Noak Bridge Parish Council

Meeting of: Noak Bridge Parish Council

Date: Wednesday 5th August 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

29th July 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 Annual Parish Council meetings held on the 24th June and the 15th July 2026, Minutes 70/2026 to 83/2026 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 updates from Borough and County Councillors if in attendance.

6. Banking and Finance

6.1 Accounts for Payment

To agree the accounts for payment for the period 1st July to the 31st August 2026. Payment schedule attached.

6.2 Monthly Bank Reconciliation

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

6.3 Budget Comparison

To receive and note the budget comparison to the 31st July 2026. Attached.

6.4 Grant Application

To consider a grant application submitted by BASICS Essex. Documents sent separately

6.5 DM Payroll Services Ltd – Payroll Services Contract 2027/28

To consider and approve the revised payroll services contract for 2027/28. Report attached.

6.6 Unity Trust Bank Account Additional Signatory

To appoint an additional signatory to the Unity Trust Bank Accounts. Report attached.

7. Policies and Procedures

7.1 Biodiversity Policy

To review and adopt a draft Biodiveristy Policy. Report attached.

8. Planning

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

8.2 To note planning decisions made by Basildon Borough Council

8.2.1 **26/00171/FULL** Single storey side extension (Amended) at 95 Crouch Street, Noak Bridge. **GRANTED**

9. Christmas 2026

To consider how the Parish Council will celebrate Christmas 2026.

10. Environment

10.1 Handyman Taks

To consider areas within the village which require improvement and to approve any quotes obtained for areas requiring improvement in the village.

10.2 Remembrance Display Honouring Local Service Personnel

To explore displaying photographs of local residents or relatives who served in the Armed Forces, particularly around Remembrance Sunday

10.3 Community Poppy and Wildflower Planting Initiative

To consider planting poppies and other wildflowers in suitable locations within the parish to enhance the village and support Remembrance-themed displays.

11. Correspondence

To note correspondence received.

12. Items to be Included on the Next Agenda

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting will be held on the 16th September 2026.

14. Chairman to Close the Meeting

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Minutes

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

Wednesday 24th June 2026 at 7:00pm

Present

Chairman:	Cllr M Cottrell
Councillors:	Cllr C Bateman, Cllr P Daft, Cllr J Dowton, Cllr P Hawkins and Cllr T Sargent
In attendance:	Lynda Townend (Clerk) and 2 members of the public.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

70/2026 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Gilliam.

Basildon Borough Councillor Myers and County Cllr Hockton were unable to attend the meeting.

71/2026 Declarations of Interest

To receive any Declarations or Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Pecuniary Interests or Non-pecuniary Interests by Members relating to any agenda items.

Cllr Bateman declared an Other Registerable Interest in relation to Agenda Item 10.3, as he had previously worked with Achievement Through Football (ATF).

Cllr Sargent declared an Other Registerable Interest as a Borough Councillor.

No other Declarations of Interest were made.

72/2026 Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on the 20th May 2026, Minutes 48/2026 to 69/2026 inclusive.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2026 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

73/2026 Public Participation Session

A member of the public requested updates regarding potential handyman tasks which could be considered in the village:

1. **The overgrown pathway near Oakley Path**
   A quote has been received to complete these works at a cost of £380 plus VAT.
2. **Repair of the wooden fence and bus shelter**

   Basildon Borough Council confirmed that these works will be scheduled.
3. **Overgrown pathway by Bramble Tye.**
   A quote to cut back will be requested.

74/2026 Borough and County Councillor Reports

Cllr Sargent, in her capacity as a Borough Councillor, provided the following update:

- Following the election on 7th May, a new administration has been formed at Basildon Council through a supply and confidence agreement between the Conservative and Reform parties.
- The Conservative Party controls the Cabinet, and the chairmanships of committees are held by the Reform Party.
- Cllr Sargent is a cabinet member for Health and Inclusion and Cllr Myers is a cabinet member for Regeneration and Economic Development.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Sargent for the update**.**

75/2026 Banking and Finance

75/2026/01 Accounts for Payment

The Council received and approved the following accounts for payment:

JUNE	Ref	Desc 2	Minute	Total	VAT	Net
18/06/2026	Windowflowers	2026 hanging baskets	37/2026/02	**£1,569.46**	£261.58	£1,307.88
23/06/2026	London Hearts	2 x sets defib pads	Fin Reg. 6.9	**£140.39**	£23.40	£116.99
25/05/2026	NBCA	Hall Hire 24 Jun 2026		**£50.00**	£0.00	£50.00
25/06/2026	Lynda Townend	June salary	155/2024	**£681.32**	£0.00	£681.32
25/06/2026	Lynda Townend	June salary	155/2024	**£33.48**	£0.00	£33.48
25/06/2026	Lynda Townend	June expenses	155/2024	**£30.20**	£0.00	£30.20

	HMRC	June PAYE costs	155/2024	**£249.98**	£0.00	£249.98
25/06/2026	Nest Pensions	June submission	21/2025/05	**£62.72**	£0.00	£62.72
30/06/2026	Unity Trust Bank	May service charge	121/2025	**£7.00**	£0.00	£7.00
TOTAL				**£2,824.55**	**£284.98**	**£2,539.57**

75/2026/02 Monthly Bank Reconciliation

The Council **received and noted** the bank reconciliation to the 31st May 2026.

75/2026/03 Budget Comparison

The Council **received and noted** the budget comparison to 31st May 2026, noting that the Council had spent £5,571.90, representing 4% of the budget and 13% of the precept.

75/2026/04 Fixed Term Investment Account

The Council received a report recommending £120,000 is invested into a 12-month fixed rate account with Unity Trust Bank which is offering a fixed interest rate of 4.06%.

Resolved: That the Parish Council approve the transfer of £31,515 from the Metro Bank Account to the Unity Trust Bank savings account.

Resolved: That the Parish Council invest a total of £120,000 in a new 12-month fixed rate savings account with Unity Trust Bank.

76/2026 General Power of Competence

Members further considered whether to adopt the General Power of Competence. It was noted that Noak Bridge Parish Council met the eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 2 of the Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order, specifically:

- That the number of members elected at the last ordinary election is equal to or exceeds two-thirds of the total number of seats on the council (the Council currently has 5 elected members of 7 seats).
- That the Parish Clerk holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) and has completed relevant training in the exercise of the general power.

Cllr Sargent requested that it be recorded in the minutes that adoption of the General Power of Competence would not oblige the Council to use it, and that Members did not identify any current intention to rely on the power for specific expenditure.

Resolved: That, having satisfied the eligibility criteria, Noak Bridge Parish Council adopts the General Power of Competence.

A member of the public left the meeting at 7:31pm.

77/2026 Policies and Procedures

77/2026/01 Information Technology Policy

The Council reviewed an amended Information Technology Policy.

Resolved: That the amended Information Technology Policy be adopted by the council with a review date set for June 2027.

78/2026 Planning

78/2026/01 Planning Applications

The Council considered the following planning application published by Basildon Borough Council:

78/2026/01/01 26/00342/OUT – Outline planning application for improvements to existing sports provision, including a new up to 1,900m² pavilion, visitor car and coach parking, up to 7,200m² of commercial development and associated parking (class E(g)(i)), pedestrian and cycle route landscaping and drainage matters reserved except access on land west of Barleylands Road.

Members considered the potential community benefits of improved sports provision, including additional facilities for youth football. However, Members also noted that the site lies within the Green Belt and that any benefits must be weighed against national and local planning policy requirements.

Resolved: That the Parish Council objects to application 26/00342/OUT on the grounds that the application has not demonstrated that the proposal would fall within an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, nor that it would avoid harm to Green Belt openness, permanence and function. The Council further objects because the application appears to misinterpret the Grey Belt provisions, conflicts with Basildon Borough Council's Green Belt evidence base, the emerging Basildon Borough Local Plan 2023–2043 and the adopted Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan, and has not demonstrated compliance with paragraphs 152, 153, 154 and 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework or provided sufficient justification to outweigh the identified Green Belt harm.

The Council additionally considers that insufficient justification has been provided for the scale and location of the proposed 7,200m² of commercial development and its associated impacts within the Green Belt.

78/2026/01/02 26/00485/VAR – Variation of conditions 5 (plan numbers and documents), 6 (Phasing Plan), 7 (Compliance) with approved design code and access statement, and 27 (external materials) of approved outline planning permission 23/01551/OUT in land to the South of Wash Road.

Cllr Daft left the meeting at 8:06pm.
Cllr Daft returned to the meeting at 8:07pm.

Resolved: That the Parish Council has no objection to this application.

78/2026/01/03 26/00171/FULL – single storey side extension (amended) at 95 Crouch Street, Noak Bridge.

Members considered the amended application and noted that the property lies within Noak Bridge Conservation Area where development should respect local character, residential amenity and, where relevant, the character and appearance of the Noak Bridge Conservation Area.

Resolved: That the Parish Council supports this application, subject to the Local Planning Authority being satisfied that the amended proposal accords with the relevant policies of the adopted Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan, including Policy NBH1 on high-quality design and Policy NBD1 on conserving and enhancing local character and heritage assets, together with any applicable requirements relating to residential amenity, materials and the character and appearance of the area.

78/2026/02 Planning Decisions
The Council noted the following planning decisions made by Basildon Borough Council:

78/2026/02/01 26/00404/VAR – T1 oak crown reduction by 3-4m. Reduce east side crown by 3m, other side crown by 3m at 69 Bridgecote Lane. **Application permitted.**

78/2026/02/02 26/00171/OUT – Hybrid application for a phased development of up to 300 dwellings on land at Wash Road junction with Bridge Street. **Granted.**

78/2026/02/03 26/01096 – Part retrospective change of use for six football pitches with ancillary facilities and parking and part full planning permission for the siting of a further three football pitches, additional parking and access road at Toby Football Club, Barleylands. **Granted.**

79/2026 Environment

79/2026/01 Handyman Tasks

The Council received and reviewed quotes provided by P Thomas Landscapes to complete the following improvement works:

1. Area cleared in Bridge Street, opposite the Tudor Bus Stop at a cost of £100 plus VAT.
2. Clearing the overgrowth from Oakley Path to the rear of South Wash Road at a cost of £380 plus VAT.
3. Clearing overgrown shrubbery at the end of Lower Street, Wash Road off Noak Hill Road and Kenilworth Place Sheltered Housing, at a cost of £100 plus VAT.

Resolved: That the Council agreed expenditure totalling £580 plus VAT to P Thomas Landscapes to complete the above works.

Resolved: That the Clerk inform Basildon Borough Council of the Parish Council's intention to complete these works.

79/2026/02 Essex County Council Salt Bag Partnership

The Council received a report detailing the Essex Salt Bag Partnership.

Resolved: That the Parish Council decline the offer to participate in Essex County Council's Salt Bag Partnership.

Cllr Bateman had declared an Other Registerable Interest in the following agenda item, as he had previously worked with Achievement Through Football (ATF).

79/2026/03 Achievement Through Football (ATF)

The Council considered information about the work of the charity Achievement Through Football.

Resolved: That the Parish Council will arrange an informal meeting with ATF on the Wash Road field to seek further information about the services they could provide to children in Noak Bridge.

80/2026 Correspondence

No correspondence was presented.

81/2026 Date of Next Meeting – 15th July 2026. Apologies were received in advance from Cllrs Dowton and Hawkins.

82/2026 Chairman to Close the Meeting

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8:27pm.

Signed:_____ Date:_____
Chairman

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Minutes

Meeting convened to be held at Noak Bridge Village Hall, Coppice Lane, Noak Bridge SS15 4JS on

Wednesday 15th July 2026 @ 7.00pm

Present

Chairman: Cllr Mark Cottrell

Councillors:

In attendance: Lynda Townend (Clerk)

83/2026 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bateman, Daft, Dowton, Hawkins and Gilliam.

Only the Chairman and the Clerk were present. As the meeting was not quorate, no business could be transacted in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.01 pm. The meeting will be rearranged, and a new date will be notified in due course.

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Cllr Mark Cottrell

Return to agenda

Accounts for Payment

JULY	Ref	Desc 2	Minute	Total	VAT	Net
06/07/2026	Windowflowers	2026 hanging baskets	37/2026/02	**£1,569.46**	£261.58	£1,307.88
24/07/2026	Lynda Townend	July salary	155/2024	**£680.72**	£0.00	£680.72
24/07/2026	Lynda Townend	July expenses – mileage and home office allowance	155/2024	**£30.59**	£0.00	£30.59
24/07/2026	Lynda Townend	July expenses – office equipment and stationery	155/2024	**£1.56**	£0.00	£1.56
24/07/2026	Nest Pensions	July submission	21/2025/05	**£62.72**	£0.00	£62.72
24/07/2026	HMRC	July PAYE costs	155/2024	**£251.01**	£0.00	£251.01
24/07/2026	Rhino Security	Service contract visit	77/2025	**£134.00**	£0.00	£134.00
31/07/2026	Unity Trust Bank	June service charge	121/2025	**£7.00**	£0.00	£7.00
JULY TOTAL				**£2,737.06**	**£261.58**	**£2,475.48**

Bank Reconciliation

BANK RECONCILIATION - Financial year ending 31.03.2027			
Bank Balance as at	**30.04.2026**	**31.05.2026**	**30.06.2026**
Metro Bank	£ 72,228.35	£ 72,274.36	£ 72,316.97
Santander Business Saving Account	£ 18,288.26	£ 18,288.26	£ 18,288.26
Unity Trust Current Account	£ 39,178.16	£ 36,058.47	£ 35,053.36
Unity Trust Fixed Term Account/Savings	£ 85,000.00	£ 85,000.00	£ 88,574.82
Total:	**£ 214,694.77**	**£ 211,621.09**	**£ 214,233.41**
Less Unpresented cheques			
Total of unpresented /Rec. Receipts	£ -	£ -	£ -
Net Bank Balances as at	**£ 214,694.77**	**£ 211,621.09**	**£ 214,233.41**
CASH BOOK			
Balance as at 01.04.26	£ 191,904.25	£ 191,904.25	£ 191,904.25
Plus Receipts Metro account	£ 44.50	£ 90.51	£ 133.12
Plus Receipts Bus. Saving account	£ 287.10	£ 287.10	£ 287.10
Plus Receipts Unity Trust Bank	£ 24,709.08	£ 24,709.08	£ 24,709.08
Plus Receipts Unity Trust Saving account	£ -	£ -	£ 3,574.82
Plus Receipts Unity Fixed Term Account	£ -		£ -
Total	**£ 216,944.93**	**£ 216,990.94**	**£ 220,608.37**
Less Payments	£ 2,250.16	£ 5,369.85	£ 6,374.96
Grand Total	**£ 214,694.77**	**£ 211,621.09**	**£ 214,233.41**
Difference	**£ 0.00**	**£ -**	**£ -**

Accounts for Payment

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Bank Reconciliation

Month		**30 Jun 2026**

Balance per bank statements

Metro Bank Account	(Cashbook 1)	£72,274.36
Santander Business Savings	(Cashbook 2)	£18,288.26
Unity Current Account	(Cashbook 3)	£35,053.36
Unity Trust Bank Savings Account	(Cashbook 4)	£88,574.82
	TOTAL IN BANK	**£214,190.80**

Monthly activity	**Metro Bank Account**
Opening Balance brought forward May 2026	£72,274.36
Less Payments for May	£0.00
Plus Receipts for May	
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques	£0.00
	£72,274.36
	Santander Business Savings Account (Cashbook 2)
Opening Balance brought forward May 2026	£18,288.26
Less Payments for May	£0.00
Plus Receipts for May	£0.00
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques	£0.00
	£18,288.26
	Unity Trust Bank Account
Opening Balance brought forward May 2026	£36,058.47
Less Payments for May	£1,005.11
Plus Receipts for May	£0.00
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques	£0.00

	£35,053.36
	Unity Trust Savings Account
Opening Balance brought forward May 2026	£85,000.00
Less Payments for May	£0.00
Plus Receipts for May	£3,574.82
Un-presented/unreconciled cheques	£0.00
	£88,574.82
CLOSING BALANCE	**£214,190.80**
Difference	£0.00

Member/Person	Signature	Date
Clerk / RFO		
Cllr Hawkins		

Budget Comparison

NOAK BRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL	MONTHLY BUDGET REPORT
Month	July 2026

INCOME	Budget	Actual (to date)	Variance (+/-)	Income in month
Precept	£41,235.00	£20,642.74	-£20,592.26	£0.00
LCTS Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
CIF Grant	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Interest	£0.00	£3,995.04	£46.01	£0.00
Event Income	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Miscellaneous	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
- VAT reclaim 08/04/2024	£3,511.00	£4,066.34	£555.34	£0.00
INCOME TOTALS	**£44,746.00**	**£28,704.12**	**-£16,041.88**	£0.00

EXPENDITURE	Budget	Total spent to 31/07/26	Variance (+/-)	Percentage spent	Expenditure in month
Staff Costs					
Salaries	£10,215.00	£2,722.48	£7,492.52	27%	£680.72
Tax & Employer NI	£1,970.00	£1,008.82	£961.18	51%	£251.01
Pension	£500.00	£250.86	£249.14	50%	£62.72
Payroll	£300.00	£120.00	£180.00	40%	£0.00
Home allowance, Travel & Costs	£500.00	£132.59	£367.41	27%	£32.15
Training inc. travel	£2,000.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	0%	£0.00
Office equip & stationery	£1,000.00	£64.16	£935.84	6%	£1.56
General Costs					
Computer & Other Digital Equipment	£500.00	£0.00	£500.00	0%	£0.00
Fixed asset maintenance	£2,000.00	£250.99	£1,749.01	13%	£134.00
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	£795.93	£1,204.07	40%	£0.00
Hall Hire	£600.00	£100.00	£500.00	17%	£0.00
Insurance	£1,000.00	£754.26	£245.74	75%	£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%	£0.00
Bank Charges	£204.00	£28.00	£176.00	14%	£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		£195.00	-£195.00	#DIV/0!	£26.80
Community Support					
Community Events Support	£1,500.00	£306.33	£1,193.67	20%	£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	£0.00	£4,700.00	0%	£0.00
Support Grants	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	0%	£0.00
Projects					
Parish Plan	£5,000.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	0%	£0.00
D Day (from reserves) VE Day	£5,000.00	£0.00	£5,000.00	0%	£0.00
Contingency earmarked (from reserves)	£10,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	0%	£0.00
Community Projects earmarked (from reserves)	£30,000.00	£1,569.46	£28,430.54	5%	£1,569.46
Community Projects Play Area earmarked (from r	£25,000.00	£0.00	£25,000.00	0%	£0.00
Environmental Maintenance (From Reserves)	£10,000.00	£604.00	£9,396.00	6%	£0.00
Neighbourhood Plan (funded from reserves)	£10,000.00	£0.00	£10,000.00	0%	£0.00
Noak Bridge Pond	£5,000.00				
Nature Reserve/Gates	£5,000.00				
Duck Trail	£3,000.00				
Gym equipment	£10,000.00				
Phone Kiosk/Little Libraries	£6,000.00				
EXPENDITURE TOTALS	**£135,823.00**	**£9,090.38**	£126,732.62	7%	**£2,765.42**
PRECEPT TOTALS	**£41,276.54**	**£9,090.38**		22%	

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 6.5
DM Payroll Services – Contract Renewal 2027/28

Background

The Council currently contracts with DM Payroll Services Ltd to provide its payroll services.

The provider has advised that, with effect from 1 April 2027, it is introducing a revised contract and increasing its annual fee. The increase reflects rising operating costs, and the provider has also updated its contract terms to introduce charges for certain additional services requested outside the standard payroll provision.

The annual fee will increase from £120 in 2026/27 to £146 plus VAT for 2027/28. The revised contract also includes:

- A £10 plus VAT charge for setting up a new employee during the year.
- A £10 plus VAT charge per employee for P11D submissions.
- A £10 charge for submitting the Declaration of Compliance to The Pensions Regulator.
- A £10 plus VAT charge where the Council requests a payroll re-run through no fault of the payroll provider.

From April 2028, the annual fee will automatically increase each year in line with the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) published in July of the preceding year.

Summary

The Council currently has a single employee and has not historically required the additional chargeable services outlined in the revised contract. Consequently, it is anticipated that the only immediate financial impact will be the increase in the annual payroll fee.

DM Payroll Services has requested that the signed contract be returned if the Council wishes to continue using its payroll service from 1 April 2027.

Recommendation

Members are requested to:

1. Consider the revised contract and associated changes proposed by DM Payroll Services Ltd.
2. Approve the revised payroll services contract with effect from 1 April 2027.
3. Authorise the Clerk to sign and return the contract on behalf of Noak Bridge Parish Council.

Return to agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 6.6
Appointment of an Additional Unity Trust Bank Signatory

Background

The Parish Council currently has three authorised signatories for its Unity Trust Bank account: Councillors Bateman, Dowton and Gilliam.

Following the Council's Financial Regulations, payment batches are prepared by the Clerk following approval by the Council (or in accordance with the Council's financial procedures) and require authorisation by two authorised signatories before payment is released.

Summary

The Parish Council currently has three authorised signatories for its Unity Trust Bank account, with two signatories required to authorise each payment.

When signatories are unavailable due to annual leave, work or other commitments, there can be limited flexibility to authorise payments within Unity Trust Bank's required timescales. If payment batches are not approved in time, they expire and must be recreated by the Clerk, resulting in unnecessary additional administrative work.

Appointing an additional authorised signatory would improve resilience and flexibility, help ensure payments are processed promptly, and avoid the need to contact councillors whilst they are away or otherwise unavailable. The requirement for two authorised signatories to approve each payment would remain unchanged.

Recommendation

Members are asked to appoint an additional councillor as an authorised signatory for the Parish Council's Unity Trust Bank account.

Return to agenda

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 7
Biodiversity Policy

Background

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, places a duty on all public authorities, including parish councils, to have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity when exercising their functions.

Government guidance published in May 2023 advised that public authorities should complete their first consideration of biodiversity by 1 January 2024 and adopt appropriate policies and objectives as soon as practicable thereafter.

Summary

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) has produced a model Biodiversity Policy to assist parish and town councils in meeting their statutory duty. A draft policy and accompanying Action Plan have been prepared using this guidance and adapted to reflect the circumstances of Noak Bridge Parish Council.

As the Parish Council does not own or manage any land or buildings, the policy focuses on the areas where the Council can make a meaningful contribution. These include considering biodiversity when responding to planning consultations, supporting community initiatives, promoting awareness, working in partnership with other organisations and encouraging biodiversity enhancements throughout the parish.

The proposed Action Plan identifies practical and proportionate measures that are within the Council's remit and provides a framework for monitoring progress through an annual review.

Advice

Adopting a Biodiversity Policy and Action Plan will demonstrate that the Council has considered its statutory biodiversity duty and has identified appropriate actions to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, consistent with its functions and responsibilities.

Annual review of both documents will ensure they remain relevant, reflect any legislative or policy changes and enable the Council to monitor progress against the agreed actions.

Recommendation

Members are recommended to:

1. Adopt the Biodiversity Policy and accompanying Biodiversity Action Plan.
2. Review the Policy and Action Plan annually at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council or as required to ensure they remain current and effective.

Noak Bridge Parish Council

Agenda 5 August 2026

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
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Biodiversity Policy

1. Background

1.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, as strengthened by the Environment Act 2021, places a duty on public authorities, including parish councils, to have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity.

1.2 Conserving biodiversity includes restoring or enhancing populations of species and habitats as well as protecting them. Although the Council does not own or directly manage land, it recognises that it can make a positive contribution through its decision-making, community leadership, partnership working and planning consultation role.

2. Definition

2.1 According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet.

2.2 Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water, and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

3. Aims and Objectives

3.1 The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

3.2 The Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

3.3 In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact/nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the village to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

3.4 As the Council does not own or directly manage any land or buildings, it will seek to fulfil its biodiversity duty primarily through its statutory functions, planning consultation responses, community engagement, partnership working and support for local initiatives.

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4. Actions

4.1 Planning applications

The Council will:

- when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.
- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider whether planning applications appropriately address biodiversity, habitat protection and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements where applicable.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the development of a neighbourhood plan.
- Develop an action plan which will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Council.

4.2 Local Community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website, social media page and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.

4.3 Partners

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

5. MONITORING

5.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and actions updated where appropriate.

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Noak Bridge Parish Council Biodiversity Action Plan

Objective	Action	Intended Outcome	Timescale	Monitoring / Reporting
Planning	Consider biodiversity, habitat protection and Biodiversity Net Gain (where applicable) when responding to planning consultations.	Development supports and enhances biodiversity wherever possible.	Ongoing	Planning consultation responses.
Planning	Support the use of biodiversity enhancements in new developments, such as native planting, hedgehog highways, swift bricks, bat boxes, bee bricks and sustainable drainage where appropriate.	Increased habitat opportunities within new development.	Ongoing	Planning consultation responses.
Community Awareness	Promote biodiversity through the Council's website, newsletters and social media, including seasonal advice on wildlife-friendly gardening and pollinator planting.	Increased community awareness and participation.	Ongoing	Website, newsletters and social media.
Community Engagement	Encourage residents to undertake wildlife-friendly actions, including planting native species, reducing pesticide use, providing nesting habitats and creating pollinator-friendly gardens.	Improved biodiversity across private gardens and community spaces.	Ongoing	Communications and community feedback.
Partnership Working	Work with Basildon Borough Council, Essex County Council, local organisations and other landowners to encourage biodiversity-friendly management of public open spaces, verges and other green infrastructure.	Enhanced habitats through collaborative working.	Ongoing	Liaison meetings and correspondence.
Local Projects	Support community-led biodiversity initiatives where appropriate, including tree planting, wildflower planting, litter picking and habitat improvement projects.	Increased opportunities for local environmental improvement.	Ongoing	Council reports and publicity.

Objective	Action	Intended Outcome	Timescale	Monitoring / Reporting
Education	Encourage schools, community groups and local organisations to participate in biodiversity and environmental education initiatives where opportunities arise.	Greater understanding of biodiversity within the community.	Ongoing	Partnership activities.
Funding	Where resources permit, consider supporting projects that deliver measurable biodiversity benefits through the Council's grant funding arrangements.	Local biodiversity projects receive appropriate support.	Annual	Grant awards.
Local Nature Recovery	Have regard to the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other relevant environmental strategies when considering opportunities to support biodiversity.	Council activities remain aligned with local and national priorities.	Ongoing	Council reports.

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