

Burnham Parish Council has been granted Quality Council status by the National Association of Local Councils.

The Quality Parish and Town Council scheme was launched in June 2003, following the publication of the governments Rural White Paper, 2000. The scheme was designed to provide a benchmark minimum standards for parish and town councils and enable them to better represent the communities they serve. The scheme also aims to give enhance relationships between local councils, principal authorities and voluntary sector organisations.

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

- . Electoral Mandate
- . Qualifications of the Clerk
- . Council Meetings
- . Communications
- . Annual Report
- . Accounts and
- . Code of Conduct

The tests exceed the statutory duties of parish and town councils and represent the standards that an efficient, well run parish council should achieve. Further details of the Test Criteria can be found in the Guidance '[The Quality Scheme Explained](#)'.

Q: Is there a pass mark that councils need to achieve to become a Quality Council?

A: A council must pass each one of the tests to become a Quality council.

If a council does not meet the criteria of one of the tests it will fail to become a Quality council.

Q: What are the aims of the scheme?

A: The three main aims are:

1. To provide a benchmark of standards for parish and town councils;
2. Enable them to work more closely with partners in the delivery of services and
3. Enable them to more effectively represent their communities.

Q: Where does the concept of Quality Parish Council come from?

A: The Rural White Paper 'Our Countryside: The Future, a Fair Deal for Rural England, published in November 2000, recognised the important role of the first tier of local government and proposed a number of initiatives designed to enhance the role of parish and town councils. Subsequently, in June 2003 the Quality Town and Parish Council Scheme was launched.

Q: What are the main benefits a council would receive in attaining Quality status?

A: Quality councils will bring considerable benefits to the parish or town, principal authority and the community it represents. Quality councils will be in a better position to take on additional services and areas of responsibility from their principal authorities and can demonstrate to local communities that minimum standards have been met.

Q: Will the role of Quality Parish Council increase in the future?

A: The acquisition of Quality Status offers the way for a greater partnership working with the District and County Councils as expressed in the New Deal for Buckinghamshire. A

model for the working relationship between Buckinghamshire County and District Councils and Town and Parish Councils.

Q: Will the role of Quality Parish and Town Council increase in the future?

A: The acquisition of Quality Status offers the way for a greater partnership working with the District and County Councils as expressed in the New Deal for Buckinghamshire.

At the present time Parish Councils can only undertake work where they have a specific legal power. Under new government legislation, the Local Government Act 2000, additional powers and responsibilities can be conferred on Quality councils to undertake anything which they consider is likely to achieve any one or more of the following objects:

- (a) the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area,
- (b) the promotion or improvement of the social well-being of their area, and
- (c) the promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area.

This is known as the power of well-being.



Chairman of Burnham Parish Council, Councillor Shorne Tilbey, receiving the award of Quality Council status on behalf of the Council from Mr Richard Pushman.