



Congleton Town Council

Historic market town

Town Clerk: **BRIAN HOGAN**



22nd October, 2015

Dear Councillor,

Town Council Meeting – Thursday 29th October, 2015

You are summoned to attend a meeting of the Council, to be held in the Town Hall, Congleton on Thursday **29th October, 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 17th September 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

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5. Presentation of Pennant

The Town Mayor will present a pennant to John Gibb representing St Peter's Church.

6. Questions from Members of the Public (enclosed)

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

7. Mayor's Announcements (enclosed)

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

8. Planning Committee (enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 20th August and 24th September 2015.

9. Community, Environment & Services Committee (enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 27th August 2015.

10. Finance and Policy (enclosed)

To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2015.

11. Urgent Items

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

12. 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.

13. Youth Committee

- a) To receive the minutes of the Youth Committee meeting held on held on 19th October 2015. (enclosed)
- b) To deal with Questions from Members of the Youth Committee present at the meeting.
- c) Matthew Jones, the new Chairman of the Youth Committee will read a letter from Joseph Hearson.

14. Local Council Award Scheme (enclosed)

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

15. Recruitment of Chief Officer (to follow)

To consider a report and recommendation from the Personnel Committee on the recruitment of a Chief Officer.

To: All Members of the Town Council, Press 2, Burgesses (5), Mayor's Chaplain,
Members of the Youth Committee
MP, Congleton Library, Congleton Tourist Information Centre.

Congleton Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday,
17th September 2015 in the Town Hall, Congleton.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs S Akers Smith
 Mrs D Allen
 Mrs A L Armit
 J G Baggott
 P Bates
 R Boston
 C Booth
 P Broom
 D T Brown
 G R Edwards
 Mrs S A Holland
 Mrs E Wardlaw (Town Mayor)
 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, G P Hayes, Mrs A E Morrison and Mrs J D Parry.

2. **MINUTES**

CTC/28/1516 RESOLVED- That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 9th July 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 P Bates, D T Brown, Mrs E Wardlaw and G S Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Cheshire East Council.

Cllr P Bates declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 13.

4. **OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

None.

5. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from members of the public.

6. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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

7. **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

CTC/29/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 18th June 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

8. **COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT & SERVICES COMMITTEE**

CTC/30/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th June 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

9. **FINANCE & POLICY COMMITTEE**

CTC/31/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4th June and 16th July 2015 be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

10. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent matters raised.

11. **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCILLORS' REPORT**

Cllr D T Brown informed the Council that the Planning application for the Link Road would be submitted on 29th September 2015.

12. **YOUTH COMMITTEE**

There were no questions raised by the Youth Committee.

13. **CONGLETON PARTNERSHIP**

Steve Foster the Chairman of Congleton Partnership provided an overview of the Partnership activities over the years. He pointed out that the volunteers who form the Partnership have been involved in many projects to improve the wellbeing of the Town.

The Partnership has an Executive Committee consisting of 20 members and is non-political.

14. **LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME**

The Council considered the new Local Council Award Scheme which was introduced in early 2015 which consists of 3 levels, Foundation Level, Quality Award, and Gold Award.

CTC/32/1516 RESOLVED that this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Town Council. When it is raised again the name of the Lead members on quality will be provided.

Mrs E Wardlaw
TOWN MAYOR

Question from a Member of the Public

Question from Mr G Goodwin

Dear Sirs

On 5th March 2015, the council accepted changes to the Complaints Policy.

When the reasons for the changes were outlined to the F and P Committee by the Town Clerk at the F and P Meeting On 19th February 2015 it was stated that the proposed changes to the Policy would enhance and streamline the system and, whilst the basic changes to the policy as explained at the meeting are relatively non-contentious, at the same time, the procedure for hearing a complaint against the Mayor or the Town Clerk was also changed although this was not mentioned at all in the Town Clerk's presentation

Prior to March 2015 a complaint against the Mayor or Town Clerk, together with the defence to that complaint, was heard at a full council meeting with all councillors, public and press present. At that time the pertinent paragraph of the Procedure stated:-

"Where the Clerk or Mayor receives written complaint about his/her own actions, he/she will forthwith refer the complaint to the Council."

This paragraph was removed completely when the amended Code was adopted in March but no reason was given for its removal and its removal was certainly not mentioned when the Clerk presented the proposal for change to the F and P committee.. As a result of the change, a complaint against the Mayor or the Clerk, now follows the 3 stage procedure in the Code intended for general complaints but democracy demands that such complaints against senior members of the council are considered in an open and transparent manner

As the Code now stands, a complaint against the Clerk is first heard by a senior member of the council staff whose immediate superior is the Clerk, the second stage is a review by the Clerk himself and the final stage is consideration, in private, by a committee comprising the Mayor, The Deputy Mayor and the "Leader"

This procedure, when used for a complaint against the Mayor or the Clerk, cannot reasonably be regarded as unbiased, democratic and transparent

My question for the council is –

What precisely was the reason for the removal of the requirement for a complaint against the Mayor or Town Clerk to be referred forthwith to the council and, since it is now more than 6 months since the Code was amended, why can't the same paragraph not be reinserted into the current Code?

Response by the Town Mayor

The reason the Town Council sought to examine its complaints policy earlier this year was because there was a view that the process was being abused by certain individuals.

A complaints procedure needs to be fair and objective and it became apparent in respect of the Town Clerk and the Town Mayor, that being singled out differently to every other councillor and employee in this manner, was fundamentally wrong and manifestly unfair.

Indeed advice from our HR advisers clearly stated that to continue with the existing unfair system singling out one employee to be subjected to public scrutiny could lead to a successful claim of constructive dismissal because it would be a clear breach of contract in that the normal employee procedures for governing performance management for discipline, grievances/complaints had not been followed.

Secondly, to continue with the previous procedure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act which states:-

Data protection and confidentiality

To ensure compliance with its obligations in the Data Protection Act 1998 ('the 1998 Act'), a council cannot disclose the identity, contact details or other Personal data about an individual complainant/complained or any other party involved in the process, unless he/she consents or disclosure is otherwise fair and lawful under the 1998 Act; e.g. for the purpose of discharging the council's functions, or for the performance of contractual Obligations. Councils should ensure that agendas and minutes do not disclose personal data or financial, sensitive or confidential information that relates to an individual complainant/complained or any other third party in the agendas or minutes of its meeting.

In this instance Congleton Town Council would be acting contrary to the DPA if it continued with the previous Complaints Procedure as undertaking a complaint against the Town Clerk in a Town Council meeting would be a clear breach of the DPA as it states that such personal data cannot be provided as such information we are advised is subject to the exemption contained at FOIA Section 40 (2).

Part II of the FOIA contains the types of information exempt from the general right of access contained in S.1 of the Act. The S.40 (2) exemption covers the personal data of third parties where complying with the request would breach any of the principles in the Data Protection Act 1998 ("DPA"). The first principle of the DPA states that "*personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully*"

Thus the revised Complaints Policy is now fair to all parties concerned including the Town Mayor and our employees, it is robust, much clearer and easier to understand and meets the legal requirements under the Data Protection Act and complies with good practice as set out under Employment Law.

TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

2015

18 th September	Centre Stage Youth Theatre
19 th September	Congleton Tennis Club Tournament
20 th September	Cheshire East Civic Service
29 th September	Young People's Poppy Award – Daresbury Park
4 th October	Congleton Half Marathon
4 th October	Middlewich Civic Parade and Service
7 th October	Congleton Players – “Stepping Out”
9 th October	Meeting Guests from Kenya
13 th October	Mayor's Ladies Charity Lunch - Pecks
28 th October	Congleton Musical Theatre – Daneside Theatre

DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR

26 th September	Friends for Leisure Anniversary Celebration – New Life Church
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COUNCILLOR SALLY ANN HOLLAND

25 th September	Macmillan Coffee Morning - Tesco
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CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 20th AUGUST 2015

PRESENT Councillor Mrs E Wardlaw – Town Mayor – In the Chair
Mrs S Akers Smith
Mrs A Armitt
J G Baggott
P Bates
C Booth
P Broom
D T Brown
G R Edwards
G P Hayes
Mrs S A Holland
Mrs A M Martin – arrived at 7.10 p.m.
Mrs A E Morrison
Mrs J D Parry

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors N. Adams, D. S. Allen, L. D. Barker, H. Richards, G. S. Williams.

2. **MINUTES**

PLN/7/1516 RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16th July 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.

Councillor D. T. Brown declared a “non pecuniary” interest due to his membership of Cheshire East Council and also due to his membership of the Strategic Planning Committee.
Councillor Brown did not vote on any items.

Councillor G. P. Hayes declared a “non pecuniary” interest due to his membership of Cheshire East Council and also due to his membership of the Northern Planning Committee.
Councillor Hayes did not vote on any items

Councillors Bates and Wardlaw declared a “non pecuniary” interest due to their membership of Cheshire East Council and did not vote.

4. **OUTSTANDING ITEMS**

There were none.

5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

PLN/8/1516 RECOMMENDED: That the following comments be made to Cheshire East Borough Council:

Week ended 17th July 2015

15/2841C	24 Ayrshire Way, Congleton, CW12 3TN	NO OBJECTION
15/3057C	38 Leamington Road, Congleton, CW12 4PE	NO OBJECTION
Councillor Bates declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3057C		
15/3089C	78 Holmes Chapel Road, Congleton, CW12 4NG	REFUSE – due to comments from United Utilities regarding building over the sewer on the plot.
15/3172C	DV8 6 Little Street, Congleton, CW12 1AR	NO OBJECTION
Councillors Broome and Hayes declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3172C		
15/3173C	DV8 6 Little Street, Congleton, CW12 1AR	NO OBJECTION
Councillors Broome and Hayes declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3173C		
15/3222C	Little Croft, 5 Park Bank, Congleton, CW12 3DH	NO OBJECTION
15/3250C	Dane Street Garage, Dane Street, Congleton, CW12 1JX	NO OBJECTION
15/3108T	3 Wolstanhome Close, Congleton, CW12 3RX	NO OBJECTION
		Subject to usual conditions
Councillor Hayes declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3108T		
15/3138T	5 Bradbury Gardens, Congleton, CW12 3SR	NO OBJECTION
		Subject to usual conditions

Week ended 24th July 2015

15/3194C	54 West Street, Congleton, CW12 1JY	NO OBJECTION
Subject to Planning Officers ensuring that windows at the rear of the dwelling do not overlook adjoining properties		
Councillor Bates declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3194C		
15/3316C	Aldi, West Heath, Congleton, CW12 4NB	NO OBJECTION
Subject to Planning Officers ensuring that the Sunday trading hours comply with legislation		
15/3350C	20 Barnett Grove, Congleton, CW12 4WF	NO OBJECTION
15/3183T	32 Park Lane, Congleton, CW12 3DG	NO OBJECTION
		Subject to usual conditions
15/2795D	The Orchard, Padgbury Lane, Congleton, CW12 4HX	NO OBJECTION
		Subject to usual conditions

Week ended 31st July 2015

15/3196C	13 High Street, Congleton, CW12 1BN	NO OBJECTION
Councillor Booth declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3196C		
15/3420C	2 St. Peter's Road, Congleton, CW12 3RE	NO OBJECTION
15/3474T	31, Park Lane, Congleton, CW12 3DG	NO OBJECTION
		Subject to usual conditions

Week ended 7th August 2015

15/3466C	St Mary's School, Belgrave Avenue, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/3525C	Irlam House, Brookhouse Lane, Congleton, CW12 3QP	NO OBJECTION
Subject to rules for building in the green belt are complied with		
15/3532C	2 – 4 Moody Street, Congleton, CW12 4AP	NO OBJECTION
15/3538C	16 Kennet Drive, Congleton, CW12 3RJ	NO OBJECTION
15/3557C	Pedley House Farm, Pedley Lane, Congleton, CW12 3QD	NO OBJECTION
Councillor Hayes declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3557C		

Week ended 14th August 2015

15/3431C	39 Cross Lane, Congleton, CW12 3JX	NO OBJECTION
15/3574C	18 Lawton Street, Congleton, CW12 1RP	NO OBJECTION
Councillor Broome and Hayes declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3574C		
15/3586C	Land Off Spring Street, Congleton, CW12	NO OBJECTION
Subject to Planning Officers checking that there are sufficient parking spaces and appropriate landscaping is provided		
15/3593C	5 Bradbury Gardens, Congleton, CW12 3SR	NO OBJECTION
15/3600C	Hightown Corn Mills, Biddulph Road, Congleton	NO OBJECTION
15/3634C	4 Lower Heath, Congleton, CW12 1NJ	NO COMMENT
Councillor Martin declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3634C		
15/3664C	Field No. 5227, East of Tunstall Road, Congleton	NO OBJECTION

Additional Item

15/3227C The Spinney, Middle Lane, Congleton REFUSE – due to
insufficient reasons to remove the agricultural restriction
Councillor Bates declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3227C

6. PLANNING APPEALS

The following appeal was noted –

APP/R0660/A/14/2221324 and APP/R0660/A/14/2221325 – Land West of Padgbury Lane, Congleton – Appeal allowed and outline planning permission is granted for up to 120 and 150 dwellings

Councillors discussed concerns regarding traffic congestion due to the large volume of new dwellings. These concerns to be expressed to Cheshire East Highways because of the poor quality of evidence submitted to the appeal on traffic information. It was agreed that Councillor Brown would invite a Cheshire East Highways Officer to a Town Council meeting to discuss the issues.

Mrs E Wardlaw (Town Mayor – In the Chair)

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 24th SEPTEMBER 2015

PRESENT Councillor Mrs A M Martin – Vice Chairman
Mrs D S Allen
Mrs S Akers Smith
P Bates
R Boston
P Broom
G R Edwards
G P Hayes
Mrs A E Morrison
Mrs J D Parry
Mrs E Wardlaw

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors N. Adams, Mrs . A. L. Armitt, J. G. Baggott, L. D. Barker, C. Booth, D. T. Brown, Mrs. S. A. Holland, G. S. Williams.

2. **MINUTES**

PLN/9/1516 RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20th August 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.

Councillor G. P. Hayes declared a "non pecuniary" interest due to his membership of Cheshire East Council and also due to his membership of the Northern Planning Committee. Councillor Hayes did not vote on any items

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/10/1516 RECOMMENDED: That the following comments be made to Cheshire East Borough Council:

Week ended 21st August 2015

15/3735C	54 Henshall Hall Drive, Congleton, CW12 3TY	NO OBJECTION
15/3775C	Land Adjacent to Highland View, Canal Street, Congleton	REFUSE – due to the access to the proposed development being dangerous

15/3750D Moss Inn, Canal Road, Congleton, CW12 3AT **NO OBJECTION**
to conditions except the one relating to drainage. Canal Road has problems with
drainage and specialist officers are requested to review the issues relating to this
condition

Week ended 28th August 2015

15/3850C Grove Inn, Manchester Road, Congleton, CW12 1NP **NO OBJECTION**
 Councillors Akers Smith and Martin declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3850C
 15/3776T 2 Woburn Drive, Congleton, CW12 3SS **NO OBJECTION**
 Subject to usual conditions

Week ended 4th September 2015

15/4004C 87 Holmes Chapel Road, Congleton, CW12 4NU **NO OBJECTION**

Week ended 11th September 2015

15/3118C Lamberts Lane Stables, Congleton **NO OBJECTION**
 15/3633C Land Adj. Pump House, Forge Lane, Congleton **NO OBJECTION**
 15/3945C 8 – 10 Mill Green, Congleton, CW12 1JG **REFUSE – due to**
being overbearing and not in keeping with existing dwellings
 Councillor Bates declared a "non pecuniary" interest in application 15/3945C
 15/4069C Unit A1 Congleton Retail Park, Barn Road, Congleton **NO OBJECTION**
 15/4151C Brooklands House, Padgbury Lane, Congleton **NO OBJECTION**

Week ended 18th September 2015

15/4103C 30 William Street, Congleton, CW12 2EY **NO OBJECTION**
 15/4105C 28 High Street, Congleton, CW12 1BD **NO OBJECTION**
 15/4153C 60 Bromley Road, Congleton, CW12 1PY **NO OBJECTION**
 15/4182C 8 Worsley Drive, Congleton, CW12 3TT **NO OBJECTION**
 15/3965T 30 Holmes Chapel Road, Congleton, CW12 4NG **NO OBJECTION**
 Subject to usual conditions
 15/4230T 11 West Street, Congleton, CW12 1JN **NO OBJECTION**
 Subject to usual conditions
 15/4146D 1A/1B Sherratt Close, Congleton, CW12 3BT **NO OBJECTION**
 15/4178D Land Off A34, Newcastle Road, Congleton, CW12 **NO OBJECTION**

6. **PLANNING APPEALS**

None to report.

Mrs A M Martin – Vice Chairman

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND SERVICES COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 27TH AUGUST 2015

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs A L Armitt
 P Bates
 C H Booth
 P Broom (Vice Chair)
 D T Brown
 G R Edwards
 G P Hayes
 Mrs S A Holland (Chair)
 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 ex-officio committee member Mrs E Wardlaw.

Apologies were also received from Cllrs Mrs S Akers Smith, J G Baggott, and H Richards who are not members of this particular Committee.

2. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

CES/10/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th June 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, 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**

There were no outstanding actions.

5. **CHESHIRE POLICE**

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

6. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR WORKING GROUP

CES/11/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 11th August 2015 were received.

7. FLORAL ARRANGEMENT WORKING GROUP

CES/12/1516 RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 13th July and 5th August 2015 were received.

8. SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS IN CONGLETON

Kieran Hatton of the Young Carers Support Network provided an illuminating presentation on the plight of young carers in Cheshire and in Congleton. It was noted that Kieran would be applying for a grant from the Town Council to support young carers in Congleton.

9. PARKING EYE

It was noted that the parking charges levied by the Parking Eye system were similar to the previous scheme however, there was some confusion as to how the system works, resulting in motorists being fined.

A number of residents expressed concern at the methods used by Parking Eye and had taken this matter up with Fiona Bruce MP who is going to raise the issue in Parliament.

CES/13/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. The Town Clerk to write to Fiona Bruce MP offering the Town Council's full support in her endeavours to raise this issue in Parliament.
2. The Town Clerk to write to East Cheshire NHS Trust to express concern at the introduction of Parking Eye at the War Memorial Hospital and to seek assurance that the 4 hours of free parking will remain a permanent feature.

10. STREETSCAPE REPORT

A report on the operation of the Streetscape Team was presented to the Committee. The members commented that it was apparent that the Town looked much tidier and the Streetscape Team ought to be congratulated for their efforts.

CES/14/1516 RESOLVED that to receive the report.

11. VISIT TO CONGLETON WATER TREATMENT WORKS

A report produced by Cllrs C Booth and Mrs A M Martin was considered.

CES/15/1516 RESOLVED to receive the report.

12. REVISED STATEMENT OF GAMBLING PRINCIPLES

In accordance with the Gambling Act 2005, Cheshire East Council reviewed its Statement of Principles and produced an overall document for comment. It was noted that the Committee had no comments to offer.

CES/16/1516 RESOLVED to receive the revised Statement of Principles.

13. BUS SHELTER IN BUXTON ROAD

The disused bus shelter on Buxton Road is in a poor state and should be removed. However, due to the efforts of Cheshire East Councillors G P Hayes and G S Williams, Transport Solutions, who are responsible for the bus shelter, have raised an order with ANSA to have the shelter removed and this will be actioned in the next few weeks.

CES/17/1516 RESOLVED to receive the verbal report.

Mrs S A Holland
Chairman (In the Chair)

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2015

PRESENT

Councillors

N Adams
Mrs S Akers Smith
Mrs D S Allen
J G Baggott
P Bates
R Boston
D T Brown
Mrs S A Holland
H Richards
Mrs E Wardlaw (Town Mayor)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C Booth G R Edwards and Mrs J D Parry.

Apologies were also received from Cllr G S Williams who is not a member of this particular Committee.

2. MINUTES

FAP/10/1516 RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4th June 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 D T Brown and Mrs E Wardlaw declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters related to Cheshire East Council.

Cllr Mrs S A Holland declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 (ii).

Cllr P Bates declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 6 (iii) and (iv).

Cllr J G Baggott declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 6 (iv).

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 £13,550 is available for grants in 2015-16.

FAP/11/1516 RESOLVED that the grant summary be received.

6. NEW APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

FAP/12/1516 RESOLVED that:-

i. GR 6/1516 – Beartown Patchwork & Quilters

A grant of £100 be approved.

ii. GR 7/1516 – Congleton Musical Theatre

A grant of £500 be approved.

iii. GR 8/1516 – St Peters Bell Ringers

A grant of £165.55 be approved.

iv. GR 9/1516 – Congleton Market Trader Group

Refused, but the applicant to be requested to re-submit the application by providing more detail, it was also suggested that they should liaise and seek support from Cheshire East Council and raise the age limit of their scheme to 25 years of age.

v. GR 10/1516 – Congleton Community Projects

Refused because of concern relating to where the container would be located. It was suggested that the applicant should contact local businesses to ascertain whether they have suitable storage facilities they could make available.

7. NEW GRANT ACTIVITIES MONITORING FORMS

It was noted that Grant Activities Monitoring Forms were received from Trinity Methodist Church and Congleton Spiritualist Church.

Thanks were also received from the Jazz and Blues Festival organisers for the grant provided by the Council

8. MANAGEMENTS ACCOUNTS FOR JULY 2015

FAP/13/1516 RESOLVED that the Managements Accounts for July 2015 be received.

9. BANK RECONCILIATION

FAP/14/1516 RESOLVED that the bank reconciliation for 31st July 2015 be received.

10. LIST OF PAYMENTS

FAP/15/1516 RESOLVED that the Payments List between 1st June 2015 and 31st July 2015 be received.

11. EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The External Audit Report for 2014-15 was considered by the Committee and it was noted that there was one minor corrective action.

FAP/16/1516 RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be received.
2. The action required on ensuring that the Mayor's signature was appended in the appropriate place was noted.

12. BUDGET

The Committee considered items that needed to be included in the budget for 2015-16. It was noted that an appropriate budget for the 150th Anniversary of the opening of the Town Hall should be included.

Mrs E Wardlaw
Town Mayor

Congleton Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Youth Committee held on Monday 19th October 2015 in the Town Hall, Congleton

PRESENT Youth Councillor Joseph Hearson (Chairman)
Sophie Hammond
Bella Statham
Arabella Holland
Matthew Jones

Sebastian Nixon
Alastair Kennington
Edward Akers Smith
Adam Bailey
Tom Wright

Mr David Hermit
Councillor Sally Holland
Councillor Suzi Akers Smith
Linda Minshull

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Jamie Bernardi, Thomas Minshull, Zac Roberts and Councillors Larry Barker, George Hayes and Liz Wardlaw.

2. WELCOME

Joe introduced and welcomed the guests to the meeting and stated that he hoped that they would find it interesting and informative.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21st September 2015 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. COUNTRY PARK AND CYCLING CIRCUIT

Councillor Suzie Akers Smith gave a presentation on a country park and cycling circuit. The Committee agreed that this initiative would be of great benefit to the area and

RESOLVED – to write to Councillor Akers Smith formally giving support to the initiative.

5. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED – (i) That Matthew Jones be elected as Chairman of the Youth Committee for the forthcoming year.

(i i) That Bella Statham be elected as Vice Chairman of the Youth Committee for the forthcoming year.

The new Chairman took over the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

6. UPDATE BY JOSEPH HEARSON

Joe read out a letter resigning from the Committee and reflecting his views during his two years as Chairman. It was agreed that Joe's letter would be read out at the next Town Council meeting. The Committee wished to note their thanks to him for all his hard work, commitment and enthusiasm during his three years as a member and particularly his time as Chairman. Linda will send a formal letter of thanks.

7. MEMBERSHIP

A discussion took place regarding membership and recruitment. It was noted that there is a shortage of members from Eaton Bank. It was agreed that a recruitment exercise would be carried out at both schools. Other means of promotion would be used including social media, Bear Necessities and the Chronicle.

Several of the young people attending the Committee for the first time indicated that they would like to join and Linda agreed to contact them with information on Co-Option.

Mr Hermitt suggested that if the Youth Committee had a budget allocated by the Town Council they would be able to be in control of the delivery of some initiatives.

8. YOUTH COMMITTEE BANK ACCOUNT

It was reported that the balance is £638.92

9. YOUTH COMMITTEE MEMBERS ITEMS

Website

Matt reported on updates he had with Nathan regarding the Website. It was acknowledged that, although the Website was a great initiative, there was little support from organisations to use the site. It was agreed to invite Nathan to a future meeting, possibly around Christmas, to discuss the future of the project.

Dates

Linda informed the Committee of the following dates.

Town Council Meeting – Thursday 29th October – 7 p.m.

Remembrance Sunday – 8th November – Assemble at Booth Street
(Cricket Club) 10.15 a.m.

Carnival Meeting

Matt gave an update on a Carnival meeting he had attended.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 23rd November 2015 – 7 p.m. – Congleton Town Hall

Matthew Jones (Chairman)

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. All councils winning the award should be a 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.



LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME

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	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 risk management scheme		Disciplinary and grievance procedures
A register of assets		A policy for training new staff and councillors
Contracts for all members of staff		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.