

## **CUMBRIA ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

### **LCAS GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS FOUNDATION AWARD**

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.

#### **Preapplication checklist**

This checklist has been developed by the Cumbria Association of Local Councils to ensure the panel provides a consistent approach to the accreditation process. The checklist has also been designed to enable the applicant council to confidently confirm that in all instances that the required documents, information and conditions are in place (whether published or not) by resolution in public at a full council meeting.

To support transparency, every award level has a requirement for certain information to be published online. However, some information may not need to be published. In this instance at a public meeting of the full council, by resolution a statement of written assurance can be resolved, (proforma template appended A). Alternatively, members of the panel can meet with the Council.

#### **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 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 request that the Council provides a resolved statement of assurance.

The panel is required to check the minutes of meetings, financial regulations, the annual return (if relevant) and compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code, GDPR 2018 and the Council's statutory obligations.

The panel will expect that:

- Information on all payments are transparent and in accordance with financial regulations and statutory proper practices. Payments once approved, after the appropriate meeting, should be published on the website. It is recommended that the record of payments are published as a separate record on your website, after the meeting at which they have been considered and approved.
- All Councils activities, resolutions and priorities, all consequently the Town Clerks activities and all the Council's expenditure align with the Powers and functions of the Council.
- The Council publishes a separate grants register identifying the amount of the award, the recipient, the minute reference and legal power.

The panel will check that minutes and agendas demonstrate the lawful convening of meetings and decision-making:

- That a signed summons was published for the meeting.
- That the agenda reflects the minutes - The agenda specifies the business for the meeting and must include all the items which are to be discussed at the meeting.
- That all meetings allow the public to make representations to the council.
- There are clear resolutions for each matter - The matter and the form of the minutes is a matter for the individual council. The main purpose of the minutes is to record the resolutions made at the meeting and not record verbatim discussions.
- That decisions were lawful
- That there is regular scrutiny of the budget
- That there is a recorded resolution for the precept.
- That the parish's councils annual meeting follows the prescribed format as recorded within its standing orders.
- That the parish holds an annual meeting of the parish.

### **Peer Review Process**

1. The following are the steps which each review will follow:
  - The submission will be checked against the criteria by the Panel Co-ordinator and any concerns raised with the applicant council.
  - Panel members review the availability of necessary information on line / electronically and note any missing information or queries.
2. The panel submits its findings, including list of additional information required or actions to be undertaken by the applicant council to the association officer.
3. Councils seeking the Quality Gold Award may be required to meet with members of the panel.
4. Should no further action be required or once panel is happy with the application, the award is agreed and NALC will be notified.
5. A copy of all forms and reports will be maintained by CALC for future reference.

## **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.

## PREAPPLICATION CHECKLIST

### The Foundation Award

The Foundation Award demonstrates that a council meets the requirements for **operating lawfully** and according to standard practice. Please note that when using NALC model templates information in bold should not be edited and amended by your Council. These are in bold as they reflect legal statutory obligations. Please place an X in the box corresponding to the appropriate outcome for each of the criteria. If any criteria are not met then this is an action your Council needs to complete prior to applying for the award. When you are satisfied you that the council has met the criteria, published the evidence on line or is able to provide a statement of evidence, this checklist then populates the Clerks report to the Council as appended (B)

	Met	Not met	Examples of Evidence
1a Its standing orders			<p>A personalised, tailored copy of the Council's most recently approved Standing Orders – latest NALC model template standing orders version July 2018:</p> <p><b>Legal Topic Note:</b>  <a href="https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/members-library/templates/standing-orders/2724-109-18-model-standing-orders-amendment-july-2018-1/file">https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/members-library/templates/standing-orders/2724-109-18-model-standing-orders-amendment-july-2018-1/file</a></p> <p><b>Template:</b>  <a href="https://www.nalc.gov.uk/members-area/templates">https://www.nalc.gov.uk/members-area/templates</a></p> <p>All policies should comply with current legislation and guidance and note the date of the next review.</p>
1b Its financial regulations			<p>A personalised, tailored copy of the Council's Financial Regulations – latest NALC model template financial regulations January 2016:</p> <p><b>Template:</b>  <a href="https://www.nalc.gov.uk/members-area/templates">https://www.nalc.gov.uk/members-area/templates</a></p> <p>All policies should comply with current legislation and guidance and note the date of the next review.</p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/180910-Financial-Regulations.pdf">https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/180910-Financial-Regulations.pdf</a></p>

	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not met</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence</b>
2a Its Code of Conduct			<p>A personalised, tailored Code of Conduct Policy that reflects the advice and guidance in LTN March 2017:</p> <p>Legal Topic Note:  <a href="https://www.nalc.gov.uk/members-area/legal">https://www.nalc.gov.uk/members-area/legal</a></p> <p>All policies should comply with current legislation and guidance and note the date of the next review.</p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/code-of-conduct/">http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/code-of-conduct/</a></p>
2b Its councillors' registers of interests or a link to the principals authority record of your parish members ROI's			<p>Each members register of interests should be available to view on your website or your website should have a link to your principal authorities website where that authority is required to publish all the parish members registers on their website.</p>
3 Its publication scheme			<p>A personalised, tailored copy of a personalised publication scheme:</p> <p><a href="https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/publication-scheme/">https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/publication-scheme/</a></p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/freedom-of-information/">http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/freedom-of-information/</a></p>

	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence</b>
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		<b>met</b>	
4 Its last annual governance and accounting return			<p>The <a href="#">Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014</a> and the <a href="#">Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015</a> require that the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested.</p> <p>The panel would expect to view as a minimum the last fiscal years annual return: The Accounting Statements (i.e. Section 2 of either Part 2 or 3, whichever is relevant, of the Annual Governance &amp; Accountability Return (AGAR))</p> <p>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:</p> <p><b>Guidance</b>  <a href="https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/2468-the-good-councillors-guide-on-finance-and-transparency-2017/file">https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/2468-the-good-councillors-guide-on-finance-and-transparency-2017/file</a></p> <p>Evidence Example:  <a href="http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/financial-information/">http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/financial-information/</a></p>
5 Transparent information about council payments			<p>Guidance:  <a href="https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/2468-the-good-councillors-guide-on-finance-and-transparency-2017/file">https://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/2468-the-good-councillors-guide-on-finance-and-transparency-2017/file</a></p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/council-finance/supplier-payments/">https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/council-finance/supplier-payments/</a></p>

	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not met</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence</b>
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6 A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors			<p>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.</p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Meeting-Schedule-18-19.pdf">http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Meeting-Schedule-18-19.pdf</a></p>
7 Minutes for at least one year of full council meetings and (if relevant) all committee and sub-committee meetings			<p>The minutes for full council meetings over the last year include the Annual Meeting of the Council.</p> <p>If relevant, the council also posts up the minutes of its Finance Committee to demonstrate transparency according to statutory regulations and of its</p> <p><a href="http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/#50-wpfd-may-2018-to-april-2019">http://keswicktowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/#50-wpfd-may-2018-to-april-2019</a></p>
8 Current agendas			<p><a href="https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/meetings/full-council/">https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/meetings/full-council/</a></p>
9 The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year			<p>The council posts 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.</p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/council-finance/council-precept/">https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/council-finance/council-precept/</a></p>
10 Its complaints procedure			<p>Evidence example:  <a href="https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/180521-Complaints-Procedure.pdf">https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/180521-Complaints-Procedure.pdf</a></p>
11 Council contact details and councillor information in line with the transparency code			<p>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.</p> <p><a href="https://www.knutsfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/council/councillors">https://www.knutsfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/council/councillors</a></p>

	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence</b>
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		<b>met</b>	
12 Its action plan for the current year			<p>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.</p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/kendal-town-council/statutory-information/">http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/kendal-town-council/statutory-information/</a></p>
13 Evidence of consulting the community			<p>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.</p> <p><a href="http://www.launceston-tc.gov.uk/Community-Engagement-Strategy.aspx">http://www.launceston-tc.gov.uk/Community-Engagement-Strategy.aspx</a></p>
14 Publicity advertising council activities			<p><a href="http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/">http://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/</a></p>
15 Evidence of participating in town and country planning			<p>Planning Committee minutes will be reviewed to show that procedures for reviewing planning applications are correct.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>If delegations has been made a resolution or a policy to this affect must be published.</p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/planning/">http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/planning/</a></p>

	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not met</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence</b>
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15 Evidence of participating in town and country planning			<p>Planning Committee minutes will be reviewed to show that procedures for reviewing planning applications are correct.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>If delegations has been made a resolution or a policy to this affect must be published.</p> <p>Evidence example:  <a href="http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/planning/">http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/planning/</a></p>
16 A risk management scheme			<p>The Council is required to demonstrate that it has robust internal controls:</p> <p><a href="http://www.lowestofttowncouncil.gov.uk/assets/Webpage-Important-Documents/LTC-Risk-Assessment-and-Management-Policy-May-2017.pdf">http://www.lowestofttowncouncil.gov.uk/assets/Webpage-Important-Documents/LTC-Risk-Assessment-and-Management-Policy-May-2017.pdf</a></p>
17 A register of assets			<p>Where a council receives an asset as a gift at zero cost, including a transfer from another council, the asset should be included in the register at a nominal proxy value of £1.</p> <p>“Community assets” owned by a council are recorded in the same way as gifted assets, i.e. at a nominal value of £1.</p> <p>Community assets as those assets which do not have a functional purpose or any intrinsic resale value, e.g. a war memorial or village pond. The WTC assets which appear to be a community asset have a value other than the nominal value of £1.</p> <p>For information:</p> <p>Governance &amp; Accountability – Advice and Guidance for Smaller Authorities March 2018</p> <p><a href="https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2017-18-Approved-Asset-Register.pdf">https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2017-18-Approved-Asset-Register.pdf</a></p>
18 Contracts for all members of staff			<p>Resolved statement of evidence or evidenced within a training or appraisal policy.</p>

	<b>Met</b>	<b>Not</b>	<b>Examples of Evidence</b>
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		<b>met</b>	
19 Up-to-date insurance policies that mitigate risks to public money			<p>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.</p> <p>Examples of evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of schedule</li> <li>• Minuted resolution reference where the Council resolved the insurance schedule</li> <li>• Statement within the Council's risk management scheme</li> </ul>
20 Disciplinary and grievance procedures			<p>Examples of evidence:</p> <p>Resolved statement of evidence copy of policy</p>
21 A policy for training new staff and councillors			<p>Examples of evidence:</p> <p><a href="https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/180521-Training-Policy.pdf">https://www.penrithtowncouncil.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/180521-Training-Policy.pdf</a></p>
22 A record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year			<p>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.</p> <p>Examples of evidence:</p> <p>Excel or word document – submit a copy Resolved statement of evidence</p>
23 A clerk who has achieved 12 CPD points in the last year			<p>Examples of evidence:</p> <p>Resolved statement of evidence Copy of CPD log</p>

**SAMPLE**

**Evidence statement**

**Insert Your logo**

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT**

**1. OVERVIEW**

This town Council recognises that it has a responsibility to inform its electorate of the issues it is currently .....

Using various types of media and community engagement approaches, the Council encourages community involvement:

- 1.1 The Council has consulted on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish. The group leading the plan’s development is multi-agency and includes representation from schools, the chamber of trade, the business improvement district .... Several different consultation methods have been used to encourage an effective number of responses
- 1.2 Public Notices showing date, time and venue of all meetings are made available, along with agenda in noticeboards, library and the website.
- 1.3 ..... **insert**

**2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- 2.1 Members of the public are invited to attend all meetings of the Council and its committees with a public section at the start of every meeting.
- 2.2 Members of the public are also ... **insert**

**3. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMAL REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COUNCIL**

..... **insert**

**This statement was resolved by the Full Council.**

**DATE:**

**CHAIRMAN:**

## Insert Your logo

### STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE

#### LCAS QUALITY AWARD

**council confirms by resolution at a full council meeting held on**

**that it publishes online:**

	<b>Evidence</b>
1a Its standing orders	Insert your link to you're the part f your website where your evidence is published.
1b Its financial regulations	
2a Its Code of Conduct	
2b Its councillors' registers of interests or a link to the principal authority's record of your parish members ROI's	
3 Its publication scheme	
4 Its last annual governance and accounting return	
5 Transparent information about council payments	
6 A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors	
7 Minutes for at least one year of full council meetings and (if relevant) all committee and sub-committee meetings	
8 Current agendas	
9 The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year	
10 Its complaints procedure	
11 Council contact details and councillor information in line with the transparency code	
12 Its action plan for the current year	
13 Evidence of consulting the community	
14 Publicity advertising council activities	
15 Evidence of participating in town and country planning	
15 Evidence of participating in town and country planning	

**The council provides written statements of assurance and confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it has:**

16 A risk management scheme	
17 A register of assets	
18 Contracts for all members of staff	
19 Up-to-date insurance policies that mitigate risks to public money	
20 Disciplinary and grievance procedures	
21 A policy for training new staff and councillors	
22 A record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year	
23 A clerk who has achieved 12 CPD points in the last year	

**DATE OF MEETING:**

**MINUTE REFERENCE:**

**CHAIRMAN:**

**DATE:**