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Publications  
**Star Council  
Awards 2018:  
Winners Brochure**

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# WELCOME

This year we have had a record number of entries and the judging panel was hugely impressed by the quality of work done by local (parish and town) councils across the country. The standard of entries is a testament to the dedication to improvement, community leadership and service delivery.

The Star Council Awards 2018 winners have proven local councils are becoming increasingly vibrant, dynamic and effective, leading to improved service provision. Learning from the work of others is one of the main means by which local councils can improve their performance to support their communities. Along with the awards, Council Spotlight, Local Council Award Scheme and 150 Points of Light, showcase how this can be done.

Many things unite the winners of the award. Effectiveness, creativity, insight and intelligence, as one would expect, but just as importantly the ability to think outside the box and work in partnerships to make a special difference.

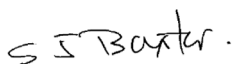
This year's awards were community focused. Many entries demonstrated that local councils

are engaging with communities and making a positive impact on them. By working with local partners and the community, local councils are delivering vital services that communities need.

It once again shows why local councils are the backbone of our democracy and at the heart of many communities.

We would like to thank our judging panel; Alison Lyon, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Victoria Moloney, County Councils Network (CCN), Rob Smith, Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and Rachel Wall, Local Government Research Unit at De Montfort University. Also, we would like to thank our partner and award sponsor BHIB Councils Insurance, as well as all our individual award sponsors.

Congratulations to all the winners. There are many great reasons to be optimistic about the future of local councils.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. S. Baxter'.



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# MESSAGE FROM BHIB COUNCILS INSURANCE

A warm welcome from BHIB Councils Insurance to all attendees, entrants and finalists to the Star Council Awards 2018.

A little over a year ago, we were presented with the opportunity to partner with NALC and to work much closer with local councils. Since then, our partnership has enabled us to provide insurance and risk management solutions to local councils at a time where having the right protection in place has never been more important.

Over the past year, we have taken the time to develop our relationship with NALC and further establish and develop strong relationships with many local councils and county associations.

We are confident that we can not only offer the right advice and protection to NALC's members, but also open doors to various opportunities, such as the Aviva Community Fund.

Our partnership with NALC has also led us straight to you, not only to exhibit our services at the Annual Conference but to host workshops around hot topics and to discuss the issues we all deeply care about. It has also allowed us to join in and sponsor the very important awards.

The awards provide well-deserved recognition for the winners and the entrants. They are a chance for local councils across the country to showcase the extraordinary work you all continue to do, and this is a great opportunity to celebrate these successes.

We are proud to work with NALC and look forward to building stronger relationships with you all as we move forward together. So, please enjoy the evening and the rest of the conference. My team and I will be around and look forward to celebrating with everyone.

## And the winner is...

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**CLERK OF THE YEAR**

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## **WINNER: JAYNE COOPER, GNOSALL PARISH COUNCIL, STAFFORDSHIRE**

Ms Cooper has a wealth of knowledge and experience. She is CiLCA qualified and encourages all councillors to take up relevant training to develop new skills which devolution of services demands.

Gnosall Parish Council achieves a vast amount on a small precept. Through the leadership of Ms Cooper, the council was able to save the local youth club when the principal authority withdrew funding, and support the establishment of a community-run library – all while managing many other projects and gaining a Quality Gold Award in the Local Council Award Scheme.

Last year, vandals destroyed a significant portion of the boardwalk that crosses the

ecological reserve and joins both parts of the village together. Shortly after learning of the incident, Ms Cooper called for support and teams of volunteers arrived to clear debris, preserving as much as they could and keeping the ecological damage to a minimum. Ms Cooper was there leading from the front, motivating volunteers, dealing with the police, public and press.

The panel was impressed by the respect that Ms Cooper carries with her colleagues and the interest that they have in learning from her. Outside of the council, she also engages with the local community and goes above and beyond when called upon. The panel felt that this was a really positive nomination.

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## **RUNNER UP: DENA LUDFORD, THAXTED PARISH COUNCIL, ESSEX**

Ms Ludford joined Thaxted Parish Council during a challenging period and has since turned the council around so that it has now regained its focus and began its regeneration.

She has consistently led by example with training, always

looking for ways to improve her role as clerk. Additionally, she has encouraged councillors to embark on their own training courses, which has helped the council become more efficient and effective.

As well as improving councillors' skills, Ms Ludford has also supported councillors through difficult times. For example, she helped a councillor who was

struggling with mental health problems, taking the necessary steps to help them get their life back on track.

The panel could see that she is respected by councillors and the chair, who elected her for

this award. She goes above-and-beyond to support and improve the councillors at Thaxted Parish Council. The work she has done is an excellent example of how the relationship between clerk and councillor should be.

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**RUNNER UP: REBECCA HILL,  
SETTLE TOWN COUNCIL,  
YORKSHIRE**


Settle has a local council that punches above its weight regarding its work, and is trusted by the community. In large part, this is due to the sterling work of the clerk, Rebecca Hill. Ms Hill joined the council as clerk five years ago, and since then has had a positive effect on the council and the town.

She has modernised council procedures, including digitising council paperwork and increasing the use of social media to engage with the community, resulting in an efficient council that delivers excellent outcomes for its parishioners.

Her willingness to work flexible hours means community project meetings are organised at times that are convenient to all, and this has been particularly useful for the Skate Park working group meetings. In addition to this, Ms Hill acts as clerk to the Town Team (a group of town and district councillors and business owners who are developing plans for major projects in the town) and to the Castlebergh Crag project, which is a plan to develop the large limestone crag that overlooks the town.

The panel was impressed by Ms Hill's commitment, saying she is open to new opportunities and is willing to go the extra mile if it means the community in Settle will benefit.



A vibrant garden scene featuring a variety of plants. In the foreground, there are dense clusters of blue flowers, possibly forget-me-nots, and a central bush with bright orange and yellow foliage. The background is filled with tall trees, including a prominent yellow weeping tree on the left, and other flowering shrubs in shades of pink and red. The overall atmosphere is bright and verdant.

“The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before.”

– *Vita Sackville-West*  
(1892 - 1962)

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# COUNTY ASSOCIATION PROJECT OF THE YEAR

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## **WINNER: WEST SUSSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

It has been well documented that the country is facing NHS and local authority social care funding cuts, GP shortages, an ageing population and social isolation.

The West Sussex Association of Local Councils (WSALC) recognised this and commissioned an innovative report to find out what local councils in the area were doing to support the health and well-being of their communities and explored opportunities for further involvement in this area.

WSALC has continued partnership-working with local bodies and the voluntary sector and encouraged its local councils to engage with their communities around health and well-being.

Over the last 18 months, WSALC has been encouraging local councils across the three counties to run Dementia Friends

information sessions and asked them to join its Dementia Action Alliance.

A follow-up survey was sent to all 140 local councils in 2018 to establish the value of the work. Findings showed that a third of respondents took action on health and well-being following the publication of the WSALC report, and a quarter made an allocation in their budgets for health and well-being work in 2018/19.

The panel was pleased to see WSALC working with other organisations to push the health and well-being agenda and help communities be aware of the social challenges the county faces. By raising awareness, all tiers of local government are now taking an active role and working with voluntary organisations to help care for the most vulnerable in society.

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## **RUNNER UP: ESSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

The Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) administered a Local Service Fund on behalf of Essex County Council (ECC). The fund seeks to contribute to

local life in Essex and looks at how local communities can make decisions on their priorities. After consultation with local councils, EALC identified there was a gap in the funding system where predominantly funds only paid for capital expenditure. Both local councils and voluntary

organisations have a shortfall in funding for staff. The fund was developed to bridge the gap and make projects viable over a three-year period, giving organisations time to increase their income through the precept or by other means.

The funding – £15,000 over three years or a one-off grant of up to £10,000 – is unique in that it is strictly for new innovative projects. So far, it has provided 34 grants

totalling £250,000 for community projects or services.

The panel was pleased to see EALC working in partnership to enable local councils to take on work in their communities that previously they would not have been able to do. It is fantastic to see the funding has allowed local councils to increase their precept to take over the services they have prioritised.

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## **RUNNER UP: WARWICKSHIRE AND WEST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS**

Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC) has been working with principal authorities within its area to improve relations between them and the local council sector.

To launch this work, WALC adopted a Local Councils Charter that was signed by all four principal authorities. The document contained a commitment from each authority to appoint a 'parish champion'. Each principal authority has agreed to a common role and how the county association can triage issues between local councils and the principal authority to make the role effective.

WALC has also focused on training in Stratford upon Avon to build the relationships between local councils and principal authorities.

WALC has held a three-tier training session for councillors to help them communicate better on planning and understand each tier's role in more detail. This was met with positive feedback and is something WALC wants to do again. The ambition for WALC is to achieve the same level of engagement with the other district and borough councils.

The panel was impressed with the work WALC has been doing to increase the awareness of the sector with different tiers of local government. Often local councils are overlooked by principal authorities, but WALC has ensured that its councils are considered and consulted.



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**YOUNG COUNCILLOR OF THE YEAR**  
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## **WINNER: CLLR MELISSA BOYDEN, ASFORDBY PARISH COUNCIL, LEICESTERSHIRE**

At the age of 19, Cllr Boyden suffered a serious illness which left her learning how to walk again. Following the illness, she decided she wanted to make a positive change to her community and saw joining a local council as a way to do that. With this, Cllr Boyden joined Asfordby Parish Council and immediately brought new ideas and a reinvigorated energy to the council. She has organised many community events which brought the communities of Asfordby together.

One of the most significant events Cllr Boyden led on was the Summer Fete for Asfordby. Before Cllr Boyden's arrival, the parish council had been trying to get the Summer Fete organised for years and saw it as an event that could really bring the community together. Cllr Boyden grabbed

the opportunity to run the event, planning everything from engaging with the local community, consulting with local businesses and charities and raising funding. The event was a huge success and one of the biggest the council had ever had with over 500 residents attending. Through her success, this year, at the age of 22, Cllr Boyden was elected as deputy chairman.

The panel expressed how inspirational they found Cllr Boyden. Going from having suffered a serious illness to seeing an opportunity to get involved in the local community. The judges commented that she has shown clear initiative since joining the council and has helped it to achieve a goal that it has had for some years.

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## **RUNNER UP: CLLR GREGAH ROUGHEAD, BERWICK-UPON-TWEED TOWN COUNCIL, NORTHUMBERLAND**

Despite his young age, Cllr Roughead has been a substantial political figure in Berwick-upon-Tweed for some years now, having served as deputy mayor and mayor, and, since 2017, as the county councillor for one of the

divisions that makes up the town. During his time as mayor, Cllr Roughead has driven a number of projects for the council including a regeneration commission which brought together the county council, town council and the local NHS to develop plans for a new hospital and leisure complex.

He has also been instrumental in encouraging young people to

stand for election to the town council with more young people coming forward year-on-year.

The panel was impressed with Cllr Roughead's ability to bring together public bodies to work in partnership on something that

brings great health and well-being benefits to the community.

They said it was great to see Cllr Roughead inspiring the next generation to get involved with the town council.

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**RUNNER UP: CLLR SAM KENWARD, BECCLES TOWN COUNCIL, SUFFOLK**

Cllr Kenward began his community involvement from an early age. He was chair of his school Youth Council and a young member of Youth Parliament before joining Beccles Town Council at the age of 19 in 2015. He is the youngest councillor to have been elected to Beccles Town Council.

On his appointment to the council, Cllr Kenward introduced the idea of a youth champion role on the council. He has been appointed to this role on many occasions and

has engaged with young people to make sure they have a voice in the community.

He has held annual 'parliament weeks' at the local high school, in which he managed to encourage university students to get involved in a debate on democracy with school pupils.

He was successful in applying for a grant to produce a local youth information magazine with the aim of engaging young people in democracy and local decision making.



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**COUNCILLOR OF THE YEAR**

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## **WINNER: CLLR NICK PENNY, COLEFORD TOWN COUNCIL, GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

Cllr Penny has been the driving force behind Coleford Town Council's goal to regenerate the town by providing a high-quality green leisure park close to the town centre. The council took this ambitious project when it bought nine acres of open space from the principal authority five years ago.

The council had major plans to transform the space into a place that incorporated activities for all ages. Cllr Penny helped put together the vision which includes a skate park, a BMX bike track, a multi-games area, an amphitheatre with a significant performance area for schools and local groups to hold outdoor performances.

The council worked in partnership with local skate and bike enthusiasts to form a Friends of Coleford Skate Park group which has taken on the duty of looking after the park. Cllr Penny got young people involved in designing the park to help them feel involved in something positive and to give them a sense of civic pride.

The panel was inspired by Cllr Penny and the council's commitment to engage with young people in the community. The panel believes the leisure park will be a lasting legacy for the community and is something the town's young people will always remember being a part of.

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## **RUNNER UP: CLLR JON HALE, ODIHAM PARISH COUNCIL, HAMPSHIRE**

Cllr Hale became chairman of the council in May 2014 and has continued in this role through a challenging period for Odiham Parish Council. Despite the challenges, Cllr Hale also became chair of the community committee on the council, helping him engage with residents and develop an understanding of their needs. As chair, Cllr Hale has led the committee to partner with various

organisations to arrange events for the community, including Halloween events, celebrations for the Queen's birthday and RAF 100. Creating an award to recognise community champions in Odiham, is also another of Cllr Hale's notable achievements, along with bringing in £10,000 from Tesco's Bags of Help fund to pay for signage and information boards along the area's canal.

Cllr Hale's commitment to his residents, his positive attitude and the work he has put in to bring

the communities together were all attributes the panel wanted to highlight.

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**CLLR JUDY WESTACOTT, TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL, DEVON**

Cllr Westacott has served her community for over 30 years in a variety of roles with community groups, as a district councillor and as a Totnes town councillor. For her dedicated service to the community, she was awarded an MBE in 2008.

She was elected mayor in 1992, 2002, 2003, 2011 and is currently serving her fifth term this year.

As the most senior councillor, she provides sensible advice and supports the staff, team and her council to make a positive difference to the community.

The panel was impressed by Cllr Westacott's ability to work with many different groups to truly understand her community's needs. It is evident that her experience is invaluable on the council and something that will be sorely missed when she steps down as a councillor next year.



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**COUNCIL OF THE YEAR**

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## **WINNER: NORTHWICH TOWN COUNCIL, CHESHIRE**

Northwich Town Council has worked hard to regenerate its town and make its community proud of where they live. Through working in partnerships with its principal authority and local community groups, it has led the planning and regeneration of the town and has held events throughout the year.

Thanks to the town council, Northwich is now buzzing with free activities held in the parks, open spaces and town centre, including a community fun weekend, music festivals, family fun days and park-runs to name a few. The council has also worked hard to improve the public realm of the high street

to encourage more people to visit. It is now a street that is thriving with more people visiting shops and local businesses than ever before, leading to a boom in the local economy.

The panel was inspired by how Northwich Town Council focused on its high street offer, which has been a challenge to many towns across the country. The judges commented on the way the council has managed to develop its artisan and cultural offer alongside its economic offer and has placed itself on a sustainable footing for the future. It is clearly a place people love to visit.

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## **RUNNER UP: WATCHET TOWN COUNCIL, SOMERSET**

Watchet Town Council has worked hard to build relationships with stakeholders from across its community.

It has consistently maintained strong partnerships with principal authorities, neighbouring local councils and community groups to deliver efficient services for its community, while building new partnerships with local businesses, Community Interest Companies (CICs) and social enterprises to help understand their needs and create jobs in the area.

The council has appointed councillors to be representatives on 20 local community groups ensure it is consistently representing the views of the community. Through these relationships, the council has developed an in-depth understanding of what the community wants it to deliver and has enabled it to take on services to benefit the community.

The panel was impressed to see Watchet Town Council performing in every single aspect of the judging criteria, the way the council worked with the assets it has and how it is working with coastal communities and CICs to save existing assets and develop new ones.



## **RUNNER UP: COGENHOE AND WHISTON PARISH COUNCIL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**

Northamptonshire has had well-publicised challenges with funding over the past few months. With these challenges came cuts to the single bus service that residents from seven villages relied on to travel to work, shops, schools and hospitals in Northampton.

Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council had just three months to save the bus service and worked quickly, in partnership with other local organisations, to learn what would be needed to set up a replacement service. After calculating the costs, the council

set up a replacement not-for-profit bus service. The service is now used daily by hundreds of residents and has proven to be a lifeline to communities. The council is now considering expanding the service and looking to work in partnership with neighbouring local councils to ensure that happens.

The judging panel was impressed with how the council responded promptly to keep a free bus service for its residents, bringing in external funding to maintain social mobility for its elderly residents. The panel also noted that the bus service has continued to meet its financial targets.





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