

a guide to becoming a  
**Quality Council**



# Foreword



## A Guide to Becoming a Quality Council - Joint Ministerial Forward

Since the launch of the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme in March 2003, councils from all over England have been steadily gaining Quality status. By acquiring Quality status, parish and town councils can demonstrate that they are representative, in touch with their communities, competent, and capable of taking on an enhanced role. This assurance of quality is helping to smooth the way for the formation of partnerships with principal authorities, enabling projects and initiatives which reflect the needs and preferences of the community.

This guide makes it easier for more parish and town councils to attain Quality status by explaining the steps that they are required to take in clear and straightforward terms. It also identifies some of the most important benefits that Quality status offers to councils as well as to their wider communities. We are very pleased to see that the National Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks and other stakeholders have worked with the Countryside Agency to produce this publication.

When councils take the positive decision to attain Quality status, we strongly advise that they obtain a copy of the official guidance entitled "The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme: The Quality Scheme Explained" which is available on the websites of ODPM, Defra and the Countryside Agency.

This Government is committed to the parish sector - the first tier of government - and is determined that it continues to flourish. As the number of Quality councils grow, the profile of the whole parish and town council sector as a whole is rising, resulting in much improved perceptions of their status and placing them in a good position to assume a greater role. We encourage councils to apply for Quality status and profit from the advantages that it brings.

Signed

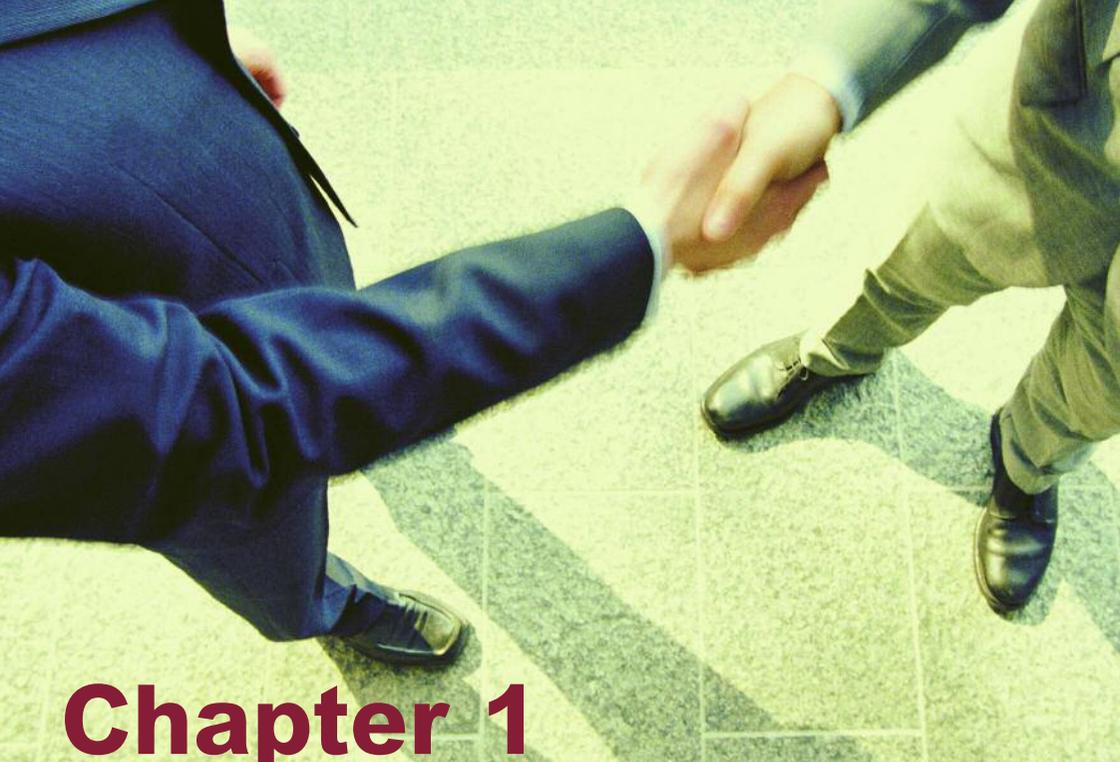
Rt Hon Alun Michael MP,  
Minister of State for Rural Affairs  
in the Department for Environment  
Food and Rural Affairs

Signed

Phil Hope MP,  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of  
State in the Office of the Deputy  
Prime Minister

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# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to Quality Status

This is a short guide to help your council understand the benefits of gaining Quality status and help them achieve it. The Rural White Paper, published in 2000, confirmed the Government's support for parish and town councils and underlined their important role as the first tier of government closest to local people, in giving local leadership and being at the heart of local communities. Consequently, the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme was launched in 2003 with the aim of providing a benchmark minimum standard for parish and town councils across the country.

The Quality scheme is open to all parish and town councils in England, irrespective of size. It aims to enable parish councils to work more closely with others in the delivery of local services and to better represent their local communities.

Whatever the circumstances, Quality status brings real benefits, not only for the Quality council, but also for the people who work with it and, more importantly, the community it serves. This guide goes through the scheme on a step-by-step basis, providing useful advice, information and case studies. It should prove a valuable tool for your council.

“ Quality status should be high on the list of priorities for local councils, as the accreditation demonstrates their ability to deliver efficient services to local residents and speak with greater authority to principal councils when seeking delegated functions which can be better carried out locally. There is no bar for any local council to work towards obtaining this award. ”

*Clerk to Nettleham Parish Council*

If you have any further questions about the scheme, the accreditation process, or any of the topics covered in this guide, please contact your County Association of Local Councils, which should be able to help. A list of contact details can be found in the back of the document. You may also wish to refer to the official Government guidance on the scheme “*The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme; The Quality Scheme Explained*” (for more on this see chapter 2).

### Acknowledgments

This guide was originally researched and written by county officers of Local Council Associations in the South West of England, before being further developed into a national publication. The guide is funded by the Countryside Agency and has been developed in conjunction with the National Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Council Clerks and other partners of the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme.



## Chapter 2

# Background

The Rural White Paper - *“Our Countryside, The Future, A Fair Deal for Rural England”* (published in 2000) - indicated that the Government wanted parish and town councils to give local leadership at the heart of local governance. In other words the Government saw an important role for parish and town councils in representing local people and improving both the quality and range of local services.

The Government wants local councils to show to their residents that they are capable of operating in an ethical way and that they are able to represent their interests effectively.

In June 2003, following an extensive period of consultation, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) published *“The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme; The Quality Scheme Explained”*, which provided more detail on the tests that would determine whether a council qualifies for quality status. This document can be downloaded at [www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_localgov/documents/page/odpm\\_locgov\\_022517-09.hcsp](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_locgov_022517-09.hcsp)

The scheme is designed to allow all parish and town councils, of whatever size and whether rural or urban, to work towards achieving Quality status. This is illustrated by the broad range of sizes of some of the current Quality councils, ranging from the 280 electors in Pertenhall & Swineshead Parish Council in Bedfordshire to some 72,000 in Weston-super-Mare Town Council in Avon.

### Quality Parish or Town Councils are expected to:

- be representative of and actively involve all parts of their community
- be effectively and properly managed, with members and officers upholding a high standard of conduct
- work closely with voluntary and community sector groups, and articulate the community’s needs and wishes through effective communications, which might include the production of parish plans or other similar documents

### and

- work in partnership with other local authorities and agencies and, depending on their size, be able to deliver local services which give the best deal for the local community

“ Quality parish and town councils can bring fresh vibrancy to local democracy by placing local leadership and local capacity building at the heart of urban and rural areas. ”

*Alun Michael MP, Minister of State for Rural Affairs, to the National Conference and Exhibition of the National Association of Local Councils 2003*

## Chapter 3

# The Benefits of Quality Status

In addition to being able to demonstrate to local communities that minimum standards have been met, Quality councils will also be in a better position to influence the decision making process and/or take on additional services and areas of responsibility from their principal local authorities.

Who benefits?

The benefits of this scheme affect three groups:

1. the community
2. the parish or town council itself
3. the principal local authority

### 1) Community benefits:

- more responsive services - the quality council will be capable of solving local problems without recourse to the principal authority
- real contact and discussions with its Quality council
- a local access point providing information on services
- a council which is more accountable, visible, representative and provides community leadership

### 2) Benefits to the parish or town council itself:

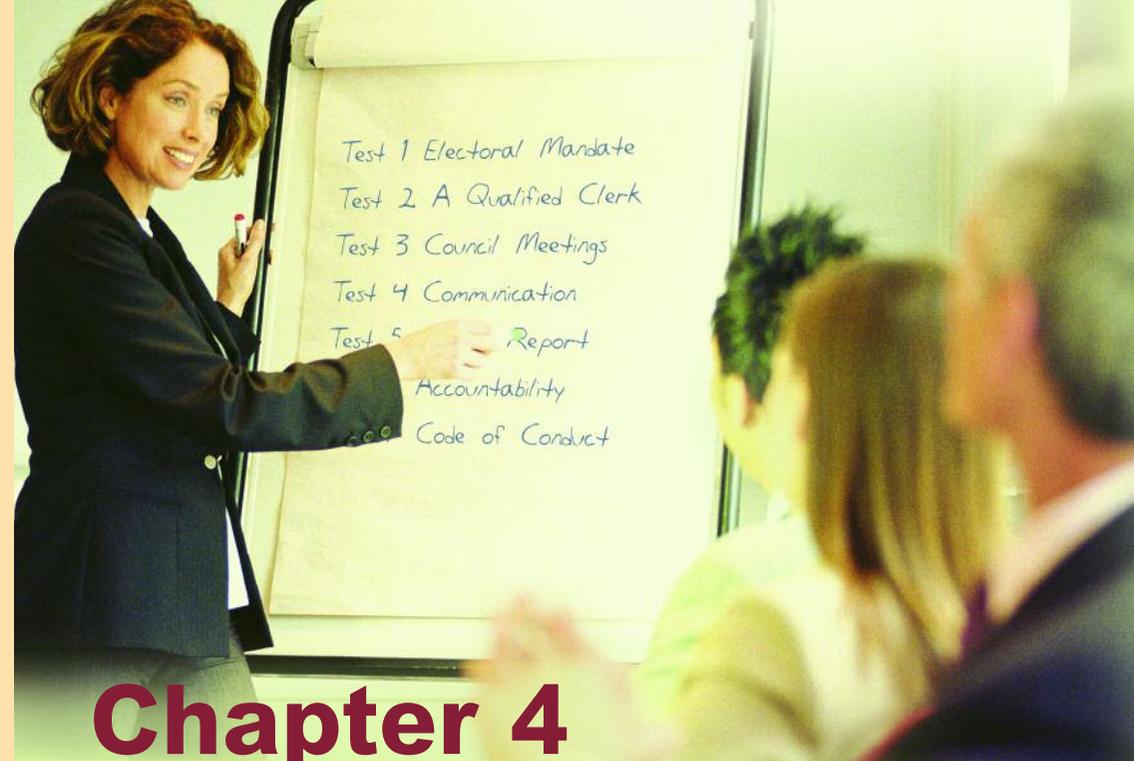
- greater credibility in the eyes of the local community, voluntary and private sectors, and principal local authorities
- greater civic pride
- more representative of the local community
- better ability to articulate the needs and wishes of the local community
- more will be achieved by working in partnership with other organisations
- ability to demonstrate that it is effectively and properly managed, which will instill greater confidence in the community
- can deliver more local services - if the council wishes to
- greater involvement by the voluntary and community sector and by principal local authorities (e.g. developing parish plans, market town health checks etc.)
- a better informed community
- a well trained clerk, through the Certificate in Local Council Administration (or University of Gloucestershire qualification in Local Policy)

### 3) Principal Authority benefits

- reassurance that the Quality council has been independently assessed and is therefore capable of working together with the principal authority to deliver services on their behalf or in partnership
- reliable evidence of the competence of the Quality council, through the four year re-assessment process
- proof that the Quality council is willing and able to be fully involved in local issues (this will be particularly valuable when implementing new initiatives)
- stronger partnership working, with the town or parish council bringing their local perspective and experience to the table. Quality councils should be more innovative and pro-active, and will want to share their ideas and experiences
- increased confidence that the Quality council is representative, competent, well managed, and thus capable of taking on and sustaining an enhanced role

“ In achieving Quality status, we have demonstrated to our principal authority that we are an active, professional, and competent body to work with. We have also raised our profile within the local community which we serve, showing that the status of the town council is higher than ever before, and a belief that we provide value for money in an open, transparent and honest manner. ”

*John Green, Clerk to Halewood Town Council*



## Chapter 4

# The Quality Criteria

Quality status requires a council to show that it is:

- representative of the whole community
  - communicates with its residents
- and
- is properly managed and responsible

To apply for Quality status, the council must submit an application form, together with the required supporting evidence, to the local County Accreditation Panel (contact details are available from your local County Association of Local Councils, which service and administer these panels on behalf of the Government through NALC). This chapter outlines each of the tests in turn.

Where a test is marked as “Mandatory”, the whole of the test must be completed by the parish council. Where the test is marked “Discretionary”, such as in parts of the communications test, the parish council can choose which parts of the test they wish to complete.

## Test 1 - Electoral Mandate

(Mandatory)

**Criteria:** On first accreditation, 80% of the members of the council must have been elected. On all subsequent re-accreditations, 100% of members must have been elected.

- “Elected” means that the member has been nominated and stood as a candidate for election
- Where an election was not held, ‘elected’ means those councillors who stood for election and were elected unopposed
- If a councillor has been appointed through an electoral process held since the last main election, then he/she is an ‘elected’ member
- Co-opted members are not regarded as ‘elected’ members for this test
- The test looks at the total number of councillors on the council (if a council has wards, the individual wards do not need to meet the percentage requirement)

### Evidence

A copy of the latest election return(s) for your council. This should include the last full council election return plus copies of any other returns for elections held by the district authority to fill a vacancy on your council



## Test 2 - A Qualified clerk

(Mandatory)

**The clerk must hold either:**

The Certificate in Local Council Administration<sup>1</sup>

**Or:**

The certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy or Local Council Administration awarded by the University of Gloucestershire<sup>2</sup>.

The Certificate in Local Council Administration requires a clerk to prepare a portfolio of their work, demonstrating their basic understanding of the roles and principles of local council administration. The portfolio includes examples of council documents, details of useful contacts and reference books.

A council is expected to support its clerk in gaining this qualification. It should be prepared to fund not only the registration fee for the certificate, plus any training required, but also to recognise the time and effort needed to prepare the portfolio. By obtaining the certificate the clerk is able to demonstrate a high level of competency in their work, which will be invaluable to their council. A clerk can be given guidance by their local County Training Partnership (CTP) on how to work towards completing the portfolio - the test element of the certificate - either on their own, using “*Working With Your Council*” (published by the SLCC) or by attending face-to-face training organised by the CTP. A council that supports and funds the training of their clerk will find that they have gained a valuable asset.

There is currently a Training Bursary Scheme available to smaller parish and town councils. For further details on this please contact the National Association of Local Councils at [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk).

Further information on the Certificate in Local Council Administration or qualification in Local Policy can be obtained from your local County Training Partnership. Details are provided by your local County Association of Local Councils (CALC) or branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks (see back of guide for a list of contacts details).

<sup>1</sup> an externally accredited qualification developed by the National Training Strategy Steering Group, to establish a common professional standard in administration and knowledge for council clerks

<sup>2</sup> The University of Gloucestershire certificate exemption is currently time limited, and will only be accepted until 2007.





## Evidence

A copy of the qualification certificate for the clerk and any other relevant qualifications.

“[Taking] the Certificate in Local Council Administration was a worthwhile and enjoyable experience. I learnt a lot from putting the portfolio together and talking to other clerks on the course”

*Garry Telling, Clerk to Peterhall & Swineshead Parish Council*

## Test 3 - Council Meetings

(Mandatory)

A council which is in touch with its community is expected to hold regular meetings.

The council should be able to demonstrate that:

- it meets at least six times per year (the annual meeting of the council can be counted as one of these meetings)
- time is allocated for public participation in all meetings
- notices of meetings are publicly displayed at least three clear days before each meeting
- minutes of the meeting are published within two months of the meeting taking place and are available for inspection by any elector in the parish

and

- all councillors attend meetings on a regular basis, unless they have a good reason for not attending and apologies have been recorded



## Evidence

Copies of notices, minutes and the attendance register (unless recorded in the minutes) for the twelve months prior to the application for Quality status



## Test 4 - Communication

(part mandatory, part discretionary)

A major requirement of Quality status is that the council can demonstrate that it communicates, consults and actively involves its electorate, local organisations and members of the public.

The importance of communications is illustrated in the on-line poll conducted by UK Villages which was commissioned by NALC and the Countryside Agency:

### On-Line Poll

NALC and the Countryside Agency commissioned an on-line poll in January 2004 on attitudes to parish councils amongst the on-line users of UK Villages Ltd. This survey found that over a quarter (27%) of respondents in villages said that they did not know how to get in touch with their parish council, rising to nearly half (49%) in market/small towns. Good communications and community involvement is critical to solving the problems highlighted by this poll, and to earning and maintaining the good will of the community you serve. The requirement for Quality status that parish and town councils communicate and engage effectively with their local communities is therefore an important one.

This is illustrated by the comments from one respondent in the on-line survey who stated that: *“It would be a good idea if people knew who they [parish councillors] were, what they did and how to get in touch with them. I’ve been in the village for twelve years and have never heard of any parish councillors”*.

### Communications Toolkit

IDeA, in conjunction with NALC, has developed a communications toolkit *“Connecting with Local Communities”* specifically designed for parish and town councils. It includes tips on how to communicate effectively, together with examples of best practice from first tier councils across the country. It can be downloaded from [www.idea.gov.uk/communications](http://www.idea.gov.uk/communications)



## I. Mandatory Section

The council is required to:

- produce and publish a regular newsletter at least four times a year
- include in its newsletter the names of councillors and the clerk and how they can be contacted
- provide a synopsis of the annual report for local people (NB: this could be incorporated in one of the newsletters)

and

- make the newsletter readily available at public sites across the parish or town (such as in local shops, libraries and village halls)

### Evidence

Provide examples of the methods used to inform and communicate with the residents about parish council activities (newsletters, magazines, articles in local papers or publications by principal authorities, leaflets, information displayed on notice boards) and any other ways in which the local community is consulted and informed. Details of how local people access your council and how you ensure that the electorate's views are represented should also be provided

## II. Discretionary Section

Many parish and town councils vary in their approach to communications and the discretionary section of the communications test reflects this, allowing flexibility for different approaches. Only nine of the seventeen discretionary communications requirements listed must be met to achieve Quality status. Many simply require the simple ticking of 'Yes' or 'No' boxes - others are more complex or may be aimed at larger councils.

**At least 9 of these 17 discretionary requirements must be met:**

1. The annual report (which is mandatory) is sent to every household in the parish and town council area (a discretionary action)
2. The annual report includes a summary of council activities during the year
3. The council has a parish plan or market town action plan, or has contributed to a town or village plan
4. An information or access point is provided for details on local government services and parish council activities
5. The information or access point is linked electronically to the district and county councils. (This item is largely aimed at councils which have an office that is open to the public, and not at smaller councils)
6. Information about local government services and council activities is distributed to every household
7. Links have been established with voluntary and other community organisations in the area
8. The council has an email address that is publicly available
9. The council has a website which provides a list of council members and officers, together with their contact details, and access to the annual report

10. Councillors hold regular 'surgeries' for local residents (i.e. more than six times per year)
11. Residents are consulted on planning matters
12. Relevant principal authorities are informed of parish council activities
13. Council activities are publicised in local libraries, shops and/or other public places
14. Council activities are publicised in the local press
15. Council activities are reported in district council publications
16. Consultations or questionnaires are undertaken with the electorate on local issues affecting the parish council area
17. Information leaflets or brochures are provided on the work of the parish council (*NB: these are in addition to the annual report*)



## Test 5 - Annual Report

(Mandatory)

Although there is no statutory duty to prepare an annual report, it is now common practice for the annual meeting to include some form of report on the activity of the council. This has often been a verbal statement from the chairman, but the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme requires that the report should be more formal and be in a form suitable for wider publication. It does not, however, need to be an expensive glossy publication but it should reflect the work of the council, its activities and achievements over the previous year. It is recommended that the report is approved by the council and that it covers the same period as the financial years.

It is a requirement that the annual report must have been:

- completed and published by 30th June of the following year (thus a council whose financial year ends on 1 April 2004, for example, would need to have its annual report published by 30th June 2004)
  - made available for inspection by any elector in the council area
- and**
- made publicly available by being placed at the offices of the principal authorities and local libraries

The annual report should also include:

- a list of council members and officers plus their contact details
  - a summary of the council's accounts
- and**
- an overview by the chairman of the council's achievements.

### Evidence

Anything that can be found to back up the nine selected items. For example, supporting evidence for the website would be to supply the website address. For activities requiring production of a leaflet, a copy of the leaflet should be enclosed. The aim is to demonstrate that the council understands the views of its community and works to represent them at all times

### Evidence

Councils are required to send a copy of the latest annual report

## Test 6 - Accountability

(Mandatory)

This test is to ensure that all Quality parish and town councils maintain accurate and transparent financial arrangements<sup>3</sup>.

All council statements of accounts must receive an unqualified opinion from the external auditor to qualify for Quality status. Councils whose expenditure falls below £500,000 (the majority of councils), can make use of the Lighter Touch Audit regime return (where councils are advised to use approved external auditors to check their accounts).

It is required that:

- The latest available statement of accounts was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations, and that the statement received an unqualified opinion from the external auditor
- The latest available statement of accounts was published within nine months of the end of the accounting period
- An adequate system of internal control has been maintained, having regard to relevant guidance such as the NALC/SLCC Practitioners' Guide
- An adequate and effective system of internal control in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations has been in place, having regard to relevant guidance contained within the NALC/SLCC Practitioners' Guide or CIPFA's Code of Practice on Internal Audit



Councils with income or expenditure of less than £500,000 per annum must submit:

- a copy of the audited return
- all internal audit reports

Councils with income or expenditure of £500,000 per annum or more must submit:

- a copy of the latest audited statement of accounts
- all internal audit reports



## Test 7 - Code of Conduct

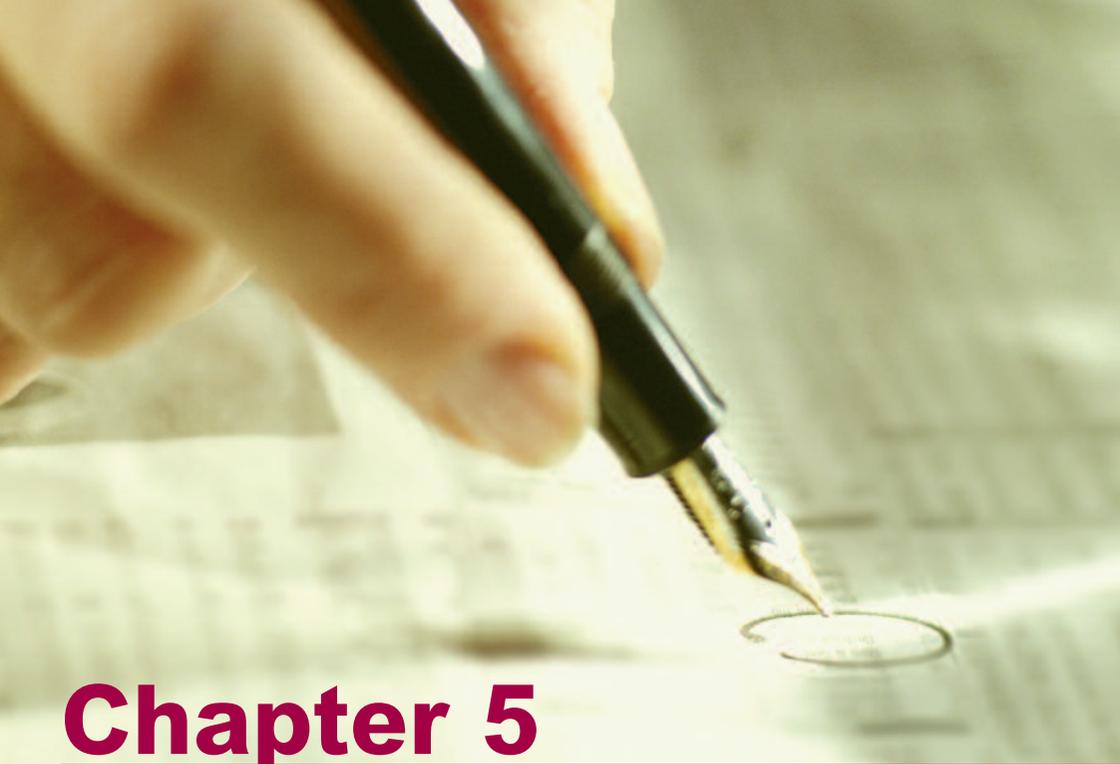
(Mandatory)

There is a requirement to show that the council has formally adopted the Code of Conduct (in accordance with the Local Government Act, 2000). Some councils did not formally adopt the Code, but it was automatically applied to them by the operation of the Act.



A copy of the Code of Conduct and the date of its adoption

<sup>3</sup> Detailed requirements are found in the Audit Commission Act 1998, the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2003 (SI 2003 No: 533) and in the proper practices set out in "Governance and Accountability of Local Councils in England and Wales - A Practitioner's Guide" published by NALC and SLCC. For further information on accounting for larger councils (with income or expenditure of £500,000 or above), please refer to the "Accounting for Larger Local Councils Guidance; A Short Guide" <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/news/2004/accountingllc.pdf>



## Chapter 5

# The Accreditation Process

A County Accreditation Panel (CAP) considers applications for Quality status. There is one panel for each English county area. The panels were established by NALC, for the Government, with nominations submitted from County Associations of Local Councils (CALCs). Each CAP consists of between three and five members, all experienced in working with both principal authorities and parish councils. They are approved by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and act through NALC on behalf of the Government.

A council's application for Quality status should be sent to the relevant County Accreditation Panel via the local CALC (for the address of your local CALC, see Appendix 1). You will be given details of when the panel meet and notice of the date that your application will be considered.

To help cover the costs of the accreditation process, an application fee is charged, which should be sent with the application (the rates are shown later in this chapter). This fee is based on either the actual gross income or the expenditure of the council (whichever is the higher). A VAT element must be included in the fee.

The panel members will consider the application and its supporting material; in some cases they may require further information before reaching a decision.

The panel's decision is final. Where Quality status is not awarded, the reasons will be given. The panel will also outline improvements that it considers necessary for Quality status to be awarded, and give a date when it will reconsider the application once the improvements have been made.

Where an application is successful, the local council will receive a certificate signed by the chairman of the County Accreditation Panel. The council will then be entitled to use the Quality logo. It can also contact its principal authorities, and other groups with whom it works, about a new or revised Charter (see chapter 6). The panel will notify principal local authorities and NALC of successful applications.

The accreditation lasts for four years. Applications for re-accreditation cannot be made before the four-year period expires but during the three-month following expiry there will be a 'grace' period, during which a parish can apply for re-accreditation. If re-accreditation is not sought during the 'grace' period, then Quality status will be lost.

## What will it cost?

The council must be aware that the application fee is not the only cost to the council in attaining Quality status. The clerk and councillors will need to spend time in collating the evidence to support the application. The council will need to present all the original documentation in a way that is easily understood and gives an overall impression of the quality of the council's work.

If the clerk is to research and collate the evidence, the council must ensure that he or she is given the time to do so. If this work is in addition to their normal duties, the council should consider paying for the additional hours required to complete the application. Councils should recognise that clerks who achieve the Certificate in Local Council Administration are contributing to their own development as well as helping their council towards achieving Quality status. The portfolio takes between 20-30 hours to complete and much of this time will be taken up researching and compiling all the evidence.

Application fees relate to the gross income or expenditure of the local council (whichever is the higher):

### Application Costs

| Expenditure of parish/town council | Application fee (including VAT) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Under £50,000                      | £29.38                          |
| £50,000 - £100,000                 | £58.75                          |
| Over £100,000                      | £117.50                         |

All cheques **must** be payable to the National Association of Local Councils.

## What is the County Accreditation Panel looking for?

The panel is not looking to catch anyone out. The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme is a national programme with national standards set by the Government. County Accreditation Panels are not allowed to impose any further criteria, deviate from the mandatory tests or set any local standards.

County Accreditation Panels will be looking for evidence that the applicant council is properly managed, and that it is representative of, and actively involved with, the whole local community.

Local councils will have different approaches to how they deliver services and represent their communities and often this depends on their size and the resources available to them. What is appropriate for one council may not be for another. The panel members are aware of this and will take it into consideration. However, it should be noted that a council is required to pass each of the tests and it will fail if any one of the mandatory tests is not passed. We therefore advise that due care and attention be paid in putting together the application and its supporting evidence.

The evidence is best collated in a logical order, so that the panel members can find their way around it easily. For example, the papers could be placed in a loose-leaf binder with labelled sections, or in separate folders for each test's supporting documents.

We suggest keeping copies of the application form, and the supporting documents, as these will not be returned (they will be sent to NALC for central data storage for an independent evaluation of the accreditation process, to ensure that a uniformity of handling across the country has been carried out).

“ In submitting the application, do not do it in haste. Check everything three times, and then check it again! If you have close links with another local clerk, ask him or her to review your application, and make use of a local clerks' network if there is one. Take the opportunity to find as many avenues of information as you can, you never know when a particular source will be needed in the future. ”

*John Green, Town Clerk at Halewood Town Council*



## Chapter 6

# The Charter

The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme is intended to bring benefits to the community at large, but it also brings benefits to principal local authorities. While some district, county and unitary authorities generally recognise that working with parish and town councils is important and can improve the delivery of local services, some have concerns about entering into such partnerships.

Charters aim to improve joint working arrangements and develop an understanding between the different tiers of local government. The arrangement is likely to be either at a county level (to include county, district and local councils), or it might be at a unitary level (to include the unitary authority and its local councils).

Central government, through consultation with county, district, town and parish councils, and others, has developed a 'model Charter' to help the process locally. This model has been based on good practice from around the country. The Charter provides a structure within which principal authorities and local councils agree to work. It includes a number of general principles and covers a common set of topics, such as consultation and communication, community planning, service delivery and how the document will be monitored and evaluated.

The Charter is a starting point, a commitment to work together, and a statement for the principles by which all partners will approach their work together. The document should be adapted to reflect local circumstances and is not something to take off the shelf, sign and put back on the shelf merely to collect dust.

The model Charter is set out in two parts. The first part relates to the relationship between principal authorities and ALL parish and town councils in their area. It gives details of the general working practices needed for achieving improved partnership working, including how all parties will share information and communicate with each other.

The second part explains the enhanced role that Quality councils in the area can perform, and the benefits that Quality status can bring to these councils.

The Charter will detail these functions and services that might be considered for delegation to parish councils by principal local authorities. Local discussion between all the partners is needed during the process of developing the Charter, which in itself should be a very valuable exercise.

It will also set out the financial arrangements for devolving services, while also avoiding "double taxation"<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The situation where costs of certain services are charged twice to local taxpayers because the parish pays for and provides a service but the principal authority charges taxpayers in the parish for the equivalent services it provides elsewhere. NALC and the ODPM are in the process of developing further guidance on the issue of double taxation. This should be published late in 2004.

“ Going for Quality status helped the town council resolve some long-standing issues with the district council, such as double taxation which had been occurring between the tiers. Now we are accredited with the Quality mark we have been invited to talks with our principal authority to discuss how these matters can be taken forward, hopefully leading to some form of Charter and formal arrangement for service provision between the tiers.”

*Mike Downing, Clerk to Edenbridge Town Council*

Examples of functions that might be considered for delegating to parish councils include:

- control of markets
- street cleaning
- maintenance of highway verges, pavements and footpaths
- litter collection and litter control
- street lighting (other than on principal routes)
- recycling measures
- street naming
- parking restrictions
- issue of bus and rail passes, and other transport voucher schemes
- road safety measures
- noise and nuisance abatement
- tree preservation orders
- some aspects of development control
- some aspects of management of libraries and museums
- some aspects of leisure and tourism provision
- public conveniences
- taxi and public entertainment licensing

## Developing the Charter

If the Charter is to be a meaningful document which will be used by principal authorities and local councils alike, the process by which it is developed is extremely important. This will strengthen relationships and support the Quality councils aim of taking a proactive approach in working more closely with principal local authorities, and in delivering the services that their communities want and need.

There needs to be a clear dialogue between officers and members of all the councils, involved at all levels, and an understanding of why a Charter is needed and how it will be achieved.

Expectations and concerns need to be fully discussed and all partners need to be aware of both the opportunities and constraints placed on each of them by the Charter. The priorities and interests of the community need to be kept at the forefront of discussions.

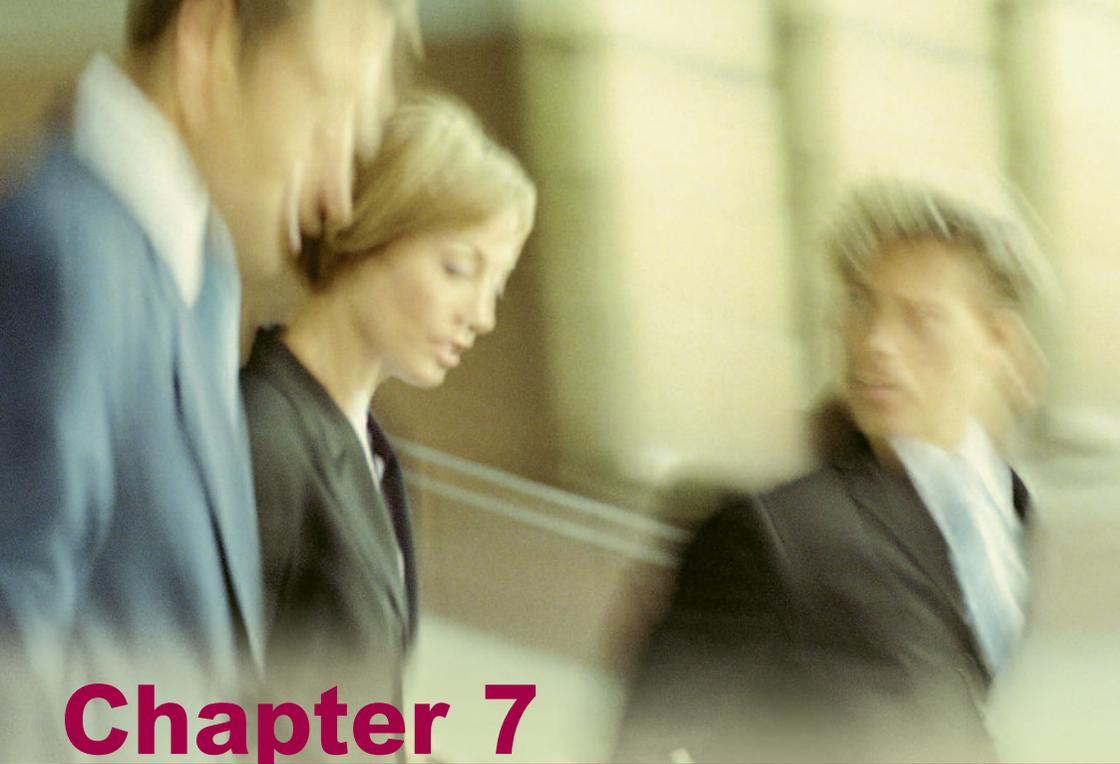
A range of methods can be used to explore all these issues, such as workshops, focus groups, seminars and questionnaires, in order to draft a Charter that will reflect a consensus view that all parties can sign up to.

The draft should then go out to full consultation, with sufficient time for each partner to consider the issues and make their views known.

The final document is just the beginning. It should be used as a tool to improve relationships, to recognise the value of the first tier sector to the quality of life in local communities and to underpin the benefits of Quality status.

The Charter should be regularly reviewed, recognising that, as local councils take on a greater role, their confidence and ability to deliver services locally will grow. County Associations of Local Councils will generally be closely involved in the development of these Charters and may help by leading the discussions on behalf of the parish councils in their area.

**If you would like more information on the development of the Charter process in your area, contact your County Association of Local Councils. Contact details are provided in the back of this guide.**



## Chapter 7

# First Tier Councils: The Future?

### Introduction

Any parish or town council starting down the road of becoming a Quality council is already likely to have a proactive culture and a vision for the future. Attaining Quality status will reinforce this. Meeting the criteria for Quality status will, in itself, improve many aspects of the work of the council, and broaden its influence, and as such Quality councils may become proactive in many more aspects of leadership in the community.

### Modernisation Agenda

Local government is currently undergoing enormous change and it is important that parish and town councils are at the forefront of local governance, community leadership and service delivery. The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme is central to ensuring that parish councils are at the heart of local community democracy. If the sector does not embrace change, modernise and develop, then first tier councils may find themselves losing out to other bodies in a fast changing world.

### Community Planning

Developing community activities, together with any new functions delegated or shared with a principal authority, will increase the influence of the Quality council.

Parish plans, market town action plans, village and town design statements, and local community partnerships (including market and coastal towns initiatives) are all more likely to be successfully implemented if done in conjunction with a principal authority. This should give the greatest chance for long-term and sustainable impact on the community. Not only will this affect such issues as the planned physical development of the local area, amenities and infrastructure, but also involve wider factors such as affordable housing, local employment and education. Having Quality status will give more confidence to the principal authority, other organisations and community, when dealing with the parish council.

### Sustainability

A Quality council will be a more sustainable council. Not just because local democracy will be seen to be more effective, attracting a wider range of talented candidates to the council, but also because the development of the village or town (in a planned way) will contribute to a longer term, more thriving local community. Jobs and young people are more likely to be retained, a wider range of community facilities will be available, and new business attracted to the area.

## Regionalisation and Local Government Reorganisation

As the regional agenda develops, with the possibility of local government reorganisation (through the establishment of unitary authorities) the Government recognises that Quality councils will have a stronger role to play. In the Boundary Committee's *"Overview Report on Local Government Reorganisation"* it is stated that the Committee sees a role for high performing parish and town councils through the achievements of the Quality Parish and Town Councils Scheme. The Boundary Committee recognises that local councils may have a strong role to play in representing communities under larger unitary authorities and regional structures.

### Conclusion

The development of Quality councils is in its early stages, but it is likely that take-up will accelerate as the benefits become more apparent. Quality status and modernisation of the sector are here to stay. In addition, as local government changes and develops, it will become an increasingly important feature of local government fabric and the Government has already hinted at further developing the scheme, possibly with new incentives and areas of activity for Quality councils.

Information on the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme and the Certificate in Local Council Administration can be obtained from your County Association of Local Councils. They will also be able to give you further information on local training events run as part of the National Training Strategy, which may be of interest to your council.

You may also want to refer to the various websites, case studies and the contacts listed in the back of this guide for more information and advice.



## Case Studies

### 'Size does not matter when going for Quality status: Case Study of Peternhall & Swineshead Parish Council'

Peternhall and Swineshead parish in Bedfordshire illustrates that Quality status can be achieved by all parish and town councils, irrespective of size.

The parish council represents just 280 electors and has seven parish councillors. Garry Telling, clerk to the parish council, said that "the parish council wanted to achieve quality status so it could better represent the local community, raise the profile of the council and give it greater clout with the principal authority and other organisations". She also stated that she found the certificate in Local Council Administration a "worthwhile and enjoyable experience" having learnt a lot from "putting the portfolio together and talking to other clerks on the course". Garry further commented that "the size of the council did not hinder us in applying for Quality status in any way and we found the criteria straight forward and relatively simple to follow".

### 'How Quality status helped us: A Case Study of Brading Town Council'

Brading Town Council on the Isle of Wight, is a relatively small council, with eight members representing a population of just over 2,000.

Six years ago, the council decided that it needed to be more accessible, and it set about employing an active clerk and obtaining a new premises. The town council did not predict that it would end up dealing with over 100 queries a month, and as the council started to develop, it realised that it was lacking a formal status and a benchmark to compare itself with other parish and town councils.

Brading Town Council was therefore keen to obtain Quality status following the introduction of the scheme. Cathy Mills, clerk to the council, comments that "The process made us review what we actually did and the result was very surprising. The process made us stop and think. We did not have the staff, management plan nor policies in place to ensure sustainability and we needed to be more organised, to be efficient and effective and to offer good value for money to our residents".

"In summary, Quality status has given us the knowledge that we are working at a satisfactory standard, which is recognised nationally, and has encouraged us to review all of our methods of operating. Personally I would like to see another step introduced that we could now strive for, so that we are on a ladder of continual improvement and can measure the success of our work".

### **'Developing a Charter: The Shropshire Approach'**

The new Parish Charter for Shropshire was launched in September 2004 and follows the adoption of a similar Charter in the Unitary area of Telford and Wrekin in 2003. Whilst the County Association of Local Councils were involved with the development of the Charter, the lead was taken by Shropshire County Council who had a long track record of working closely with parish and town councils in the county. The County Association have been at the forefront of Charter development and have been involved in the adoption of the country's first two Parish Charters since the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme was launched. However the County Association have noted that, whilst the Charter may not be perfect from the parish councils perspective, getting one up and running is an achievement in itself and lays the foundation for future partnership working between the County Council, parish and town councils and Quality councils.

### **'Still Learning 50 Years On: A Case Study of a Clerk who, after 50 Years Service, took and passed the Certificate in Local Council Administration'**

Frank Walton has been a clerk for Cranidge Parish Council for 50 years and has recently successfully completed his Certificate in Local Council Administration - passing first time. While Frank was thrilled with his recent success, he admits that he was reluctant to do the certificate at first, saying that after fifty years in service "what would the Certificate achieve?". After passing the first time, he now says that he learnt a lot, and is glad that he has done it. With his parish eager to gain Quality status, Frank knew that gaining the certificate was vital. With full support from his Chairman and members, Frank decided to register for the certificate. He said their "support and help was invaluable" and hopes that all clerks receive the support he did.



## **Useful Websites:**

The National Association of Local Councils  
[www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk)

The Society of Local Council Clerks  
[www.slcc.co.uk](http://www.slcc.co.uk)

Countryside Agency  
[www.countryside.gov.uk](http://www.countryside.gov.uk)

Department for Environment and Food and Rural Affairs  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
[www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk)

Local Government Association  
[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

## APPENDIX 1

### List of contact details for County Associations of Local Councils

#### Avon LCA

Church House  
74 Long Ashton Road  
Long Ashton  
Bristol BS41 9LE  
Tel: 01275 394571  
Fax: 01275 393796  
Email:  
parishes@alca.fsworld.co.uk

#### Bedfordshire APTC

The Old School  
Cardington  
Bedford MK44 3SX  
Tel: 01234 838771 ext 117  
Fax: 01234 838149  
Email: louisea@bedsrcc.org.uk

#### Berkshire ALC

c/o Buckinghamshire  
(see below)

#### Buckinghamshire ALC

County Hall, Walton Street  
Aylesbury  
Bucks HP20 1UA  
Tel: 01296-383154  
Fax: 01296387966  
Email: balc@buckscc.gov.uk

#### Cambridgeshire ALC

33 Stephenson Road  
St Ives  
Cambridgeshire PE27 3WJ  
Tel: 01480 375629/630  
Fax: 01480 375631  
Email:  
admin@calc-cambs.org.uk

#### Cheshire APTC

Blue Bache Barn  
Burleydam, Whitchurch  
Shropshire SY13 4AW  
Tel & Fax: 01948 871314  
Email:  
jackieweaver@btinternet.com

#### Cleveland LCA

c/o Hardwick in Partnership Ltd  
Enterprise & Initiative Centre  
High Newham, Road Hardwick  
Stockton-on-Tees TS19 8RH  
Tel: 01642 808700  
Fax: 01642 808701  
Email:  
hardwickpartnership@hotmail.com

#### Cornwall ALC

11 Walsingham Place  
Truro Cornwall TR1 2RP  
Tel & Fax: 01872 260096  
Email: captc@ruralnet.org.uk

#### Cumbria APC

Penrith Library  
St Andrew's Churchyard  
Penrith CA11 7YA  
Tel: 01768 242141  
Fax: 01768 242144  
Email: office@calc.org.uk

#### Derbyshire APC

Agricola House Church Street  
Wirksworth, Matlock  
Derbyshire DE4 4EY  
Tel: 01629 824827  
Fax: 01629 826053  
Email: b.wood@dalc.org.uk

#### Devon APC

County Hall  
Exeter  
Devon EX2 4QD  
Tel: 01392 382534  
Fax: 01392 382062  
Email: lesley@devonrcc.org.uk

#### Dorset APTC

Collton Annexe  
Collton Park  
Dorchester  
Dorset DT1 1XJ  
Tel & Fax: 01305 260972  
Email: daptc@dorsetcc.gov.uk

#### Durham APTC

Room 99, Town Hall  
Durham DH1 5UB  
Tel: 0191 383 3827  
Fax: 0191 384 500  
Email: council@shildon.gov.uk

#### East Riding & Northern Lincolnshire ALC

The Old Church Institute  
High Street  
Winterton  
North Lincolnshire DN15 9PU  
Tel: 01724735252  
Fax: 01724 735022  
Email: alan.barker@btclick.com

#### Essex ALC

Foakes House  
47 Stortford Road  
Great Dunmow  
Essex CM6 1DG  
Tel: 01371 879722  
Fax: 01371 879733  
Email: info@ealc.gov.uk

#### Gloucestershire APTC

15 College Green  
Gloucester GL1 2LZ  
Tel: 01452 500301  
Fax: 01452 528493  
Email: richardb@grcc.org.uk

#### Hampshire APTC

St Thomas' Centre  
20 Southgate Street  
Winchester SO23 9EF  
Tel: 01962 841699  
Fax: 01962 841647  
Email:  
town.parish.assoc@hants.gov.uk

#### Herefordshire ALC

1A Folbigg Court  
Ramsden Road  
Rotherwas  
Hereford HR2 6LR  
Tel: 01432 353492  
Fax: 01432 353492  
Email:  
halchereford@btconnect.com

#### Hertfordshire APTC

1A The Queen Square  
Hemel Hempstead  
Hertfordshire HP2 4ES  
Tel & Fax: 01442 235317  
Email:  
herts-aptc@btconnect.com

#### Isle of Wight APTC

3 Langley Court  
Pyle Street, Newport  
Isle of Wight PO30 1LA  
Tel: 01983 524058

#### Kent APC

9 West Cliff Gardens  
Folkestone,  
Kent CT20 1SP  
Tel: 01303 248252  
Fax: 01303 258011  
Email: kapc@btconnect.com

#### Lancashire APTC

Howick House  
Howick Park Avenue  
Penwortham, Preston  
Lancashire PR1 0LS  
Tel: 01772 750900  
Fax: 01772 750990  
Email: laptc@btconnect.com

#### Leicestershire and Rutland APLC

41 High Street, Sibleby  
Leicestershire LE12 7RX  
Tel: 01509 816 400  
Fax: 01772 750990  
Email: lraplc.com@virgin.net

#### Lincolnshire ALC

Lincoln Voluntary Sector Hub  
Beaumont Fee  
Lincs NG34 7DF  
Tel: 01522 551695  
Fax: 01522 514619  
Email:  
richard.enderby@cclincs.co.uk

#### Merseyside ALC

c/o Lancashire (see above)

#### Norfolk CAPTC

North Wing, County Hall  
Martineau Lane  
Norwich  
Norfolk NR1 2UF  
Tel: 01603 664869  
Fax: 01603 664871  
Email: ncaptc@btclick.com

#### Northamptonshire ALC

Hunsbury Hill Centre  
Harksome Hill  
Northampton NN4 9QX  
Tel: 01604 706333  
Fax: 01604 708571  
Email:  
nalc@northantsacre.org.uk

#### Northumberland ALC

Tower Buildings  
9 Oldgate  
Morpeth NE61 1PY  
Tel: 01670 517178  
Fax: 01670 511400  
Email: davidfrancis@ccn.org.uk

#### Nottinghamshire ALC

Minister Chambers  
Church Street, Southwell  
Notts NG25 0HD  
Tel: 01636 816890  
Fax: 01636 814842  
Email: lynda.ogilvie@nalc.org.uk

#### Oxfordshire ALC

Jericho Farm, Worton  
Witney OX29 4SZ  
Tel: 01865 883488  
Fax: 01865 883191  
Email: oalc@ruralnet.org.uk

#### Shropshire APTC

PO Box 484  
Shrewsbury SY2 6WW  
Tel: 01743 252744  
Fax: 01743 252713  
Email:  
salc@shropshire-cc.gov.uk

#### Somerset ALC

Victoria House, Victoria Street  
Taunton  
Somerset TA1 3JZ  
Tel: 01823 252515  
Fax: 01823 323652  
Email:  
peter.lacey@somerset.gov.uk

#### Staffordshire PCA

15 Martin Street  
Stafford ST16 2LE  
Tel: 01785 2774 99  
Fax: 01785 215153  
Email:  
spca.parish@staffordshire.gov.uk

#### Suffolk ALC

Unit 11a, Hill View Business  
Park  
Claydon  
Ipswich IP6 0AJ  
Tel: 01473 833713  
Fax: 01473 833714  
Email:  
adminsalc@btconnect.com

#### Surrey APTC

6 Bishopsmead Parade  
East Horsley  
Leatherhead  
Surrey KT24 6RT  
Tel: 01483 285595  
Fax: 01483 280783  
Email: scaptc@btconnect.com

#### Sussex ALC

212 High Street  
Lewes  
East Sussex BN7 2NH  
Tel: 01273 476342  
Fax: 01273 483109  
Email:  
trevor.leggo@ruralsussex.org.uk

#### Warwickshire & West Midlands ALC

25 Stoneleigh Deer Park  
Stareton, Kenilworth  
Warwickshire CV8 2LY  
Tel: 02476 531283  
Fax: 02476 531296  
Email: walc@walc.org.uk

#### Wiltshire ALC

Wyndhams  
St Josephs Place  
Devizes SN10 1DD  
Tel: 01380 722475  
Fax: 01380 728476  
Email:  
pread@communityfirst.org.uk

#### Worcestershire ALC

141 Church Street  
Malvern  
Worcs WR14 2AN  
Tel: 01684 891825  
Fax: 01684 891299  
Email: pat@worcsalc.org.uk

#### Yorkshire LCA

William House  
Shipton Road, Skelton  
York YO30 1XF  
Tel: 01904 645271  
Fax: 01904 610985  
Email: ylca@williamhouse.co.uk

## APPENDIX 2

### Annual Report: Content Guidance

The Charity Commission has published some guidance on what it expects to be included in an Annual Report for a body that it regulates. This is a useful comparison for the reports of a parish council<sup>5</sup>.

The council should ensure that the report is easy to read and identify its target audience. This will include:

- local electors
- members of the public in the parish (including under 18s and new residents)
- the relevant principal authorities
- the relevant principal authority elected members
- officers of the principal authorities
- employees of the council
- interest groups and voluntary sector bodies in and serving the parish
- parish newsletter editor
- local news media, paper, radio and TV

The following contents list may be helpful in developing the format and content of your council's annual report. Principles of good reporting include:

- clarity of purpose
- easy to draw comparisons with previous years
- up to date and relevant to events in the parish
- keep it clear and simple, attractive and interesting

Don't be shy, if you are proud of something you have done, such as awarding a grant to a community group to undertake a project, supporting another organisation to initiate an idea or been actively involved in developing a service or facility for the community as a council, shout about it!

It might be developing a welcome pack for residents or supporting a community shop, financing a bus shelter or a new village hall. The important factor is that you have listened to the community, identified what is important to them and taken action to make it happen.

<sup>5</sup> Charity Commission publication CC59 and the relevant Regulations (The Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2000 SI 2000 No: 2868)

## APPENDIX 3

### The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme Application Form

1. The main requirements or 'Tests' that a parish, town or city council<sup>1</sup> must meet to be recognised as a Quality parish council are listed below. You are asked to tick the relevant boxes and attach papers to this return as requested.
2. When completed, the Form should be passed to with a cheque, made payable to the National Association of Local Councils. You may be asked further questions about the answers you have given, or to provide further supporting information. You will be notified if your application has been successful.
3. Copies of this document should be kept for record purposes and made available for inspection at any time.

#### Introduction

4. A Quality parish council will be able to demonstrate that it is representative of, and actively engages with, all parts of its community and that it is properly managed.
5. So, in order to become a Quality parish council, a parish council must comply with certain 'Tests' to demonstrate the above in order to show that it has the capacity to take on the broader role envisaged:
  - a) To have had at least 80% of seats filled by members elected at the last election<sup>2</sup> or, where a parish council already has Quality parish status and is reapplying for Quality parish status (at the end of four years), to have had 100% of seats filled by members elected at the last election<sup>3</sup>.
  - b) Have a qualified clerk;
  - c) Have adopted a local Code of Conduct;
  - d) Hold at least six Council meetings each year;
  - e) Publish an Annual Report;
  - f) Provide regular information to residents on parish council activities; and
  - g) Produce properly prepared and audited accounts.
6. Parish councils inevitably deal with their duties and communicate with their electorates in different ways, depending on their size, resources and circumstances. What might be possible and appropriate for one parish may not be so for another. This form allows for these differences in approach by giving some flexibility in meeting the criteria in the Communications test where there is a selection of ways to show that the parish is representative of and engages with its community. Not all of these need be met, although we would encourage all parish councils to meet as many as they can.

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, reference to parish councils also includes town and city councils

<sup>2</sup> Where at an ordinary parish election an insufficient number of persons were validly nominated to fill vacancies, other people may be co-opted or appointed to fill remaining vacancies (see section 21 of the Representation of the People Act 1985 and section 39 of the Representation of the People Act 1983).

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of a parish obtaining Quality parish status for a further period, any members who had been co-opted or appointed to the parish council rather than elected would need to retire at or before the last election (this would not prevent them standing for election) in order to enable all the seats to be filled by elected members. A vacant seat (whether remaining vacant or subsequently filled) shall not be taken into account for the purpose of the Quality parish status application where either it arises as a result of a validly nominated candidate for the last election being no longer able to stand at that election, or it arises after 100% of seats were filled by members elected at the last election.

#### The Application Form

You can photocopy the application form which follows (see opposite page - Appendix 3), obtain a hard copy from your local CALC (see Appendix 1), or download a copy from:  
[http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm\\_localgov/documents/page/odpm\\_locgov\\_022517-11.hcsp#P441\\_60887](http://www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm_localgov/documents/page/odpm_locgov_022517-11.hcsp#P441_60887)

Send the form, along with your evidence and a cheque for the fee (made payable to NALC), to the relevant Accreditations Panel of the County Association (see Appendix 1)

| <b>Electoral mandate</b>  | <b>Number</b> |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Number of seats  |               |
| 2. Number of Councillors that were nominated and stood at the last election |               |
| 3. Number of co-opted members   |               |
| 4. Percentage of elected representatives <sup>4</sup>                       | %             |

*Please attach latest electoral returns.*

### **Qualifications of the Clerk**

|   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Does the Clerk hold an AQA Certificate in Local Council Administration?  |            |           |
| 2. <b>Or (until 2007)</b> : The Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy (or the earlier CertHE in Local Council Administration) awarded by the University of Gloucestershire? |            |           |

*Please attach copies of Certificates and details of any other Qualifications or experience that may be relevant.*

### **Meetings**

|   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. How many meetings did the parish hold in the twelve calendar months preceding this application?          |            |           |
| 2. Were they all open, or partly open, to the public? <sup>5</sup>  |            |           |
| 3. Does the parish council meet at least six times each year (including the Annual Meeting of the council)? |            |           |
| 4. Did all Councillors attend the meetings or give their apologies?   |            |           |
| 5. Are Notices of Meetings publicly displayed at least three clear days before each Meeting?                |            |           |
| 6. Are the Minutes of meetings published and available for inspection by any elector in the parish?         |            |           |
| 6. Were they published within two months of the meeting being held?   |            |           |
| 7. Was time set aside in each meeting for public participation?   |            |           |

*Please attach attendance records and Minutes of Meetings for last year.*

<sup>4</sup> Box 2 expressed as a percentage of Box 1

<sup>5</sup> If no please explain the necessity for closed meetings and how many such meetings there were

| <b>Communications - Mandatory</b>   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|---|------------|-----------|
| 1. Did you provide regular information to your electorate - in the form of a Newsletter or other publication - on all parish council activities over the last year? |            |           |
| 2. If you did so was it published four or more times in the year?   |            |           |
| 3. Did it include a list of council members and officers with contact details?  |            |           |
| 4. Did one edition include a synopsis of the Annual Report (including a brief summary of the accounts)?   |            |           |
| 5. Were they placed in readily available public sites such as Notice Boards or the Village Hall?  |            |           |
| <b>Communications - Discretionary</b><br>You should be able to tick yes to at least nine of the following:  | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| 1. Was the Annual Report sent to every household in the parish council area?  |            |           |
| 2. Did the Annual Report include a summary of reports of council activities during the year?  |            |           |
| 3. Have you a Parish Plan or contributed to a town or village plan?   |            |           |
| 4. Do you provide an information/access point for details on local government services and parish council activities?   |            |           |
| 5. Is the access point electronically linked to the district and county councils?   |            |           |
| 6. Is information about local government services and parish council activities distributed to every household?   |            |           |
| 7. Have you established links with voluntary and other community organisations in your area?  |            |           |
| 8. Has the parish council an e-mail address that is publicly available?   |            |           |
| 9. Do you have a Website for the parish that provides a list of council members and officers with contact details and access to the Annual Report?                  |            |           |
| 10. Do Councillors hold regular 'surgeries' for local residents (i.e. more than six times a year)?  |            |           |
| 11. Do you consult residents on planning matters?   |            |           |
| 12. Do you keep the relevant principal authorities informed of parish council activities?   |            |           |
| 13. Do you publicise parish council activities in local libraries/shops/other public places?  |            |           |
| 14. Do you publicise the parish council activities in the local press?  |            |           |
| 15. Do you ensure coverage of parish council activities in any district council publication?  |            |           |
| 16. Do you undertake Consultations/Questionnaires with the electorate on local issues affecting the parish council area?  |            |           |
| 17. Do you provide Information leaflets/brochures on the work of the parish council?  |            |           |

Please provide examples of the way information has been passed to your community - newsletters, magazines, articles in other local papers or district council publications, notice boards, leaflets in public places etc - and of other ways that you consult with your local community and make information available to them. Details of how local people access the parish council and how you ensure that the parish represents the views of the electorate should also be provided.

| <b>Annual Reports</b>  | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Was the last Annual Report completed and published by 30th June of the following year?  |     |    |
| 2. Was the Annual report made available for inspection by any elector in the parish council area?  |     |    |
| 3. Was it made publicly available by being placed at the offices of the principal authorities and local libraries?   |     |    |
| 4. Did the Annual Report include a list of council members and officers with contact details?  |     |    |
| 5. Did it include a summary of the Accounts of the parish council?   |     |    |
| 6. Did it include a Chairman's overview of the Council's achievements?   |     |    |
| <b>Accounts</b>  | Yes | No |
| 1. Was the latest available statement of accounts prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations and did the statement receive an unqualified opinion from the external auditor?   |     |    |
| 2. Has the parish council provided proper opportunity for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations?  |     |    |
| 3. Were the latest available statements of accounts published within nine months of the end of the accounting period?  |     |    |
| 4. Has the parish council maintained an adequate system of internal control having regard to relevant guidance such as that contained within the NALC/SLCC Practitioners' Guide?   |     |    |
| 5. Do you have an adequate and effective system of internal audit of your accounting records and of your system of internal control in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations and having regard to relevant guidance such as that contained within the NALC/SLCC Practitioners' Guide or CIPFA's Code of Practice on Internal Audit? |     |    |

*Please provide a copy of the latest audited statement of accounts, or, for parishes with annual income or expenditure below £500,000, the audited Annual Return. Please also supply all internal audit reports for the last year.*

### **Ethical Framework**

| Yes  | No |
|--|----|
| Have the parish council resolved to adopt a local Code of Conduct (as opposed to the code being applied in the absence of adoption)? |    |

*Please attach a copy of the Code and date of its adoption.*

### **Other**

These issues do not form part of the assessment but will be of interest to the Panel and act as an aid to understanding your capabilities and the role you currently play in your local community. It also has the benefit of gathering data on parish council activities, which will be useful when considering the effectiveness of the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme in the future, and any improvements that might be made.

| Yes   | No |
|---|----|
| 1. Has the Clerk attended any training courses in the last year?  |    |
| 2. Have any Councillors attended Training courses/briefings in the last year?   |    |
| 3. Do you own a Village Hall?   |    |
| 4. Do you manage <sup>6</sup> a Village Hall that you also own?   |    |
| 5. Do you manage a Village Hall that you do not own?  |    |
| 6. What was the average number of Councillors in attendance at parish council meetings over the preceding 12 calendar months?                                       |    |
| <b>Which of the following services is your parish council currently involved with:</b>  |    |
| Do you provide and/or equip buildings for use of clubs having athletic, social or educational objectives (Community Centres) or for Conference facilities?          |    |
| Do you provide and manage any recreation grounds, public walks, boating pools or other open spaces?   |    |
| Do you work on local youth projects?  |    |
| Are you involved in any community transport schemes?  |    |
| Do you contribute to crime prevention measures in your area?  |    |
| Do you provide or maintain Bus Shelters or other roadside seats?  |    |
| Do you provide lighting or traffic signs for roads and public places?   |    |
| Do you repair and maintain public footpaths and bridle-ways and road side verges?   |    |
| Do you provide parking places for vehicles, bicycles and motor-cycles?  |    |
| Have you been involved in traffic calming measures?   |    |
| Have you made any Bye Laws?   |    |
| Do you regulate or maintain any Commons and/or common pastures, ponds or ditches?   |    |
| Do you promote Lotteries?   |    |
| Do you participate in Tourism activities?   |    |
| Do you provide or maintain allotment gardens?   |    |
| Do you maintain or contribute towards expenses of Burial grounds, cemeteries and crematoria, closed churchyards, monuments and memorials (including war memorials)? |    |
| Are there any other functions that the parish is discharging on behalf of principal authorities (please provide details)?   |    |

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Chairman/Mayor of the Parish/Town Council of \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>6</sup> i.e. deal with the day-to-day running of the hall

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