

Ferndown Town Council Full Council meeting

Monday 25 January 2021

Appendix 12 – Report on the NALC Local Council Award Scheme

Author: Louise Harrison, Town Clerk, 18 January 2020.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Local Council Award Scheme was launched by NALC in January 2015, replacing the Quality Parish/Town Status scheme.
- 1.2 The Town Clerk, during her 3-month probation appraisal earlier this month, asked the Personnel Committee to consider setting an award status as one of her development objectives; the Personnel Committee have subsequently referred this request to Full Council to consider.
- 1.3 Scheme benefits for Council:
 - acknowledge it has made improvements and now performs to a high standard,
 - confirms governance is up-to-date and delivered to a national professional standard,
 - recognises the responsibility of corporate continuous development,
 - improves staff, councillor and community confidence,
 - when awarded is a celebration for councillors and officers that recognises and respects commitment and hard work and demonstrates achievements and a commitment to improvement.
- 1.4 The Town Clerk recommends Council apply for Quality Award status.

2. The Scheme – award criteria

- 2.1 A form of peer review, councils are reviewed by an accreditation panel.
- 2.2 There are three award levels:
 - Foundation Award - demonstrates that a council meets the requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice;
 - Quality Award - demonstrates that a council has achieved good practice in governance, community engagement and has made improvements.
 - Quality Gold Award - demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development.
- 2.3 See appendix 1 for detailed scheme criteria.

3. Application fees and accreditation process

- 3.1 Fees: £50 registration fee plus Foundation Award £80, Quality £100 and Gold £200.
- 3.2 When a council is ready to make its application to the accreditation panel (set up by a County Association or a regional group of County Associations), its clerk notifies the panel co-ordinator that the council has passed a resolution confirming that all the documentation and information is in place for a specified award and submits a completed application form with any additional documentation required.
- 3.3 When the accreditation panel makes its decision it informs the council. It also completes an online form to allow NALC to update national records.
- 3.4 When the panel is satisfied that it has seen sufficient information, the findings are presented in a report agreed by the panel, making one of three recommendations:
 - the Award is achieved, or
 - 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.

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.

- 3.5 Councils can apply for a higher award by making a fresh registration and Application at any time. If it is within one year of the previously successful accreditation, the panel will not revisit evidence that was previously approved.
- 3.6 Councils may seek re-accreditation at the same level after four years. If it does not achieve a new accreditation or re-accreditation before four year end-date, it loses its award.
- 3.7 Councils are expected to maintain their reputation by meeting the criteria throughout the four years and 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.
- 3.8 Scheme panel dates:

May 2021 round:

| Task | Deadline |
|--|-----------------|
| Deadline for LCAS applications | 7 May 2021 |
| Deadline for NALC to provide triage feedback to councils | 28 May 2021 |
| Deadline for councils to respond to triage feedback | 11 June 2021 |
| Deadline for applications to be sent to panel | 25 June 2021 |
| Announce results | 6 August 2021 |

September 2021 round:

| Task | Deadline |
|--|-------------------|
| Deadline for LCAS applications | 10 September 2021 |
| Deadline for NALC to provide triage feedback to councils | 1 October 2021 |
| Deadline for councils to respond to triage feedback | 15 October 2021 |
| Deadline for applications to be sent to panel | 29 October 2021 |
| Announce results | 10 December 2021 |

- 3.9 The Town Clerk has successfully applied for and received the Foundation Award with her previous Council.

Appendix 1 - Award Levels

1. Foundation

TO ACHIEVE A FOUNDATION AWARD A COUNCIL DEMONSTRATES THAT IT HAS THE 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 | 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 |
| Its standing orders and financial regulations | Council contact details and councillor information in line with the Transparency Code | |
| Its Code of Conduct and a link to councillors' registers of interests | Its action plan for the current year | |
| Its publication scheme | Evidence of consulting the community | |
| Its last annual return | Publicity advertising council activities | |
| Transparent information about council payments | Evidence of participating in town and country planning | |
| 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 | | |

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 policy | | 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 |
| Up-to-date insurance policies that mitigate risks to public money | | A clerk who has achieved 12 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points in the last year |

This evidence is not posted online, the panel may ask to see the evidence if it is considered necessary.

The council notifies the accreditation panel co-ordinator when the resolution has been agreed and provides a completed application form, including webpage addresses to where the information can be found online.

2. Quality Award

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. THE QUALITY AWARD CRITERIA INCLUDE 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 |
| Addressed complaints received in the last year | 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 |
| | | A formal appraisal process for all staff |
| | | A training policy and record for all staff and councillors |

This evidence is not posted online, the panel may ask to see the evidence if it is considered necessary.

The council notifies the accreditation panel's co-ordinator when the resolution has been agreed and provides a completed application form, including webpage addresses to where the information can be found online.

3. Gold Award

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 | An annual report, online material and at least four news bulletins a year with evidence of: <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 — At least four positive outcomes achieved for the community in the last six months and 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 completed application form, including webpage addresses to where the information can be found online, and the prepared statements.