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Members' Policy Lunch

Quality Status

A commitment to excellence for your community

"Local Councils are vital to re-invigorating local democracy. The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme has played an important role in improving the quality of management and administration of parish and town councils. The Government welcomes the revision of the Scheme and encourages local councils to consider seeking accreditation."

Department for Communities and Local Government.

The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme was launched in 2003 following the Government's *Rural White Paper*, 2000. The aim of the Scheme is to provide benchmark minimum standards for parish and town councils. The Scheme is supported by six National Stakeholders, the Commission for Rural Communities, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs commissioned the University of Wales to review the Scheme in 2006 and their research helped the National Stakeholders to the Scheme to agree amendments that would help councils achieve ever higher levels of professionalism and help to cement their position as community leaders.

As of 27 June 2008 the Scheme changed to better reflect the increased professionalism of councils. There are now three tests which are highlighted below but there are also a number of amendments to some of the existing tests, again mentioned below.

Click here to open a copy of the booklet "A Guide to Becoming a Quality Council."

Click here to open a copy of test 7 as of 1 July 2012.

The Quality Parish Scheme is currently under review and some transitional arrangements are in place which will affect accreditations and reaccreditations. **Click here** to open guidance on the transitional arrangements.

In order to achieve Quality Status, parish and town councils must demonstrate that they have reached the standard required by passing several tests. These are:

- Electoral Mandate
- Qualifications of the clerk
- Council meetings
- Communication and Community Engagement
- Annual Report
- Accounts
- Code of Conduct
- Promoting local democracy and citizenship
- Terms and conditions
- Training

Changes to the Scheme, in addition to the three new tests, as of 27 June 2008 are as follows:

- Electoral mandate test - Councils will be required to show that at least two-thirds of councillors were elected. 'Elected' can mean either at a contested or uncontested election. However, they must have stood.
- Council meetings test - Councils will be required to publish draft minutes of meetings within two months of it taking place and make them available for inspection by any elector in the parish, as a minimum
- Communications and Community Engagement test (Mandatory):
 - Councils will be required to have a website which provides a list of council members and officers, details of how they can be contacted and which also provides access to the annual report.
 - Councils will also be required to have an email address that is publicly available.
 - Councils now have the option of either producing their own newsletter or contributing to a community newsletter. The information that is required to be included in the newsletter has not changed nor has the requirement that the newsletter is made readily available at



Time for Change

