The Foundation Award

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 for its councillors and officers and building a foundation for improvement and development.

The council confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it publishes online:

1   Its standing orders and financial regulations
2   Its Code of Conduct and a link to councillors' registers of interests
3   Its publication scheme
4   Its last annual return
5   Transparent information about council payments
6   A calendar of all meetings including the annual meeting of electors
7   Minutes for at least one year of full council meetings and (if relevant) all committee and sub-committee meetings
8   Current agendas
9   The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year
10 Its complaints procedure
11 Council contact details and councillor information in line with the Transparency Code
12 Its action plan for the current year
13 Evidence of consulting the community
14 Publicity advertising council activities
15 Evidence of participating in town and country planning

The council also confirms by resolution at a full council meeting that it has:

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

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

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

What is the accreditation panel looking for?

The panel seeks assurance that a council acts lawfully and according to standard practice. Unless it is a matter of law, the panel is not making a judgement on the quality of the evidence at this level; it simply confirms that the documentation and information is in place, up-to-date and complies with the guidance below. For those documents that are not posted up online, the panel 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 and complaints procedure** are public documents tailored to the specific council. Standing orders or financial regulations explain procedures for contracts and internal controls. There should be evidence of all policies and procedures demonstrating compliance with [The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014](#) including an open media policy which does not restrict engagement with the press. For councils with an annual turnover of less than £25,000 they also demonstrate compliance with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities..
- 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 name of the clerk and **contact details** (address, phone, e-mail) 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 controls. From 2017, councils with an annual turnover of less than £25,000 will not be required to submit their annual return for audit. Panels check that these councils comply with the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities.
- **Information on all payments** must be transparent and in accordance with financial regulations and statutory proper practices. The panel will check the minutes of meetings, financial regulations, the annual return (if relevant) and compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code.
- 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 bulletins. The information gives a flavour of any council **activity** such as lobbying principal authorities, giving grants to community groups, the provision of a service or helping with community events. For guidance, councils can refer to [The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity](#). Similarly any form of **consultation** is suitable including surveys, online polls, focus groups or public meetings.
- 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 but tailored to the specific council. They are not published.
- A **training policy** for new staff and councillors can be a short statement of intent while a **training record** gives dates, titles and providers of development activities undertaken by named individuals in the last year, including, for example, updating events, online courses, CPD activity and qualifications. Councillors should note that they should undertake training on financial management for which they are all responsible. In particular, the **clerk**'s training record includes evidence of CPD (Continuing Professional Development) such as training, conference attendance, mentoring and studying for qualifications. CPD points are allocated according to a system published by the IDB.