



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Meeting of: Noak Bridge Parish Council

Date: Wednesday 21st January 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 January 2026

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive, consider and approve any apologies for absence.

2. 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.

3. Minutes

To receive, approve and sign the Minutes of the meeting Parish Council meeting held on the 17th December 2025, Minutes 128/2025 to 133/2025 inclusive ([attached](#)).

4. Public Participation Session

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

5. Borough and County Councillor Reports

To receive update from District and Borough Councillors.

6. Local Government Reorganisation

To receive an update.

7. Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan Referendum Update

To receive an update from Cllr Sargent on the Neighbourhood Plan and results of the referendum.

8. Finance

8.1 Accounts for Payment

To approve the accounts for payment paid to the 31st December 2025 and due to the 31st January 2026. [Attached](#).

8.2 Bank Reconciliation

To receive and note the bank reconciliation to the 31st December 2025. [Attached](#).

8.3 Monthly Budget Report

To receive and note the monthly budget comparison to the 31st December 2025. [Attached](#).

8.4 Santander Bank Mandate

To receive an update from Cllr Sargent regarding removing an ex-councillor from the Santander Bank Account/s.

8.5 Council's Banking Arrangements

To receive an update and agree how to fund the recently opened Unity Trust Bank Account. [Report attached](#).

8.6 2026/27 Budget

To agree the Council's budget and Precept for 2026/27. [Report attached](#). Spreadsheet sent separately.

8.7 Grant to Essex and Herts Air Ambulance

To consider a grant award to the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance. [Letter attached](#).

8.8 Grant to Friends of Noak Bridge

To consider a grant award to the Friends of Noak Bridge. [Report attached.](#)

8.9 Council Process for Obtaining Late Invoices

To discuss.

9. Policies and Procedures

9.1 Civility and Respect Pledge

To pass a resolution to sign up to the civility and respect pledge. [Report attached.](#)

9.2 Equality and Diversity, Dignity at Work and Grievance Procedure

To review and adopt an Equality and Diversity Policy, Dignity at Work Policy and Grievance Procedure. [Report and draft policies/procedure attached.](#)

9.3 Health and Safety Policy

To review and adopt an updated Health and Safety Policy. [Report and draft policy attached.](#)

10. Planning

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

10.2 To note planning decisions made by Basildon Borough Council

10.2.1 25/00014/S211 – Section 211 - Adjacent to 55 New Waverley Road. T1 - T3 Leylandii fell and grind stumps. G1 - Crown lift to 1.5m and crown reduce by half height (3m). **CLOSED.**

10.2.2 25/00015/S211 – Work required to pollard 2 common maple and 1 hornbeam just outside boundary fence at 43 Durban Lane Laindon Essex SS15 4JU. **CLOSED.**

10.2.3 25/01561/TPOBAS - T4 (Oak) of TPO/08/81 - Crown reduction of 1.5m and removal of regrowth at 27 Bridge Street Noak Bridge. **APPLICATION PERMITTED.**

10.2.4 25/00020/S211 - Section 211 Notice - Crown reductions to be carried out on three oak trees location at the entrance to the medical centre. Overhanging branches to be cut back to allow clearance for cars in the car park at Noak Bridge Medical Centre. **CLOSED.**

10.2.5 25/01485/TPOBAS - T3 (Oak) of TPO/08/81 Fell and grind stump at 25 Bridge Street Noak Bridge. **APPLICATION PERMITTED.**

11. CouncilWise

To receive a report and details on the subscription service offered by CouncilWise to parish Councils. [Report attached.](#)

12. Environment – Handyman Tasks

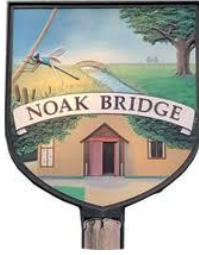
To receive an update on agreed tasks and to consider and prioritise newly notified tasks. Report sent separately.

13. Correspondence

To note correspondence received.

14. Date of Next Meeting

To next Parish Council meeting will take place at 7pm on the 25th February 2026



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Minutes

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

Wednesday, the 17th December 2025 @ 7.30pm

Present

Chairman: Cllr Mark Cottrell

Councillors: Cllr Cris Bateman, Cllr Jacqui Dowton, Cllr Lynn Gilliam, Cllr Peter Hawkins, and Cllr Terri Sargent.

In attendance: Cllr Tony Ball (Essex County Council), Cllr Malcolm Buckley (Essex County Council) and Lynda Townend (Clerk).

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

128/2025 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Daft.

Borough Councillor Alex Meyers confirmed he was unable to attend the meeting

129/2025 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations were made.

130/2025 Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on the 26th November 2025, Minutes 115/2025 to 127/2025 inclusive.

Cllr Sargent requested clarity on minute reference 121/2025/03, *Monthly Budget Report*, the actual spend to date versus the total expenditure budget.

The Chairman explained the total expenditure budget for 2025/26 was £136,234.88, which included £95,000 of spend from earmarked reserves.

Resolved: That, for clarity and transparency, the monthly budget report shall include:
(a) total expenditure to date expressed as a percentage of the total expenditure budget;
(b) total expenditure to date expressed as a percentage of the precept.

Cllr Sargent enquired why the reason for the recorded vote on item 121/2025/04, *Business Banking Arrangements*, was not recorded in the minutes.

The Clerk explained the minutes correctly recorded the decision and the requested recorded vote. There is no requirement for minutes to record individual reasons for voting, as they are not intended to be a verbatim or narrative record of debate

Cllr Sargent advised she would investigate whether the reason given should be recorded in the minutes.

Cllr Sargent requested a recorded vote to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th November 2025.

Vote:

For: Cllrs Bateman, Cottrell, Dowton, Gilliam and Hawkins

Against: Cllr Sargent

Resolved: that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

131/2025 Public Participation Session

No members of the public were present.

131/2025 Consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock

The Council discussed the four proposals being consulted on.

Resolved: That Noak Bridge Parish Council supports the Local Government Reorganisation proposal led by Essex County Council for the establishment of three Unitary Authorities for Greater Essex.

The Council further supports the proposed boundary change within this model, whereby villages/Wards situated to the north of the A127, including Wickford North, Wickford Park and Castledon and Crouch, would be included within the proposed Mid-Essex Unitary Authority, rather than remaining within the area to be absorbed into the South Essex Unitary Authority.

The Council considers this proposal to better reflect natural community links, service provision, and local identity, and agrees that the Clerk will respond to the Government's Consultation recording the Council's preference.

132/2025 Correspondence

No correspondence was received or discussed.

133/2025 Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled Parish Council meeting will be held on the 21st January 2026.

With no further business the meeting closed at 20.32.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairman

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Accounts for Payment**For authorisation on: 21st January 2026**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Supplier</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>VAT</i>	<i>Total</i>
26/11/2025	Solopress	Referendum banner	56.20	-	56.20
26/11/2025	Solopress	Referendum banner	43.20	8.64	51.84
26/11/2025	Solopress	Referendum banner	25.37	5.07	30.44
26/11/2025	Solopress	Referendum banner	37.26	7.45	44.71
26/11/2025	Solopress	Referendum banner	31.32	6.26	37.58
26/11/2025	Solopress	Referendum leaflets	43.20	8.64	51.84
03/12/2025	Solopress	Referendum banner	29.33	5.87	35.20
03/12/2025	Solopress	Referendum banner	34.29	6.86	41.15
03/12/2025	Santander	November Bank Charge	9.99	-	9.99
04/12/2025	At Last Events	Final balance for Christmas lights	4,170.00	695.00	3,475.00
19/12/2025	Noak Bridge Community Association	Hall hire 19/12/2025 - inv 215	25.00	-	25.00
24/12/2025	L Townend	December salary	679.52	-	679.52
24/12/2025	L Townend	December expenses	104.97	-	104.97
24/12/2025	HMRC	December PAYE costs	253.11	-	253.11
24/12/2025	Nest Pension	December submission	62.72	-	62.72
02/01/2026	Santander Bank	Bank Charge	9.99	-	9.99
TBC	Peter Thomas	Oct and Nov handyman works	918.00	153.00	765.00
23/01/2026	L Townend	January salary	679.72		679.72
23/01/2026	L Townend	January expenses	54.46		54.46
23/01/2026	HMRC	January PAYE costs	252.88		252.88
23/01/2026	Nest Pension	January submission	62.72		62.72
TOTAL:					6,784.04

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Bank Reconciliation to the 31st December 2025

	Actual	Actual	Actual
Bank Balance as at	29.10.2025	30.11.2025	31.12.2025
Current Account	£ 33,037.15	£ 31,563.51	£ 26,574.03
Business Saving Account Santander	£ 18,001.16	£ 18,001.16	£ 18,001.16
Business Saving Account Metro	£ 71,960.29	£ 72,004.65	£ 72,050.52
Unity Trust Bank	£ 85,000.00	£ 85,000.00	£ 85,000.00
Total:	£ 207,998.60	£ 206,569.32	£ 201,625.71
Less Unpresented cheques			
HMRC Costs	£ 251.86	£ 504.59	£ 757.70
Coppice Lane Pond		£ 3,000.00	£ 3,000.00
Nest pension			£ 62.72
Total of unpresented cheques	£ 251.86	£ 3,504.59	£ 3,820.42
Net Bank Balances as at	£ 207,746.74	£ 203,064.73	£ 197,805.29
CASH BOOK			
Balance	£ 202,631.11	£ 202,631.11	£ 202,631.11
Plus Receipts Current account	£ 44,891.30	£ 44,971.30	£ 44,971.30
Plus Receipts Bus. Saving account	£ 1,060.97	£ 1,060.97	£ 1,060.97
Plus Receipts Bus. Sav. Metro Account	£ 348.69	£ 393.05	£ 438.92
Plus Receipts Unity Trust Bank	£ -	£ -	£ -
Total	£ 248,932.07	£ 249,056.43	£ 249,102.30
Less Payments	£ 41,185.33	£ 45,991.70	£ 51,297.01
Grand Total	£ 207,746.74	£ 203,064.73	£ 197,805.29
Difference	£ -	£ 0.00	£ 0.00

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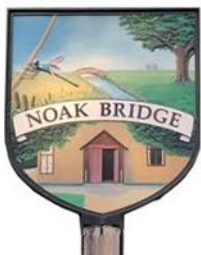
Monthly Budget Report to the 31st December 2025

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL	MONTHLY BUDGET REPORT
Month	Dec-25

INCOME	Budget	Actual (to date)	Variance (+/-)
Precept	£41,235.00	£41,276.54	£41.54
LCTS Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
CIF Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Interest	£0.00	£1,499.89	£1,499.89
Event Income	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Miscellaneous	£0.00	£203.70	£0.00
- VAT reclaim 08/04/2024	£3,511.00	£3,491.06	-£19.94
- VAT reclaim	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
- VAT reclaim			
INCOME TOTALS	£44,746.00	£46,471.19	£1,725.19

EXPENDITURE	Budget	Total spent to 30/04/25	Variance (+/-)	Percentage spent	Expenditure in month
Staff Costs					
Salaries	£10,215.00	£6,110.25	£4,104.75	60%	£679.52
Tax & Employer NI	£1,970.00	£2,689.32	-£719.32	137%	£253.11
Pension	£500.00	£500.64	-£0.64	100%	£62.72
Payroll	£300.00	£84.00	£216.00	28%	£0.00
Home allowance, Travel & Costs	£500.00	£400.72	£99.28	80%	£56.17
Training inc. travel	£2,000.00	£120.00	£1,880.00	6%	£0.00
Office equip & stationery	£1,000.00	£336.93	£663.07	34%	£58.79
General Costs					
Computer & Other Digital Equipment	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Fixed asset maintenance	£2,000.00	£904.00	£1,096.00	45%	£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	£70.00	£1,930.00	4%	£0.00
Hall Hire	£1,000.00	£350.00	£650.00	35%	£25.00
Insurance	£1,200.00	£931.19	£268.81	78%	£0.00
Subscriptions	£1,000.00	£1,090.50	-£90.50	109%	£0.00
Councillor Training	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
Audit Fees	£750.00	£390.00	£360.00	52%	£0.00
Publications/newsletters	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
CCTV & Security	£1,500.00	£0.00	£1,500.00	0%	£0.00
VAT		£3,573.34	-£3,573.34	#DIV/0!	£695.00
Community Support					
Community Events Support	£1,500.00	£2,301.01	-£801.01	153%	£0.00
Kings Meni Bridge	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Kings Coronation	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Community Grants Awards (small)	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	0%	£0.00
Community Lights Project	£4,700.00	£8,450.00	-£3,750.00	180%	£3,475.00
Support Grants	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	0%	£0.00
Projects					
Parish Plan	£5,000.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	0%	£0.00
D Day (from reserves) VE Day	£5,000.00	£250.00	£4,750.00	5%	£0.00
Contingency earmarked (from reserves)	£10,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	0%	£0.00
Community Projects earmarked (from reserves)	£30,000.00	£16,004.44	£13,995.56	53%	£0.00
Community Projects Play Area earmarked (from reserves)	£25,000.00	£0.00	£25,000.00	0%	£0.00
Environmental Maintenance (From Reserves)	£10,000.00	£3,480.00	£6,520.00	35%	£0.00
Neighbourhood Plan (funded from reserves)	£10,000.00	£3,265.17	£6,734.83	33%	£0.00
EXPENDITURE TOTALS	£136,235.00	£51,301.51	£84,933.49	38%	£5,305.31

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AGENDA REPORT ITEM 8.5

Banking Arrangements

Background Information

At the Council meeting held on 26th November 2025 (Minute 121/2025/04), Council resolved to:

1. Open a current account with Unity Trust Bank to ensure compliance with Financial Regulations 7.1, 7.4, 7.6 and 7.10 at a cost of £6/month.
2. Designate the Clerk as Service Administrator with Cllrs Bateman, Dowton and Gilliam as authorised signatories.
3. Continue to use the Santander Business Account until the Unity account was operational and retain the Santander Current Account for occasional debit card payments.
4. Use the Unity account for all income and expenditure transactions once operational.

The Unity Trust Bank account has now been opened. A final mandate request form was submitted on 7th January 2026 to set up the Clerk as administrator. This process should be completed by 21st January 2026. Pending the transfer of funds, the account will be fully operational.

Summary

Since the Council's November meeting, Santander has commenced charging a monthly administration fee of **£9.99**, costing **£119.88 per year** (assuming no increase). Unity Trust Bank also advised in early December that its monthly fee will increase from **£6 to £7 per month** from February 2026.

The Council must now:

- determine how to fund the Unity Trust Current Account; and
- consider whether it remains economical to retain the Santander Current Account purely for occasional debit card purchases when the debit card facility may be available with the Metro Bank account at no monthly cost.

The council's cash assets currently consist of:

Cash Balances & Interest Rates (as at 31 December 2025)

Account	Balance	Rate / Charge	Notes
Metro Bank	£72,050.52	~0.76%	No monthly fee
Santander - Current Account	£26,574.03	0%	Now £9.99/month
Santander - Business Saver	£18,001.16	1%	No monthly fee
Unity Trust – Current Account	(to be funded)	£7/month	£7/month from Feb '26
Unity Trust – Fixed Term Deposit	£85,000	4.10%	Matures June 2026

FSCS Considerations

FSCS protection has recently increased to £120,000 per authorised institution.

Current exposures by banking group:

- **Metro Bank:** £72,050.52 (within limit)
- **Santander Group:** £26,574.03 + £18,001.16 = £44,575.19 (within limit)
- **Unity Trust Bank Group:** £85,000 (Fixed Term) + future operating balance (TBC)

To remain within the FSCS limit at Unity Trust Bank, the Council should fund the Unity Current Account with **no more than £35,000** at this time.

Recommendation

To streamline the Council's banking arrangements and minimise cost, it is recommended that the Council:

1. **Close the Santander Current Account**
2. **Transfer the balance of approximately £24,600 to the Unity Trust Current Account** to cover expected expenditure of £11,515.80 to 31 March 2026.

The first tranche of the 2026/27 precept, estimated at **£20,913.76**, is due on **1st April 2026**. When received into the Unity Current Account, this will keep the Council's total Unity exposure within the FSCS limit when combined with the £85,000 Fixed Term Deposit.

Financial Implications Reasoning

The proposed recommendations will streamline the Council's banking arrangements and reduce annual administration costs.

1. Closing the Santander Current Account will remove the new £9.99/month fee (£119.88 per year). Unity Trust Bank will charge £7/month (£84 per year) from February 2026 to act as the Council's main operating account.
2. Retain the Metro Bank for occasional debit card usage (if permitted) which incurs no monthly fee and provides interest income (currently ~0.76% p.a.).
3. The proposed transfer of **£24,600** to Unity Trust Bank will ensure sufficient operational liquidity through to 31st March 2026, prior to receipt of the first tranche of 2026/27 precept funding (£20,913.76) expected on 1st April 2026.

There are no unbudgeted costs arising from these proposals.

Future Account Management

The Council holds a substantial cash balance in both the Metro Bank and the Santander Business Savings account (combined total of £90,000), which only pays a minimal interest rates of 0.76% and 1% respectively. Higher-yielding FSCS-compliant options are available for public bodies.

It is therefore recommended that the Council investigate opening a new savings and/or investment account for surplus funds to ensure the Council's cash assets achieve the highest reasonable return while remaining within FSCS guidelines.

Indicative examples of current instant access rates include:

Institution	FSCS Protected	Rate / Yield	Min Investment
Hampshire Trust Bank	Yes	3.81%	£5,000
Tide	Yes	3.09%	£1.00
Metro Bank	Yes	0.85%	£1.00
Virgin Money	Yes	3.75%	£1.00
CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund	No*	4.75%**	£1.00

* AAA-rated money market structure. ** Latest published yield: 3.69%.

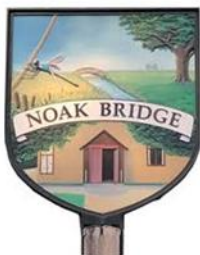
Should the council agree, a separate report will be brought to Members with comparative sector-appropriate options once research is completed.

Resolution

That the Council:

1. Considers the continued suitability of maintaining the Santander Current Account in light of recently introduced charges on the account, if an alternative, fee-free debit card facility is able to be used for occasional debit card payments using the Metro account.
2. Approves the transfer of operating funds to the newly opened Unity Trust Bank Current Account and determines the source account(s) from which such funds are to be drawn and the amount.
3. Explores alternative business savings products with a view to maximising returns on council reserves and receives recommendations for decision at a future meeting.

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AGENDA REPORT ITEM 8.6

2026/27 BUDGET AND PRECEPT

Background information

It has been confirmed there is, again, no cap on the amount that parish councils can raise via their precept for 2026-27.

Basildon Borough Council have advised the tax base to be used when calculating the Band D rate is 1003.78, an increase from 999.19 in 2025-26.

It is recommended that councils hold between 6 and 12 months net operating costs in their general reserves which equates to £41,816 at the upper limit. At the end of the 2025-26 financial year, it is projected the Council will only hold £195,192 in cash assets.

The draft budget is based on the assumption that all current activities will continue and that the Council will move its unspent reserves into Earmarked Reserves to build them for future projects.

Summary

Last year the Council's expenditure budget was set at £41,234.88 resulting in a Band D rate of £41.31.

In the coming financial year, 2026-27, it is proposed the expenditure budget will need to be increased by 1.41% to £41,816.20. This represents a year-on-year increase of 0.35p/resident.

During 2025-26 the Parish Council has:-

- Funded the VE80 community event on the 8th May 2025 which also included the installation of the Tommy Statue and commemorative bench - £2,224
- Funded the installation of hanging baskets in Coppice Lane - £1,920
- Funded and arranged the installation of Christmas Lights in Coppice Lane and Bridge Street - £8,540
- Oversaw the completion and referendum of the Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan - £3,265
- Supported Basildon Borough Council with works on Coppice Lane Pond - £3,000

- Contracted a handyman to improve areas in the village - £1,494
- Funded CCTV - £1,500
- Provided a grant to the Noak Bridge Community Association to upgrade the heating system in the village hall - £13,594

Draft Budget Calculations for 2026-27

1. Income

The council only income stream comes from the precept. In 2025-26 from the precept demand was £41,276.54.

2. Expenditure

Clerk and Administration Costs – a budget of £14,482 is proposed (a decrease of 12.15%). Costs include the clerk's salary and associated costs, training, office equipment, stationery and bank charges.

General Costs – a budget of £14,834 is proposed (a decrease of 3.99%). Expenditure in this area includes computer equipment, fixed asset maintenance, election costs, hall hire, professional and legal fees, insurance, subscriptions, councillor training, audit costs, publications and CCTV costs.

Community Support – a budget of £12,500 is proposed (an increase of 34.4%). Expenditure includes community events support, grants and Christmas lights.

Proposed Reserves – a total of £118,548 is currently held in earmarked reserves, including:-

- £2,000 – hanging baskets
- £10,000 – contingency
- £33,000 – community support
- £35,000 – playground and gym equipment
- £18,048 – environmental maintenance
- £6,000 – little libraries improvements
- £13,000 – environmental improvements
- £1,500 – Neighbourhood plan review costs

Recommendation

Councillors are asked to receive, consider, and approve the proposed budget and precept for 2026.27

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**Essex & Herts
Air Ambulance**

Your local life-saving charity

Flight House,
The Business Centre,
Earls Colne Business Park,
Earls Colne,
Colchester, Essex, CO8 2NS

T: 0345 2417 690
E: contactus@ehaat.org
W: www.ehaat.org

Cllr T Sargent
Noak Bridge Parish Council

By email: terriken@aol.com

Thursday 27th November 2025

Dear Cllr Sargent

Essex and Herts Air Ambulance (EHAAT) is incredibly grateful for the previous ongoing of Noak Bridge Parish Council. Since my last update EHAAT has marked more than one year of active duty of its second Agusta Westland air ambulance helicopter. A milestone that has only been possible due to the invaluable funding the charity receives, including assistance from the Parish Council.

Since entering active service the second aircraft has responded to more than 425 missions, accrued over 235 flying hours and completed more than 887 landings.

It continues to cost around £1 million every month to remain operational. It's vital that we continue to provide this life-saving emergency medical service 24/7 and raise much needed funds to secure it for the future. I am therefore writing to request that the Parish Council once again consider awarding a grant to help people like Grace, whose story is attached.

The Parish Councils support really is invaluable in helping to keep the service operational for those most in need of advanced clinical care in your local community. Between April 2024 and March 2025 EHAAT's critical care teams on board the air ambulances and rapid response vehicles undertook 47 missions in the borough of Basildon.

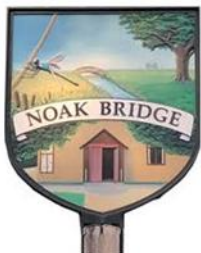
We hope the Parish Council will once again consider supporting EHAAT so that together we can help people like Grace now and into the future.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Aderyn Gillett
Trusts & Special Projects Manager
aderyn.gillett@ehaat.org

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AGENDA REPORT ITEM 8.8

COMMUNITY GRANT REQUEST

Background Information

In December 2025 a resident living near the Handley's Chase pond contacted the Parish Clerk to ask what support could be provided for a Muscovy duck that is a familiar presence in the area. During the recent cold spell, concerns were raised that the Handley's Chase pond offers no shelter or protection for the duck.

The matter was referred to the Friends of Noak Bridge (FoNB) who advised that the duck had previously resided on the Coppice Lane pond until the water dried up during Summer 2025. FoNB agreed to purchase a duck house and relocate the duck back to the Coppice Lane pond where improved conditions and shelter can be provided.

FoNB estimate the cost of the duck house to be in the region of £200 and have undertaken to install and oversee its use.

Summary

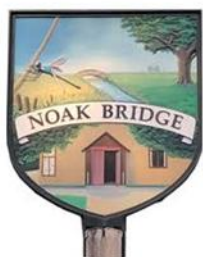
In the 2025/26 financial year the Council allocated £2,000 for small community grants. As at 31 December 2025 no expenditure has been made from this budget heading.

A grant of up to £300 would therefore be within the available provision and consistent with supporting local voluntary activity and biodiversity.

Recommendation

That the Council approves a grant of up to £300 from the Small Community Grants budget to the Friends of Noak Bridge towards the purchase of a duck house for installation at the Coppice Lane pond.

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AGENDA REPORT ITEM 9.1

Civility and Respect Pledge

Background Information

Definition of Civility and Respect Civility means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Examples of ways in which you can show respect are by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), in partnership with the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and One Voice Wales (OVW), has developed the Civility and Respect Pledge to encourage local councils to adopt and maintain high standards of behaviour and respectful working practices.

By signing up to the civility and respect pledge the Council demonstrates it is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

Signing up is a simple process, which requires councils to register and agree to the following statements:

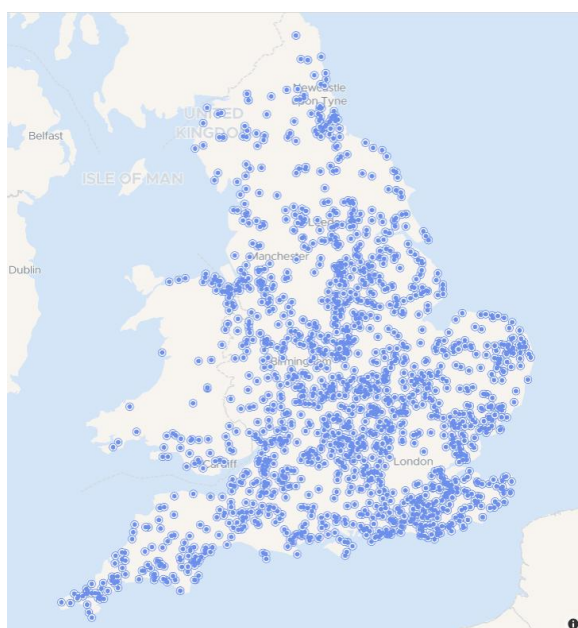
Statement	Tick to Agree
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.	
Our council has put in place a training programme for councillors and staff	
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors	✓
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy	
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.	
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when it happens.	

Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme.	
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	

Once signed up to the pledge the council will show on the NALC tracker and mapping tool.

At present 1,894 councils have signed up to the pledge

Civility and Respect Pledge Map



Civility and Respect Pledge Counter



Further information on the pledge can be found on the NALC website: [Civility and Respect Pledge](#)

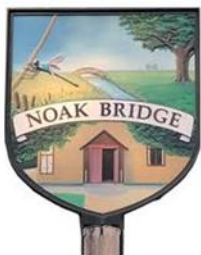
Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council:

By signing the Civility and Respect Pledge, Noak Bridge Parish Council would formally commit to:

1. Upholding high standards of conduct in all council activities.
2. Promoting a culture of civility and respect between councillors, staff, and the public.
3. Taking appropriate action where behaviour falls below expected standards.
4. Implementing policies, training, and governance measures that support these commitments.

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AGENDA REPORT ITEM 9.2

Equality & Diversity and Dignity at Work Policies and Grievance Procedure

Background Information

Cllr Sargent emailed the Clerk to request the NALC model Equality & Diversity Policy be the next policy to be reviewed by the Council.

The policy presented is the official **NALC model policy**, with only minimal tailoring to reflect Noak Bridge Parish Council's name and structure. Because it is a model policy drafted to ensure legal compliance with the **Equality Act 2010** and best practice for local councils, no further amendments are recommended.

In reviewing the model policy, it refers to both a Dignity at Work Policy and a Grievance Policy. These two policies are necessary companions to ensure that the Council can meet the standards and processes referenced within the Equality & Diversity Policy. Without them, the Council would lack the procedures required to address complaints, harassment, bullying, or equality-related concerns effectively or lawfully.

Accordingly, a Dignity at Work Policy and a Grievance Policy have been drafted to align with NALC/SLCC guidance, employment law, and the ACAS Code of Practice. Together, these three policies form a coherent framework that supports good governance and legal compliance.

In addition, the Dignity at Work Policy refers to the Civility & Respect Pledge to be considered as a separate agenda item

Together, the Equality & Diversity Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Grievance Policy, and the Civility & Respect Pledge form a coherent and robust governance framework for the Council.

Summary

- Equality & Diversity Policy — NALC model policy, minimally tailored, legally compliant, and recommended without further amendment.
- Dignity at Work Policy — required to support the Equality & Diversity Policy and ensure appropriate standards of behaviour.

- Grievance Policy — ensures the Council has a clear, fair procedure for addressing concerns, in line with ACAS guidance.

All three policies work together to ensure:

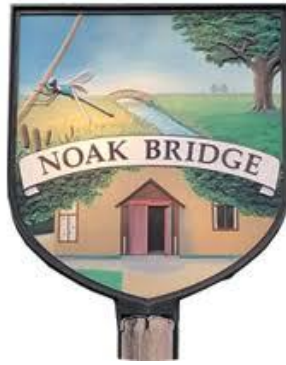
- compliance with the Equality Act 2010,
- clear expectations for councillors, staff, contractors, and the public,
- legally compliant processes for raising and handling concerns,
- support for a respectful, safe, and inclusive working environment.

Recommendation

That the Council adopts the following policies:

1. Equality & Diversity Policy
2. Dignity at Work Policy
3. Grievance Policy

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Noak Bridge Parish Council

Equality and Diversity Policy

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1			

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Our commitment

Noak Bridge Parish Council (the council) is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination.

This policy is intended to assist the council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

The law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

The council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Types of unlawful discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity)

that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they don't, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

Equal opportunities in employment

The council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

Recruitment

Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

Working practices

The council will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the council considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. The council will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract

variations. The council will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

Equal opportunities monitoring

The council will monitor the ethnic, sex/gender and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

The council treats personal data collected for reviewing equality and diversity in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the council's privacy notices.

Dignity at work

The council has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

People not employed by the council

The council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use the services provided by the council.

You should report any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others to the council who will take appropriate action.

Training and prevention

The council will raise awareness of equal opportunities to those likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.

The council will raise awareness of all staff engaged to work at the council to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the dignity at work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. The council will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

We will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of staff. If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other branches of the business.

Your responsibilities

Every employee is required to assist the council to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held

personally liable as well as, or instead of, the council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

Grievances

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use the council's grievance procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy.

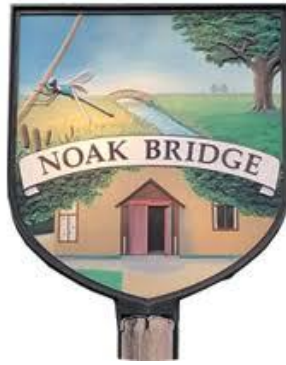
The council will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored periodically by the council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. In particular, the council will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation we receive to ensure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed; the ethnic and gender composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will review its equal opportunities policy in accordance with the results shown by the monitoring . If changes are required, the council will implement them.

Information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time and at least every three years unless a change in legislation occurs beforehand.



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Dignity at Work Policy

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1			

1. Introduction

1.1 Noak Bridge Parish Council believes that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect when carrying out council business.

1.2 The Council expects all councillors, the Clerk, contractors, volunteers, and members of the public to act politely, courteously, and professionally at all times.

1.3 The Council has signed the NALC and SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge, confirming our commitment to creating a positive, safe, and respectful environment where harassment, bullying, and discrimination are not tolerated.

1.4 This policy explains what to do if anyone feels they are being treated inappropriately and how the Council will respond.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote a culture of civility, respect, and inclusion in all council activities.
- Prevent bullying, harassment, and victimisation.
- Provide a clear process for raising and resolving concerns promptly and fairly.

2.2 The emphasis of this policy is on early resolution and mediation wherever possible, rather than on adversarial or punitive action.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to:

- The Clerk (as the Council's only employee).
- All Parish Councillors.
- Contractors, volunteers, and members of the public who come into contact with the Council.

3.2 Complaints about other employment matters will be dealt with under the Council's Grievance Policy.

3.3 The Council will take appropriate action if its employee or councillors are bullied or harassed by anyone connected with council work.

4. Expected Standards of Behaviour

4.1 Everyone working for or with the Council must:

- Treat others with courtesy and kindness.
- Listen to and respect different opinions.
- Avoid raising voices, personal criticism, or disrespectful comments.
- Use social media and written communication responsibly and politely.
- Follow the Councillor Code of Conduct, Equality and Diversity Policy, and this policy at all times.

4.2 Bullying, harassment, or any behaviour that makes others feel intimidated, humiliated, or offended will not be tolerated, whether it happens face-to-face, in meetings, by phone, by email, or online.

5. What Is Bullying and Harassment?

5.1 Bullying means offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour that misuses power or undermines, humiliates, or causes distress to another person.

5.2 Harassment means unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (such as age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation) that violates a person's dignity or creates a hostile environment.

5.3 Examples include:

- Spreading rumours or making insulting remarks.
- Shouting or persistent unjustified criticism.
- Excluding someone from conversations or meetings.
- Unwanted physical contact or suggestive comments.
- Offensive jokes, messages, or images.
- Abusing a position of authority.
- Inappropriate posts or comments on social media connected to the Council's work.

6. Our Approach

6.1 The Council aims to resolve issues quickly and informally wherever possible.

6.2 All complaints will be taken seriously, treated confidentially, and handled fairly.

6.3 No one will be victimised or treated unfairly for raising a genuine concern.

6.4 Knowingly making false or malicious complaints may lead to disciplinary or Code of Conduct action.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
The Council	Adopts, reviews, and promotes this policy; leads by example.
Chairman	Acts as first point of contact for concerns; promotes respectful conduct at meetings.
Clerk	Implements the policy and reports any concerns to the Chairman or Personnel Committee.
Personnel Committee	Oversees formal processes and ensures fair and consistent handling of complaints
Councillors	Uphold the Code of Conduct and treat others with civility and respect
Contractors & Public	Expected to act respectfully towards councillors and staff

8. What to Do if You Have a Concern

(a) If the Clerk feels bullied or harassed by a Councillor

8.1 The Clerk should raise the concern with the Chairman or the Personnel Committee.

8.2 The Council will discuss what support or adjustments are needed (for example, avoiding contact with the councillor concerned).

8.3 If the matter appears to be a breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct, it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council for investigation.

(b) If a Councillor feels bullied or harassed by another Councillor

8.4 The Councillor should raise the issue with the Chairman or seek advice from the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council.

8.5 Informal discussion, mediation, or training may be used to help resolve the issue.

(c) If a Councillor or Clerk feels bullied or harassed by a member of the public or contractor

8.6 Report the behaviour to the Chairman or Clerk.

8.7 The Council will decide how best to manage the situation, which may include limiting contact, refusing correspondence, or ending a contract.

9. Resolving Concerns

9.1 Informal Resolution

Many issues can be resolved quickly by explaining calmly why certain behaviour is upsetting or inappropriate.

Mediation by an independent person (for example, through the Essex Association of Local Councils) may be used to rebuild working relationships.

If informal action does not resolve the issue, or if the behaviour is serious, a formal process may be used.

9.2 Formal Complaint

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the Chairman.

If the complaint involves the Chairman, it should be sent to the Chairman of the Personnel Committee.

The matter will be dealt with under the Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Policies.

Complaints involving councillors that may breach the Code of Conduct will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council.

10. Confidentiality and Protection

10.1 All complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible, and personal information will be managed in line with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

10.2 No one will suffer detriment or disadvantage for raising a concern in good faith.

10.3 Temporary changes may be made to working arrangements while a matter is under review to protect wellbeing.

11. Monitoring and Review

11.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Personnel Committee.

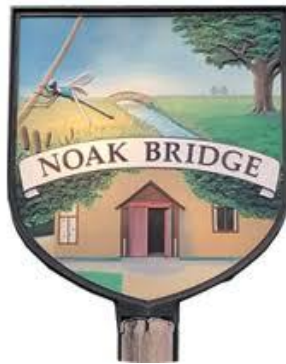
11.2 The Clerk will maintain a confidential record of any dignity-at-work concerns.

11.3 The Council will provide Civility and Respect or similar training for all councillors and new members as part of induction.

12. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Civility and Respect Pledge



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Grievance Procedure

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1			

1. Introduction

1.1 This procedure is based on and complies with the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (2015) and takes into account the Equality Act 2010. It is designed to encourage good working relationships by addressing grievances quickly, fairly, and consistently.

1.2 The procedure applies to the Clerk as the Council's only employee. It may also guide councillors in raising concerns, except where a complaint relates to a breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct (see section 1.7).

1.3 The Council will handle all grievances in accordance with equality law and treat employees fairly, regardless of any protected characteristic (such as age, disability, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation).

1.4 Employees raising a grievance in good faith will not be penalised. Malicious or knowingly false grievances may result in disciplinary action.

1.5 Employees have the right to be accompanied at any grievance or appeal meeting by a workplace colleague, trade union representative, or trade union official. The companion may present the case and confer with the employee but cannot answer questions on the employee's behalf unless agreed.

1.6 The Council will give reasonable notice of meetings, normally at least 10 working days, and any proposed changes to deadlines will be agreed with the employee.

1.7 If a grievance relates to a councillor's conduct under the Code of Conduct, the employee can raise it at the informal stage. If unresolved, the employee may contact the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council. Formal grievance stages cannot be used for Code of Conduct matters.

1.8 The Council has a duty of care to ensure a safe working environment and will take appropriate steps if a grievance involves safety concerns, bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

2. Informal Grievance Procedure

2.1 The Council encourages resolving grievances informally wherever possible, as quickly as possible.

Steps:

1. Raise the concern promptly with the Chairman or a member of the Personnel Committee.
2. Explain clearly what the grievance is and what outcome you hope for.
3. If the grievance concerns the Chairman, raise it with the Chairman of the Personnel Committee.
4. If the grievance involves a councillor, informal discussion with their consent may be attempted.
5. Consider mediation if both parties agree, especially for issues involving communication breakdowns, bullying, or harassment.

2.2 The Council will aim to resolve the matter informally within 10 working days where possible.

3. Formal Grievance Procedure

3.1 If the grievance cannot be resolved informally and is not a Code of Conduct issue, it may be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Personnel Committee.

3.2 The Personnel Committee will appoint three members to hear the grievance and will select a Chairman from among them. Councillors directly involved in the grievance will not sit on the panel.

3.3 Investigation:

- The panel may appoint an investigator to gather facts before the grievance meeting.
- Investigation steps may include interviews with the employee, witnesses, councillors, or contractors, and review of relevant documents.
- The investigator reports only to the Personnel Committee.

4. Notification

4.1 The employee will normally receive written notice of the grievance meeting within 10 working days of submitting the formal grievance.

4.2 The notice will include:

- Names of the panel members and Chairman
- Date, time, and place of the meeting (normally within 25 working days)
- Right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, trade union representative, or trade union official
- Copy of this Grievance Procedure
- Information about witnesses (if applicable) and request for supporting evidence in advance
- Opportunity to request adjustments for health or accessibility needs

5. The Grievance Meeting

5.1 At the meeting:

- The Chairman introduces the panel to the employee
- The employee (or companion) presents the grievance and evidence
- Panel members may ask questions and clarify points
- Witnesses may be questioned if appropriate
- The employee (or companion) may summarise the case

5.2 The meeting may be adjourned if further investigation is required.

5.3 The panel's decision will be provided in writing within 5 working days, including:

- Outcome of the grievance
- Actions the Council will take (if any)
- Right to appeal

6. Appeal

6.1 If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved, the employee may submit a written appeal to the Personnel Committee within 5 working days of receiving the decision. The appeal must state the grounds, such as:

- Failure to follow the grievance procedure
- Decision not supported by evidence
- Proposed action is inadequate
- New evidence has arisen

6.2 The appeal panel will normally consist of three councillors who were not involved in the original grievance panel. If insufficient members are available, the panel may include other councillors, but no one directly involved in the grievance.

6.3 The employee will receive written notice of the appeal meeting within 10 working days, and the meeting will usually take place within 25 working days of receipt of the appeal.

6.4 At the appeal meeting:

- Panel members are introduced
- Purpose of the meeting and potential outcomes are explained
- Employee (or companion) presents the grounds for appeal
- Panel may ask questions and review evidence

6.5 The appeal panel will issue a written decision within 5 working days. The decision is final.

7. Confidentiality

7.1 All grievance records, evidence, and discussions will be treated **confidentially** and shared only with those involved in the process.

7.2 Records will be maintained in line with the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**.

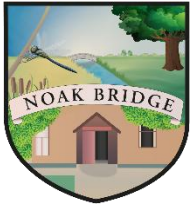
8. Mediation

8.1 Mediation may be offered at any stage if appropriate, with consent from all parties. It can help resolve disputes without formal disciplinary action.

9. Related Policies

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy

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AGENDA REPORT ITEM 9.3

Health and Safety Policy

Background information

The Parish Council's existing Health and Safety Policy was adopted on 4th October 2016 and has not been substantially reviewed since.

The current version focuses mainly on meeting procedures, venue insurance, and general safety measures at council meetings. While these remain relevant, the policy no longer reflects current best practice, changes in legislation, or the broader range of activities now undertaken by the Council.

In line with the Council's ongoing commitment to good governance and compliance, a full review has been undertaken.

Summary of Key Changes

The revised Health and Safety Policy provides a clear, modern framework appropriate for a small parish council.

Key updates include:

- A clear statement of intent aligned with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Defined roles and responsibilities for the Council, the Clerk, employees, volunteers, and contractors.
- Clear arrangements for key areas such as accident reporting, risk assessments, lone working, contractor management, and training.
- An annual review requirement to ensure the policy remains current and compliant.
- A concise and practical format suitable for inclusion in the Council's governance

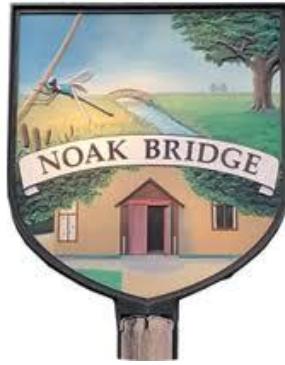
framework.

The policy replaces the previous version in its entirety.

Recommendation

That Noak Bridge Parish Council:

1. Adopt the updated Health and Safety Policy (as drafted) to replace the existing 2016 Health and Safety Policy in its entirety.
2. Agree a review cycle of 12 months or sooner if legislation/guidance changes.



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Health and Safety Policy

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1			

1. Policy Statement

Noak Bridge Parish Council recognises and accepts its responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all other relevant legislation to provide a safe and healthy working environment for its employees, volunteers, councillors, contractors, and members of the public who may be affected by its activities.

The Council will, as far as is reasonably practicable:

- Provide a safe place of work and safe systems of work.
- Ensure equipment and materials are safe and properly maintained.
- Provide appropriate information, instruction, and training to enable all to carry out their duties safely.
- Provide adequate welfare facilities and a safe environment for all who use or visit its premises and open spaces.
- Regularly assess risks and take necessary actions to eliminate or control them.
- Review this policy annually or sooner if legislation or circumstances change.

The Council is committed to promoting a positive health and safety culture where everyone takes responsibility for their own safety and that of others.

2. Responsibilities

The Council

The overall responsibility for health and safety rests with the Council. It will:

- Provide leadership and adequate resources to ensure the policy is implemented.
- Approve and review risk assessments and safety procedures.
- Review health and safety performance annually.

The Clerk

Day-to-day responsibility for implementing this policy is delegated to the Clerk, who will:

- Keep up to date with relevant health and safety legislation and advise the Council accordingly.
- Carry out and maintain risk assessments for Council activities and assets.
- Ensure suitable training, information, and supervision are provided.
- Liaise with contractors to ensure they have appropriate risk assessments, insurance, and safe systems of work.
- Record and investigate all accidents, incidents, and near misses.
- Maintain the accident book, insurance records, and other relevant documentation.
- Refer serious or unresolved issues to the Chairman.

Employees, Councillors, Volunteers, and Contractors

All individuals working for or on behalf of the Council have a duty to:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others.
- Comply with instructions, training, and procedures issued by the Council.
- Use protective equipment where required and report defects or hazards immediately.
- Report all accidents, near misses, or unsafe conditions to the Clerk.
- Co-operate fully in promoting safe working practices.

3. Arrangements

Accidents and Reporting

All accidents, near misses, and dangerous occurrences must be reported to the Clerk as soon as possible.

The Clerk will record the incident and ensure appropriate action is taken to prevent recurrence.

Accidents that meet the criteria of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) will be reported to the HSE.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments will be undertaken for all Council activities, premises, and assets, and reviewed annually or when there are changes in operations, legislation, or staff.

Contractors

All contractors working for or on behalf of the Council must:

- Comply with health and safety legislation and good practice.
- Provide method statements and risk assessments where appropriate.
- Maintain valid public liability insurance.

The Clerk will monitor contractor compliance and safety performance.

Lone Working

Where lone working is required, the Council will take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the individual.

Staff and volunteers must inform the Clerk of their working location and expected duration, carry a mobile phone, and avoid potentially hazardous tasks when alone.

Manual Handling

Where lifting or moving objects is unavoidable, individuals must use proper techniques, seek assistance when required, and use lifting aids if available.

Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

Employees using computers or screens regularly will be offered workstation assessments and eye tests in accordance with regulations.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Where risks cannot be eliminated, suitable PPE will be provided free of charge and must

be used as instructed.

Inspections and Maintenance

All Council-owned assets and equipment will be inspected at least annually or in line with risk assessments, and records maintained.

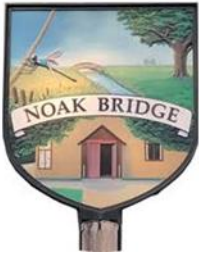
Training and Information

The Council will ensure that appropriate training is provided to employees and volunteers relevant to their duties. Training records will be retained by the Clerk.

4. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation or operational circumstances.

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AGENDA REPORT ITEM 11

CouncilWise

Background Information

CouncilWise Training & Support is a newly established organisation founded by experienced sector professionals, Ann Wood and Pearl Willcox, who together bring nearly 50 years' experience working with parish and town councils. The company will begin delivering training, support, and networking opportunities to councils and their officers from 1 January 2026, with an optional subscription service available from 1 April 2026.

CouncilWise's offer includes in-person and online training, governance support, sector-specific advice, and networking opportunities for Clerks, Chairs, and Councillors. Their aim is to support good governance, compliance, collaborative working, and the professional development of council members and staff.

For councils with a precept between £15,000 and £75,000, the annual subscription cost is £150 per year.

Summary

Subscription to CouncilWise (£150 per year) would provide:

- Free invitations to Clerks' and Councillors' networking events
- 20% discount on all training courses
- Email and telephone support (Mon–Thu) for Councillors and the Clerk, up to 30 minutes per call
- Out-of-hours urgent support (Mon–Thu, 5pm–7pm)
- Face-to-face support at their Great Dunmow office (by appointment)
- Regular newsletters and training bulletins

Additional services are also available on a paid basis including:

- Tailored training sessions
- One-to-one Clerk support at the workplace
- Audit health checks

Comparison with EALC

Area	EALC	CouncilWise
Access to NALC	✓ Essential access	✗ Not available
Training provision	✓ Established programme	✓ New but experienced trainers
Governance advice	✓ Available	✓ Available
Out-of-hours support	✗ Limited	✓ Included in subscription
Future certainty	✗ Unclear due to LGR	✓ New organisation with defined offer
Networking events	✓ Offered	✓ Offered

Rationale for Considering an Additional Subscription

- EALC's future support model is unclear due to LGR, meaning the Council may face reduced or changing service levels in the medium term.
- Access to experienced sector professionals may provide additional resilience to the Clerk and Councillors.
- The out-of-hours support offered by CouncilWise may be particularly beneficial given the increasing complexity and expectation placed on parish councils.
- A second source of governance and procedural advice could help the Council manage risk, especially during the period of reorganisation.

However, the Council must balance these benefits against cost and duplication of services already provided through EALC.

Recommendation

That the Council:

1. Notes the services offered by CouncilWise Training & Support and the potential benefits of enhanced resilience and support during Local Government Reorganisation.
2. Considers whether adding a CouncilWise subscription to the existing EALC membership would strengthen governance, support the Clerk and Councillors and providing value for money.
3. Considers whether to approve an annual subscription to CouncilWise at a cost of £150 per year, effective from the 1st April 2026.

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