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**Agenda Item:** NALC Local Council Award Scheme – Silver Award

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 8 December 2025

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's confirmation that it has the necessary documents and policies in place to apply for silver accreditation under the NALC Local Council Award Scheme.

### Background

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Award Scheme provides councils with the opportunity to demonstrate that they meet sector-defined standards, while also establishing a framework for ongoing improvement in governance, transparency, and best practice.

The scheme comprises three award levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. At its meeting held on 9 December 2024 (Minute No. 709), the Council resolved that it met the criteria required to apply for the Bronze Award, which was subsequently achieved in March 2025.

As discussed at that time, the Council's aspiration was to progress to the Silver Award within 12 months, with the aim of achieving Gold by the end of the current Council term in 2027. The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) describes the Silver Award as follows:

"The attainment of the Silver Award signifies that a council excels in governance, community engagement, and continuous improvement. Distinguished by going beyond mere legal obligations, quality councils emerge as leaders within their communities, consistently seeking opportunities to enhance and develop further.

To secure the Silver Award, a council not only fulfils all the requisites of the Bronze Award but also provides additional evidence showcasing exemplary governance, effective community engagement, and notable council improvement initiatives. Given the elevated level of this accomplishment, a council bestowed with the Silver Award may also qualify to exercise the general power of competence, underscoring its commitment to exceptional standards and proactive leadership."

### Current Situation

To achieve the NALC Local Council Awards Scheme Silver Award status, the Council must first meet the criteria for both bronze and silver awards and resolve that it has the following and publishes them online:

## Bronze Award

Governance	
Standing Orders	The current Standing Orders were adopted on 23 June 2025. The next review is due in May 2026. They are viewable here <a href="#">WTC Standing Orders</a>
Financial Regulations	The current Financial Regulations were adopted on 9 June 2025. The next review is due in June 2026. They are viewable here <a href="#">WTC Financial Regulations</a>
Code of Conduct	The Council re-adopted the Oxfordshire Code of Conduct on 7 May 2025. The next review is due in May 2026. They are viewable here <a href="#">WTC Councillor Code of Conduct</a>
Publication Scheme	The Council reviewed and adopted an updated Publication Scheme on 24 November 2025. The next review is due in November 2027. It is published on the Town Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Publication Scheme</a>
Last Annual Return	Is published on the Town Council's website here <a href="#">WTC - Annual Return 2024-25</a>
Transparent Information about Council Payments	In line with the transparency code, payments over £500 can be viewed on the Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Payments over £500 2025-26</a>
A calendar of meetings, including the annual meeting of electors	Is published on the Town Hall noticeboard and its website here <a href="#">WTC Meetings Calendar</a>
Minutes for at least one year of full council, committee and sub-committee meetings	Are viewable on the Council's website under each Committee here <a href="#">WTC Agendas &amp; Minutes</a>
Current Agendas	Are viewable on the Council's website under each Committee as above <a href="#">WTC Agendas &amp; Minutes</a>
The budget and precept information for the current or next financial year	Is viewable on the Council's website here <a href="#">WTC - Budget &amp; Precept Explained 2025-26</a> <a href="#">WTC Annual Budget Summary 2025-26</a>
Complaints procedure	The Council reviewed and adopted an updated Complaints Policy on 24 November 2025. The next review is due in . It is viewable on the Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Complaints Policy</a>
Accessibility Statement	Is viewable on the Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Accessibility Statement</a>
Privacy Notice	The Council reviewed and adopted an updated Publication Scheme on 24 November 2025. The next review is due It is published on the Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Privacy Notice</a>
Biodiversity Policy	The Council reviewed and adopted an updated Biodiversity Policy on 25 November 2024. The next review is due in May 2026. It is viewable on the Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Biodiversity Policy</a>

<b>Community</b>	
Council Contact Details	Councillors' names and email addresses are published on the Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Councillors</a>
Councillor Information including registers of interests, in line with the Transparency Code	Register of Interests are listed on the Town Council's website under each Councillor here <a href="#">Link to Councillors Register of Interests (JA)</a>
Its Action Plan for the year ahead	The Council has action plans for each committee for the forthcoming year, agreed in May/June 2025 which can be seen here <a href="#">[Links to Committee Action Plan Pages]</a>
Evidence of consulting the community	Council consultations occur throughout the year. The most popular is the Annual residents' survey which is delivered to every household in February. The Council's consultation page can be seen here <a href="#">WTC Consultations</a>
Publication of Council activities	The Council publishes its activities on a number of social media, online and hard copy outlets. For the purpose of this award, the quarterly newsletter can be viewed from the home page of the Council's website here <a href="#">Witney Town Council – Official Site of Witney Town Council</a>
Evidence of participating in town and county planning	The Council convenes a meeting of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee every three weeks. Details of planning responses can be seen in the minutes published here <a href="#">WTC Planning Minutes 18 November 2025</a>
Evidence of publicising elections and vacancies on the council	The Council publicises all town council elections on noticeboards, social media and website. Notice of the most recent by-election can be seen here: <a href="#">WTC - Notice of Town Council Election (Web)</a>

The Council must also resolve that it has:

<b>Governance</b>	
A Risk Management Policy	An updated Risk Management Policy was adopted by the Council on 31 March 2025 (minute no. F189 refers) and can be seen here <a href="#">WTC Risk Management Policy</a>
A Register of Assets	A register of Assets is maintained by the Council's RFO.
Up-to-date insurance policies that mitigate the risk to public money	The Town Council's current insurance policy runs from 1 April 2025 -31 March 2026. It includes Employers Liability, Public Liability, Motor Vehicles, Money, All Risks and Fidelity Guarantee up to the sum of £5m and more. This is attached as <b>Appendix A</b> .
<b>Community</b>	
Evidence of considering the impact of functions and decisions on crime and disorder in the local area	All Council reports include a Crime and Disorder Impact Assessment which highlights and asks Councillors to consider crime and disorder. This report below, highlights the impact but also contains a section on engaging with the local police around anti-social behaviour at The Leys Recreation Ground <a href="#">WTC Community Engagement Report - July 2025</a>  The Council also invites a member of the neighbourhood policing team to attend all Full Council meetings (and Annual Town Meeting) to discuss any relevant issues or concerns. This can be seen in the minutes here (minute no. 570)

	<a href="#">Full Council Minutes- Monday 6th October 2025</a>
<b>Development</b>	
Disciplinary & Grievance procedures	The Council has disciplinary and grievance procedures set out in the Staff Handbook issued to all staff. This is attached as <b>Appendix B</b>
A policy for training and development of staff and councillors	New staff undergo induction training and specific in-house training for their roles. Statutory training modules are in place regarding health & safety and data protection. The Council retains an annual budget for staff training. This is attached as <b>Appendix C</b> New Councillors receive an induction pack, and the Council retains an annual budget for Councillor training and has a designated policy which was adopted on 21 July 2025. This is due for review in 2027 and can be viewed here <a href="#">WTC Councillor Training Policy</a>
A record of all training undertaken by staff and councillors in the last year	All staff training is requested and logged on an internal HR platform, Breathe HR. It is confirmed via 1:1 meetings and/or via submission of a Training Needs Analysis Form. Councillor training can be viewed on the Council's website under each individual Councillor. This can be seen here <a href="#">Link to Councillor Training (GD)</a>
A Clerk who has achieved 12 CPD points in the last year	The Town Clerk has achieved 12 CPD points in the last year.
Signed up to the Civility & Respect Pledge, including adopting a Dignity at Work Policy	The Town Council signed up the Civility & Respect Pledge in October 2022 <a href="https://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/civility-and-respect/">https://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/civility-and-respect/</a>

## Silver Award

To achieve the silver award, the Council must resolve that it has the following items and publishes them online:

<b>Governance</b>	
A Health & Safety Policy	Witney Town Council reviewed and re-adopted a Health & Safety Policy on 29 July 2024. The next review is due in 2026. The Council's H&S Policy Statement is published on the Town Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Health &amp; Safety Policy</a> The Council's full H&S Policy is attached as <b>Appendix D</b>
An Equality Policy	Witney Town Council has an adopted Equality Policy which applies internally and outside the Council. This can be seen here <a href="#">[Link to follow]</a> All Council reports contain an Equality Impact Assessment which can be seen in the report here <a href="#">FC Report 17th February 2025</a>
A Co-option Policy	Witney Town Council reviewed and re-adopted a Co-option Policy on 25 November 2024. The next review is due in November 2026. It is published on the Town Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Co-option Policy</a>
<b>Community</b>	
A Community Engagement Policy involving two-way communication between Council and community	The Council reviewed and adopted a Community Engagement Strategy on 9 June 2025. The next review is due in June 2027. It is published on the Town Council's website here <a href="#">WTC Community Engagement Policy</a>

Councillor Profiles	<p>Councillors have a basic profile on the Council's website which includes their name, photo, contact details, membership of committees, ward and election details, attendance, declarations and links to training, declared hospitality (if any) and register of interests.</p> <p><a href="#">WTC Councillor Profile (JA)</a></p>
A Grant Awarding Policy	<p>The Council reviewed and re-adopted its grant aid policy on 25 March 2024. The next review is due in March 2026. It is published on the Town Council's website here</p> <p><a href="#">WTC Grant Aid Policy</a></p>
Evidence showing how electors contribute to the Annual Town Meeting	<p>The Town Council advertises the Annual Town Meeting every year in the February newsletter which goes to every household. This can be seen for 2025 here</p> <p><a href="#">WTC Spring Newsletter 2025 - Join the Conversation</a></p> <p>In addition, the Council places an advertisement in the local paper 2 weeks before and promotes the meeting by placing posters on noticeboards and on social media.</p> <p>The agenda for the Annual Town Meeting includes wording inviting questions from electors and can be seen here</p> <p><a href="#">Annual Town Meeting Agenda 2025</a></p> <p>Every year, the Council invites grant awardees during the previous 12 months to attend and speak to electors in the foyer of the venue.</p>
An Action Plan and related budget responding to community engagement and setting out a timetable for action and review	<p>The Council adopted a Medium-Term Financial Strategy on 21 July 2025 as a working document. This can be seen here</p> <p><a href="#">WTC Medium Term Financial Strategy</a></p> <p>The above is aligned with the Council's Corporate Strategic plan ..... The plan contains a Council vision and key objectives and can be seen here</p> <p><a href="#">[Link to Plan]</a></p> <p>The document is fed from the work of its committees, in turn led from customer engagement either directly or through an annual resident's survey. The Strategy also links to other Council strategies such as an Open Spaces Strategy, Community Engagement Strategy <a href="#">[expand]</a></p>
Evidence of community engagement, council activities and the promotion of democratic processes in the annual report which is actively shared with the community, online material and regular news bulletins	<p><u>Social Media</u></p> <p>The Town Council engages with residents on activities via Facebook, X, Insta, TikTok and YouTube. These can be accessed by clicking the links at the bottom of the Council's website home page here</p> <p><a href="#">Witney Town Council – Official Site of Witney Town Council</a></p> <p><u>Annual Report</u></p> <p>The Council produces an Annual report for the Annual Town Meeting in March. The report highlights Council activities during the previous 12 months, broken down into work by each Committee. This is published on the Council's website and promoted on social media. The report can be seen here</p> <p><a href="#">WTC Annual Report 2024-25</a></p> <p><u>WTC newsletters</u></p> <p>These are issued quarterly. The first quarter newsletter is delivered to every household and contains the year's budget/precept information and annual residents' satisfaction survey. The other three are issued digitally on the council's</p>

	<p>website and shared on social media. It is also printed and placed in the Council's public hall/café at the Corn Exchange and distributed to the library and care homes. The most recent newsletter can be seen here  <a href="#">WTC Autumn Newsletter 2025</a></p> <p><u>Communications Strategy</u>  The Council has adopted a Communications Strategy to ensure it reaches residents. A new version is currently being finalised but the original version can be seen here  <a href="#">WTC Community Engagement Strategy</a></p> <p><u>Council Meetings</u>  The Council published notice of its committee meetings on its website and social media once the agendas packs have been prepared and intends to live broadcast Council/Committee meetings from January 2026. A website post can be seen here  <a href="#">Agenda for Policy, Governance &amp; Finance Committee – Monday 24th November 2025, 6.00 pm – Witney Town Council</a></p> <p><u>Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey</u>  Every February, the Council conducts an annual satisfaction survey of residents on its services both in paper and online. Previous survey results can be seen on this page  <a href="#">Consultations – Witney Town Council</a>  The results of the survey are compiled by Committee and presented to the Council with input from officers which can be seen here  <a href="#">H401 Halls, Cemeteries &amp; Allotments 7th July 2025</a>  Many comments fall under the remit of the principal Councils. These are categorised and sent to the CEOs of the organisations so we are lobbying on behalf of residents. A response from Oxfordshire County Council in response in 2025 can be seen here  <a href="#">Minute no. 594 Full Council 6th October 2025</a></p>
<p>Evidence of helping the community plan for its future</p>	<p><u>Developer Contributions</u>  The Council regularly comments on large developments within and on the periphery of the town and requests Section 106 contributions. An example of this can be seen here  <a href="#">WODC Planning Response to 25_02184_FUL.pdf</a></p> <p><u>Principal Authority Engagement</u>  The Town Council also constructively engages with its principal authorities Oxfordshire County (OCC) &amp; West Oxfordshire District Councils (WODC) on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Plan 2041/43 Comments (WODC)  <a href="#">Minute no. P673 Planning &amp; Development 18th November 2025</a></li> <li>• Road Infrastructure Projects/consultations (OCC)  <a href="#">Minute no. P478 Planning &amp; Development 26th August 2025</a></li> <li>• Witney High Street Renovation Project  <a href="#">Minute no. 581 Full Council 14th October 2024</a></li> </ul> <p>The Council considers environmental impact several ways.</p> <p><u>Climate &amp; Biodiversity Committee</u>  The Council has a designated Climate &amp; Biodiversity Committee which was created in May 2025. The terms of reference for the Committee can be seen here</p>

	<p><a href="#"><u>Climate &amp; Biodiversity - Terms of Reference</u></a></p> <p><u>Compliance &amp; Environment Officer</u> The Council employs a Compliance &amp; Environment Officer whose role is to help deliver the Council's climate emergency declaration of 2019 and achieve carbon neutrality across the Council's Estate by 2028.</p> <p>In addition, the Council hosted an Eco Fair with representatives from several local stakeholders to show residents how they may reduce their carbon consumption and highlight that the Council has a thermal imaging camera available for loan free of charge to residents</p> <p><u>Committee Reports</u> All Committee reports contain an impact assessment on the environment which obligates officers and Councillors to consider how the matter before them. This can be seen here <a href="#"><u>Climate &amp; Biodiversity Report 9th September 2025</u></a></p> <p><u>Planning &amp; Development Committee</u> The Planning &amp; Development Committee consider environmental issues when consulted on all planning applications within the parish. The terms of reference (g and h) can be seen here <a href="#"><u>Planning &amp; Development - Terms of Reference</u></a></p> <p><u>Stakeholders &amp; Local Groups</u> The Council also works with several stakeholder groups and volunteers, the latter on planting schemes – community orchard planting, hedgerow planting, tiny forest monitoring.</p> <p>The Council holds litter picking equipment which is available for use by groups free of charge.</p> <p>In addition, the Council has also lobbied the Environment Agency on flooding issues and works with Witney Flood Group in helping to avoid and prepare for flooding in the town.</p> <p>In addition, the Council passed a motion against Thames Water as a competent sewerage provider due to the amount of pollution in the local river and concerns by residents. <a href="#"><u>Minute no. 345 - Full Council 17th June 2024</u></a></p>
Evidence of encouraging public engagement in local democracy	<p><u>Youth council</u> The Town Council re-established a Youth Council in 2024 as a way of hearing the views of young people and to encourage interest in local democracy. The details of the YC can be found here <a href="#"><u>Witney Youth Council – Witney Town Council</u></a></p> <p><u>Promotion on Standing as a Councillor</u> The Committee Clerk authored an article for the Spring 2025 Newsletter about the benefits of becoming a local Councillor (as part of attaining his CiLCA). This newsletter was delivered to each household and the article on page 4 can be viewed here <a href="#"><u>WTC Spring Newsletter 2025</u></a></p> <p><u>Public Participation</u> The Town Council welcomes residents to participate in Council meetings and indicates this in text on all Committee agendas under 'Admission to Meetings' which can be seen here</p>

	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a> And on the main page of the Council's meetings webpage here <a href="#">Browse Meetings</a> The Council's Standing Order 25 also makes provision for public participation.
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The Council must also resolve that it has:

<b>Governance</b>	
A Scheme of Delegation	The Council's scheme of delegation was reviewed and re-adopted on 23 June 2025 and can be seen here <a href="#">WTC Scheme of Delegation</a> This will be reviewed again in 2027.
<b>Community</b>	
At least two thirds of its councillors who stood for election, or significant evidence of the Council advertising vacancies	Witney Town Council has seventeen ward Councillor positions. Sixteen WTC Councillors were elected in May 2023. A further Councillor was elected in November 2024.
Evidence of customer service in how the Council handles correspondence with the public	Witney Town Council adopted Customer Service Standards which outline the expectations of customers on 3 February 2025 which can be seen here <a href="#">WTC Customer Service Standards</a>  The Council's complaints policy also outlines expectations in relation to complaints. Complaints are anonymised, summarised and presented to the Council six-monthly for transparency.
<b>Development</b>	
A qualified Clerk	The Town Clerk & CEO Sharon Groth is qualified to the following level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIPD Level 5 Associate Diploma in People Management</li> <li>• CMI Level 7 Certificate Senior Leadership Programme in Strategic Management</li> <li>• CMI Level 5 Certificate in Management &amp; Leadership</li> <li>• IOSH Managing Safely</li> <li>• Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy: from University of Gloucestershire - Cheltenham (Local Policy (now Community Governance))</li> <li>• CiLCA Section L07 Law – The General Power of Competence (GPC) (England)</li> <li>• NVQ 2, 3 &amp; 4 in Accounting (Association of Accounting Technicians - AAT)</li> </ul> Post nominals & Affiliations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FCMI – Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute CMI</li> <li>• FSLCC - Fellow of the Society of Local Council Clerks</li> <li>• Assoc.CIPD – Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development</li> <li>• MAAT – Member of the Association of Accounting Technicians [membership lapsed]</li> </ul>
A formal appraisal process for all staff	The Council has a formal appraisal process as seen in the staff handbook. This is attached as <b>Appendix C</b>

The deadline for the next round of applications is 5 January 2026.



## **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – accreditation affirms the Council's commitment to ensuring equality in Council services.
- b) Biodiversity – accreditation affirms the Council's commitment to ensuring consideration of biodiversity in providing Council services.
- c) Crime & Disorder – accreditation affirms the Council's commitment to ensuring consideration of crime and disorder Council services.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct impact from the contents of this report.

## **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Attaining the NALC award(s) demonstrates the Council's compliance with statutory governance and transparency requirements. It provides a structured framework to initiate and plan the initial stages of improvement, fostering increased performance and confidence. Establishing policies for continuous development becomes a key outcome, aiding the Council in pursuit of excellence.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

There is no direct positive change from the contents of this report, but the accreditation of the awards enshrines community engagement and will ensure services are delivered which will improve the lives of residents.

## **Financial implications**

- The cost of applying for registration is £50
- The Silver Award accreditation fee for the Local Council Award Scheme is £80.00 (reduced as the bronze award was received in the last 12 months).
- The cost can be funded from budget line 4024/702 – Democratic Representation & Management Subscriptions.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

- That, the Council confirms that it has the required documents, information and conditions are in place (whether published or not) for both the bronze and Silver Local Council Award

Scheme Award, and that these are published on the Council's website, where applicable and,

- That, therefore, as it meets all the criteria, it resolves to apply for the Silver Award.