

LOCAL COUNCIL AWARDS SCHEME

FOUNDATION STANDARD

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 confirms 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 may 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.

The council also confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it recognises its duties in relation to bio-diversity and crime and disorder

e.g. Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (“the 1998 Act”) a local council has a duty to: exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, (a) crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment) (b) the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area and (c) re-offending in its area.

NALC Publication What can local councils do on climate change

<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/our-work/climate-change/3598-what-can-local-councils-do-on-climate-change-2021/file>

Criteria	NALC Guidance
FOUNDATION: GOVERNANCE	
1 Its Standing Orders 2 Its Financial Regulations	Standing orders, financial regulations, the Code of Conduct, publication scheme, accessibility statement, privacy statement and complaints procedure are public documents tailored to the specific council. Standing orders or financial regulations explain procedures for contracts and internal controls. There should be evidence of all policies and procedures demonstrating 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 Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.
3 Its Code of Conduct and a link to councillors’ registers of interests	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.

4	Its publication scheme	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.
5	Its last annual return	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 submit their annual return for audit. Panels check that these councils comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.
6	Transparent information about council payments	Information on all payments must be transparent and in accordance with financial regulations and statutory proper practices.
7	A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors	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.
8	Minutes for at least one year of full council meetings and (if relevant) all committee and sub-committee meetings	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.
9	Current agendas	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.
10	The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year	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.
11	Its Complaints procedure	Standing orders, financial regulations, the Code of Conduct, publication scheme, accessibility statement, privacy statement and complaints procedure are public documents tailored to the specific council.
12	Its Accessibility Statement	
13	Its Privacy Notice	
14	A risk management policy	The risk management policy shows the council has considered health and safety of staff, councillors and others as appropriate.
15	A register of assets	

16 Contracts for all members of staff	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. The contract(s) for staff can be provided in redacted format, or if there are reasons why the contract cannot be shared then the council provides a statement from a full council meeting confirming that all staff are employed under an appropriate contract.
17 Up-to-date insurance policies that mitigate risks to public money	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 does not seek to judge the appropriateness of the insurance policies themselves.
FOUNDATION: COMMUNITY	
18 Council contact details and councillor information in line with the Transparency Code	It should also publish the names of councillors and councillors' responsibilities in compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code .
19 Its action plan for the current year	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.
20 Evidence of consulting the community	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.
21 Publicity advertising council activities	See above
22 Evidence of participating in town and country planning	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.
FOUNDATION: DEVELOPMENT	
23 Disciplinary and grievance procedures	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.
24 A policy for training and development of staff and councillors	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 undertake a range of development activities such as attending conferences, undertaking training, or reading about developments in the sector.
25 A record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year	
26 A clerk who has achieved 12 CPD points in the last year	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 NALC IDB

QUALITY

The accreditation panel first checks that the criteria for the Foundation Award are in place if the award was granted more than one year ago. The exception to this is if the council received the Foundation award less than a year ago. Then the panel does not check the Foundation criteria again, but the council still confirms in a public meeting that it meets these criteria.

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 confirms that the documentation and information is in place and up-to-date and complies with the guidance below.

All council policies should comply with current legislation and guidance and note the date of the next review.

Criteria	NALC Guidance
QUALITY: GOVERNANCE	
1 Draft minutes of all council and committee meetings within four weeks of the last meeting	Draft minutes (marked <i>Draft</i>) of all council and committee meetings 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.
2 A Health and Safety policy	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.
3 Its policy on equality	See above

4	A scheme of delegation (where relevant)	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 .
QUALITY: COMMUNITY		
5	Councillor profiles	Councillor profiles normally contain a photo and reference to the ward represented (if relevant) but personal contact details are not required.
6	A community engagement policy involving two-way communication between council and community	A community engagement policy demonstrates the council's commitment to hearing what people in the community think and communicating its own actions and decisions.
7	A grant awarding policy	The council also gives grants to community organisations and publishes a grant awarding policy .
8	Evidence showing how electors contribute to the Annual Parish or Town Meeting	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.
9	An action plan and related budget responding to community engagement and setting out a timetable for action and review	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.
10	Evidence of community engagement, council activities and the promotion of democratic processes in an annual report, online material and regular news bulletins	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.
11	Evidence of helping the community plan for its future	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 seeks evidence that the council has considered environmental matters as part of how it plans for the future of the community. This may be through the planning system such as considering environmental impact in neighbourhood plans, or through engagement with the community. The council may also undertake activities to engage with the community on the environment outside of the planning system, this might include tree planting, litter picking, reducing carbon and addressing climate change.

12 At least two-thirds of its councillors who stood for election

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 democratic processes. 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

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	11	12	12	13	14

rounded up to the next whole number using the table below.

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.

13 An annual report that is actively shared with the community

The **annual report** should be actively communicated and shared with the community. It might be produced digitally and/or in hard copy. 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

14 Evidence of a customer service in how the council handles correspondence with the public

The panel seeks evidence of how the council handles correspondence with the public and takes a customer service approach. Evidence shows how the council plans for and manages correspondence with the public, this might include examples of how the council has addressed complaints, queries and other communications in the past year. It might also include any policies or training for staff that illustrates the council's commitment to customer service.

QUALITY: DEVELOPMENT

15 A qualified clerk

A **qualified clerk** is defined in [Parish Councils \(General Power of Competence\) \(Prescribed Conditions\) Order 2012](#). The clerk (and deputy

	<p>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 clerk is expected to achieve at least 12 Continuous Professional Development Points every year. The CPD guidance on how points are allocated can be downloaded from NALC's or SLCC's websites</p>
16 A formal appraisal process for all staff	<p>The panel may ask to see the document setting out the formal appraisal process that must be in place for all staff.</p>
17 A training policy and record for all staff and councillors	<p>Panel 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 Continuous Professional Development Points every year. CPD points are allocated according to a system published by the IDB</p>