



# Needham Market Town Council

Needham Market town Council Office, Community Centre, School Street, Needham Market, Suffolk IP6 8BB  
01449 722246

<https://www.needhammarket-tc.gov.uk/>

Clerk: Shannon Smith

Deputy Clerk: Georgina de Cova

**You are hereby summoned to a Meeting of the Full Town Council of  
Needham Market Town Council which will be held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>  
March 2025 at 7PM in the Green Room at Needham Market Community  
Centre, to consider the items on the agenda below.**

Shannon Smith

Town Clerk

04/03/2025

## AGENDA

- 1. Co-option to Vacancy of Office for Parish Councillor & Declaration of acceptance of Office**
- 2. To receive and approve Apologies of Absence**  
Councillors to note any apologies for absence.  
Councillors to consider and vote on acceptance of apologies for absence.
- 3. To receive any Declarations of Pecuniary or Non-Pecuniary Interests by Members**

- 4. To approve any Dispensations with respect to Disclosable Non-Pecuniary Interests**

- 5. Questions and Statements from the Public**

An opportunity to enable members of the press and public present to comment.

**Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation**



*time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman.*

**6. To receive and confirm the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025.**

**7. To receive a verbal report from the Town Clerk**

**8. Committee Reports**

To receive the following committee reports

- a) Community & Assets - To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.
- b) Finance & Governance - To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.
- c) Planning - To receive a report from the Committee Chairperson.

**9. District and County Councillor reports**

To receive the reports.

**10. Accounts for payment and confirmation**

To receive and approve the accounts for payment and confirmation.

**11. Appointment of Internal Auditor**

To receive and approve SALC Internal Audit Service 2025 letter of engagement ([attached at page 4](#)).

**12. Meeting Schedule 2025/2026**

To receive the draft proposed meeting schedules for 2025/2026 and approve the appropriate one ([attached at page 9](#)).

**13. Easter Event**

To receive a report ([attached at page 15](#)).

**14. Local Government Award Scheme**

To receive a report ([attached at page 17](#)).

<https://www.slcc.co.uk/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/lcas-guide-2021.pdf>

**15. Internal Audit Update**

To receive a verbal report.

**16. Christmas Lights**

To receive a proposal.



## **17. Skatepark**

To receive a verbal report.

## **18. Donation requests**

To receive requests for donations.

## **19. Member Motion Requests**

To receive a report ([attached at page 22](#)).

## **20. CCTV**

To receive and approve the CCTV contract.

## **21. To confirm the Date, Time and Location of the next meeting**

## **22. Exclusion**

At this point, the Chair will move the following resolution: Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

## **23. Employment**

To receive a report.

## **24. Newsletter**

To receive a report.

**Members of the Public are welcome to attend the meeting.**



Internal audit service terms and conditions V.9  
Last revised: 21.01.2025



## SALC INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE – LETTER OF ENGAGEMENT

SALC is committed to providing a high-quality internal audit service which aims to assist local councils to maintain and improve internal controls in accordance with proper practices as set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

This letter of engagement sets the terms of the agreement between SALC and the council which includes details such as the scope, responsibilities and fees. This will need to be approved at the next council meeting and recorded in the minutes of the decision to appoint SALC as the internal auditor for the period 1st April 2024 - 31st March 2025.

### Internal audit objectives and responsibilities

The primary objective of internal audit is to review, appraise and report upon the adequacy of internal control systems operating throughout the council, and to achieve this will adopt a predominantly systems-based approach to audit.

The council's internal control system comprises the whole network of systems established within the council to provide reasonable assurance that the council's objectives will be achieved, with reference to:

- the effectiveness of operations
- the economic and efficient use of resources
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws and regulations
- the safeguarding of assets and interests from losses of all kinds, including those arising from fraud, irregularity and corruption
- the integrity and reliability of information, accounts and data

Accordingly, in the conduct of planned audits internal audit may:

- carry out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the financial year to be able to complete the Annual Internal Audit Report (AIAR) section of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

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- review the reliability and integrity of financial information and the means used to identify, measure, classify and report such information
- review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the existence of such assets
- appraise the economy and efficiency with which resources are employed, identify opportunities to improve performance and recommend solutions to problems
- review the established systems to ensure compliance with those policies, procedures, laws and regulations which could have a significant impact on operations, and determine whether the council complies
- review the operations and activities to ascertain whether results are consistent with objectives and whether they are being carried out as planned

### The scope of the internal audit activity

There are no limitations on internal audit's scope of activities. The scope of internal audit allows for unrestricted coverage of the council's activities, including both financial and non-financial systems of internal control.

### Independence

The main determinant of the effectiveness of internal audit is that it is seen to be independent in its planning and operation. To ensure this, internal audit will operate within a framework that allows:

- unrestricted access to the officers of the council
- reporting in its own name
- segregation from the day to day operations of the council

Every effort will be made to preserve objectivity by ensuring that all internal auditors are free from any conflicts of interest and do not undertake any non-audit duties on behalf of the council.

### Rights of access

There are no limitations on internal audit's access to records. Internal auditors have the authority to:

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- access council premises at reasonable times agreed in advance
- access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems
- receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration
- require any employee to the council to account for cash, stores or any other council asset under his/her control
- access records belonging to third parties, such as contractors when required

### The council's responsibilities

The Responsible Financial Officer and Proper Officer have clearly defined responsibilities for risk management, internal control, internal audit and preventing fraud and corruption.

The existence of internal audit does not diminish the responsibility of the council to establish systems of internal control to ensure that activities are conducted in a secure and well-ordered manner. **Please be aware that if the council are late reporting for the present year, the council will fail the public rights test on the AGAR for the following year.**

### Reporting

The internal auditor will formally report the results of audits and the recommendations made to the council and will follow up at subsequent internal audits to make sure that corrective actions are taken.

### Data protection

This internal audit offer is an additional service provided by SALC as described in our published privacy notice (section 6) [available on our website here](#). When booking this service you are providing consent to proceed. The delivery of the internal audit service involves the handling of some personal data supplied by the member council.

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Internal audit service terms and conditions V.9  
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For the purposes of data protection legislation SALC is the data controller and the internal auditor is the data processor. SALC and internal auditors, whilst separate entities, work in partnership to deliver a service that seeks to support and improve local councils. SALC and the internal auditor have entered into a data sharing agreement as part of their terms of engagement.

### Audit fees for 2025

#### Income/expenditure, whichever is higher (excl. VAT)

Up to £5,000	£124.00
£5,001 - £15,000	£183.00
£15,001 - £25,000	£230.00
£25,001 - £50,000	£282.00
£50,001 - £100,000	£332.00
£100,001 - £200,000	£407.00
£200,001 - £300,000	£490.00
£300,001 - £400,000	£542.00
£400,001 - £500,000	£600.00
£500,001 +	£692.00
Onsite visits will incur mileage expenses at 45p per mile.	
£28 hourly rate for meetings/ad-hoc training/development of materials	

## AUDIT PROCEDURE

SALC continues to offer onsite audits to town and larger councils. The SALC admin team will contact you to arrange a suitable date and confirm which auditor will be carrying out the onsite audit.

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Internal audit service terms and conditions V.9  
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When allocated the internal auditor shall:

- process the documents in line with SALC's policies and procedures
- raise queries or points of clarification as soon as possible direct with you

The signed AIAR (page 4 of the AGAR) will be signed and presented to you by the auditor on the day of the on-site visit. On receipt of the report [admin@suffolk-alc.gov.uk](mailto:admin@suffolk-alc.gov.uk) will provide a link to an electronic copy which can be downloaded. This will be sent to both the chairperson and clerk/RFO/lead officer.

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**Proposed Dates: Version 1****June 2025**

- Tuesday, 17 June – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 24 June – Governance and Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

**July 2025**

- Tuesday, 15 July – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 22 July – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

**August 2025**

- Tuesday, 19 August – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

**September 2025**

- Tuesday, 16 September – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 23 September – GF (7:00 PM)

**October 2025**

- Tuesday, 14 October – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 21 October – Community & Assets (7:00 PM)

**November 2025**

- Tuesday, 18 November – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

**December 2025**

- Tuesday, 9 December – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 16 December – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

**January 2026**

- Tuesday, 20 January – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 27 January – Community & Assets (7:00 PM)

**February 2026**

- Tuesday, 17 February – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

**March 2026**

- Tuesday, 17 March – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 24 March – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)



## **April 2026**

- Tuesday, 14 April – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Clerk (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 21 April – Community & Assets (7:00 PM)

## **May 2026**

- Tuesday, 19 May – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), TC (7:00 PM) (Annual Town Council Meeting)

## **Proposed Dates: Version 2**

### **June 2025**

- Wednesday, 18 June – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 25 June – Governance and Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

### **July 2025**

- Wednesday, 16 July – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 23 July – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

### **August 2025**

- Wednesday, 20 August – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **September 2025**

- Wednesday, 17 September – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 24 September – Governance and Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

### **October 2025**

- Wednesday, 15 October – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 22 October – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

### **November 2025**

- Wednesday, 19 November – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)



## **December 2025**

- Wednesday, 10 December – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 17 December – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

## **January 2026**

- Wednesday, 21 January – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 28 January – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

## **February 2026**

- Wednesday, 18 February – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

## **March 2026**

- Wednesday, 18 March – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 25 March – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

## **April 2026**

- Wednesday, 15 April – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 22 April – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

## **May 2026**

- Wednesday, 20 May – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)  
(Annual Town Council Meeting)

## **Proposed dates: Version 3**

### **Town Council Meeting Schedule 2025-2026**

## **June 2025**

- Wednesday, 4 June – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 11 June – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

## **July 2025**

- Wednesday, 2 July – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)



- Wednesday, 9 July – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **August 2025**

- Wednesday, 6 August – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **September 2025**

- Wednesday, 3 September – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 10 September – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **October 2025**

- Wednesday, 1 October – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 8 October – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **November 2025**

- Wednesday, 5 November – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 12 November – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

### **December 2025**

- Wednesday, 3 December – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 10 December – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **January 2026**

- Wednesday, 7 January – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **February 2026**

- Wednesday, 4 February – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 11 February – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **March 2026**

- Wednesday, 4 March – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 11 March – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **April 2026**

- Wednesday, 8 April – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)



## **May 2026**

- Wednesday, 6 May – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM) (Annual Town Council Meeting)
- Wednesday, 7 May – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)
- Wednesday, 13 May – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

## **Proposed dates: Version 4**

### **June 2025**

- Tuesday, 3 June – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 10 June – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **July 2025**

- Tuesday, 8 July – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 10 July – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

### **August 2025**

- Tuesday, 5 August – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **September 2025**

- Tuesday, 2 September – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 9 September – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **October 2025**

- Tuesday, 7 October – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 9 October – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

### **November 2025**

- Tuesday, 4 November – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 11 November – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **December 2025**

- Tuesday, 9 December – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 11 December – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)

### **January 2026**



- Tuesday, 6 January – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **February 2026**

- Tuesday, 3 February – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 10 February – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **March 2026**

- Tuesday, 3 March – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 10 March – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **April 2026**

- Tuesday, 7 April – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM)

### **May 2026**

- Tuesday, 5 May – Planning Committee (6:00 PM), Town Council (7:00 PM) (Annual Town Council Meeting)
- Tuesday, 7 May – Community & Assets Committee (7:00 PM)
- Tuesday, 12 May – Governance & Finance Committee (7:00 PM)

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**Event Overview:** The Needham Market Easter Trail would be a fun, family-friendly activity encouraging residents and visitors to explore the town centre. Participants will search for eggs hidden in shop windows, each displaying a letter. Once all letters are collected, they will unscramble them to reveal a special Easter-themed word. Completed entry forms can be submitted to the Town Council office for a chance to win a special Easter prize!

**Event Details:**

- **Date:** 7<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April
- **Time:** N/A
- **Location:** Needham Market Town Centre
- **Target Audience:** Families, children, and residents
- **Entry Fee:** Free

**How It Works:**

1. Families collect an entry form from designated locations, such as the Town Council office, local shops, and the town's website.
2. Participants explore the town centre to find bunnies displayed in shop windows.
3. Each Easter egg will have a letter attached to it.
4. Participants write down each letter on their entry form.
5. Once all letters are collected, they rearrange them to spell a special Easter-themed word.
6. Completed entry forms are posted into the designated drop box at the Town Council office during opening hours on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> of April.
7. All correct entries are entered into a prize draw, and winners will be announced after the event, but every participant will receive a small prize.

**Marketing & Promotion:**

- Posters around town and in participating shops
- Social media campaign via the Town Council's platforms
- Feature in the local newspaper and town newsletter
- Flyers distributed to local schools and community centres



- Promotion through local businesses involved in the trail

#### **Prizes:**

- A special Easter prize for the winner (e.g., Easter hamper, chocolate selection, gift vouchers)
- Small participation rewards for children who complete the trail (

#### **Sponsorship & Partnerships:**

- Local businesses sponsoring the event or donating prizes
- Shops participating by displaying the bunnies in their windows
- Potential collaboration with community groups and schools

#### **Logistics & Supplies:**

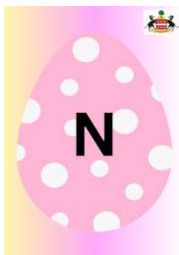
- Printed entry forms
- Printed letters and bunny cutouts for shop windows
- Collection box at the Town Council office
- Staff/volunteers to manage entries and prize draw
- Small number of decorations for each shop

#### **Post-Event Activities:**

- Announce winners on social media and town noticeboards
- Contact the winner and arrange prize collection
- Thank local businesses and participants for their involvement
- Gather feedback for future events

This event is designed to be a fun and engaging way for families to enjoy the Easter season while supporting local businesses.

#### **Example of Easter egg:**





## 1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to outline the benefits and requirements of achieving the Foundation Award under the Local Council Award Scheme. This report seeks the Town Council's approval to pursue the award and take necessary steps to meet the criteria.

## 2. Background

The Local Council Award Scheme is a nationally recognized program designed to support and celebrate the achievements of parish and town councils. The scheme is managed by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and aims to establish good governance, enhance community engagement, and ensure effective management.

The Foundation Award is the entry-level accreditation and demonstrates that a council meets the standards expected of an effective, well-managed local authority.

## 3. Benefits of Achieving the Foundation Award

Achieving the Foundation Award will provide the following benefits:

- **Recognition of Good Governance:** Demonstrates that the Town Council is operating in accordance with legal and best practice requirements.
- **Improved Public Confidence:** Enhances transparency and accountability, thereby strengthening public trust.
- **Better Community Engagement:** Encourages effective communication with residents and stakeholders.
- **Stronger Operational Practices:** Ensures policies and procedures are up to date and fit for purpose.
- **Funding and Partnership Opportunities:** Some funding bodies and partners give preference to councils with accreditation, increasing access to grants and collaborative projects.

## 4. Criteria for the Foundation Award

To qualify for the Foundation Award, the Town Council must demonstrate compliance with the following key areas:

- **Governance:** Adopt and publish key documents such as standing orders, financial regulations, and a code of conduct.



- **Community Engagement:** Maintain an up-to-date website, publish meeting agendas and minutes, and provide contact details for councillors and staff.
- **Financial Management:** Adhere to proper financial procedures and publish the annual budget and audit reports.
- **Council Performance:** Ensure councillors and staff receive appropriate training and development.

## **5. Actions Required**

To achieve the Foundation Award, the Town Council will need to undertake the following steps:

1. **Conduct a Compliance Review:** Assess current policies, procedures, and documentation against the award criteria.
2. **Update and Publish Required Documents:** Ensure all necessary documents are publicly accessible and up to date.
3. **Implement Training and Development:** Provide relevant training for councillors and staff as required.
4. **Submit an application:** Once compliance is met, submit an application to the accreditation panel.



## 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.

All local councils want to serve their local communities and make a real difference to the lives of the people that live there. This scheme offers councils the opportunity to show that they meet the standards set by the sector, assessed by their peers, and to put in place the conditions for continued improvement.

The Local Council Award Scheme has been designed to both provide the tools and encouragement to those councils at the beginning of their improvement journeys, as well as promoting and recognising councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector. It is only through the sector working together to share best practice, drive up standards and supporting those who are committed to improving their offer to their communities that individual councils and the sector as a whole will reach its full potential.

The scheme was created in 2014 and is managed on behalf of local councils by the Improvement and Development Board (IDB). Councils can apply for an award at one of three levels:

**The Foundation Award** demonstrates that a council meets the requirements for operating lawfully and according to standard practice.

**The Quality Award** demonstrates that a council achieves good practice in governance, community engagement and council improvement.

**The Quality Gold Award** demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development.

The scheme sets out criteria to meet at each level covering selected aspects of the council's work. Councils can seek to progress through the tiers over time thereby raising standards. Councils of any size can aspire to an award appropriate for their budget and level of activity.

To support transparency, every award level has a requirement for certain information to be published online (plus some information that does not need to be published). In all instances the council confirms that the required documents, information and conditions are in place (whether published or not) by resolution in public at a full council meeting. For Quality Gold, councils also provide statements for submission to the panel demonstrating excellence in their activities. The panel may ask for additional information to check the accuracy of claims.





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 also confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it recognises its duties in relation to bio-diversity and crime and disorder, and 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
Its standing orders	Council contact details and councillor information in line with the Transparency Code	
Its financial regulations	Its action plan for the current year	
Its Code of Conduct and a link to councillors' registers of interests	Evidence of consulting the community	
Its publication scheme	Publicity advertising council activities	
Its last annual return	Evidence of participating in town and country planning	
Transparent information about council payments		
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		
Its accessibility statement		
Its privacy notice		

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

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.



## 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 online, the panel may ask to see the evidence if it is considered necessary.
- All policies should comply with current legislation and guidance and note the date of the next review.
  - Standing orders, financial regulations, the Code of Conduct, publication scheme, accessibility statement, privacy statement and complaints procedure are public documents tailored to the specific council. Standing orders or financial regulations explain procedures for elections and internal control. There should be evidence of an open access policy which does not restrict engagement with the press. For councils with an annual turnover of less than £25,000 they also demonstrate compliance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.
  - The council does not need to publish the councillors' registers of interests on their own website provided that there is a working link to the complete register of all councillors' interests on the principal authority's website.
  - The council's website should include the names 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.
  - 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 control. 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.
  - Information on all payments must be transparent and in accordance with financial regulations and statutory proper practices.
  - The calendar (in any format) includes the Annual Meeting of the Council and the Annual Parish/Town Meeting and both meetings must be held during the correct statutory period. The calendar also shows that the council has at least four full council meetings a year.
  - Similarly, the minutes for full council meetings over the last year include the Annual Meeting of the Council. If relevant, the council also posts up the minutes of its Finance Committee to demonstrate transparency according to statutory regulations and of its Planning Committee showing that procedures for reviewing planning applications are correct. The panel checks that minutes and agendas demonstrate the lawful convening of meetings and decision making and that all meetings allow the public to make representations to the council.

- The council can post up the current or next year's budget (or both). Budget documents would normally show columns comparing the year in question with the two previous years; they include information on income and expenditure (or receipts and payments) and show how the precept was calculated.
- The council must publish an action plan, as a minimum this is a one-page document listing the council's objectives for the current year. It is not a parish plan which is a plan for the future of the community; the council can extract objectives for action from the parish plan depending on its areas of responsibility.
- The panel seeks at least one piece of evidence from council publicity that it consults and actively serves its community. Publicity might include an annual report, web material or news bulletin. The information gives a flavour of any council activity such as lobbying principal authorities, giving grants to community groups, the provision of a service or helping with community events. For guidance, councils can refer to The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity. Similarly any form of consultation is suitable, including surveys, online polls, focus groups or public meetings.
- Council documents demonstrate that the council participates in the planning system by, for example, commenting on planning applications or working on a neighbourhood plan. Decisions on planning matters must be made in properly convened meetings and, if required, by delegation to a committee. Some decisions may be delegated to an officer.
- 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.
- Contracts, disciplinary/grievance procedures, a risk management policy and register of assets can be based on a model tailored to the specific council. They are not published. The contract(s) for staff can be provided in redacted format, or if there are reasons why the contract cannot be shared then the council provides a statement from a full council meeting confirming that all staff are employed under an appropriate contract. The risk management policy shows the council has considered health and safety of staff, councillors and others as appropriate.
- A training and development policy for 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, events, online courses, learning on the job and qualifications. Councillors undertake a range of development activities such as attending conferences, undertaking training, or reading about developments in the sector. The clerk's training record includes evidence of CPD such as training, conference attendance, mentoring and studying or qualifications. CPD points are allocated according to a system published by the IDB.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this report is to propose the implementation of a standardised proforma submission process for Town Council members who wish to add reports and items to meeting agendas. This will ensure sufficient time for agenda preparation, improve efficiency, and enhance transparency in council proceedings.

**Background:** Currently, there is no standardised process for submitting items to be included in the Town Council meeting agenda. This often results in last-minute submissions, which can lead to delays in agenda production, inadequate time for review, and potential oversight of critical matters. To address these concerns, it is proposed that all agenda submissions be made using a designated proforma form provided by the council office.

**Proposal:** It is recommended that Town Council members be required to:

1. Complete a standardized proforma form when submitting reports or requesting the inclusion of an item on the agenda.
2. Submit the completed form to the council office via email no later than 10 days before the scheduled meeting.
3. Ensure that all necessary supporting documents are attached to the submission to facilitate proper review and inclusion in the agenda.

**Benefits:**

- **Improved Efficiency:** Ensuring all items are submitted in a structured format and within a set timeframe will allow the office to compile the agenda in an orderly manner.
- **Adequate Preparation Time:** Council members will have sufficient time to review all agenda items before the meeting, leading to more informed discussions and decision-making.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** A formalised process will provide a clear record of agenda submissions, ensuring fairness and accountability in council operations.
- **Reduced Administrative Burden:** By standardising submissions, administrative staff will spend less time following up on incomplete or last-minute requests, allowing for a more streamlined workflow.



**Implementation:**

- The proforma form will be developed and made available in both digital and hard copy formats.
- The Town Clerk's office will oversee the submission process and maintain a log of received forms.
- A communication plan will be put in place to inform all council members of the new requirement and deadline.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Town Council approve the implementation of the proforma submission process for agenda items as outlined in this report. If approved, the council office will begin the necessary preparations to ensure a smooth transition.

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