Noak Bridge Parish Council

Meeting of: Noak Bridge Parish Council – Annual Parish Council Meeting

Date: Wednesday 28th May 2025

Time: 7.00pm

Place: Noak Bridge Village Hall, Coppice Lane, Noak Bridge

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

Councillors to be present: M. Cottrell (Chairman), P. Daft (Vice-Chairman) C. Bateman, J. Dowton, L. Gilliam, P. Hawkins and T. Sargent

L Townend
Parish Clerk

23rd May 2025

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman

To elect the Chairman to serve for the 2025/26 civic year.

2. Declaration of Acceptance of Office

To receive the Chairman's statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3. Apologies for Absence

To receive, consider and approve any apologies for absence.

4. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded that they are required to disclose the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Registerable Interests and Non-Registerable

Interests relating to items of business on the agenda having regard to paragraph 9 and Appendix B of the Code of Conduct for Members. Members are reminded that they are also required to disclose any such interests as soon as they become aware should the need arise throughout the meeting.

5. Minutes

To receive, approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting Parish Council meeting held on the 26th March 2025, Minutes 33/2025 to 47/2025 inclusive (attached).

6. Appointment of Vice Chairman

To elect a Vice-Chairman to serve for the 2025/26 civic year.

7. Public Participation Session

With respect to items on the Agenda and other matters of mutual interest.

8. Borough and County Councillor Reports

To receive update from District and Borough Councillors.

9. Update from Councillors from the ABLC

To receive an update from Cllr Cottrell.

10. Neighbourhood Plan Update

To receive an update from Cllr Sargent.

11. Community Projects

11.1 Noak Bridge Community Association Heating Project – Grant Administration

To receive an update on the Parish Council's grant to the Noak Bridge Community Association for the heating project and to consider how the Council administers grants going forward, including the possible adoption of a formal grant policy.

12. Banking and Finance

12.1 Bank Accounts

To confirm the Council will continue to bank with Metro Bank, Santander and Unity Trust Bank for the coming year.

12.2 Confirmation of Signatories to the Bank Accounts:

To confirm any changes to the current signatories on the Council's accounts:

Metro Bank – Cllrs Paul Daft and Mark Cottrell
Santander - Cllr Terri Sargent
Unity Trust Bank – Cllrs Cris Bateman, Jacqui Dowton and Lynn Gilliam

12.3 Financial Risk Assessment

To adopt the Parish Council's Financial Risk Assessment for 2025/26. Attached.

12.4 Fixed Asset Register

To review the Fixed Asset Register for 2025/26. Attached.

12.5 Statement of Internal Control

To review the Statement of Internal Control for 2025/26. Attached.

12.6 Deposits Received

To note deposits received into the Council's accounts:

- VAT reclaim for 2024/25 of £3,491.06 was deposited into the Santander Current Account on the 25th April 2025.
- An interest payment of £1,060.97 was deposited into the Santander Business Savings Account on the 27th April 2025.
- An interest payment of £59.53 on the 30th April 2025.
- The half year precept of £20,638.27 was deposited into the Santander Current Account on the 1st April 2025.

12.7 Regular Payments

To approve a list of regular payments and Direct Debits which will be made each month outside of meeting schedules, if required in accordance with Financial Regulation 6.6. List attached.

12.8 Accounts for Payment

To agree the accounts for payment for the period 1st April and 31st May 2025. Payment schedules attached.

12.9 Bank Reconciliation

To receive and note the bank reconciliation to the 1st April 2025. Attached.

12.10 Budget Comparison

To receive and note the budget comparison to the 30th April 2025. Attached.

12.11 Unity Trust Term Deposit

To consider the amount of funds to deposit in the Unity Trust Term Deposit Account. Report attached.

13. Internal Auditor for the 2025/26 Financial Year

To appoint an internal auditor for 2025/26 financial year. Report attached.

14. Parish Council Insurance

To consider and agree the Parish Council's Insurance Provider for the year 2025/26. Report attached.

15. Memberships and Subscriptions

To review and confirm the Council's memberships and subscriptions for 2025/26. List attached.

16. Annual Return for the Year Ending 2024/25

16.1 Internal Audit Report 2024/25

16.1.1 To receive and approve the Annual Internal Audit Reports for 2024/25. Audit reports attached.

16.1.2 To consider the internal auditor's recommendations and agree on the actions required to address them. Proposed action plan attached.

16.2 Section 1 Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the Year Ended 31st March 2025.

To receive and approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2025 and to authorise the Chairman and Clerk to sign the Annual Governance Statement. Attached.

16.3 Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the Year Ended 31st March 2025.

To receive and approve Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the year ended 31st March 2025, and to authorise the Chairman to sign the Accounting Statements. Attached.

16.4 Dates of the Period of Public Rights and Publication of Annual Return

The period of public rights will commence on Tuesday 3rd June 2025 and end on Monday the 14th July 2025. Copy attached.

17. Policies and Procedures

17.1 Standing Orders

To review and adopt the Standing Orders, following minor amendments to Standing Orders 14 and 18. Sent separately.

17.2 Financial Regulations

To review and adopt Financial Regulations following amendments to Financial Regulations 5.4, 5.7 and 5.11. Sent separately.

17.3 Policy and Procedure Review

To review the following policies and procedures without amendment:

a. Application Form for Grants
b. CCTV Code of Practice
c. CCTV Data Impact Assessment
d. CCTV Policy
e. CCTV Process for Footage

f. Code of Conduct
g. Complaints Procedure
h. Data Protection Policy
i. Data Retention Policy
j. Disciplinary Policy
k. Equality and Diversity Policy
l. Freedom of Information Policy
m. Health and Safety Policy
n. Press Policy
o. Publication Policy
p. Sickness and Absence Policy
q. Social Media Policy
r. Virement Policy

17.4 Review the Terms of Reference for the Following Committees:

a. Personnel Committee
b. Neighbourhood Plan Committee

17.5 To Appoint Members to Serve on Committees and Outside Bodies:

a. Personnel Committee
b. Neighbourhood Plan Committee
c. ABLC
d. LCLG

17.6 Councillor Roles and Responsibilities

To agree Members' roles and responsibilities for the year 2025/26.

17.7 Register of Member's interests

Councillors are respectfully reminded to always keep their register of interests and memberships up to date with Basildon Borough Council.

18. Planning

18.1 To consider planning applications detailed below and any planning applications published by Basildon Borough Council between the circulation of this agenda and the meeting.

18.1.1 **25/00451/FULL** Replacement of all UPVC windows, front, back and side doors with new composite units. Proposal also includes removal of a section of existing fence and reinstatement of a gate at the rear of the property to allow vehicular access to the garage. Planning application can be viewed here. 33 Durban Lane.

18.1.2 **25/00560/FULL** Renewal of planning permission CC/BAS/87/10 for the existing temporary classroom. Noak Bridge Primary School, Coppice Lane.

18.2 To note planning decisions made by Basildon Borough Council

18.2.1 **25/00272/TPOBAS** 2 Metre reduction on the oak tree. 5 Handleys Chase. **Application Permitted**.

18.2.2 **25/00311/S211** various tree works. 1-73 Kenilworth Place, Noak Bridge. **Closed**.

18.3 Delegated Authority to Respond to Planning Applications

To grant the Clerk delegated authority to respond to planning applications, received outside the timescale of meetings and following email consultation with Councillors (if an additional meeting is not deemed necessary). Report attached.

19. VAT Charged for Projects

That the Parish Council consider registering with HMRC for a section 33 application.

20. Correspondence

To note correspondence received.

21. Date of Next Meeting

To confirm the date of the next Parish Council meeting.

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Minutes

Held at Noak Bridge Village Hall, Coppice Lane, Noak Bridge SS15 4JS on

Wednesday the 26th March 2025 @ 7.00pm

Present

Chairman:	Cllr Mark Cottrell
Councillors:	Cllr Cristopher Bateman, Cllr Jacqui Dowton, Cllr Lynn Gilliam, Cllr Peter Hawkins and Cllr Terri Sargent,
In attendance:	Cllr Malcolm Buckley (Essex County Councillor), Cllr Tony Ball (Essex County Councillor), Cllr Alex Myers (Borough Councillor), Lynda Townend (Clerk) and 2 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

33/2025 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Paul Daft and Stuart Allen.

Resolved: the apologies were noted.

34/2025 Declarations of Interest

To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other pecuniary interests or nonpecuniary interests by Members relating to any agenda items.

Resolved: No declarations of interest were received from Councillors.

35/2025 Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on the 26th February covering Minutes 14/2025 to 32/2025 inclusive.

It was noted that the incorrect day of the week was printed in the minutes; 'Friday' was amended to 'Wednesday'.

Additionally, under Item 30, the location was recorded in the minutes as Hall Street, but this should read Bridge Street.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2025 be amended as noted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

36/2025 Public Participation Session

A member of the public advised roadway improvements are continuing on Coppice Lane.

Cllr Peter Hawkins joined the meeting at 19.19.

A member of the public complimented the council on its Facebook page.

A member of the public advised the Noak Bridge Litter Pickers will be happy to help clear any litter left after the VE Day Celebration being held on Thursday the 8th May 2025.

The Council thanked the group for their support.

37/2025 Borough and County Councillor Reports

Cllr Malcolm Buckley provided the council with an update on County matters including:

- The Government is considering changes that may limit the public's right to object to planning applications in a bid to streamline the planning process. Confirmation of how this will affect residents is still to be confirmed.
- Locality funding will be extended into 2025/26. Cllrs Ball and Buckley will merge their allocations, creating a £20,000 fund focused on levelling up and environmental projects. Councillors are invited to submit suggestions to the County Councillors who will confirm if they meet the criteria.
- Pothole repair funding remains separate from locality funding.
- A targeted fund is available for re-painting worn lines on pelican crossings.
- Wickford Town Council has appointed a part-time handyman, which may present an opportunity for the Parish Council to purchase a set number of hours per month for local maintenance tasks.

Cllr Alex Myers provided the council with an update from Basildon Borough Council including:

- He participated in the Noak Bridge Litter Pickers' Big Spring Clean, where Basildon Borough Council collected 26 bags of rubbish.

- The Crunch, a mobile waste collection service, will be back on Saturday at Crays Hill.
- Basildon Borough Council is funding wooden edging around Coppice Lane pond and plans to install three additional dog bins in nearby locations. Cllr Gilliam reported a deteriorating dog bin, and Cllr Meyers asked her to send him the details.
- BBC is funding the installation of a notice board for the Friends of Noak Bridge.
- Area Committee funding will be the only funding available to parish councils for community-led projects.

Cllr Sargent provided the council with an update from Basildon Borough Council including:

- Concerns were raised regarding changes to parking charges and Basildon Borough Council's assertion that Parish Councils could contribute financially.
- A Council meeting was held last week, and another meeting will take place on 1st April to discuss changing the electoral cycle from every three years to every four years. A consultation was conducted, but it was poorly publicised, resulting in only 42 responses. Cllr Sargent expressed concerns, stating that this change undermines democratic rights.
- A new consultation paper has been published regarding a proposal to request the Secretary of State to cancel elections in 2026 and 2027 due to anticipated changes from the devolution process.
- Cllr Ball advised that the Secretary of State can only cancel elections one year at a time, meaning no decision has yet been made regarding 2027.

38/2025 Neighbourhood Plan Update

Cllr Sargent confirmed that the Council had agreed to fund its response to the Wash Road outline planning application from the Neighbourhood Plan budget. The Council appointed Bluestone to prepare the objection response, which can be viewed at the end of these minutes. The objection was uploaded to Basildon Borough Council's planning portal.

Cllr Sargent is liaising with Basildon Borough Council and Bluestone Planning Consultants to appoint an independent examiner. She hopes the Neighbourhood Plan will be finalised before the Benson Farm application is submitted.

Cllr Sargent also noted that the consultation remains open for submissions and queried what would happen if response numbers were low. The consultant confirmed that this would not be an issue, as the referendum is the key stage in the process.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

39/2025 Local Council Liaison Meeting

Cllrs Hawkins and Sargent provided the council with an update on the Local Council Liaison Meeting which was held on the 5th March 2025.

- Cllr Hawkins expressed concern at the language used throughout the meeting.
- Cllr Sargent advised the ABLC had serious concerns about planning matters but there was little discussion on this and how matters could be improved.
- Expressed concern regarding the chairing and format of the Local Council Liaison and how this seems to have deviated from the Terms of Reference.

Cllrs Ball and Myers left the meeting at 20.20

40/2025 Community Projects

40/2025/1 Lamp Post Flower Baskets

Cllr Dowton shared a quotation from Window Flowers with Members providing a cost to install and maintain double baskets on 6 columns in Coppice Lane at a cost of £1,260. There would be a one-off additional cost of 50 brackets at a cost of £660. The terms of the agreement would see planters installed from June to September and they would be fully maintained throughout this period. Three months' notice is required to cancel the contract, and a licence will be required from Essex County Council to install the baskets on the lighting columns.

Resolved: That the Council approve the quote for an initial trial of 12 months.

Resolved: that the Clerk will apply for the licence from Essex County Council.

Cllr Ball returned to the meeting at 20.25

40/2025/2 Flower Planters

The Council received a briefing from the Friends of Noak Bridge requesting funding and support to enable the group to purchase three flower planters, compost and plants which will be installed (subject to obtaining the necessary permissions) on:

1. The verge at Eastfield Road
2. The verge at Bridge Street
3. The verge at South Wash Road – not practical but Fore St would be suitable.

Members discussed the proposed locations and agreed planters located at these locations would not be suitable, preferring a group of planters to be installed at Fore Street, where the Council is proposing to install a VE Day memorial bench.

Resolved: That the council approve a grant to the Friends of Noak Bridge of £1,000 to be used to purchase planters, compost and plants.

Resolved: That the Clerk will seek the appropriate permissions from Basildon Borough Council for a plater to be installed at Fore Street.

41/2025 Finance

41/2025/01 Accounts for Payment

The Council received and approved the following accounts for payment:

Supplier	***Item***	***Net***	***VAT***	***Total***
ADP Consultants	Professional services-planning objection letter	£ 360.00	£ 72.00	£ 432.00
Mrs L Townend	March Salary	£ 715.96	£ -	£ 715.96
HMRC	February tax costs	£ 210.60	£ -	£ 210.60
HMRC	March tax costs	£ 184.80	£ -	£ 184.80
SLCC	Membership fees	£ 78.00	£ -	£ 78.00
Noak Bridge Community Association	March Hall Hire	£ 50.00	£ -	£ 50.00
Sarah Physical Trade Ltd	VE Day 80 flags	£ 44.74	£ 11.18	£ 55.92
Royal British Legion Industries	VE Day 80 bunting and lamppost signs	£ 173.23	£ 34.64	£ 207.87
Noak Bridge Litter Pickers	Litter picking equipment	£ 509.38	£ -	£ 509.38
AGA Print - Solopress	Spring Newsletter printing	£ 189.97	£ -	£ 189.97
	TOTAL:			**£ 2,634.50**

Resolved: That the accounts for payment for March be approved.

41/2025/02 Bank Reconciliation

The council received and **noted** the bank reconciliation to the end of February 2025.

41/2025/03 Monthly Budget Sheet

The Council received and **noted** the budget comparison to the end of February 2025 and noting, in the 2024/25 financial year the council had spent £46,515.37, 38% of the 2024/25 budget.

41/2025/04 Bank Signatories

Councillors were asked to appoint an additional signatory to the Metro Bank account to ensure payments would be made according to the process laid out in the Council's Financial Regulations (two councillors to approve a payment).

Resolved: That Cllr Bateman BE included as a signatory on the Metro Bank Account to view online transactions and authorise payments only. There is no requirement to withdraw cash or need a debit card.

Cllrs Ball and Buckley left the meeting at 20.44

41/2025/05 Council's Saving Account

Councillors received a report recommending the Council diversify its deposits to ensure all funds are protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and achieve a greater return for their investments and discussed the options presented and which councillors would be signatories on the account.

Resolved: That the Parish Council will open a 12-month Term Deposit account with Unity Trust Bank and a separate instant access servicing account. Once opened the Council will transfer £50,000 from the Santander Business Savings account to fund the Term Deposit account.

Resolved: That the Council agreed the signatories on the new accounts would be Cllr Christopher Bateman, Cllr Jacqui Dowton and Cllr Lynn Gilliam.

41/2025/06 Payment of Tax and NI Costs to HMRC

Councillors received and discussed a report recommending a variable direct debit is set up to ensure payments due to HMRC are paid promptly.

Resolved: That the Council agreed to set up a variable direct debit on the Santander Bank Account to pay tax and NI payments to HMRC.

A member of the public left the meeting at 21.00

42/2025 Asset Register Review

Councillors were asked to review the Fixed Asset Register.

Resolved: That Cllr Paul Daft will inspect each item on the list, take a photograph of the asset, update the list and send this to the Clerk by Friday the 4th April 2025.

Cllrs who have assets stored in their homes will do likewise.

43/2025 VE Day 80 Event

Cllr Cottrell updated the council on the plans so far and the work undertaken so far, including:

- The application to access the field has been submitted to Basildon Borough Council.
- Quotes are being sought for a contractor to service and light the beacon.
- The Noak Bridge Public House is keen to be involved serving sandwiches and soft drinks on the green. Cllr Bateman will confirm the exact requirements and set up a WhatsApp group to include all those involved in the event.
- V Dub Coffee Bar has agreed to attend the event at no charge to the Council.
- The Fish and Chip van has agreed to attend the event from 7.30pm at no charge to the Council.
- A piper will play before the beacon lighting.
- St Johns Ambulance had agreed to cover the event with two first aiders at no cost to the Council. A gazebo will need to be set up for the volunteers.
- Cllr Sargent will speak to the school to request the children sing an appropriate song at the event.
- Three quotes for the hire of a generator and flood lighting have been obtained from 4 suppliers ranging in price from £104 to £175.
  Resolved: That the council appoint Mark One Hire to supply the generator and flood lights at a cost of £103.20.
- The Council will not be providing any give aways at this event.
- The Clerk will print and post 10 copies of an event poster to Cllr Gilliam for distribution.

44/2025 Planning

44/2025/1 The Council **noted** the objection response to planning application 25/00171 submitted by to Basildon Borough Council on the 21st March 2025. Attached.

The Council considered the following planning application published by Basildon Borough Council and the publication of the agenda for this meeting:

44/2025/2 25/00272/TPOBAS TPO/09/98 – 2 metre reduction on the oak tree at 5 Handley's Chase Noak Bridge.

Resolved: That the Council had no objection to the application.

44/2025/3 The Council noted planning decisions made by Basildon Borough Council 24/01383/FULL single storey side extension at 211 Crouch St Noak Bridge. **GRANTED**

25/00055/TPOBAS crown reduction of oak tree by 2m to 2.5m at 2 Kimberley Drive Noak Bridge. **GRANTED**

45/2025 Consideration of Contracting a Handyman for Village Maintenance

The Council considered contracting a handyman for village tasks such as sign cleaning and hedge trimming.

Resolved: That the Council will contact the handyman who recently repaired the Little Libraries to enquire if they had capacity for additional work.

Resolved: That the Clerk would also see quotes from interested parties including contacting Wickford Town Council to ascertain if their handyman would have capacity for additional work.

46/2025 Correspondence

No correspondence was received.

47/2025 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be the annual parish meeting which will take place on the 23rd April 2025 commencing at 7.00pm, in the village hall.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.26

Signed:_____

Cllr Mark Cottrell

Date:_____

B|P
Bluestone Planning
www.bluestoneplanning.co.uk

Planning Services

Basildon Borough Council

The Basildon Centre

St Martin's Square

Basildon

Essex

SS14 1DL

Email: planning@basildon.gov.uk

FAO: Ellie Hendry

21 March 2025

Dear Ms Hendry,

Objection to Application ref: 25/00171/OUT on behalf of Noak Bridge Parish Council

Description: Hybrid application for a phased development of up to 300 residential dwellings (C3 Use Class) to include 1. Detailed application (Phase 1) for the first 100 dwellings, new vehicular and pedestrian accesses from Wash Road, provision of green infrastructure including a new community park, resident allotments, surface water drainage basins, swales and foul water pumping station, all hard and soft landscaping works, residents and visitors car parking and 2. Outline application (Phases 2 and 3), for up to 200 residential dwellings, community use buildings, surface water drainage basins, a second foul water pumping station, new vehicular and pedestrian accesses from Wash Road, and all associated infrastructure works.

Location: Land At Wash Road Junction With Bridge Street Wash Road Laindon Essex

Bluestone Planning is instructed by Noak Bridge Parish Council (NBPC) to advise on a consultancy basis in respect of the above matter. This letter outlines the objections that NBPC wishes to raise in connection with the current hybrid planning application at the above site.

This letter sets out the reasons for this objection to the current hybrid planning application. We trust that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will attach appropriate weight to the matters discussed below and that they will take them into account during the determination of this application.

Neighbourhood Plan Considerations

The Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan (NBNP) was submitted for examination (Regulation 16) on 24th February 2025. Whilst the draft policies of the NBNP have not been reviewed by the Independent Examiner yet, it is considered that the relevant draft policies should be material to the determination of this planning application. This is due to:

1) the NBNP has already been subject to extensive public consultation during the Pre-Submission Stage (Regulation 14) and in the representations that were made there were no strong objections against the draft policies; and
2) the NBNP will most likely be made by the time the LPA determines this planning application.

Accordingly, it is considered that the relevant draft policies of the NBNP should attract moderate weight in decision making, until the Independnt Examiner sends their comments which will then mean that full weight can be afforded.

Housing

The NBNP has adopted a positive approach when seeking to meet the housing need for the local area and has made specific provisions to ensure that an identified housing need, if there is any, can be met within the NBNP period. This is reflected from NBNP draft policies NB1 and NB5.

It is significant to note that no housing need was identified during the preparation of the NBNP and that is why it was decided to not allocate any sites for residential development. The applicant's agent does not appear to dispute this and instead seeks to justify this proposed development by arguing that it will help with meeting the Borough's unmet need for this particular type of development.

Even if there was an identified housing need within the parish area, this would have already been met in full by the development that was recently approved to the south of Wash Road (23/01551/OUT). Noak Bridge is a small village with a population of only 2,800 people and the approved development will result in the addition of 400 new homes, which will comprise a mix of housing, including affordable and associated infrastructure. NBPC cannot therefore support

this proposed development when it could lead to the creation of 300 additional homes on top of the 400 that were approved, as this would introduce an increase in population that is more than half of the existing one. This is scenario is not considered to be sustainable, as existing and future proposed local services and facilities would be totally overwhelmed.

NBNP draft policy NB1 highlights that infill development will be supported within the built-up area of the village. Paragraph 6.1.8 also makes clear that:

"Any housing development outside the built part of the settlement will be resisted unless it is allocated in a development plan document or meets one of the exceptions in the NPPF"

The NBPC considers that the proposed development does not meet any of the exceptions mentioned in paragraphs 84 and 154 of the NPPF, and therefore conflicts with policy NB1.

Given that the proposed development also does not meet any of the exceptions of paragraph 154 of the NPPF and no very special circumstances have been demonstrated, it is also considered to be contrary to policy NB5.

Important Views

In addition, the site lies within Important View V09, which is considered on of the best long range views in the Parish. The Wash Road fields to Barleylands / Views over Benson Farm were determined to be extremely important to the local community.

Policy NB11 – Important Views states that:

"Development proposals should preserve or enhance the local character of the landscape and through their design, height and massing should recognise and respond positively to the various Important Views. Development proposals which would have a significant adverse impact on an identified Important View will not be supported."

The Character Appraisal supporting the Neighbourhood Plan makes it clear that the view is of Significant Value (the highest level available) and states:

"This view is considered highly sensitive to new intensive or major development as it would result in the narrowing of the gap between Billericay and Basildon as a whole."

In consideration of the above, it is clear that the development as proposed would be in conflict with Policy NB11.

Design

The neighbourhood Plan and its design policies and code were devised to protect the unique conservation area and its setting and to maintain the high standards of development as originally envisaged for the area. Although this is an outline application for the remaining

phases, the information to accompany the detailed element of the application does not reflect the quality expected in this part of the Parish.

On the edge of the Conservation Area, this site plays a key role in its setting. In particular the approach into Bridge Street with its landmark buildings. The information submitted shows a generic housing estate development, with little to no reference to the locally specific details as set out in the Design Code or Character Appraisal documents.

Policy NB15 – Design Principles sets out:

"New development should contribute to the creation of high-quality places through a design-led approach to development underpinned by good practice principles and reflecting a thorough site appraisal and demonstrate how it preserves and enhances features that define the character of the individual area, as set out in the Noak Bridge Design Code."

The Design Code accompanying the application analyses the context of the area, but the output does not accord with the analysis, with standard modern house types, poor quality materials and low levels of detailing supplied. The proposal is considered to not meet the standards of design expected for such an important site on the edge of the Conservation Area.

The original development which is now a Conservation Area, is successful due to a combination of the level of detailing, appropriate building form, choice of high quality materials and plentiful landscaping. In this regard, it is considered that the proposed scheme does not reflect the high standard of design that is required.

Equally, it is clear that the proposal does not appear to have its own unique identity or create a high quality development as required. As proposed, it would not preserve or enhance the identified features that define the character of this area.

The NBPC kindly requests from the LPA to take into account the points addressed above, as granting planning permission to the proposed development will severely undermine policies NB1 and NB5 of the NBNP and as a consequence, will be contrary to the Development Plan as a whole.

Grey Belt

According to paragrapb 143 of the NPPF, Green Belt serves five purposes. These are the following:

a) *"to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
b) *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
c) *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
d) *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*

e) *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*

The applicant's agent has reviewed the Basildon Green Belt Study (December 2023) that forms part of the evidence base documents informing the emerging Local Plan and they have undertaken their own assessment to identify the harm from the proposed development to the Metropiltan Green Belt. They have concluded that the application site does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b) or (d) in paragraph 143 of the NPPF. And therefore the application site meets the definition of 'Grey Belt', which is a concept introduced by the new government in December 2024.

In Annex 2: Glossary of the NPPF, Grey Belt is defined as:

"..land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey Belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

The applicant's agent assessment, however, is not in line with the recent guidance published by the government on how should the contribution land makes to the relevant Green Belt purposes should be assessed. Whilst, it is appreciated that this guidance was published after the planning application was submitted, it was considered critical in deciding whether the application site can be defined as Grey Belt.

Paragraph 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225 of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states:

"Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.

Contribution	***Illustrative features***
Strong	*Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.* *They are also likely to include all of the following features:* *- be adjacent or near to a large built up area*

Contribution	***Illustrative features***
	- if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt)
Moderate	*Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land's contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to):* *- having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development* *- be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development* *- contain existing development* *- being subject to other urbanising influences*
Weak or None	*Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that:* *- are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area* *- are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development"*

The application site lies adjacent to our village, which forms an extension of Basildon's built up area. NBPC considers that the application site contributes strongly to purpose A, as it lies adjacent to a town's (Basildon) built-up area and there are no physical features from the west, north and east that would prevent its expansion and would result in an incogruous pattern of development. Whilst it is appreciated that the proposed development seeks to develop only a part of the application site with the land to the north staying open for recreational purposes, it is considered that any future paraphernalia are likely to have an adverse harm to the openess of the Green Belt. **Accordingly, the NBPC considers that the application site contributes strongly to purpose (a) of paragraph 143 of the NPPF.**

"Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.

Contribution	***Illustrative Features***
Strong	*Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features:* *- forming a substantial part of a gap between towns* *- the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns*
Moderate	*Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):* *- forming a small part of the gap between towns* *- being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation*
Weak or None	*Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that:* *- do not form part of a gap between towns, or* *- form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation"*

With regards to purpose (b), the NBPC considers that due to the size of the application site and its proximity to the built-up area of Great Burstead the contribution that can be attributed to this purpose is moderate.

Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.

Contribution	***Illustrative Features***
Strong	*Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features:*

Contribution	***Illustrative Features***
	- form part of the setting of the historic town *- make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town*
Moderate	*Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):* *- being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography* *- containing existing development* *- not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town*
Weak or None	*Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that:* *- do not form part of the setting of a historic town* *- have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town*

Given that the application site does not form part of the setting of a historic town (Basildon), the NBPC considers that weak/none contribution can be attributed to this purpose.

The NBPC considers that the application site clearly contributes strongly to the first purpose (a) of the Green Belt, and therefore it cannot be defined as Grey Belt. Even if it were to be accepted that its contribution to purpose (a) is moderate, it is still considered that the application site cannot qualify as Grey Belt bacause it falls within the excluded land described in footnote 7 of the NPPF. Footnote 7 states:

"The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, ***Local Green Space****, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast;*

irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and ***areas at risk of flooding*** *or coastal change"* (own emphasis).

The application site includes land which is is proposed in the NBNP as Local Green Space (LGS8). As highlighted in the Local Green Space Assessment supporting our NP, LGS8 was proposed to be designated as a LGS because it *"provides instant access to the open countryside and Rights of Way network beyond as well as important views towards the wider countryside".*

This proposed LGS designation did not attract any objections during Regulation 14 consultation, and therefore NBPC considers that it is reasonable to expect that the Independent Examiner will choose to retain it.

The proposed development shows the creation of a new footpath passing through LGS8, which will undoubtedly adversely harm the character of the area and how it is enjoyed by local residents, including a negative impact on views experienced from public points into the open countryside. Therefore, NBPC considers that this constitutes a strong reason for refusing or restricting the proposed development.

Further, the application site is located in an area that has identified by the Environment Agency (EA) to be at high risk from surface water flooding. This is also agreed by the applicant's agent in paragraph 2.37 of their planning statement. The Drainage and Flood Risk assessment accompanying this planning application states in paragraph 3.7.1 that *"neither a Sequential Test nor an Exception Test will be required."* The NBPC does not agree with this conclusion, as the government has issued clear guidance stating that **all sources of flooding** should be considered when proposed new development. Paragraph 023 Reference ID: 7-023-20220825 makes clear that:

"What is the aim of the sequential approach?

The approach is designed to ensure that areas at little or no risk of flooding from any source are developed in preference to areas at higher risk. This means avoiding, so far as possible, ***development in current and future medium and high flood risk areas considering all sources of flooding incuding areas at risk of surface water flooding****."* (own emphasis)

Paragraph 175 of the NPPF also adds that:

"The sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding, except in situations where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes, land

raising or other potentially vulnerable elements, would be located on an area that would be at risk of flooding from any source, now and in the future (having regard to potential changes in flood risk)."

The applicant has failed to undertake a sequential test to inform the proposals, which is evident from the proposed layout which includes new residential development on areas at medium and high risk of surface water flooding. This specific area was also identified in our NP as particularly vulnerable to surface water flooding, and therefore the proposed development would conflict with draft policy NB12. Accordingly, the NBPC considers that this flood risk issue has not been addressed adequately by the applicant and as a consequence constitutes a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

The graph of paragraph: 007 Reference ID: 64-007 20250225 of the PPG makes clear that Green Belt land can be defined as Grey Belt, only if **both** of the requirements described in the glossary of the NPPF are met. It is the opinion of the NBPC that the neither of these are met in this instance for the reasons described above. Accordingly, the application site cannot be identified as Grey Belt.

NBPC considers significant to also draw the case officer's attention to paragraph 008 Reference ID: 64-008-20250225 which states:

"How can the impact of releasing or development on the remaining Green Belt in the plan area be assessed?

A Green Belt assessment should also consider the extent to which release or development of Green Belt land (including but not limited to grey belt land) would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole.

In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way."

The applicant's agent alleges that the application site makes a moderate to no contribution to all of the five purposes of the Green Belt due to its size, location and surroundings and the assessment that was previously undertaken by the LPA is inaccurate as it assessed a larger parcel of Green Belt land in which the application site forms a small part of.

NBPC considers that paragraph 8 of the PPG makes clear that even when such cases occur, it is significant to ensure that the release of any Green Belt land will not **fundamentally**

undermine all of the purposes of the remaining Green Belt. In this instance, NBPC considers it is evident that the release of the application site from the Green Belt will fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaning Green Belt for all of the reasons highlighted earlier above, and therefore the proposed development should be refused.

Very Special Circumstances

The application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The proposed development does not meet any of the exceptions of paragraph 154 of the NPPF, and as highlighted earlier it can also not be identified as Grey Belt. Therefore, the propsoed development does not meet all of the requirements of paragraph 155 of the NPPF and constitutes inappropriate development in the Metropiltan Green Belt.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF highlights that:

"When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development, is by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

The applicant's agent presents in paragraph 6.43 to 6.50 a number of alleged positive benefits that they state constitute VSC. NBPC has reviewed these and considers that the following cannot be considered as benefits, and therefore do not consitute VSC.

"The site is immediately deliverable within the first 5 years of new Local Plan period and this should be given very significant positive weight."

No evidence has been provided to back this up and provide certainty, and therefore it should attract limited to no positive weight.

"The proposal would result in the utilisation of a sustainable and deliverable site to help meet the LPA's development needs and this should be given significant positive weight."

This alleged benefit is similar, if not identical, to the above. The LPA is currently in the final stages of preparing their emerging Local Plan which seeks to meet the housing need of the wider area. Accordingly, it should afford limited to no positive weight.

"The provision of public open space including a publicly accessible community park, orchard, allotment, drainage basins and walking routes should be given moderate positive weight."

The village already benefits from a surplus of open green and community spaces that are relatively in fair to good condition, as evidenced by the Community Facilities Assessment supporting the NBNP. Therefore, the proposed community areas do not seek to meet an identified deficiency and as a consequence, this element should attract limited positive weight.

"The provision of traffic calming measures, new footpaths and highways improvements to Wash Road should be given moderate positive weight."

The reason these are proposed and needed is due to the influx of a significant number of people that could live in the village, should the proposed development be granted planning permission. The applicant has not submitted any evidence showing that there are existing road safety concerns on that particular area. Therefore, this can be classified as a mitigation measure and not a benefit. Accordingly, it should attract no positive weight.

"The creation of modern, energy efficient buildings incorporating renewable energy technologies. should be given moderate positive weight."

NBPC considers that this should attract limited to no positive weight, as it is a national and local requirement to ensure that new development proposals aim to tackle the effects of climate change.

"Provision of on-site community buildings / facilities (subject to further discussions) should be given limited positive weight given their uncertainty."

As highlighted earlier above, NBPC considers that where there is a level of uncertainty asscoiated with any alleged benefits, then these should attract no positive weight.

By taking the above together with the rest alleged positive benefits that are put forward by the applicant, NBPC considers that it is evident that there are no VSC that could outweigh the substantial harm caused from the proposed development to the Green Belt, including its openness.

Conclusions

NBPC considers that is has been demonstrated that the proposed development is proposed on land that cannot be defined as Grey Belt. Given that the type development proposed does not meet any of the exceptions listed in paragraph 154 and 155 of the NPPF, it means that it constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Inappropriate development is considered by definition to be harmful to the Green Belt, including its openness as highlighted in paragraph 153 and should not be approved unless VSC exist. In this instance, NBPC considers that it has also been demonstrated that the VSC brought forward by the applicant are not sufficient to outweigh the substantial harm to the Green Belt.

Further, the proposed development has also been demonstrated to be contrary to NBNP policies NB1, NB5 and NB12. It is considered that significant negative weight should also be attached to the conflict identified with these policies. This significant negative weight is not considered to be outweighed by the alleged positive benefits that will be delivered from the proposed development.

Therefore, after due consideration of the submitted documents and plans, it is respectfully requested that the planning application is recommended for refusal

Yours sincerely,

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Noak Bridge Parish Council Risk Assessment 2025-2026

Risk assessment is a systematic examination of working condition, workplace and environmental factors that will enable the Parish Council to identify any and all potential risks.

The Parish Council, based on a recorded assessment, will take practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible. This document has been produced to enable the Noak Bridge Parish Council to assess the risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them.

Finance and Management				
Subject	**Risk(s) identified**	**Risk Rating H/M/L**	**Management/Control of Risk**	**Review/Assess/Revise**
(Business Continuity) Financial Records	Risk of Council not being able to continue its business due to an unexpected or tragic circumstance.	L	All files and records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the village hall meeting room. Regular back up of files are made to the PC laptop. Ensure the latest versions of software is used. In the event of the Clerk being indisposed the chairman to contact the Essex Association of Local Councils for advice	Review & update procedures when a new clerk is employed. Existing procedures are considered adequate.
Staffing	Loss of services of employee	L	Immediately advertise vacancy (if permanent loss). Appoint a Locum Clerk (if temporary loss). Lists of Locum Clerks are held by the EALC and SLCC. Ensure relevant passwords are kept in a sealed envelope by the Chairman.	Existing procedures are considered adequate.
Administration	Fraudulent payments	M	The Council's Financial Regulations sets out the requirements. Continue with the requirement to report all payments to Council for approval. Introduce the requirement for two councillors to authorise all BACS payments, submitted by the RFO.	Existing procedure to be strengthened by introducing dual authorisation on all payments submitted by the RFO. Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required.

Salaries and Associated Costs	Salary paid incorrectly Unpaid tax to HMRC	L	The procedure for paying salaries is outlined in the Council's Financial Regulations. Contract of employment in place for all employees. Payroll provider engaged to ensure instruction for timely payment of tax and NI is received and adhered to, where necessary and for the provision of payslips. Payslip provided by Clerk and countersigned by Chairman and additional Councillor to ensure correct payment. Payments is made by BACS. Annual salary review to be undertaken before budgeting and precept. Direct debit set up to pay HMRC costs directly each quarter	Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required. Existing procedures are adequate.
Administration	Banking/financial administrative errors Loss Charges	L	The Council's Financial Regulations sets out the banking, cheques, debit card payments and reconciliation of accounts requirements. Bank reconciliations to be carried out on a monthly basis. Reconciliations to be checked by an appointed councillor, other than the Chairman or a bank signatory. Dual authorisation for payments ensures all invoices are triple checked for accuracy before payment is made. The RFO reviews the banking arrangements and any irregularities to be addressed each month during the bank reconciliation.	Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required.
Administration	Procedural advice beyond that of the Proper Officer required	L	Continue with memberships of the EALC and SLCC	Existing procedures are adequate
Cash and Debit Card	Loss through theft and/or dishonesty	L	No petty cash is held and no debit card is available for the withdrawal of cash. A debit card has been authorised for use for internet payments and transfer of monies between accounts. All payments/transfers to be approved by the council and recorded in minutes	Existing procedures are adequate
Direct costs and Overhead expenses	Goods paid for but not supplied	L	The Council's Financial Regulations sets out the requirements. Good supplied are checked against the order and delivery note. Copies of all invoices are distributed to Councillors.	Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required.

			At each Council meeting invoices awaiting approval are considered and approved by Council and recorded in the minutes. Council has minimal stocks other than basic stationary, which is monitored.	Existing procedures are adequate.
Reporting and Auditing	Information communication and Compliance		Financial information is included as a standing item on the council agenda. At each meeting: • A Finance Report is presented, including bank reconciliation and budget monitoring. • A full list of payments and receipts is provided, along with details of cheques to be signed or payments to be authorised. • Financial records, including a breakdown of income and expenditure reconciled against the bank statement, are reviewed. These records are verified and signed off by the Chairman to confirm accuracy and transparency.	
Auditing	Non-compliance with internal audit recommendations	L	The Council formally reviews the Internal Auditor's report, as stipulated in the Council's Financial Regulations, at the next available meeting following receipt of the audit. • The Clerk will prepare an action plan identifying all recommendations made by the auditor. • Each action will be assigned a priority level (High, Medium, Low) and a clear timescale for implementation. • The Council works through the action plan in line with these priorities, ensuring timely and effective compliance.	Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required. Existing procedures are adequate.

			• Progress against the action plan is monitored and reviewed at subsequent meetings until all actions are completed.	
Accounting	Non-compliance with statutory deadlines of the completion/approval/submission of accounts and other financial returns	L	The Clerk maintains a calendar noting the dates the Annual Governance and Accounting Review	Continue to ensure that all accounts and returns are completed and submitted by the deadlines. Existing procedures are adequate.

Precept	The precept set is insufficient to meet the Council's financial obligations	L	The Council ensures the adequacy of the precept through regular and informed budget monitoring and forecasting as detailed in the Council's Financial Regulations.
			• In preparation for setting the precept, the Council receives a detailed budget report at its annual precept meeting. This includes:
			  ○ The current actual income and expenditure,
			  ○ Projected year-end figures, and
			  ○ Indicative costs for the forthcoming financial year, provided by the Clerk or relevant lead Councillor.
			• Using this information, the Council identifies funding requirements for both ongoing commitments and planned projects.
			• The agreed precept amount is formally resolved by the Council and submitted in writing to Basildon Council by the 31st January each year.
			• The Council monitors receipt of the precept (typically paid in two instalments in April and October) and confirms receipt accordingly.
				Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required.
				
				Existing procedures are adequate

Precept	Inadequate Monitoring of Performance which may result in overspending or failure to meet obligations.	L	As detailed in the Council's Financial Regulations the Council reviews budget update reports at each parish council meeting to maintain oversight of income and expenditure. Variances are highlighted and explained. If a virement is needed from one budget heading to another this must be agreed by the Council.	Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required. Existing procedures are adequate
Precept	Illegal Expenditure	L	Continue to ensure that all expenditure is within legal powers and payments authorised by the Council.	Existing procedures are adequate.
Grants – Receivable	Failure to understand or comply with conditions attached to grant funding.	L	Council to be aware of the conditions attached to grants awarded and ensure they adhere to any such conditions. The Clerk will collate a list of the conditions and any time frames regarding the conditions which the council must satisfy and present this to the council.	Existing procedures are adequate.
Grants - Payable	Power and authorisation to pay	L	Applications for grants to be submitted on the Council's Grant Application Form. All grants must be approved by the Council and awarded according to a Grant Policy. Any payments using Section 137 powers will be separately listed.	Existing procedures are adequate
Projects	Completion	L	Project updates are a regular standing item on the council agenda where the lead councillor will provide the council with an update on progress, challenges, budget and expected completion date.	Existing procedures are adequate.
Contract Best Value Accountability	Work awarded incorrectly. Overspend on services Not ensuring value for money and/or continuity of work	L	Process for orders for work, goods and services and entering into contracts is outlined in the Council's Financial Regulations. Continue the practice of obtaining the correct number of quotes according to the value of the contract or purchase. Maintain a Contract Spreadsheet to ensure an invitation to tender is carried out in a timely manner.	Existing procedures are adequate

			If problems occur with a contract the lead Cllr to investigate the situation and report to the Council.	
Salaries and Associated Costs	Salary paid incorrectly Unpaid tax to HMRC	L	Contract of Employment in place for all employees. Timesheet provided by the Clerk and countersigned by the Chairman to ensure correct payment. Payroll provider retained to calculate monthly wage payments according to the Contract of Employment and to ensure instruction for the timely and accurate calculation of tax and NI is received. Direct debit set up to pay HMRC. Salary and expense payments paid by BACS. Annual salary review to be undertaken before budgeting,	Existing procedures are adequate.
Clerk/RFO	Fraud by Staff Health and Safety Loss of Clerk/RFO	L L L	Council adheres to Standing Orders and Financial Regulations to minimise fraudulent activity by the Clerk/RFO. Requirements of Fidelity Guarantee Insurance included in annual policy. All employees, including the Clerk to be provided adequate direction and safety equipment needed to undertake their role safely. The Parish Council holds adequate reserves to pay a locum clerk in the event of the Clerk leaving/resigning.	Financial Regulations and Standing Orders to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required. Existing procedures are adequate, review annually.
Councillor Allowances	Councillors overpaid	L	Councillors do not receive any allowances but can be reimbursed for expenses such as stationery and mileage costs when travelling on Council business, where required. Payment of expenses to be approved by the Council and made by BACS.	Existing procedure adequate. Review Financial Regulations when necessary.
Election Cost	No funds available for election costs	L	The Parish Council will make a provision each year to build up a reserve to cover election costs. Unexpected election costs would be met from general reserves.	Existing procedure adequate. Review Financial Regulations when necessary.

VAT	Reclaiming/charging	L	VAT incurred on business expenses to be reclaimed annually at the end of the financial year. The council does not currently provide any services where there is a need to charge VAT.	Existing procedures are adequate.
Annual Return AGAR	Submit with specified time frame	L L	Employer's Annual Return is completed and submitted online within the prescribed time frame, by the Clerk. AGAR completed, reviewed by the internal auditor for completion of the Internal Audit Report. Section 1, Annual Governance Statement presented to the council and signed by the Clerk and Chairman. Section 2, Accounting Statements, presented to the council and signed by the chairman. Signed forms submitted to the external auditor for review, within the prescribed timescale.	Existing procedures adequate
Liability				
Legal Powers	Illegal activity or payments	L	All activity and payments to be made within the powers of the Parish Council, to be resolved at the full Council meetings, including reference to the power used under the Finance section on the agenda.	Existing Procedures adequate
Minutes / Agendas Statutory Notices Documents	Accuracy and Legality Business Conduct	L L L L	Minutes and Agendas are produced in the prescribed manner by the Clerk or lead councillor and adhere to the legal requirements. Minutes are approved and signed at the next council meeting Agendas displayed according to legal requirements. Business conducted at meetings is managed by the Chairman	Existing Procedures adequate

Data Protection	Policy provision	L	The Council has adopted a Data Protection Policy and is registered with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO)	Policy reviewed annually or as needed to comply with new legislation. Existing procedures adequate.
Member's Interests Member Training	Conflict of Interest Register of Interests not completed Unfamiliar with Council process	L L L	Declarations or Interests by members at Council meetings. Register of Member's Interests forms reviewed annually. EALC provide training for members to partake. Additionally, Basildon Council offers Code of Conduct training to parish councils annually. This training is mandatory for all councillors. Training to be agreed by Full Council	Existing procedures adequate. Members are responsible to ensure their Register of Interests is up to date at all times. Member training recorded and reviewed annually.
Public Liability	Risk to Third Party Property	L	Risk Assessments regularly carried out to comply with the requirements	Existing procedures adequate. Ensure Risk Assessments are carried out where necessary
Employer's Liability	Non-compliance with Employment Law	L	Insurance in place. Advice will be sought from the EALC and ACAS where required	Existing procedures adequate.
Legal Liability	Legality of Activities Proper and timely reporting via Minutes Proper document control	L L L	Clerk to clarify legal position on proposals and to seek advice if necessary. Council to approve Minutes at monthly meetings. Document Retention Policy adopted by the council and reviewed annually.	Existing procedures adequate.
Insurance	Adequacy	L	An annual review is undertaken of all insurance arrangements. Cost budgeted for on an annual basis.	Existing procedures adequate.

	Cost Fidelity Guarantee		Employers and Employee liabilities a necessity and within policies. Ensue compliance measures are in place. Fidelity checks and insurance in place	
Social Media	Reputation/Communication	L	Social Media and Press Policies adopted by the Council to prevent reputational risk by receipt of unwarranted or malicious postings and to ensure adequate communications	Policies reviewed annually. Existing procedures adequate.
Freedom of Information	Policy	L	Model Publication Scheme adopted by the Council. The Council is aware substantial FOI's or subject access requests may create additional work hours for the Clerk. The Parish Council can request a fee to supplement the additional hours.	Monitor any requests made under FOI. Existing procedures adequate.
Physical Equipment or Areas				
Assets	Loss or Damage Risk/Damage to Third Party(ies) property	L	An annual review of fixed assets is undertaken for insurance provision	Existing procedures adequate.
Maintenance	Poor Performance or Assets or Amenities	L	All assets owned by the council are regularly reviewed and maintained. Professional risk assessments to be conducted on playground equipment on a yearly basis. All assets are insured. Expenditure related to repairs are actioned/authorised in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.	Existing procedures adequate.
Notice Boards	Risk of Damage	L	The Parish Council own and maintain two notice boards which are reviewed regularly. Expenditure related to repairs are actioned/authorised in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.	Existing procedures adequate.

Meeting Location	Inadequate Venue	L	The Parish Council meetings are held in a local venue considered to have adequate facilities for the Clerk, Council and members of the public.	Existing procedures adequate.
Council Records – Electronic	Loss of Data	L	Electronic records are stored on the Council laptop and the Council's website. Software is kept up to date. Council to explore the use of Cloud storage	Existing procedures adequate.
Council Records – Papers	Loss through:- Theft Fire Damage	L M L	Historic files and records are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the village hall meeting room, which is reviewed regularly. Information uploaded to the Council's website. Records include historical correspondence, minutes, insurance and bank records. The documents are secure but the Council could consider storing important documents at the Essex Records Office.	Damage (apart from fire) and theft is unlikely so existing procedures are adequate.
Council Property – iMac/Laptop	Risk of not being used for Council business	L	iMac is currently in storage. Laptop is used only for council business. A contract of employment is in place for staff along with a disciplinary policy in case there is a breach of conduct.	Existing procedures are adequate.

Fixed Asset Register

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL FIXED ASSET REGISTER REVISED 1ST APRIL 2025								
Year	**Asset**	**Location**	**Condition**	**Cost**	**Insurance Value**	**Checked March 2025**	**Condition 2025**	**Photo on File**
2004	Boundary Signs X 4	South Wash Rd/Wash Rd/Barleylands	Good	1,322.00		✓	Most Fair but Barleylands Road Sign Very Dirty / Unreadable / Photos Attached	Yes
2007	Duck House	Coppice Lane Pond	Fair	346.00		✓	Good	Yes
2007	Teen Shelter	Village Green	Fair	8,272.00		✓	Poor	Yes
2007	York Bench	Coppice Lane School	Good	600.00		✓	Good	Yes
2010	York Bench	Coppice Lane Pond	Good	735.00		✓	Good	Yes
2013	Orion Display Board	Bridge Street	Good	222.00		✓	Fair	Yes
2008	Notice Board	Coppice Lane	Good	609.00		✓	Fair	Yes
2008	Notice Board	South Wash Road Playing Field	Good	702.00		✓	Good	Yes
2009	Goal Posts 1 small	South Wash Road Playing Field	Good	500.00		✓	Fair	Yes
2012	Diamond Jubilee Stone Bench	South Wash Road Playing Field	Good	1,352.89		✓	Fair	Yes
2013	Apple iMac Desktop Computer	Chairman's Home	Good	1,272.37		✓	Fair	Yes
2013	Bench	Village Green	Good	200.00		✓	Good	Yes
2013	Childrens Play Equipment	Village Green	Good	18,461.00		✓	Fair	Yes
2015	Gazebo	Chairman's Home	Good	200.00		✓	Good	Yes
2016	WiFi Printer	Chairman's Home	Good	90.00		✓	Fair	Yes
2017	Filing Cabinet	Village Hall	Good	200.00		✓	Fair	Yes
				35,084.26				
Acquisitions to year end March 2018								
2017	Pentanque Court	Village Hall Garden	New	14,020.00		✓	Good	Yes
2018	Stone Boulders x 9	South Wash Road Playing Field	New	2,722.26		✓	Good	Yes
2018	Telescopic Bollards x 2 model no RTS	South Wash Road Playing Field	New	672.00		✓	Operation to be checked / Photo Attached	Yes
				17,414.26				
Acquisitions to year end March 2019								
2018	Fencing & 2 Gates Dog Utility Course	South Wash Road Playing Field	New	7,242.24		✓	Good	Yes
2018	Defibrillators + Cabinets X 2	Medical Centre X 1 - Noak Bridge Pub	New	3,144.00		✓	Good	Yes
				10,386.24				
Acquisitions to year end March 2020								
2019	Goal Posts x 2 Large	South Wash Road Playing Field	New	1,060.00		✓	Fair	Yes
Acquisitions to year end March 2021				**1,060.00**				
None								

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL FIXED ASSET REGISTER REVISED 1ST APRIL 2025 CONTINUED								
Year	Asset	Location	Condition	Cost	Insurance Value	Checked March 2025	Condition 2025	Photo on File
Acquisitions to year end March 2022								
Mar-21	Little Libraries x 2	Outside Village Hall	New	430.00		✓	Good	Yes
Mar-21	Seesaw Play Equipment	Village Green Play Park	New	3,200.00		✓	Fair	Yes
				3,630.00				
Acquisitions to year end March 2023								
May-22	Megaphone Speaker	Chairman Home	New	74.00		✓	Good	Yes
May-22	Flood Lights x 4	Chairman Home	New	104.00		✓	Good	Yes
Jul-22	Jubilee Beacon	South Wash Road Playing Field	New	3,000.00		✓	Good - However as Advised seperately soft dri	Yes
Sep-22	Dell Laptop	Clerk's Home	New	515.00		✓	Good	Yes
Nov-22	Remembrance Figurine	Stored at Pat Wordswroth's residence	New	97.00		✓	Good	Yes
Jul-22	Duck House	Durban Lane Pond	New	467.00		✓	Good	Yes
Nov-22	Village Signs	Entrance Bridge St / Eastfield Road	New	2,500.00		✓	Good	Yes
Nov-22	Christmas Tree & Lights	Chairman's Home	New	350.00		✓	Good	Yes
				7,107.00				
Acquisitions to year end 2023								
Jul-23	Small Goal Post	Wash Road Playing Field	New	936.00		✓	Good	Yes
Jul-23	Defibrillator	Rear Costcutter Shop	New	1,760.00		✓	Good	Yes
Sep-23	Duck Landing Board	Durban Lane Pond	New	334.00		✓	Good	Yes
Dec-23	Street Sign	Saling Green	New	492.00		✓	Good	Yes
				3,522.00				
Acquisitions to year end March 2025								
Oct-24	Three CCTV Cameras	External Wall Shop & Chemist	New	1,335.68		✓	Good	Yes
		Total acquisitions 2025/26		**1,335.68**				
		Total Fixed Assets		**79,539.44**				

Statement of Internal Control

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL
STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Noak Bridge Parish Council (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

An Annual Risk Assessment was approved at full Council on 20th March 2018 with immediate effect. To complete the process of the system of internal control the Council adopted the Statement of Internal Control at Council on March 24th 2023.

3. THE INTERNAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT
The Council:
The Council has appointed a Chairman who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings and for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful.

The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets for the following year at its January meeting. The January meeting of the Council approves the level of precept for the following financial year.

The full Council meets a minimum of six (6) times each year and monitors progress against its aims and objectives at each meeting by receiving relevant reports from the Chairman and the Clerk.

The Council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems and procedures and an annual review of the annual risk assessment

Clerk to the Council / Responsible Financial Officer:

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Clerk is responsible for the day to day compliance with laws and regulations

that the Council is subject to and for managing risks. The Clerk also ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and polices are adhered to.

Payments:

All payments are reported to the Council for approval. Bacs payments for approval and two Members of the Council must sign every cheque.

Risk Assessments / Risk Management:

The Council carries out regular risk assessments in respect of actions and regularly reviews its systems and controls and reviews the annual risk assessment

Internal Audit:

The Council has appointed an Independent Internal Auditor who reported to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management
- Reviews
  The effectiveness of the internal audit system is reviewed annually.

  External Audit:

  The Council's External Auditors, The Audit Commission, submit an annual Certificate of Audit, which is presented to the Council.

  4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

  The Council has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the by the work of:

- the full Council;
- the Clerk to the Council / Responsible Financial Officer who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment and managing risks;
- the independent Internal Auditor who reviews the Council's system of internal control;
- the Audit Commission, the Council's external auditors, who make the final check using the Annual Return, a form completed and signed by the Responsible Financial Officer, the Chairman and the Internal Auditor. The Audit Commission issue an annual audit certificate;
- the number of significant issues that are raised during the year.

  Reviewed & Adopted: May 2024

  Review date: May 2025

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Noak Bridge Parish Council Regular Payments – 2025/26

Description	**Frequency**
Clerk's salary and expenses	Monthly
HMRC payments	Quarterly
Information Commissioners Office	Annually
Mobile Phone Cost	Monthly
Noak Bridge Community Association – Hall Hire	Monthly

Accounts for Payment - April 2025

Accounts for Payment **For authorisation on 28th May 2025**

Date	*Supplier*	*Item*	*Net*	*VAT*	*Total*
03/04/2025	Ward Arboriculture Limited	Supply and plant Christmas tree	490.00	98.00	588.00
03/04/2025	VCS Websites	Invoice 1430 website training costs	120.00	-	120.00
24/04/2025	Bluestone Planning	Objection letter to planning app. 25/00171/OUT	957.50	191.50	1,149.00
24/04/2025	L Townend	April salary	736.34	-	736.34
24/04/2025	Royal British Legion	VE Day Statue	541.67	108.33	650.00
24/04/2025	PPL PRS	Music Licence	116.47	23.29	139.76
24/04/2025	DM Payroll Services	Administration of payroll 2025/26	84.00	-	84.00
24/04/2025	Noak Bridge Community Association	Hall hire 23/04/2025 - Inv 164 NBPC	50.00	-	50.00
25/04/2025	HMRC	Q4 2024/25 HMRC costs (Feb & Mar)	436.51	-	436.51
25/04/2025	HMRC	April HMRC Costs (to be paid by Direct Debit on the 22 June 2025)	238.17	-	238.17
		TOTAL	**£ 3,770.66**	**£ 421.12**	**£ 4,191.78**

Accounts for Payment - May 2025

Accounts for Payment **For authorisation on 28th May 2025**

Date	***Supplier***	***Item***	***Net***	***VAT***	***Total***
	EALC	NALC and EALC affiliation fees	£682.60	£0.00	£ 682.60
10/05/2025	Zoom Communications	Subscription to 22 April 2026	£129.90	£25.98	£ 155.88
	Amazon	Bunting for VE Day	£79.09	£15.80	£ 90.39
	Matts Generators	Provision of generator and lights for VE Day event	£175.00	£0.00	£ 175.00
	Essex Community First Aid Events Volunteers	First Aid provision VE Day	£150.00	£0.00	£ 150.00
	Epping Forest Pipe Band	Musician Services for VE Day	£250.00	£0.00	£ 250.00
25/05/2025	L Townend	May salary	£681.61	£0.00	£ 681.61
25/05/2025	Nest Pension	May pension costs	£25.62	£0.00	£ 25.62
25/05/2025	HMRC	May HMRC Costs (to be paid by Direct Debit on the 22 June 2025)	£237.33	£0.00	£ 237.33
28/05/2025	Noak Bridge Community Association	Hall hire 28/05/2025 - inv	£50.00	£0.00	£ 50.00
29/05/2025	John Watson	Internal Audit Fee	£180.00	£0.00	£ 180.00
TBC	Basildon Borough Council	Recharge for beacon servicing	TBC	TBC	TBC
		TOTAL:	**£2,641.15**	**£41.78**	**£2,678.43**

Bank Reconciliation

Noak Bridge Parish Council Bank Reconciliation			
Apr-25			
Santander Business Account Bank Balance at	**31/03/2025**		**£ 15,484.88**
	Cheques not presented		£ -
	Plus income		£ 24,129.33
	Less expenditure		£ 4,031.61
Santander Business Account Bank Balance at 31/03/2025	**Balance carried forward**		**£ 35,582.60**
Santander Business Savings Account Balance at	**31/03/2025**		**£ 101,940.19**
	Cheques not presented		£ -
	Plus income		£ 1,060.97
	Less expenditure		£ -
Santander Business Savings Account Balance at 31/03/2025	**Balance carried forward**		**£ 103,001.16**
Metro Account Bank Balance at	**31/03/2025**		**£ 85,206.04**
	Cheques not presented		£ -
	Plus income		£ 59.53
	Less expenditure		£ -
Metro Account Balance at 31/03/2025	**Balance carried forward**		**£ 85,265.57**
Reconciled to bank statement on	05/04/2025		
Signed:			
Name:	Cllr		
Dated:			

Monthly Budget Report 30th April 2025

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL	MONTHLY BUDGET REPORT
Month	APRIL 2025

INCOME	Budget	Actual (to date)	Variance (+/-)	
Precept	£41,320.00	£20,638.27	-£20,681.73	* First tranche received 01/04/25
LCTS Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
CIF Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
Interest	£0.00	£1,120.50	£1,120.50	
Event Income	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
Miscellaneous	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
- VAT reclaim 25/04/2025	£3,511.00	£3,491.06	-£19.94	
- VAT reclaim	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
- VAT reclaim				
INCOME TOTALS	**£44,831.00**	**£25,249.83**	**-£19,581.17**	

EXPENDITURE	Budget	Allocation in EMR	Total spent to 30/04/25	Variance (+/-)	Percentage spent	Expenditure in month
Staff Costs						
Salaries	£10,215.00		£736.34	£9,478.66	7%	£736.34
Tax & Employer NI	£1,970.00		£436.51	£1,533.49	22%	£436.51
Pension	£500.00		£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Payroll	£300.00		£84.00	£216.00	28%	£84.00
Home allowance, Travel & Costs	£500.00		£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Training inc. travel	£2,000.00		£120.00	£1,880.00	6%	£120.00
Office equip & stationery	£1,000.00		£0.00	£1,000.00	0%	£0.00
General Costs						
Computer & Other Digital Equipment	£500.00		£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Fixed asset maintenance	£2,000.00		£0.00	£2,000.00	0%	£0.00
Telephone & Internet	£0.00		£0.00	£0.00	#DIV/0!	£0.00
Elections/By-election	£2,500.00		£0.00	£2,500.00	0%	£0.00
Professional fees	£2,000.00		£194.47	£1,805.53	10%	£194.47
Hall Hire	£1,000.00		£50.00	£950.00	5%	£50.00
Insurance	£1,200.00		£0.00	£1,200.00	0%	£0.00
Subscriptions	£1,000.00		£0.00	£1,000.00	0%	£0.00
Councillor Training	£1,500.00		£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
Audit Fees	£750.00		£0.00	£750.00	0%	£0.00
Publications/newsletters	£1,500.00		£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
CCTV & Security	£1,500.00		£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
VAT			£421.12	-£421.12	#DIV/0!	£421.12
Community Support						
Community Events Support	£1,500.00		£541.67	£958.33	36%	£541.67
Kings Meni Bridge	£500.00		£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Kings Coronation	£500.00		£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Community Grants Awards (small)	£2,000.00		£0.00	£2,000.00	0%	£0.00
Community Lights Project	£4,700.00		£0.00	£4,700.00	0%	£0.00
Support Grants	£100.00		£0.00	£100.00	0%	£0.00
Projects						
Parish Plan	£5,000.00		£0.00	£5,000.00	0%	£0.00
D Day (from reserves) VE Day	£5,000.00		£0.00	£5,000.00	0%	£0.00
Contingency earmarked (from reserves)	£10,000.00		£0.00	£10,000.00	0%	£0.00
Community Projects earmarked (from reserves)	£30,000.00		£490.00	£29,510.00	2%	£490.00
Community Projects Play Area earmarked (from r	£25,000.00		£0.00	£25,000.00	0%	£0.00
Environmental Maintenance (From Reserves)	£10,000.00		£0.00	£10,000.00	0%	£0.00
Neighbourhood Plan (funded from reserves)	£10,000.00		£957.50	£9,042.50	10%	£957.50
EXPENDITURE TOTALS	**£136,235.00**	**£0.00**	**£4,031.61**	£132,203.39	3%	**£4,031.61**

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 12.11
Unity Trust Term Deposit

Background Information

At the Council meeting held on 26th March 2025 (Minute Reference: 41/2025/05), the Council resolved to transfer £50,000 from the Santander savings account to open a 12-month Fixed Term Deposit Account with Unity Trust Bank (UTB). The aim was to achieve a higher return on surplus funds while ensuring deposits remained protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS), which covers up to £85,000 per person, per banking group.

Following that decision, it has since come to light that Unity Trust Bank requires a minimum deposit of £85,000 to open any fixed-term deposit account. This requirement was not known at the time the report was presented, and the application for a fixed-term deposit could not be completed.

In the interim, the Council has successfully opened an Instant Access Savings Account with Unity Trust Bank, which is now ready to be funded. This account offers an interest rate of 2.25% gross and has no minimum deposit requirement.

Financial Position

The Santander current account holds sufficient funds to cover the Council's agreed budget and operational commitments through to April 2026, provided that no significant new capital projects are undertaken and the second half of the precept is received, as expected, in October.

In addition, the Council holds £85,265.57 in its Metro Bank account, which remains fully accessible. This provides flexibility should the Council wish to embark on longer-term or capital projects.

Therefore, locking away £85,000 in a fixed-term deposit would not adversely impact the Council's ability to deliver its agreed programme of work or respond to emerging opportunities, subject to normal budgetary oversight.

Interest Rate Comparison – 12 Months Fixed Term Accounts

The Clerk has investigated several providers of fixed term accounts, shown in the table below.

Account Type	Interest Rate (Gross)	Min. Deposit	Penalty	Comments
Co-op Bank Link here	3.84%	£1,000	Not permitted under any circumstances before maturity	Alternative provider
Metro Bank 1 Year Fixed Term Account Link here	3.45%	£500	No withdrawals or closures are permitted before the end of the term	Existing account held
Santander 1 Year Fixed Rate Business Bond Link here	2.50%	£10,000	An early withdrawal incurs a penalty equal to 3 months' interest on the amount withdrawn	Existing account held
Unity Bank 12 Month Fixed Term Account Link here	4.10%	£85,000	If early closure is permitted, the interest rate applied will be reduced to 2.25%	Existing account held. £24 CHAPS fee applies to outbound transfers

All listed banks are FSCS protected.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the following options:

1. Increase the deposit to £85,000 and proceed with opening a 12-month Fixed Term Deposit at Unity Trust Bank offering 4.10% interest, using funds from the Santander Business Saving account.
2. Retain the £50,000 in the Instant Access Savings Account at Unity Trust Bank (2.25% interest).
3. Explore the deposit options listed with Metro Bank, Santander, or The Co-operative Bank that:
    - Require lower deposit thresholds,
    - Offer competitive interest rates,
    - Are covered by the FSCS.

As the Council already banks with Metro Bank, Santander and Unity Trust Bank, it may be more expedient to place funds with an existing provider to avoid additional administrative processes and enable faster fund placement.

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 13
Internal Auditor 2025/26

Background Information

Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires smaller authorities like Noak Bridge Parish Council to conduct an annual internal audit. This audit must evaluate the effectiveness of the council's risk management, control and governance processes, adhering to public sector standards outlined in the Practitioners' Guide 2025 as published by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel.

Summary

The annual internal audit plays a vital role in ensuring the effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements and internal controls. It is considered good practice to appoint the internal auditor early in the civic year to allow sufficient time for planning, continuity, and timely delivery of the audit work.

The appointed internal auditor must be independent of the council and have the appropriate knowledge and competence in public sector finance and governance. According to Note 4.11 of the 2025 Practitioners' Guide, while there is no formal requirement to rotate auditors, the independence of the appointed individual or firm should be reviewed annually. This includes consideration of their personal, financial, and professional independence.

To ensure best value for the council, the Clerk has sought quotations from three experienced internal audit providers. The quotes received are summarised and attached to this report for consideration.

Auditor A - Based on your income/expenditure, whichever is the higher

- £245 - £25,001 - £50,000
- £285 – 50,001 - £100,000

Auditor B - £275.00

Auditor C - £187.50

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council consider the quotes provided and appoint and auditor to conduct the internal audit of the council for the 2025/26 financial year.

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 14

Parish Council Insurance

Background information

The Parish Council's insurance is due for renewal on 1st June 2025. The current insurance is provided through Clear Councils Insurance.

In the previous year (2024–25), the Council paid £1,038.29 for its insurance cover.

Summary

Quotes were sought from the following insurance providers:

1. Ecclesiastical (via Clear Councils Insurance Brokers)
2. Hiscox (via Gallagher Insurance Brokers)
3. Zurich Insurance

Quotes have now been received from all three providers. A cost and coverage comparison is included in the accompanying spreadsheet.

Key Points of Comparison

- **Clear Councils (Ecclesiastical)** provides a standard policy tailored for parish and town councils, offering blanket cover for a broad range of assets and liabilities. The quote received is **£1,177.86**.
- **Hiscox (via Gallagher)** offers a customised policy that insures only the assets held by the Council, potentially avoiding unnecessary costs. The quote received is **£984.45**, with an option to enter into a 3-year long-term agreement at the same rate.
- **Zurich** provides a competitive policy with comprehensive coverage, particularly in areas such as public liability and money cover. The quote is **£1,008.20** for a single year, or **£931.19** per year under a 3-year agreement.

Recommendation

Members are asked to review the quotes received and confirm their preferred insurance provider.

The Clerk recommends either Zurich or Hiscox as the most suitable options for the Council's insurance cover, with the following considerations:

- **Zurich** offers the most competitive rate over a 3-year period at **£931.19 per year**, along with strong coverage for public liability, money, and playground equipment.
- **Hiscox**, at **£984.45**, provides a tailored policy that avoids unnecessary coverage, potentially offering better value for councils with a well-defined asset register.

Both providers present high-quality options with long-term agreement benefits.

Members are encouraged to consider whether they prefer the broad and cost-effective approach of Zurich, or the more tailored and focused policy from Hiscox, depending on the Council's priorities for coverage and risk management.

Noak Bridge Parish Council Insurance Quote Comparison 2025

	Clear Councils	Hiscox Insurance	Zurich Insurance
Premium (Including Taxes)			
Cost of 2024-25 Cover	£1,038.29		
For one year 2025-26	£1,177.86	£984.45	£1,008.20
Cost for 2025-26 as 1st yr of a 3 yr agreement	-	£984.45	£931.19
Details of Cover			
All contents owned by the council	£7,500.00	£2,902.00	£2,909.00
Street Furniture	£20,000.00	£18,056.00	£18,056.00
Wall, gates and fences	£7,500.00	£7,242.00	£7,242.00
Monuments, Memorials and Statues	£20,000.00	£0.00	
Playground equipment (11-15 pieces)	£42,036.00	£29,933 * Playground Equipment	£46,449.00
CCTV	Included as street furniture	£1,336.00	£1,336.00
Defibrillators	Included as street furniture	£4,904.00	£4,904.00
Ground surfaces	£25,856.00	£14,020 *Petanque Court	£0.00
Mowers and Machinery*	£5,000.00	£0.00	£0.00
Sports Equipment	£15,641.00	£2 496 * Goal posts	Included as Street Furniture
Fixed Outside Equipment	£0.00	£1,885.00	Included as Street Furniture
MONEY			
Loss of non-negotiable money	£250,000.00	£250,000.00	£250,000.00
Loss of other money	£5,000.00		
- in transit	£2,500 limit/vehicle	£1,000.00	£5,000.00
- in residence of member or employee	Insured	£1,000.00	£250.00
- in premises under supervision	Insured	£1,000.00	£5,000.00
- in locked safe	Insured		£5,000.00
- in locked recepticle	Insured		£250.00

Business Interruption Cover			
- Loss of Income	£10,000	£10,000	
- additional increased costs of working	£10,000	£10,000	
Public Liability	10,000,000	£10,000,000	£12,000,000
Employers liability	10,000,000	£10,000,000	£10,000,000
Reputational Risk			
Libel & Slander	Insured	£500,000	£250,000
Fidelity Guarantee (Fraud and Dishonesty)	£250,000	£100,000	£250,000
Personal Accident	Insured	£250,000	£100,000/£500 PW
Legal Expenses	250,000	£100,000	£200,000
Requirements	Safeguarding Policy and Procedures	Safeguarding Policy and Procedures	Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
	Training records	Training records	Training records
	Written risk assessments	Written risk assessments	Written risk assessments
Other Endorsements		Bespoke policy based on Council's assets.	Bespoke policy based on Council's assets.
		Premium includes a fixed rate agreement where the policy will renew on the same underlying rates as those used in the first year's quotation for a period of three years.	Premium includes a fixed rate agreement where the policy will renew on the same underlying rates as those used in the first year's quotation for a period of three years.

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Noak Bridge Parish Council Memberships and Subscriptions – 2025/26

Organisation Name
Association of Basildon Local Councils
Essex Association of Local Councils
Information Commissioners Office
National Association of Local Councils
Parish Online Mapping Software
Society of Local Council Clerks
Zoom Communications

Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25

Noak Bridge Parish Council

www.noakbridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2025, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2024/25 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✔		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✔		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✔		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✔		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✔		
F. Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.			✔
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✔		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✔		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✔		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✔		
K. **If** the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2023/24, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2023/24 AGAR tick "not covered")*			✔
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✔		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations *(during the 2024-25 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2023-24 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).*	✔		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2023/24 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✔		

O. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	Yes	No	Not applicable
			✔

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken: 21/05/2025

Name of person who carried out the internal audit: John P Watson & Co

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Date: 21/05/2025

***If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).**

******Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

John P Watson & Co

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Internal Audit Report 2024-25

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86 Southchurch Boulevard
Southend on Sea
Essex, SS2 4UZ

Introduction

Legislation introduced from 1st April 2001, requires all Town and Parish Councils to implement an independent internal audit examination of their accounts and accounting processes annually. The following report complies with these requirements.

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2024-25 financial year, during the course of the audit, which took place on 21st May 2025.

As detailed in the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practioners' Guide, it is not the purpose of either the Internal or External Audit to detect or prevent fraud.

Internal Audit Approach

The basis of the review is that regard should be given to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential misrecording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts/AGAR. The programme of cover has been designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council's financial systems remain robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective control of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to assist the completion of the 'Internal Audit Report' as part of the Council's AGAR process, which requires independent assurance over several internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

The quality of the records maintained by the Acting Clerk/RFO and the new Clerk/RFO is acknowledged and the new Clerk is thanked for her assistance during this internal audit review of the 2024-25 financial year, which has ensured the smooth progress of the work undertaken.

The 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the year's AGAR has been signed and dated having concluded that, in all significant respects, the Internal Control Objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard more than adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

1 Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations

a) **Objective**
To ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no incorrect or inexplicable entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers.

b) **Detail**

i. There are two bank accounts in operation with Santander Bank being the Business Account and the Business Savings Account. Additionally, a new bank account was opened with the Metro Bank on 18th December 2024.
ii. The Council maintains their accounting records by way of a detailed Excel spreadsheet which is more than adequate for a Council of this size.
iii. The opening cashbook balance for 2024-25 has been reconciled to the 2023-24 closing Statement of Accounts and the certified AGAR detail.
iv. VAT is identified separately in the spreadsheet.
v. All transactions in the cashbooks of the two Santander Bank Accounts and the Metro Bank Account have been checked for the year. All were complete and accurate and had been prepared in a timely manner.
vi. Bank Reconciliations were prepared on a regular basis. These have been checked and were complete and accurate.
vii. All accounts remained "in balance" at the end of the period under review.
viii. It is noted that the computers holding the Council records are backed up on a regular basis. It was suggested in the Internal Audit Report last year that a backup also be made to the Cloud. It is understood that the Clerk is investigating this.

c) **Conclusion**

i. It is suggested that a backup of the Council's computer system be made to the Cloud.

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2 Corporate Governance

a) Objective
To ensure that the Council has a robust regulatory framework in place, that Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and that, bearing in mind we do not attend Council or Committee meetings, no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation.

b) Detail

i. The Council Minutes have been reviewed for the year to date by reference to the Council's website and in hard copy format, to identify whether any issues arise that may have an adverse effect on the Council's future financial stability, either in the short, medium or longer term.
ii. Standing Orders nor Financial Regulations were reviewed by Council at their meeting on 21st May 2024 (minute 58/2024 refers).
iii. The Council has not adopted the General Power of Competence.
iv. The 2025/2026 precept was agreed in the amount of £41,276.54 at the Council meeting held on 31st January 2025 (minute 08/2025 refers.).
v. The Council provided for the proper opportunity for the exercise of public rights in respect of 2023/2024.

vi. Council are reminded that AGAR details must be retained on their website for a minimum of five years.

c) Conclusion

i. There are no matters to be commented on in this area of the Report.

3 Expenditure

a) Objective

To ensure that the Council follows good practice when making payments.

b) Detail

i. All payments for the year to 31st March 2025 were checked. Three payments were not supported by invoices and the Clerk is obtaining copies. It is recommended that invoices are retained in respect of all payments made.
ii. With three exceptions as reported in 3 b) i above, payments were supported by appropriate documentation, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due.
iii. All payments were approved by Council members as required with all payments being recorded in the minutes.
iv. All discounts due on goods and services were taken where appropriate.
v. With one exception VAT has been appropriately identified for periodic recovery. This exception has been discussed with the Clerk Clerk/RFO.
vi. A VAT repayment claim in the amount of £4,731.71 has been submitted to HMRC in respect of the year ending 31st March 2024, payment being received on 8th April 2024.
vii. It is noted that the Council holds a Debit Card which is rarely used. Any expenditure on this card is authorised as part of the payment authorisation process.
viii. It is noted that two Councillor have individual authority to submit online banking transactions but that these transactions are not verified by a separate Councillor. Clause 7.1 of Financial Regulations states “”a minimum of two Councillors will be involved in any online approval process”. It is again recommended that online banking transactions be verified by a second separate Councillor.

c) Conclusion

i. It is recommended that invoices are retained in respect of all payments made.
ii. It is recommended that online banking transactions be verified by a second separate Councillor

4 Risk

a) Objective

To ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks.

b) Detail

i. It is noted that Council reviewed their Risk Assessment at the Council meeting held on 21st May 2024 (minute 58/2024 refers).
ii. Council's insurance is with Clear for the year to 31st May 2025 with Employers and Public Liability being set at £10m and Fidelity Guarantee being set at £250k.
iii. It is understood that the Council owns a Petanque Court and Play Equipment. It is further understood that no inspections of these have been undertaken. Council are reminded that it is a requirement to carry out regular health and safety inspections of such areas and it is recommended that Council ensure that such inspections are carried out by a suitably trained person on a regular basis, that written reports are submitted to Council by that person and any remedial work is carried out without delay. Council is reminded that it is a statutory requirement to retain all playground inspection reports for a period of eighteen plus three years, twenty-one years in total, and to ensure that a reasonable and proportionate Play Area Management Policy is in maintained.
iv. It is also recommended that an appropriate RoSPA accredited Company be appointed to carry out annual inspections

c) Conclusion

i. It is recommended that Council ensure that inspections are carried out in the Play Area by a suitably trained person on a regular basis and that reports are submitted to Council by that person and any remedial work is carried out without delay.
ii. It is recommended that an appropriate RoSPA accredited Company be appointed to carry out annual inspections

5 Precept Determination

a) Objective

To ensure that the Council has the appropriate procedure in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and level of precept to be drawn down from the District Council.

b) Detail

i. Council discussed and agreed the detailed 2025/2026 budget at their meeting on 31st January 2025 (minute 08/2025 refers).
ii. As mentioned previously in this Report, the 2025/2026 precept was agreed in the amount of £41,276.54 at the Council meeting held on 31st January 2025 (minute 08/2025 refers).

c) Conclusion

i. There are no matters to be commented on in this area of the Report.

6 Budget Control

a) Objective

To ensure that Council has an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place and also to ensure that the Council retains appropriate funds in general and earmarked reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

b) Detail

i. Council are regularly provided with monthly budget reports.

ii. It is noted that Total Reserves as at 31st March 2025 are £202,631 of which £108,594 are Earmarked Reserves. The balance of General Reserves at £94,037 equates to over thirty five months average revenue expenditure which is well above the generally accepted guidelines of between three and six months average revenue expenditure.

iii. The year-end budget outturn has been reviewed for any significant unexplained variances with none in evidence.

c) Conclusion

i. There are no matters to be commented on in this area of the Report.

7 Income

a) Objective

To ensure that Council has appropriate procedures in place to ensure that all income due is identified, invoiced (if necessary), recovered and banked in a timely manner.

b) Detail

i. The main sources of income available to the Council are the precept, VAT repayments, bank interest and occasional grants and donations.

ii. All income has been verified by reference to the cash book with no issues arising.

c) Conclusion

i. There are no matters to be commented on in this area of the Report.

8 Petty Cash

a) Objective

To ensure that the Council follows good practice when making cash payments.

b) Detail

The Parish Council does not hold Petty Cash.

c) Conclusion

There are no matters to be commented on in this area of the Report.

9 Salaries

a) Objectives

To confirm that current Employment Law is being appropriately observed together with the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions, together with meeting the requirements of the revised local government pension scheme, to which employees contribute.

b) Detail.

i. The Council did not employ a paid Clerk/RFO until the new Clerk/RFO was appointed on 27th January 2025.
ii. Payroll calculations are provided by an external payroll provider.
iii. The payroll has been checked for the months of March 2025 with no issues arising.
iv. Council agreed at their meeting on 26th February 2025 that the Clerk/RFO should be enrolled in the NEST Pension Scheme (minute 21/2025/05 refers).
v. It is noted that, as at the year end, no payments had been made to HMRC in respect of PAYE/NI deductions.

c) Conclusion

i. There are no matters to be commented on in this area of the Report.

10 Asset Register

a) Objective

To ensure that the Council develops and maintains a register of assets identifying detail of all land, buildings, vehicles, furniture and equipment owned by the Council as required by the Governance and Accountability Manual.

b) Detail

i. The Council maintains a detailed formal Asset Register which has been prepared using purchase cost uplifted or decreased to reflect the acquisition or disposal of any assets (where applicable) during the financial year.
ii. It is noted that a photographic record of the Council's Assets is retained.
iii. Council approved the Asset Register at their meeting on 21st May 2025 (minute 58/2024 refers).
iv. It is confirmed that the correct Asset value has been reflected in the 2025 AGAR.

c) Conclusion

i. There are no matters to be commented on in this rea of the Report.

11 Investments and Loans

a) Objective

To ensure that the Council is "investing" surplus funds, be they held temporarily or on a longer term basis in appropriate banking and investment accounts; that an appropriate investment policy is in place; that the Council is obtaining the best rate of return on any such investments made; that interest earned is brought to account correctly and appropriately in the accounting records and that any loan repayments due to or payable by the Council are transacted in accordance with appropriate loan agreements.

b) Detail

i. Council holds no long-term investments, an interest bearing account being held at the Santander Bank.
ii. Council approved their Investment Policy at their meeting on 26th February 2025 (minute 22/2025/01 refers).
iii. It has previously been recommended that Council take note of the government's Financial Services Compensation Scheme which gives a

maximum level of protection of £85,000 invested in one institution. It is understood that Council have opened an account with Unity Bank.

iv. Council does not have any loans with external bodies repayable by or to it.

c) Conclusion

i. It is recommended that Council take note of the government's Financial Services Compensation Scheme which gives a maximum level of protection of £85,000 invested in one institution.

12 Statement of Account and AGAR

a) Objective

To ensure Council meets the requirements of the 1996 Accounts and Audit Regulations in that they must prepare annually a detailed Statement of Accounts, together with supporting statements identifying other aspects of the Council's financial affairs.

b) Detail

i. The accuracy of detail contained in the above documentation has been verified.

ii. The reports have been checked against prime documentation, and it is confirmed that the Council's accounting reports accurately records the 2024-25 financial year's transactions.

iii. As previously mentioned in this Report, Council are reminded that AGAR Sections 1, 2 and 3 should be retained on their website for a minimum of five years.

c) Conclusion

i. There are no matters arising in this area of our review warranting formal comment or recommendation and, on the basis of the work undertaken during the course of the review for the year, the Internal Audit Certificate in the Annual Return has been completed and signed assigning positive assurances in all areas.

21st May 2025

Proposed Action Plan

This action plan outlines the Council's response to the internal auditor’s recommendations and sets out the steps to ensure compliance and good governance.

Ref	Recommendation	Action Required	Responsible Person	Target Date	Notes
1.1	Backup Council records to the Cloud	Investigate and implement a secure, automated Cloud backup system for Council digital records, with regular backup schedules.	Clerk	By July 2025	Raised in previous audit
3.1	Retain invoices for all payments made	Ensure that every payment is supported by a corresponding invoice or valid supporting documentation and properly filed (digital or hard copy).	Clerk	Immediate	3 invoices missing in 2024–25
3.2	Online banking to be verified by a second Councillor	Implement dual authorisation for online payments in line with Financial Regulations (Clause 7.1); maintain an audit trail.	Council	By July 2025	Clause 7.1 of Financial Regs
4.1	Regular inspections of the Pétanque Court and playground equipment.	Clerk to prepare an inspection template. Lead Councillor to carry out monthly inspections with written records submitted to the Clerk.	Clerk / Lead Councillor	Start July 2025	Inspection records to be retained 21 years
4.2	Annual play area inspection by RoSPA-accredited company	Obtain quotes and appoint a RoSPA-accredited inspector to carry out and report on annual inspections.	Clerk	By October 2025	Legal and safety requirement

6.1	Value of general reserves exceeds guidelines	Reduce the level of general reserves to £22k, in line with guidelines to hold between 3 and 6 months of average expenditure. Funds could be allocated to earmarked reserves for specific projects.	Council	By March 2026	Joint Panel of Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioners Guide Section 5.34
9.1	Payments had not been made to HMRC in respect of PAYE/NI deductions	Direct Debit approved. HMRC deducted Q4 2024/25 payment on the 25th April 2025.	n/a		No further action necessary
11.1	Financial Services Compensation Scheme (£85,000 limit)	Review Council funds and ensure no more than £85,000 is held with any single banking group; consider spreading funds for protection.	Council	By July 2025	Consider using multiple institutions or public sector deposit fund options

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

We acknowledge as the members of:

Noak Bridge Parish Council ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		*prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.*
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		*made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.*
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		*has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.*
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		*during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.*
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		*considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.*
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		*arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.*
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		*responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.*
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		*disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.*
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A — *has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.*
			✓

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

DD/MM/YYYY

and recorded as minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk SIGNATURE REQUIRED

https://e-voice.org.uk/noakbridgepc/ AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

Noak Bridge Parish Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	*Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.*
1. Balances brought forward	171,790	186,795	*Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.*
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	42,040	41,320	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	6,070	6,664	*Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.*
4. (-) Staff costs	0	1,592	*Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.*
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	*Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).*
6. (-) All other payments	33,105	30,556	*Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).*
7. (=) Balances carried forward	186,795	202,631	*Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).*
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	186,795	202,631	*The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – **To agree with bank reconciliation.***
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	82,066	79,539	*The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.*
10. Total borrowings	0	0	*The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).*

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)		✓		*The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.*
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)			✓	*The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date 21/05/2025

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

CONFIRMATION OF THE DATES OF THE PERIOD FOR THE EXERCISE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS

This form is only for use by smaller authorities subject to a review and should not be published on your website

Please submit this form to PKF Littlejohn LLP with the AGAR Form 3 and other requested documentation

Name of smaller authority: **Noak Bridge Parish Council**

County Area (local councils and parish meetings only): **Essex**

On behalf of the smaller authority, I confirm that the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights are as follows:

Commencing on: **Tuesday 3rd June 2025**

and ending on: **Monday 14th July 2025**

(Please enter the dates set by the smaller authority as appropriate which must be 30 working days (i.e. Monday – Friday only, and not Bank Holidays) inclusive and must include the first 10 working days of July 2025 (i.e. Tuesday 1 July – Monday 14 July). The period should not commence before the approval of the AGAR.

We have suggested the following dates: Tuesday 3 June – Monday 14 July 2025 The latest possible dates that comply with the statutory requirements are Tuesday 1 July – Monday 11 August 2025.)

Signed: 

Role: Clerk and RFO Noak Bridge Parish Council

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 18.3

Delegated Authority to Respond to Planning Applications

Background Information

As a statutory consultee, the Parish Council is required to respond to planning applications submitted within its parish boundary. Typically, there is a 28-day consultation window from the date an application is validated by the planning authority. However, there are times throughout the year when the Parish Council does not meet namely, April, August, and December, making it difficult to respond within the designated timeframe.

Recently, two applications were received outside the usual meeting schedule, requiring the Clerk to request deadline extensions from Basildon Borough Council. While these requests were granted, there is no guarantee that future extensions will be approved, which risks the Council being unable to submit a response at all.

Summary

To ensure that the Council can respond in a timely manner to all planning applications, it is proposed that the Clerk be granted delegated authority to submit comments on behalf of the Parish Council when applications are received outside the meeting cycle and where an additional meeting is not considered necessary.

The process would be as follows:

1. Upon receipt of a planning application, the Clerk will circulate the details, including links to the application and plans, to all councillors.
2. Councillors will be asked to provide comments by a set deadline, allowing the Clerk to prepare and submit a response based on the majority view.
3. For transparency, any planning applications responded to under this delegated authority will be listed as a standing item on the next available agenda, with a note of the Council's agreed response.
4. This delegation would apply only to non-controversial or routine applications (e.g., replacement windows, minor extensions). Any application deemed significant or sensitive would still require discussion at a public meeting.

Recommendation

That the Council approve the delegation of authority to the Clerk to respond to planning applications received outside of meeting dates, following consultation with councillors, and only where an additional meeting is not deemed necessary.