Noak Bridge Parish Council

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

Date: Wednesday 20th May 2026

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

14th May 2026

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman
To elect the Chairman to serve for the 2026/27 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 25 March 2026, Minutes 29/2026 to 39/2026 inclusive (attached).

6. Appointment of Vice Chairman

To elect a Vice-Chairman to serve for the 2026/27 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 updates from Borough and County Councillors if in attendance.

9. General Power of Competence

To resolve that Noak Bridge Parish Council meets the criteria specified in paragraph 2 of the Parish Council's (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order and resolves, in accordance with Section 1 to adopt the Power. Report attached.

10. Council Memberships and Subscriptions

To review and confirm the Council's memberships and subscriptions for 2026/27. List attached.

11. Banking and Finance

11.1 Banknig Arrangements

To confirm the Council's existing bank accounts are held with Metro Bank, Santander and Unity Trust Bank.

11.2 Confirmation of Signatories to the Bank Accounts:

To confirm any changes to the current signatories on the Council's bank accounts. The Current signatories are:

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

11.3 To Appoint a Member to Review the Quarterly Bank Reconciliations

In accordance with Financial Regulation 2.6, to confirm which Member, other than the Chairman, will be responsible for verifying the bank reconciliations on a quarterly basis.

11.4 Financial Risk Assessment

To review and re-adopt the Parish Council's Financial Risk Assessment for 2026/27. Attached.

11.5 Statement of Internal Control

To review and re-adopt the Statement of Internal Control for 2026/27. Attached.

11.6 Deposits Received

To note deposits received into the Council's accounts since the 1st April 2026:

- VAT reclaim for 2025/26 of £4,066.34 deposited into the Unity Trust Bank account on the 14th April 2026.
- Interest payment of £287.10 deposited into the Santander Business Savings Account on the 27th April 2026.
- Interest payment of £44.50 deposited into the Metro Account on the 30th April 2026.
- The half year precept of £20,642.74 deposited into the Unity Trust Bank Account on the 1st April 2026.

11.7 Regular Payments

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

11.8 Accounts for Payment

To agree the accounts for payment for the period 1st April and 31st May 2026. Payment schedule attached.

11.9 Year End Bank Reconciliation

To receive and note the year end bank reconciliation to the 31st March 2026. Attached.

11.10 Monthly Bank Reconciliation

To receive and note the bank reconciliation to the 30th April 2026. Attached.

11.11 Budget Comparison

To receive and note the budget comparison to the 30th April 2026. Attached.

11.12 Investment Report.

To receive and note the 2025/26 Investment Report, in accordance with the adopted Investment Policy. Attached

12. Internal Auditor for the 2026/27 Financial Year

To appoint an internal auditor for 2026/27 financial year. Report attached.

13. Parish Council Insurance

To note the Parish Council's Insurance provider for the year 2026/27. Report attached.

14. Internal Auditor's Report

To receive, approve and note the Internal Auditor's Report and recommendations made. Attached.

15. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the Year Ending 31st March 2026

15.1 Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

To receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26. Attached.

15.2 Section 1 Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

To receive and approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and to authorise the Chairman and Clerk to sign the Annual Governance Statement. Attached.

15.3 Section 2 – Accounting Statement 2025/26

To receive and approve Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return and to authorise the Chairman and to sign the Accounting Statement. Attached.

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

To note the Period of Public Rights will commence on Wednesday 3rd June 2026 and end on Tuesday the 14th July 2026. Notice attached.

16. Policies and Procedures

16.1 Standing Orders

To review and re-adopt the Standing Orders without amendment. Sent separately.

16.2 Financial Regulations

To review and re-adopt Financial Regulations following a proposed amendment. Draft Financial Regulations sent separately. Report attached.

16.3 Neighbourhood Plan Committee

To consider the dissolution of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee following the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan. Report attached.

16.4 Review the Terms of Reference

To review the Terms of Reference for the Council's Personnel Committee. Attached.

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

a. Personnel Committee
b. Association of Basildon Local Councils (ABLC)

d. Local Councils Liaison Group (LCLG)

16.6 Councillor Roles and Responsibilities

To review and agree Members' roles and areas of responsibility for the municipal year 2026/27, and to consider whether councillors should continue to be allocated to all identified service areas.

Proposed areas of responsibility include:

a. Audit
b. CCTV
c. Defibrillators
d. Finance
e. Fixed Assets
f. Freedom of Information
g. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
h. Health and Safety
i. Neighbourhood Plan
j. Newsletter
k. Planning
l. Policy Review
m. Projects
n. Public Rights of Way (PRoW)
o. Website and Communications

16.7 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.

17. Planning

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

17.1.1 **26/00485/VAR** Variation of condition(s) 5 (Plan Numbers and documents) , 6 (Phasing Plan), 7 (Compliance with approved design code and design and access statement), and 27 (external materials) of approved planning consent 23/01551/OUT on land south of Wash Road. View planning application details.

17.2 To note planning decisions made by Basildon Borough Council

17.2.1 **26/00148/VAR** Variation of condition 2 (Approved plans) of planning reference 25/00263/FULL, to change the materials of the extension walls and roof to Anthracite Zinc (3372_L01B_Proposed Plans & 3372_L02B_Proposed Elevations). **Granted.**

17.2.2 25/01254/FULL Retention of installation of two external air conditioning condenser units to the side and rear elevations (retrospective) at 11 Sailing Green. **Granted.**

17.2.3 26/00235/LDCP To establish the lawfulness of a proposed single storey rear extension at 60 Lower Street. **Granted.**

18. Environment

18.1 Parish Council Defibrillator Servicing

To receive advice from Wel Medical regarding service checks of the defibrillators. Report attached.

18.2 Verges in the Village

To discuss the condition of verges within the village.

18.3 Handyman Taks

To approve any quotes obtained for areas requiring improvement in the village.

18.4 Fore Street Green Planting Project

To receive an update and consider the scope and potential support for a planting project on Fore Street Green. Report attached.

19. Correspondence

To note correspondence received.

20. Date of Next Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on the 17 June 2026.

21. Chairman to Close the Meeting

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Minutes

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

Wednesday 25 March 2026 @ 7.00pm

Present

Chairman:	Cllr M Cottrell
Councillors:	Cllr C Bateman, Cllr P Daft, Cllr J Dowton and Cllr T Sargent
In attendance:	Lynda Townend (Clerk) and 3 members of the public.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

29/2026 Apologies for Absence
Apologies were received from Cllrs L Gilliam and P Hawkins.

Basildon Borough Councillors Meyers and Allen and Essex County Councillors Ball and Buckley were unable to attend the meeting.

30/2026 Declarations of Interest
To receive any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Pecuniary Interests or Non-pecuniary Interests by Members relating to any agenda items.

No other Declarations of Interest were made.

31/2026 Minutes
Members reviewed the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on the 25 February 2026, Minutes 15/2026 to 28/2026 inclusive.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2026 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

32/2026 Public Participation Session
A member of the public advised the boardwalk in the nature reserve had now been completed and the gates had been painted.

A member of the public advised notices of interest to the village could be affixed to the new notice board.

The Clerk advised Noak Bridge Litter Pickers had been in touch with a request for funding support.

Resolved: That the Clerk will advise the Noak Bridge Litter Pickers to complete a grant application form for the Council to consider.

33/2026 Borough and County Councillor Reports

Cllr Sargent, in her capacity as a Borough Councillor, provided an update to the Council on Borough matters, including:

- The Secretary of State had announced the formation for Greater Essex under their plans for Local Government Reorganisation. It has been decided that Greater Essex which will be divided into five Unitary Authorities. Basildon will be grouped with Thurrock in the South-West Essex Council.
- Concerns remain regarding Thurrock's debt and how that will be managed.
- Elections in May 2027 will be for the new Unitary Authorities.
- The election for the Mayor of Greater Essex will take place in May 2028.
- Both Cllr Sargent and Cllr Cottrell attended Basildon Borough Council's Planning Committee meeting held on the 11 March 2026, where the Benson's Farm housing development was given approval. Cllrs Cottrell and Sargent both spoke at the meeting, opposing the development.
- Basildon Borough Council has purchased the Town Square.
- The Local Council Liaison Group meeting, scheduled to take place on the 19 April 2026, was postponed as the meeting would have been held during the pre-election period.
- The Association of Basildon Local Councils (ABLC) meeting, due to take place on 19 March 2026, will be rescheduled due to the meeting being inquorate.
- The village hall will be used as a polling station for the Borough and County elections taking place on the 7 May 2026.

34/2026 Finance

34/2026/01 Accounts for Payment

The Council received and approved the following accounts for payment:

Date	*Supplier*	*Item*	*Net*	*VAT*	*Total*
02/03/2026	Friends of Noak Bridge	Grant agreed	139.00	-	139.00
02/03/2026	Basildon Council	Tommy Bench installation	2,142.95	-	2,142.95
26/03/2026	Peter Thomas	Handyman works Jan and Feb '26	1,700.00	340.00	2,040.00
`25/03/2026	L Townend	March staffing costs	1,080.47	-	1,080.47
28/02/2026	VCS Websites Ltd	Website hosting Feb 26 to Feb 27	283.00	-	283.00
26/03/2026	NBCA	Hall hire - 25th March 2026	50.00	-	50.00
31/03/2026	Unity Trust Bank	February service charge	7.00	-	7.00
23/03/2026	Solopress	Printing spring newsletter	172.21	-	172.21
		TOTAL	**5,574.63**	**340.00**	**5,914.63**

Resolved: That the accounts for payment, listed above, for the period 1 to 31 March, be approved.

Cllr Sargent enquired about an outstanding invoice for works on Coppice Lane Pond.

Resolved: That £3,000 will be moved to earmarked reserves for works to Coppice Lane Pond.

34/2026/02 Bank Reconciliation

The Council **received and noted** the bank reconciliation report to the to the 28 February 2026.

34/2026/03 Monthly Budget Report

The Council **received and noted** the budget comparison to the 28 February 2026. It was highlighted the council had spent £59,071.68 representing 43% of the annual expenditure budget. This represents 143% of the annual precept.

34/2026/04 Santander Bank Mandate

Cllr Sargent confirmed the ex-councillor is not a signatory on the Santander Business Savings account. No further action is needed.

34/2026/05 Fixed Asset Register

Members received the fixed asset register and agreed a value of assets totalling £50,956.44 for 2026/27.

35/2026 Policies

35/2026/01 Budget and Virement Policy

The Council received and reviewed an updated Budget and Virement Policy.

An amendment to clause 4.2 was proposed.

Resolved: That clause 4.2 will be changed to 'Where variances indicate a material overspend or underspend, the RFO or Councillors may recommend, or request, virement to Full Council for approval.

Resolved: That Noak Bridge Parish Council adopt the updated Budget and Virement Policy, with the above amendment, which will be reviewed at least every three years unless a change in legislation occurs beforehand.

35/2026/02 Grant Funding Policy

The Council received and reviewed a Grant Funding Policy.

Resolved: That a Small Grant Policy be drafted for approval for grants under £500.

Resolved: That Noak Bridge Parish Council be adopt the Large Grant Funding policy, amending text so the policy only reflects grants between £500 and £5,000. The policy will be reviewed at least every three years.

35/2026/03 Councillor Co-option Policy

The Council received and reviewed a draft Councillor Co-option Policy.

Resolved: That an amendment is made to the 'Desirable Criteria' to include 'expenses incurred in your duties will be considered by the Council.'

Resolved: That Noak Bridge Parish Council adopt the Councillor Co-option Policy, with the above amendment, which will be reviewed at least every two years unless a change in legislation occurs beforehand.

36/2026 Planning

36/2026/01 Planning Applications Considered

36/2026/01/01 26/00171/FUL – Single storey side extension incorporating a roof lantern at 95 Crouch Street, Noak Bridge.

Resolved: That Noak Bridge Parish Council objects to the application as it considers that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the Noak Bridge Conservation Area and would fail to preserve or enhance its significance.

36/2026/02 Planning Decisions

36/2026/02/01 26/00002/S211 - 1 x Oak, Crown reduce by 2-3m to clear branch off building at 25 - 31 Kenilworth Place Lower Street Noak Bridge Basildon Essex. **Closed**

36/2026/02/02 26/00093/TPOBAS – T2 (Oak) of TPO/09/98 crown lift 3.95m above ground level. Crown reduction height reduced to 9m. Spread reduced by 4.5m at 65 Bridge Street, Noak Bridge. **Application Permitted.**

Cllr Daft left the meeting at 19:39
Cllr Daft returned to the meeting at 19:40

37/2026 Environment

37/2026/01 – Handyman Tasks

Members were given an update on works completed and tasks still outstanding. All approved works have now been completed with the exception of:

- Refurbishment of benches at Coppice Lane Pond

Further tasks were identified include:

1. The area outside the sheltered housing on Kenilworth Place
2. Overgrown shrubbery at the end of Lower Street
3. Overgrown shrubbery off Noak Hill Road
4. Bollard and verge repair on Bridgecote Lane

Resolved: That Cllr Dowton will contact the Contractor to confirm the works to enable quotes to be prepared for approval.

37/2026/02 – Hanging Basket Scheme

Members discussed the hanging basket scheme and the scope for 2026.

Resolved: That the Council will install a total of nine hanging baskets in the village:

- 4 x hanging baskets to be installed in Coppice Lane, removing the basket which had been located outside the school due to poor growth.
- Install 1 x hanging basket on the lamp post on the mound, near the village sign
- Insall 2 x hanging baskets in Bridge Street.

Cllr Dowton left the meeting at 20:04
Cllr Dowton returned to the meeting at 20:06

38/2026 Correspondence

No correspondence was received.

39/2026 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be the Annual Parish Council meeting which will be held on the 15 April 2026.

Next Parish Council meeting will be held on the 20 May 2026.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20:07

Signed:_________________________________ Date:____________________
Chairman

[Return to Agenda](#)

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 11

General Power of Competence

Background information

At the Parish Council meeting held on 26 February 2025 (Minute Reference 18/2025), Members considered a report on the adoption of the General Power of Competence (GPC) and resolved to defer the decision.

Since that time, the Council has continued to operate using existing statutory powers, including Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, which places limitations on certain types of expenditure and activities.

The purpose of this report is to revisit the matter, provide further clarification, and address any concerns Members may have had regarding the implications of adopting the GPC.

Under the Localism Act 2011[1], eligible local councils may adopt the GPC, which provides a broad power "to do anything that individuals generally may do," subject to existing laws and statutory restrictions.

Summary

The General Power of Competence is designed to simplify and broaden the Council's ability to act in the best interests of the community. It replaces the need to rely on a range of specific statutory powers and, in particular, reduces reliance on Section 137, which has spending limits and narrower scope.

Key points for Members to note:

- **No additional obligations imposed:**
  Adoption of the GPC does **not** require the Council to take on any new services or responsibilities. In particular, it does **not** allow Basildon Borough Council (or any other authority) to transfer or "foist" services onto the Parish Council. Any decision to take on new services remains entirely at the discretion of Members.

- **Existing safeguards remain in place:**
  The Council must still:
  - Act lawfully and within statutory limits
  - Comply with all relevant legislation and guidance
  - Act reasonably and in the public interest
  - Seek permissions where required (e.g. from highways authorities for verge works)
  - Respect the statutory responsibilities of other authorities

[1] Localism Act 2011

- **Eligibility criteria:**
  The Council meets the prescribed conditions, as defined in paragraph 2 of the Parish Council's (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012[2], namely:
  - At least two-thirds of Members are elected (5 out of 7 seats)
  - The Clerk holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA)
  - The Clerk has completed the relevant training
- **Ongoing requirement:**
  If adopted, the Council must confirm its eligibility at the relevant Annual Meeting following an ordinary election. If eligibility is lost, the Council must formally resolve to cease using the GPC, although any existing projects may continue.

In practical terms, adopting the GPC does not change what the Council must do, it simply provides more freedom in what it **may choose** to do, should Members wish to do so.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the information provided and to resolve:

"That Noak Bridge Parish Council confirms that it meets the criteria specified in paragraph 2 of the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 and resolves, in accordance with Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, to adopt the General Power of Competence until the next relevant Annual Meeting following an ordinary election."

Return to Agenda

[2] The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Noak Bridge Parish Council Memberships and Subscriptions – 2026/27

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

Return to Agenda

Noak Bridge Parish Council Risk Assessment 2026/27

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 professional bodies such as the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) or Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) 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 professional bodies such as 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 professional bodies such as 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. At each Council meeting invoices awaiting approval are considered and approved by Council and recorded in the minutes.	Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required.

			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. • Progress against the action plan is monitored and reviewed at subsequent meetings until all actions are completed.	Financial Regulations to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and updated as and when required. Existing procedures are adequate.
Accounting	Non-compliance with statutory deadlines of the completion/approval/submission	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.

	of accounts and other financial returns			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	Existing procedures are adequate.

			of the conditions and any time frames regarding the conditions which the council must satisfy and present this to the council.	
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. If problems occur with a contract the lead Cllr to investigate the situation and report to the Council.	Existing procedures are adequate
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	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.	Financial Regulations and Standing Orders to be reviewed by the Council on an annual basis and

	Health and Safety Loss of Clerk/RFO	L L	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.	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	Accuracy and Legality	L	Minutes and Agendas are produced in the prescribed manner by the Clerk or lead councillor and adhere to the legal requirements.	Existing Procedures adequate

Statutory Notices Documents	Business Conduct	L L L	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	
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 professional bodies such as 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 Cost Fidelity Guarantee	L	An annual review is undertaken of all insurance arrangements. Cost budgeted for on an annual basis. Employers and Employee liabilities a necessity and within policies. Ensue compliance measures are in place. Fidelity checks and insurance in place	Existing procedures adequate.
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.	Existing procedures adequate.

			Expenditure related to repairs are actioned/authorised in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations.	
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.

[Return to Agenda](#)

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL
STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL

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. The document was reviewed by the Council on the 24th May 2025.

3. THE INTERNAL CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

The Council:

The Council annually appoints 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. The Clerk raises the payments which are subsequently verified and approved by two Members of the Council.

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: 24th May 2024 Review date May 2026

[Return to Agenda]

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Noak Bridge Parish Council Regular Payments – 2026/27

Description	Frequency
Clerk's salary, expenses and pension contributions	Monthly
Essex Association of Local Councils	Annually
HMRC payments	Quarterly by Direct Debit
Information Commissioners Office	Annually
Noak Bridge Community Association – Hall Hire	Monthly
Peter Thomas Landscaping – Approved works only	When invoiced
Unity Trust Bank – bank charges	Monthly by Direct Debit

Return to Agenda

PAYMENTS

APRIL	Ref	Desc 2	Total	VAT	Net
20/04/2026	Howard Shillingford	Grant	**£306.33**	£0.00	£306.33
20/04/2026	John P Watson	Internal audit fee	**£187.50**	£0.00	£187.50
20/04/2026	DM Payroll	Payroll processing	**£144.00**	£24.00	£120.00
20/04/2026	NBCA	Hall Hire 15 April 2026 - Inv 40	**£50.00**	£0.00	£50.00
23/04/2026	HMRC	Q4 PAYE costs	**£757.81**	£0.00	£757.81
24/04/2026	Lynda Townend	April salary	**£680.32**	£0.00	£680.32
24/04/2026	Lynda Townend	April expenses	**£33.48**	£0.00	£33.48
24/04/2026	Lynda Townend	April expenses	**£21.00**	£0.00	£21.00
31/07/2026	HMRC	April PAYE costs	**£251.85**	£0.00	£251.85
24/04/2026	Nest Pensions	April submission	**£62.72**	£0.00	£62.72
30/04/2026	Unity Trust Bank	March service charge	**£7.00**	£0.00	£7.00
APRIL TOTAL			**£2,502.01**	**£24.00**	**£2,478.01**
MAY	**Ref**	**Desc 2**	**Total**	**VAT**	**Net**
21/05/2026	Zurich Muncipal	2026/27 insurance	**£754.26**	£0.00	£754.26
21/05/2026	SLCC	2026/27 membership	**£98.54**	£0.00	£98.54
21/05/2026	EALC	2026/27 membership	**£0.00**	£0.00	£0.00
28/05/2026	Lynda Townend	May salary	**£680.12**	£0.00	£680.12
29/05/2026	Lynda Townend	May expenses	**£20.98**	£0.00	£20.98
30/05/2026	Lynda Townend	May expenses	**£11.40**	£0.00	£11.40
31/07/2026	HMRC	May PAYE costs	**£252.05**	£0.00	£252.05
01/06/2026	Nest Pensions	May submission	**£62.70**	£0.00	£62.70
31/05/2026	Unity Trust Bank	April service charge	**£7.00**	£0.00	£7.00
MAY TOTAL			**£1,887.05**	**£0.00**	**£1,887.05**

Return to Agenda

YEAR END BANK RECONCILIATION TO 31ST MARCH 2026

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Bank Reconciliation to 31st March 2026

Month		31 March 2026
Balance per bank statements		
Business Account		£0.00
Business Savings Santander		£18,001.16
Business Savings Metro		£72,183.85
Unity Trust Bank 12 Month Deposit Account		£85,000.00
Unity Current Account		£16,719.24
	TOTAL IN BANK	**£191,904.25**
Monthly activity		**Metro Bank Account**
Opening Balance brought forward February 2026		£72,137.90
Less Payments for March		£0.00
Plus Receipts for March		£45.95
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£72,183.85
		Santander Business Savings Account
Opening Balance brought forward February 2026		£18,001.16
Less Payments for March		£0.00
Plus Receipts for March		£0.00
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£18,001.16
		Unity Trust Current Account
Opening Balance brought forward February 2026		£24,244.89
Less Payments for March		£7,525.65
Plus Receipts for March		£0.00
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£16,719.24
		Unity Trust Fixed Rate Account
Opening Balance brought forward February 2026		£85,000.00
Less Payments for March		£0.00
Plus Receipts for March		£0.00
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£85,000.00
	CLOSING BALANCE	**£191,904.25**
	Difference	£0.00

Return to Agenda

BANK RECONCILIATION TO 30TH APRIL 2026

Bank Balance as at	**30.04.2026**	
Metro Bank	£ 72,228.35	
Santander Business Saving Account	£ 18,288.26	
Unity Trust Current Account	£ 39,178.16	
Unity Trust Fixed Term Account	£ 85,000.00	
Total:	**£ 214,694.77**	
Less Unpresented cheques	£ 251.85	
Total of unpresented /Rec. Receipts	£ 251.85	
Net Bank Balances as at	**£ 214,442.92**	
CASH BOOK		
Balance as at 01.04.26	£ 191,904.25	
Plus Receipts Metro account	£ 44.50	
Plus Receipts Bus. Saving account	£ 287.10	
Plus Receipts Unity Trust Bank	£ 24,709.08	
Plus Receipts Unity Fixed Term Account	£ -	
Total	**£ 216,944.93**	
Less Payments	£ 2,502.01	
Grand Total	**£ 214,442.92**	
Difference	**£ 0.00**	
	Actual	

Return to Agenda

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Bank Reconciliation

Month	**30 April 2026**
Balance per bank statements	
Metro Bank Account	£72,228.35
Santander Business Savings	£18,288.26
Unity Current Account	£39,178.16
Unity Trust Bank 12 Month Deposit Account	£85,000.00
TOTAL IN BANK	**£214,694.77**

Monthly activity	**Metro Bank Account**	
Opening Balance brought forward March 2026		£72,183.85
Less Payments for March		£0.00
Plus Receipts for March		£44.50
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£72,228.35
	Santander Business Savings Account	
Opening Balance brought forward February 2026		£18,001.16
Less Payments for March		£0.00
Plus Receipts for March		£287.10
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£18,288.26
	Unity Trust Bank Account	
Opening Balance brought forward February 2026		£16,719.24
Less Payments for March		£2,250.16
Plus Receipts for March		£24,709.08
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£39,178.16
	Unity Trust Fixed Term Deposit Account	
Opening Balance brought forward February 2026		£85,000.00
Less Payments for March		£0.00
Plus Receipts for March		£0.00
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques		£0.00
		£85,000.00
	CLOSING BALANCE	**£214,694.77**
	Difference	£0.00

Return to Agenda

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL	MONTHLY BUDGET REPORT
Month	APRIL 2026

INCOME	Budget	Actual (to date)	Variance (+/-)	
Precept	£41,285.47	£20,642.74	-£20,642.73	* First payment 01/04/26
LCTS Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
CIF Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
Interest	£0.00	£331.60	£331.60	
Event Income	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
Miscellaneous	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
- VAT reclaim 25/04/2025	£0.00	£4,066.34	£4,066.34	
- VAT reclaim	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	
- VAT reclaim				
INCOME TOTALS	**£41,285.47**	**£25,040.68**	**-£16,244.79**	

EXPENDITURE	Budget	Total spent to 30/04/25	Variance (+/-)	Percentage spent	Expenditure in month
Staff Costs					
Salaries	£8,570.52	£680.32	£7,890.20	8%	£680.32
Tax & Employer NI	£3,199.68	£757.81	£2,441.87	24%	£757.81
Pension	£790.00	£62.72	£727.28	8%	£62.72
Payroll	£120.00	£120.00	£0.00	100%	£120.00
Home allowance, Travel & Costs	£652.00	£33.48	£618.52	5%	£33.48
Training inc. travel	£150.00	£0.00	£150.00	0%	£0.00
Office equip & stationery	£1,000.00	£21.00	£979.00	2%	£21.00
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	£0.00	£2,000.00	0%	£0.00
Hall Hire	£600.00	£0.00	£600.00	0%	£0.00
Insurance	£1,000.00	£0.00	£1,000.00	0%	£0.00
Subscriptions	£1,219.00	£0.00	£1,219.00	0%	£0.00
Councillor Training	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
Audit Fees	£515.00	£187.50	£327.50	36%	£187.50
Bank Charges	£204.00	£7.00	£197.00	3%	£7.00
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		£24.00	-£24.00	#DIV/0!	£24.00
Community Support					
Community Events Support	£1,400.00	£306.33	£1,093.67	22%	£306.33
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	£7,000.00	£0.00	£7,000.00	0%	£0.00
Support Grants	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Projects					
Parish Plan	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	#DIV/0!	£0.00
D Day (from reserves) VE Day	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	0%	£0.00
Contingency earmarked (from reserves)	£10,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	0%	£0.00
Community Projects earmarked (from reserves)	£33,000.00	£0.00	£33,000.00	0%	£0.00
Community Projects Play Area earmarked (from reserves)	£25,000.00	£0.00	£25,000.00	0%	£0.00
Environmental Maintenance (From Reserves)	£18,048.00	£0.00	£18,048.00	0%	£0.00
Neighbourhood Plan (funded from reserves)	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
Noak Bridge Pond	£5,000.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	0%	£0.00
Nature Reserve/Gates	£5,000.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	0%	£0.00
Duck Trail	£3,000.00	£0.00	£3,000.00	0%	£0.00
Gym equipment	£10,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	0%	£0.00
Phone Kiosk/Little Libraries	£6,000.00	£0.00	£6,000.00	0%	£0.00
EXPENDITURE TOTALS	**£159,968.20**	**£2,200.16**	£157,768.04	**1%**	**£2,200.16**
PRECEPT TOTALS	**£41,285.47**	**£2,200.16**		**5%**	

Return to Agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 11.12

2025/26 Investment Report

Background Information

Under the Council's current Investment Policy, the Responsible Financial Officer is required to report annually on the Council's investment activity. The policy is aligned with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance (JPAG) Practitioner's Guide (2024).

The Council's investment priorities are the security of funds, liquidity, and achieving an appropriate return.

Summary of Investment Activity

As at 31 March 2026, the Council held funds across four accounts as follows:

1. Santander Business Savings Account
   Balance: £18,001.16
   Interest rate: 0.80%

2. Metro Bank Community Instant Access Account
   Balance: £72,183.85
   Interest rate: 0.75%

3. Unity Trust Bank – 12 Month Fixed Rate Deposit
   Balance: £85,000.00
   Interest rate: 4.10%
   Maturity date: June 2026

4. Unity Trust Bank – Current Account
   Balance: £16,719.24

Total funds held: £191,904.25

Performance and Compliance

- All investments have been held in sterling and with UK regulated financial institutions, in line with the Council's Investment Policy.
- The Council has maintained high levels of liquidity, with a significant proportion of funds held in instant access accounts to meet operational needs.
- The fixed-term deposit with Unity Trust Bank has provided a higher rate of return (4.10%), demonstrating a balanced approach between liquidity and yield.
- No non-specified or higher-risk investments have been undertaken.

- The Council has therefore complied with its Investment Policy throughout the financial year.

Review of Investment Strategy

During the year, the Responsible Financial Officer identified that a significant proportion of funds held in the Metro Bank account were attracting a relatively low rate of interest.

At its meeting on 25 February 2026 (Minute Ref: 21/2026/05), the Council agreed to transfer £50,000 to an alternative higher interest account. Subsequently, the proposed account was no longer available to public authorities.

The matter was reconsidered at the Council meeting on 25 March 2026, where it was agreed to explore alternative savings options, demonstrating that the Council is actively seeking to optimise returns while maintaining appropriate levels of security and liquidity.

Outstanding Actions

To arrange and hold an informal meeting to:

- Review available savings and investment options
- Consider redistribution of funds to achieve improved returns

Recommendation

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Council proceeds with arranging an informal meeting to review investment options and agree any reallocation of funds.

Return to Agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 12
Internal Auditor 2026/27

Background Information

Regulation 5(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires smaller authorities, including Noak Bridge Parish Council, to undertake an annual internal audit. This audit must review the effectiveness of the council's systems of internal control, risk management, and governance arrangements.

The audit must be carried out in accordance with the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel guidance set out in the Practitioners' Guide 2025. The guidance confirms that while there is no requirement to rotate internal auditors, councils must review the independence and effectiveness of their internal audit arrangements annually.

Summary

The internal audit is a key component of the council's assurance framework, supporting compliance with statutory requirements and informing the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

It is good practice to appoint the internal auditor early in the civic year to ensure adequate planning and timely completion of audit work.

The appointed internal auditor must:

- Be **independent** of the council's decision-making processes
- Have appropriate **knowledge and competence** in local council governance and finance

In line with current guidance, the council should annually review the auditor's independence, including:

- Personal independence
- Financial independence
- Professional independence

The council should also be satisfied that its internal audit arrangements remain effective and fit for purpose.

To demonstrate good governance and value for money, the Clerk has obtained three quotations from suitably qualified and experienced providers. The quotes received are summarised below and full details are attached to this report:

Heelis and Lodge – Based on income/expenditure (whichever is higher):

£245 (£25,001 – £50,000)

£285 (£50,001 – £100,000)

Jan Stobart – no quote received

John Watson – £197.50

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council:

1. Consider the quotations received and appoint an internal auditor for the 2026/27 financial year; and
2. Confirm that it is satisfied that the appointed auditor is independent and that the council's internal audit arrangements are adequate and effective, in accordance with the *Practitioners' Guide 2025*.

Return to Agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 13

Council Insurance 2026/27

Background information

The Parish Council's current insurance cover with Zurich Insurance expires on 31 May 2026.

At the Council meeting held on 24 May 2025, Minute reference: 61/2025, the Council resolved to enter into a three-year agreement with Zurich Insurance, which is due to expire in May 2028.

The cost of the Council's insurance cover in the previous two financial years (including Insurance Premium Tax) was:

- **2024/25** – £1,038.29
- **2025/26** – £931.19

Members are asked to note that a refund of £123.70 was received in October 2025 following confirmation from Basildon Council that they were the rightful owners of the playground equipment. The playground equipment was subsequently removed from the Council's asset register, resulting in a reduction to the level of cover required.

Summary

The renewal quotation for the 2026/27 financial year has now been received at a cost of **£754.26**.

The policy schedule and associated documentation were circulated to Members on 9 April 2026.

The Clerk confirms that all Council assets are appropriately covered under the policy.

The policy provides cover for the following assets:

Recommendation

Members are requested to review the policy schedule and agree the renewal of the Council's insurance policy with Zurich Insurance at a cost of **£754.26** for the 2026/27 financial year.

[Return to Agenda](#)

John P Watson & Co

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Internal Audit Report 2025-26

---

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 2025-26 financial year, during the course of the audit, which was finalised on 10th April 2026.

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 Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer is acknowledged and the Clerk is thanked for her assistance during this internal audit review of the 2025-26 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 four bank accounts in operation being a Santander Bank Business Savings Account, a Metro Bank Business Savings Account, a Unity Trust Savings Account and a Unity Trust Current Account.
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 2025-26 has been reconciled to the 2024-25 closing Statement of Accounts and the certified AGAR detail.
iv. VAT is identified separately in the spreadsheet.
v. All transactions in the cashbooks of all bank accounts have been checked for the year. All were complete and accurate and had been prepared in a timely manner.
vi. It is noted that all bank accounts are maintained on the one spreadsheet. This is not good practice and it is **recommended** that separate spreadsheets are maintained for each bank account.
vii. It is also noted that expected payments due to HMRC and the Pension Provider are sometimes entered monthly although the payment are not made monthly. It is pointed out that the Council operates on a "Receipts and Payments" basis and that payments should only be reflected on the Excel Spreadsheet as they are made. It is **recommended** that this practice be discontinued.
viii. Bank Reconciliations were prepared on a regular basis. These have been checked and were complete and accurate.
ix. All accounts remained "in balance" at the end of the period under review.
x. It is noted that the computer(s) holding the Council records are backed up on a regular basis both to the Cloud and to an external drive.

c) **Conclusion**
i. It is **recommended** that separate spreadsheets are maintained for each bank account.
ii. It is **recommended** that payments are only entered on the Excel Spreadsheet as they are made.
.

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 (excluding planning matters) have been reviewed for the year 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 and Financial Regulations were reviewed by Council at their meeting on 28th May 2025 (minute 68/2025/1 & 2 refer).

iii. The Council has not adopted the General Power of Competence. It is noted that this was discussed at a Council meeting on 26th February 2025 and any decision deferred. It is **recommended** that this be discussed at a future meeting.

iv. The 2026/2027 precept was agreed in the amount of £41,216.20 (rounded to £41,285.47) at the Council meeting held on 31st January 2026 (minute 08/2026/06 refers.).

v. The Council provided for the proper opportunity for the exercise of public rights in respect of 2024/2025.

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

c) Conclusion

i. There it is **recommended** that adopting the General Power of Competence is discussed at a future Council meeting.

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 2026 were checked.

ii. All 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. VAT has been appropriately identified for periodic recovery.

vi. VAT repayment claims are submitted to HMRC on an annual basis, the claim for the year to 3st March 2026 being submitted post the year end

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 Councillors have individual authority to submit online banking transactions but that these transactions are still 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 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. Council reviewed their Risk Assessment at the Council meeting held on 28th May 2025 (minute 59/2025/3 refers). It is noted that the copy loaded on the website is not dated and it is **suggested** it is good practice to date such documents with the date approved and the details of the relevant minute in respect of that approval.

ii. Council's insurance is with Zurich Municipal for the year to 31st May 2026 with Employers Liability set at £10m, Public Liability being set at £12m and Fidelity Guarantee being set at £250k.

iii. It is understood that the Council owns a Petanque Court and that this property is inspected on a quarterly basis by a Councillor.

c) Conclusion

i. It is **suggested** that the Risk Management document loaded on the website be annotated with the date and details of the minute approving the document.

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 2026/2027 budget at their meeting on 21st January 2026 (minute 08/2026/06 refers).

ii. As mentioned previously in this Report, the 2026/2027 precept was agreed in the amount of £41,216.20 (rounded to £41,285.47) at the Council meeting held on 21st January 2026 (minute 08/2026/06 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 £191,904 of which £121,548 are Earmarked Reserves. The balance of General Reserves at £70,356 equates to over fourteen months average revenue expenditure which is 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. Payroll calculations are provided by an external payroll provider.
ii. The payroll has been checked for the months of April and December 2025 with no issues arising.

iii. The Personnel Committee agreed an increase in the SCP point awarder to the Clerk at their meeting on 7th August 2025 (minute 07/2025 refers).
iv. It is noted that regular payments are made to HMRC and the Pension provider although these payments have not been correctly entered in the spreadsheet (see 1.b.vii above).

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 25th March 2026 (minute 34/2026/05 refers).
iv. It is confirmed that the correct Asset value has been reflected in the 2026 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 but it is noted that a ninety five day account has been opened with Cambridge and Counties Bank during the year. It is understood that, post the decision being made to make this investment, Cambridge and Counties Bank changed their criteria preventing local authorities from applying. It is further understood that Council will address this issue going forward.
ii. Council last approved their Investment Policy at their meeting on 26th February 2025 (minute 22/2025/01 refers). It is **suggested** that the Investment Policy be approved annually.

iii. It has noted that, as recommended last year, Council have taken note of the government's Financial Services Compensation Scheme which gives a maximum level of protection of £120,000 invested in one institution.
iv. Council does not have any loans with external bodies repayable by or to it.

c) Conclusion
i. It is **suggested** that the Investment Policy be reviewed annually.

12 Digital and Data Compliance

a) Objective
To ensure that the Council are complying with the new digital and data requirements including official Council owned (.gov.uk) domain names for email, website accessibility (WCAG 2.2 AA) and formal data protection and IT practice policies are in place.

b) Detail
i. It is noted that Council are using dedicated Council owned domain names.
ii. It is further noted that Council meet Website Control Accessibility requirements meeting WCAG 2.2 AA standards.
iii. It is noted that the Council are registered with the Information Commissioner.
iv. Council have detailed IT and Data Management Policies in place.

c) Conclusion
i. There are no matters to be commented on is this area of the report.

13 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 2025-26 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.

10th April 2026 Return to Agenda

Internal Audit Recommendations and Actions

2025/26 Internal Audit 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	Separate spreadsheets are maintained for each bank account	Create separate spreadsheets for each bank account	Clerk	Completed 30/04/2026	
1.2	Payments only entered on the spreadsheet as they are made	Actual payments only to be entered onto cashbook when made	Clerk	Immediate	
2.1	Council to consider adopting the General Power of Competence	Include information on the next available agenda	Clerk/Council	May 2026	
3.1	Online Banking transactions to be verified by a separate councillor	Recommendation relates to both the Santander and Metro accounts. Clerk to add an agenda item for the council to consider options	Clerk/Council	August 2026	Clause 7.1 Financial Regulations state 'a minimum of two Councillors will be involved in any online approval process'.
4.1	Risk Management document loaded on the website be annotated with the date and details of the minute approving the document	Clerk to amend the document	Clerk	Completed 16/04/2026	
11.1	Investment policy to be reviewed annually	Include investment policy on the next available agenda	Clerk	May 2026	

Return to Agenda

Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Noak Bridge Parish Council

www.noakbridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2026, 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 2025/26 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. Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all 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 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. *(If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 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 2025/26 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2024-25 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 2024/25 AGAR *(see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).*	✔		
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.	✔		
	Yes	**No**	**Not applicable**
P. **(For local councils only)** Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✔

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: 10/04/2026

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

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

Date: 10/04/2026

***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).

Return to Agenda

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

Noak Bridge Parish Council

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 2026, that:

	Agreed Yes	Agreed No*	N/A	'Yes' means that this authority:
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 have assured 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.			✓	has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	✓			has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.

***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:

20/05/2026

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://www.noakbridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk/

Return to Agenda

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

Noak Bridge Parish Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	***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	186,795	202,631	*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	41,320	41,277	*Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.*
3. (+) Total other receipts	6,664	5,620	*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	1,592	11,528	*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	30,556	46,096	*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	202,631	191,904	*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	202,631	191,904	*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	79,539	50,956	*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	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?		✓	*For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.*

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 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 02/04/2026

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

20/05/2026

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

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

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Return to Agenda

Noak Bridge Parish Council

NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS AND PUBLICATION OF UNAUDITED ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 Sections 26 and 27
The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

NOTICE

1. Date of announcement: Tuesday 2nd Jun 2026

2. Each year the smaller authority's Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) needs to be reviewed by an external auditor appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd. The unaudited AGAR has been published with this notice. As it has yet to be reviewed by the appointed auditor, it is subject to change as a result of that review.
Any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested. For the year ended 31 March 2026, these documents will be available on reasonable notice by application to:

Lynda Townend
Clerk & RFO to the Parish Council

Address: Rosewood The Furze Main Road Mundon Essex CM9 6PU

Email: clerk@noakbridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

commencing on: **Wednesday 3 June 2026**

and ending on: **Tuesday 14 July 2026**

3. Local government electors and their representatives also have:

- The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and
- The right to make an objection which concerns a matter in respect of which the appointed auditor could either make a public interest report or apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the smaller authority.

The appointed auditor can be contacted at the address in paragraph 4 below for this purpose between the above dates only.

4. The smaller authority's AGAR is subject to review by the appointed auditor under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the NAO's Code of Audit Practice 2024. The appointed auditor is:

PKF Littlejohn LLP (Ref: SBA Team)
30 Churchill Place
London E14 5RE
(sba@pkf-l.com)

5. This announcement is made by: Lynda Townend Clerk & RFO

Return to Agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 16.2
Financial Regulations

Background Information

The Council's Financial Regulations are due for annual review and re-adoption.

Following the adoption of the Budget and Virement Policy (adopted 25th March 2026, Minute reference: 35/2026/01) best practice (current Smaller Authorities Proper Practices (SAPPP) Practitioners' Guide (2025) recommends key financial controls, including adopted policies and virements, should be refenced in the Council's Financial Regulations.

To address this, it is proposed that a new clause 4.11 be inserted into the Financial Regulations to formally reference the Council's adopted Budget and Virement Policy and clarify the approval and reporting arrangements for virements.

Summary

The proposed new clause 4.11 reads: *'Virements between approved budget headings shall only be made in accordance with the Council's adopted Virement Policy. All virements shall require Full Council approval and shall be recorded in the minutes. The RFO shall maintain a register of approved virements and include virement reporting within in-year budget monitoring statements'.*

The insertion of this clause:

- formally links the Financial Regulations to the Council's adopted Budget and Virement Policy;
- confirms that all virements require approval by Full Council;
- requires virements to be formally recorded in the minutes; and
- requires the RFO to maintain a record/register of approved virements and report them through budget monitoring arrangements.

The addition of the clause does not alter the Council's current governance approach or decision-making arrangements, but strengthens transparency, auditability and alignment with current SAPPP guidance and audit expectations.

Recommendation

That the Council:

1. Approves the insertion of new clause 4.11 relating to virements into the Financial Regulations; and
2. Re-adopts the amended Financial Regulations for the 2026/27 financial year.

[Return to Agenda]

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 16.3

Neighbourhood Plan Committee- Dissolution

Background Information

The Parish Council established the Neighbourhood Plan Committee to oversee and support the preparation of the Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan.

Following completion of the statutory neighbourhood planning process, the Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan was formally made in December 2025 and now forms part of the statutory development plan for the area.

As the primary purpose and objectives of the Committee have now been fulfilled, the Committee is no longer required.

Under Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972, parish councils have the power to establish committees and may also discontinue committees when no longer necessary.

Summary

The Council is asked to consider formally dissolving the Neighbourhood Plan Committee.

Should the Committee be dissolved:

- any remaining responsibilities relating to monitoring or reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan would revert to Full Council unless otherwise delegated;
- references to the Committee within council governance documents, website information and committee structures would be removed or updated accordingly;
- any remaining records or documents held by the Committee would be retained within the Council's records management arrangements.

A formal resolution of Full Council is considered good governance practice to ensure the Council's committee structure accurately reflects current operational requirements.

Recommendation

Members are recommended to resolve:

1. That the Neighbourhood Plan Committee be formally dissolved with immediate effect, its purpose having been fulfilled following the adoption of the Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan in December 2025; and

2. That all relevant Council records, governance documents and website information be updated accordingly.

[Return to Agenda]

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Personnel Committee to be made up of 3 councillors, membership of the Committee to be the Chairman of the Parish Council and 2 other councillors.

The Personnel Committee to have the following delegated powers:

(a) Interview to appoint staff to the Parish Council.

(b) Interview to co-opt prospective Parish Councillor vacancies.

(c) Carry out Annual Performance Appraisals of staff - structure to be agreed by Full Council in liaison with employees.

(i) The Clerk to complete the employee part of the form and send to the Personnel Committee members to review for their comments.
(ii) The Clerk and the Personnel Committee to meet and consider and review all the comments from employer and employee and then complete the final comments of the form.
(iii) Subject to satisfactory signing off of the appraisal form, all members will then be able to review the completed form.
(iv) (An appeal can then be heard (by other non-members of the Personnel Committee) if the Personnel Committee and Clerk disagree.

Manage a process to receive a grievance and to issue a disciplinary notice in respect of employees of the Council, using the NALC model.

2. The Personnel Committee to carry out other personnel duties as/when agreed by the Parish Council.

(a) An Appeals Panel - if required - to consist of three councillors who have not participated in any matter relating to any appointment.

3. The Personnel Committee to contribute towards the content of the Chairman's Annual Parish Meeting Report.

4. To continually review policies/procedure on Employment Law.

5. These terms of reference to be reviewed annually for recommendation to a meeting of the Parish Council prior to the Annual Parish Council meeting.

Adopted 24 January 2024. Last reviewed 24th May 2025, Minute reference 64/2025/4

Return to Agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 18.1
Defibrillator Servicing

Background Information

Cllr Daft, as the Council's lead Member for defibrillators, advised that he would seek further advice regarding the servicing requirements of the Council's three CU Medical Systems iPAD SP1 defibrillators.

Advice has now been obtained from the original supplier, Wel Medical. They have confirmed that these devices are designed to undertake automatic self-diagnostic testing on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Any faults would be clearly indicated on the unit.

The supplier further advised that, provided regular visual checks are undertaken (as is currently the case), no additional routine servicing by a qualified engineer is required. The devices are also registered on "The Circuit", which provides an additional level of status monitoring.

Wel Medical confirmed that they do not offer a servicing provision and noted that third-party servicing is generally only necessary for older units or where a fault has been identified.

Summary

The advice received indicates that the current maintenance regime, consisting of regular recorded visual inspections alongside the devices' built-in self-testing functions, is sufficient to ensure the defibrillators remain operational.

There is no identified technical requirement for additional servicing at this time.

Recommendation

That Members note the advice provided by Wel Medical and agree that the Council continues to follow the current maintenance regime, without the need for additional servicing, unless a fault is identified or further guidance is received.

Return to Agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 18.4

Fore Street Green Planting Project

Background Information

At the Annual Parish Council meeting held on 15th April 2026, under minute reference 7, Members and a member of the public, discussed proposals relating to the installation of planters on Fore Street Green and the planting of additional fruit trees to increase biodiversity within the area.

During the discussion, concerns were raised regarding the ongoing watering and maintenance requirements associated with both planters and newly planted trees. It was subsequently resolved:
"That the Clerk will contact Window Flowers to enquire about the cost to water planters and newly planted trees."

Following this resolution, the Clerk contacted Window Flowers who advised that, subject to further details being provided, they may be able to:

- Supply, install and plant up planters;
- Maintain and water the planters alongside the existing hanging basket contract; and
- Water newly planted fruit trees during the hanging basket watering season.

Window Flowers also advised that Autumn would be the preferred time for planting fruit trees to allow establishment during the dormant season.

Further information has since been provided by a member of the public, who has been assisting in progressing the project on behalf of the Friends of Noak Bridge (FONB).

Summary

The information received from FONB indicates that the original planter proposal consisted of a single planter positioned near the Tommy bench on Fore Street Green. No specific planter model has yet been identified, although the use of a planter with an integrated water reservoir may now be considered to reduce maintenance requirements.

With regard to biodiversity improvements, FONB previously met with Josh Childs, Biodiversity Officer at Basildon Council, who suggested the planting of three indigenous English fruit trees, potentially including a pear, plum and cherry tree. Suggested planting positions have been identified on Fore Street Green, with guidance that trees should be planted approximately 5 metres apart and similarly distanced from the existing apple tree, ideally forming a semi-circle arrangement.

It has also been advised that:

- The planting areas would require preparation, including digging out and mulching;
- Newly planted saplings would require significant watering during establishment (first two years), estimated at approximately 50 litres per week per tree during the summer months;
- Watering requirements may extend beyond the existing hanging basket watering season operated by Window Flowers.

Correspondence from FONB indicates that these proposals were initially discussed informally as a future biodiversity project and were not originally intended as a Parish Council-led initiative. FONB have advised that they would need to regroup and formally develop proposals for the project, particularly following the completion of their pond restoration works.

At this stage, no formal scheme, specification or costings have been prepared. However, Window Flowers have indicated they may be able to provide quotations for aspects of the works once fuller details are available.

Members are therefore invited to consider whether the Parish Council wishes, in principle, to support the project and, if so, what level or type of support may be appropriate. This could include:

- Financial support;
- Assistance with watering and maintenance arrangements;
- Support in principle only;
- Partnership working with FONB; or
- No involvement at the present time.

Recommendation
That the Council:

1. Notes the update regarding the proposed planter and fruit tree project on Fore Street Green;
2. Considers whether it wishes, in principle, to support the project; and
3. Provides direction regarding the level and nature of any future Parish Council involvement.

Return to Agenda