-election. This shows that the council represents the community through the democratic process. Councillors who stood for election, even if elected unopposed, do count, while councillors who were co-opted or appointed cannot count. If two thirds is not a whole number, then it must be rounded up to the next whole number using the table below.

Total council seats

5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
4	4	5	6	6	7	8	8	9	10	10	11	12	12	13	14

Two thirds

properly operates the delegation of decision-making to committees, sub-committees and officers (where relevant). Arrangements for delegation may be set out in standing orders or in a separate scheme of delegation.

- The panel may wish to check that insurance policies have been reviewed and are up-to-date and that the council recognises insurance as a way of mitigating risks to public money.
- The panel may also seek evidence that any formal complaints received by the council during the last year have been properly addressed. The panel does not seek to judge the appropriateness of the insurance policies themselves
- A qualified clerk is defined in Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012. The clerk (and deputy clerk) should be properly remunerated with a contract in accordance with terms and conditions set out in the national agreement or in a local government scheme.
- The panel can ask to see the document setting out the formal appraisal process that must be in place for all staff. It checks that the council has a training budget and may ask to see a general training policy for staff and councillors with a detailed record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year. The panel seeks assurance that a training culture is embedded in the council. The clerk is expected to achieve at least 12 CPD points every year.

- The panel may wish to check that a council

TO ACHIEVE A QUALITY GOLD AWARD A COUNCIL DEMONSTRATES THAT IT MEETS ALL REQUIREMENTS OF THE FOUNDATION AND QUALITY AWARDS, AND IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF BEST PRACTICE BY ACHIEVING AN EXCELLENT STANDARD IN COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT.

The council confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it meets all requirements for the Foundation and Quality Awards and also publishes on its website:

GOVERNANCE	COMMUNITY	DEVELOPMENT
Criteria demonstrating good governance in managing the business and finances of a council	Criteria representing a council's role in the community and how it engages with the community	Criteria representing council improvement through the management and development of staff and councillors
A business plan covering a financial forecast for at least three years linked to revenue and capital plans for the council and its community	<p>An annual report, online material and at least four news bulletins a year with evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — engaging with diverse groups in the community using a variety of methods — community engagement leading to positive outcomes for the community — a broad range of council activities, including innovative projects — co-operating constructively with other organisations 	

The council also confirms by resolution at a full council meeting, that it has prepared statements (of no more than one page each) to be presented to the accreditation panel showing how it

GOVERNANCE	COMMUNITY	DEVELOPMENT
Criteria demonstrating good governance in managing the business and finances of a council	Criteria representing a council's role in the community and how it engages with the community	Criteria representing council improvement through the management and development of staff and councillors
Ensures that the council delivers value for money	Provides leadership in planning for the future of the community	Manages the performance of the council as a corporate body
Delivers best practice in meeting its duties in relation to bio-diversity and crime & disorder		Manages the performance of each individual staff member to achieve its business plan

The council notifies the accreditation panel when the resolution has been agreed and provides a link to the online site.

WHAT IS THE ACCREDITATION PANEL LOOKING FOR?

The accreditation panel checks that criteria for the Foundation and Quality Awards are in place if an award was assessed more than one year ago. It then considers the additional criteria for Quality Gold.

The panel assesses the quality of documents and information in some depth. It seeks reassurance that the council is acting lawfully and aspires to excellence. Complying with the guidance below, the panel carries out spot-checks to confirm that up-to-date documentation and information for Quality Gold is in place. The panel may ask for further information or talk to councillors and staff. The panel will be interested to note whether the council already has a reputation for being at the forefront of best practice. Councils seeking the Quality Gold Award should be aware that the panel is a peer group applying their own standards of excellence to the criteria explained below.

- In confirming excellence, the panel ensures that the council operates within the law as explained in standard works of reference, demonstrates transparent, efficient and effective decision-making and governance and exercises sound financial management.
- The panel also seeks reassurance that the council is not experiencing destructive internal conflict or that nothing has occurred to bring the council into disrepute.
- The council works to a forward plan (or business plan) created for at least three years even if this takes the council beyond the next election. This plan explicitly responds to community

engagement. It sets out the council's aims and objectives for both the council and the community and shows how they will be achieved including financial forecasts for both revenue and capital for the duration of the plan.

- The annual report, web material and news bulletins publicise the work and achievements of the council and contain substantial evidence that the council takes the lead in actively representing and serving all parts of its local community. The council therefore addresses the diversity of its community, including, for example, different age groups, service users, physical locations, housing types, language, employment status and skills.
- These sources of information also show that the council seeks out and responds to views and ideas expressed by its community. The council uses a variety of ways (at least four) of consulting and involving local people to understand their views. There should be evidence that the council identifies local needs and views through community engagement that are then addressed in constructive council action. These sources also show that the council promotes local democracy.
- The panel seeks at least four positive outcomes achieved for the community in the last six months and a broad range of council activities. The council is innovative; this is the case if the council undertakes actions that are still relatively unusual for a local council of its size in that county. The panel also checks that the council is co-operating with other organisations, including community groups, its principal authority(ies) and other agencies to provide an effective service to the community. Co-operation includes but is not

limited to partnerships.

- The statement on ensuring value for money explains how the council reviews the quality and costs of its activities to confirm that the costs are appropriate. This could include, for example, the cost of the clerk's role in serving the council, the purchase of computer equipment or a grass cutting contract.
- The statement on duties related to biodiversity and crime & disorder demonstrates knowledge of the law and includes ways of reminding councillors of these duties and examples of how they are implemented.
- The statement on leadership in planning for the future shows how the council engages with a range of activities that influence the planning system and facilitate community-led planning. Activities may include, for example, identifying and representing community views on planning applications and local plans, working on parish or town plans, or holding community-led planning activities such as Planning for Real[®] or community conferences. The statement should include the council's approach to neighbourhood planning.
- Finally, the statement on performance management explains the process by which the performance of the council as a corporate body is constantly improved and shows how the performance, skills and knowledge of each individual in the council is managed to help the council achieve its objectives on behalf of the community. This includes confirming that each member of staff has their own professional development plan and that the majority of

councillors participate in a member development programme. It is important to show evidence that the council is a good employer.

A GUIDE TO THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The Local Council Award Scheme is a form of peer review. Councils are reviewed by experienced peers through the work of an accreditation panel.

The aim of this accreditation process is to be as simple, efficient and flexible as possible. It also seeks to ensure that every council that wishes to take part in the scheme is able to, and is assessed in a reasonably consistent way.

REGISTRATION

- The council registers its intention to apply for a specified award online at www.nalc.gov.uk.

The contact at NALC for this stage is the Improvement and Development Manager, Charlotte Eisenhart, who can also be contacted at charlotte.eisenhart@nalc.gov.uk or 020 7290 0319.

- The council pays a registration fee to NALC to cover the costs of managing the national scheme, including: administration, national online resources, quality assurance and review processes.
- NALC provides the applicant with a template application form and the contact details of the co-ordinator of the appropriate accreditation panel.
- NALC provides the co-ordinator with information of the council's application.
- When a council is ready to make its application to the accreditation panel, its clerk notifies the co-ordinator that the council has passed a resolution confirming that all the documentation and information is in place for a specified award and provides a link to its website or

online facility.

- The council pays the accreditation fee which covers the costs administering the local service.
- The local panel co-ordinator keeps a record of all applications and monitors their progress.

ONLINE CONNECTIVITY

The Award Scheme requires councils to publish certain information and documents online. In exceptional circumstances a council may not be able to put documents online because of poor digital connectivity in the local area. In this case, the council applies to the panel co-ordinator for permission to submit evidence for an award in an alternative format. The co-ordinator must be confident that poor digital connectivity is the problem rather than an unwillingness to use an online service for publicising council documents.

THE ACCREDITATION PANEL

The accreditation panel is set up by a CALC or a regional group of CALCs. The aim of any panel arrangement is to facilitate training, promote consistency and help manage the workload. Where an individual CALC is unable to support the scheme, a council will be able to submit their application to an appropriate neighbouring or regional panel.

CALCs may adapt the accreditation process to fit local need. They are able to discuss this with the Improvement and Development Manager at NALC, for support and guidance.

The panel co-ordinator manages a pool of up to

ten potential panel members, in the expectation that between three and five members are required to review each application. The panel includes experienced councillors and clerks as well as someone independent of the sector with an understanding of local government.

Panel membership should be reviewed by the regional co-ordinator every two years.

At the beginning of the accreditation process a panel is drawn together from the pool of potential members. The panel could choose a lead panellist or chair if needed to facilitate decision making.

All panel members are expected to use email or an online service to read a council's documents and also act in the spirit of a Code of Conduct; for example, they do not assess an award for their own or a neighbouring council.

The accreditation panel determines how often an accreditation process occurs, or an appropriate trigger for this to take place. For example, a panel may decide to convene every two months or may wait until the receipt of ten applications (as long as this is no later than two months after an application has been received). Panels should note that all costs of administering the panels must be met from application fees. So, to minimise costs, the panel can convene and conduct its business remotely rather than face-to-face. The resources provided by NALC will support this way of working.

The regional panels have discretion over the detail of how they organise the accreditation process. In consultation with the panel co-ordinators,

NALC will provide regularly updated guidance and support for accreditation panels.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The emphasis of the scheme is on encouraging and supporting the improvement of councils. The aim of the panel is therefore to help councils to achieve awards and panels are urged to be constructive.

The panel checks that the criteria for the relevant award have been met in published and/or requested information. Most documents and information will be posted on a website. Where it is not appropriate for a document or information to be on a website, the panel is permitted to ask to see electronic versions.

As all information and documents are available online or in electronic format, the panel's work can be done without meeting. Each member of the panel completes a form showing their responses to the co-ordinator. The co-ordinator reviews the completed forms from the panel which decides whether additional information or documents are required.

Panel members do not need to examine every document in detail but are advised to carry out spot-checks enabling them to make recommendations.

For Quality Gold, the panel may wish to discuss the council's activities with councillors, or staff or visit the parish but the cost of doing so must be covered by the fee.

THE OUTCOME

When the panel is satisfied that it has seen sufficient information, the findings are presented in a report agreed by the panel. The panel makes one of three recommendations to the council:

- The Award is achieved.
- The Award is achieved but the council is advised to make some small changes.
- The Award is not achieved until specified improvements have been made and submitted to the panel for checking.

If a council has applied for a higher award but has not achieved all the criteria, the panel can award a lower award if appropriate.

The aim of the scheme is to be supportive and help councils achieve the status they have applied for and so it is expected that achieving a lower (or no) award would be an exceptional circumstance. The panel should let the council know as soon as possible if it appears that they have omitted necessary evidence or it appears likely that they will not achieve the award, and the council should be given some time to respond to that feedback.

The co-ordinator informs the council of the outcome within two months of being notified of the application. They also inform NALC of the outcome and successful councils are included in the published list. NALC issues a certificate and provides resources to help the council celebrate and promote their achievement which is sent to the co-ordinator.

Councils and accreditation panels will be contacted by NALC for feedback on the process and the benefits of receiving the awards.

A council may appeal to the IDB (with an additional fee) if it feels that the panel's decision is unjustified. The IDB will appoint two representatives to review the appeal and the IDB's decision is final.

UPGRADING ACCREDITATION, RE-ACCREDITATION AND REMOVAL OF ACCREDITATION

Accreditation lasts for four years.

Applying for a higher award

- If a council wishes to apply for a higher award, it makes a fresh registration and application.
- A council can make a fresh application for a higher award at any time. If this is within one year of the previously successful accreditation, the panel does not need to revisit evidence that was previously approved.

Re-accreditation

- The council may seek re-accreditation at the same level after four years. If it does not achieve a new accreditation or re-accreditation within three months of the four-year end-date, it loses its award.

Removal of accreditation

- The council is expected to maintain its reputation by meeting the criteria throughout the four years.
- Although some circumstances may change, the council will not lose its award unless a significant event such as an audit, employment tribunal, court case or police investigation demonstrates the council's poor performance. In this case, a

panel co-ordinator asks the IDB to appoint two representatives to review the situation. The IDB assesses the severity of the case before deciding whether to impose a sanction which may include the removal of all awards or returning the council to a lower award.

■ The council can appeal to the IDB if the decision to remove an award is taken in which case two different IDB representatives review the case and their decision is final.

FEES

There are two fees:

- A registration fee paid to the National Association of Local Councils
- An accreditation fee paid to the organisation responsible for administering the local or regional accreditation process.

The registration fee paid to NALC is £50 paid by all councils for each level regardless of size.¹

The accreditation fee² varies according to:

- the award applied for
- the income of the council³
- the council's accreditation history.

	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
Foundation Standard	£50	£50	£50
Quality Standard	£60	£80	£100
Quality Gold	£100	£150	£200

The IDB will review fee levels annually.

The fee is reduced by 20% if the council sought accreditation at a lower level within the previous 12 months as the checking process covering criteria for the previous standard requires less work.

¹ All figures quoted are excluding VAT.

² The figures quoted are the discounted rates for members of NALC. Both the registration fee and accreditation fee are reduced by 50% for member councils. Non-member councils must pay the full fee ie double the figures quoted in this grid.

³ Small councils have an annual income of <£25,000. Medium councils have an annual income of £25,000 to £250,000. Larger councils have an income of >£250,000.

EVALUATION AND IMPROVEMENT

The aim of the evaluation and improvement process is to allow councils to feel ownership of the scheme, and to see the scheme changing to meet the feedback and needs expressed by the sector. It should also allow the scheme to be dynamic and able to respond over time to changes in the sector, national policy and other relevant issues.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Twice a year, representatives of the IDB will check at random a small sample of awards by carrying out spot checks of documents and information posted on a council's website.

The findings will not affect a council's award but will be used to improve the training for accreditation panels and to inform regular reviews of the scheme.

EVALUATION

At the end of each accreditation process the council and the panel will be sent a short evaluation questionnaire. This will aim to gather feedback on the process, the criteria, the resources provided by NALC and how they could be improved.

One year after accreditation the council will be contacted again. The council will be encouraged to apply for the next level of award, to make use of the fee discount. The council will also be asked to describe the benefits they have felt from being accredited by the scheme and their feedback on the scheme as a whole.

IMPROVEMENT

The feedback collected will be used to inform improvements to the scheme. The whole scheme, including the content and accreditation process, will be reviewed every six months.

These reviews will alternate between:

- A light touch approach only making urgent required changes where these are considered critical to the scheme.
- A wider ranging review aiming to best address collected feedback from all parties.
- The IDB will oversee all changes to the scheme.