

## Template Local Council Award Scheme accreditation feedback document

### The Foundation Award

Please place an X in the box corresponding to the appropriate outcome for each of the criteria. If any criteria are partially met then a comment is needed to explain this. Otherwise comments are optional. Please keep comments brief and constructive, as they will be provided as feedback to the council.

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

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
1 Its standing orders and financial regulations				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
2 Its Code of Conduct and a link to councillors' registers of interests				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
3 Its publication scheme				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
4 Its last annual return				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
5 Transparent information about council payments				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and	Partially met and not

			accepted	accepted
6 A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
7 Minutes for at least one year of full council meetings and (if relevant) all committee and sub-committee meetings				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
8 Current agendas				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
9 The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
10 Its complaints procedure				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
11 Council contact details and councillor information in line with the transparency code				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and	Partially met and not
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			accepted	accepted
12 Its action plan for the current year				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
13 Evidence of consulting the community				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
14 Publicity advertising council activities				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
15 Evidence of participating in town and country planning				
Comment:				

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

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
16 A risk management scheme				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
17 A register of assets				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
18 Contracts for all members of staff				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
19 Disciplinary and grievance procedures				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
20 A policy for training new staff and councillors				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
21 A record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
22 A clerk who has achieved 12 CPD points in the last year				
Comment:				

## 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, e-mail) 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 (Continuing Professional Development) such as training, conference attendance, mentoring and studying for qualifications. CPD points are allocated according to a system published by the IDB.

## The Quality Award

Please place an X in the box corresponding to the appropriate outcome for each of the criteria. If any criteria are partially met then a comment is needed to explain this. Otherwise comments are optional. Please keep comments brief and constructive, as they will be provided as feedback to the council.

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:

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
1 Draft minutes of all council and committee meetings within four weeks of the last meeting				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
2 A Health and Safety policy				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
3 Its policy on equality				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
4 Councillor profiles				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
5 A community engagement policy involving two-way communication between council and community				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially	Partially

			met and accepted	met and not accepted
6 A grant awarding policy				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
7 Evidence showing how electors contribute to the Annual Parish or Town Meeting				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
8 An action plan and related budget responding to community engagement and setting out a timetable for action and review				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
9 Evidence of community engagement, council activities and the promotion of democratic processes in an annual report, online material and at least four news bulletins a year				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
10 Evidence of helping the community plan for its future				
Comment:				

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

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
11 a scheme of delegation (where				



relevant)				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
12 up-to-date insurance policies that mitigate risks to public money				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
13 addressed complaints received in the last year				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
14 at least two-thirds of its councillors who stood for election				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
15 a printed annual report that is distributed at locations across the community				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
16 a qualified clerk				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
17 a clerk (and deputy) employed according to nationally or locally agreed terms and conditions				

Comment:

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
18 a formal appraisal process for all staff				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
19 a training policy and record for all staff and councillors				
Comment:				

### 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
Two thirds	4	4	5	6	6	7	8	8	9	10	10	11	12	12	13	14

- The panel may wish to check that a council 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 Quality Gold Award

Please place an X in the box corresponding to the appropriate outcome for each of the criteria. If any criteria are partially met then a comment is needed to explain this. Otherwise comments are optional. Please keep comments brief and constructive, as they will be provided as feedback to the council.

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:

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
1 A business plan covering a financial forecast for at least three years linked to revenue and capital plans for the council and its community				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
2 An annual report, online material and at least four news bulletins a year with evidence of:				
a) engaging with diverse groups in the community using a variety of methods				
b) community engagement leading to positive outcomes for the community				
c) a broad range of council activities including innovative projects				
d) co-operating constructively with other organisations				
Comment:				

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

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
3 Ensures that the council delivers value for money				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and	Partially met and not

			accepted	accepted
4 Meets its duties in relation to bio-diversity and crime & disorder				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
5 Provides leadership in planning for the future of the community				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
6 Manages the performance of the council as a corporate body				
Comment:				

	Met	Not met	Partially met and accepted	Partially met and not accepted
7 Manages the performance of each individual staff member to achieve its business plan				
Comment:				

### 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<sup>®</sup> 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.



## **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 achieved 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 also 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**

Accreditation lasts for four years.

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.

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.