



## Noak Bridge Parish Council

### Minutes

**Held at Noak Bridge Village Hall, Coppice Lane, Noak Bridge SS15 4JS on  
Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025 @ 7.00pm**

Present

Chairman: Cllr Mark Cottrell

Councillors: Cllr Cristopher Bateman, Cllr Paul Daft (Vice Chairman), Cllr Jacqui Downton, Cllr Peter Hawkins and Cllr Terri Sargent,

In attendance: Cllr Malcolm Buckley (Essex County Councillor), Cllr Tony Ball (Essex County Councillor), Lynda Townend (Clerk) and 5 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### **15/2025 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Lynn Gilliam, Cllr Stuart Allen and Cllr Alex Myers.

#### **16/2025 Declarations of Interest**

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

**Resolved:** No declarations of interest were received from Councillors.

#### **17/2025 Minutes**

Members reviewed the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025, Minutes 01/2025 to 14/2025 inclusive.

Cllr Sargent enquired about the correct Band D council tax amount, as approved at the last meeting.

The Chairman confirmed the Band D council tax was £41.31.

**Resolved:** That the clerk will send out the precept form to all Members.

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

### **18/2025      General Power of Competence**

Members discussed adopting the General Power of Competence and the potential changes devolution will have on the parish and the services it provides.

**Resolved:** Members agreed to defer the adoption of the General Power of Competence.

### **19/2025      Neighbourhood Plan Update**

Cllr Sargent advised that the Neighbourhood Plan consultation is now live, running from Monday, 24th February, until midnight on Monday, 7th April 2025. Submissions must be made using the online Commonplace consultation platform.

Cllr Sargent emphasised the importance of residents participating in the consultation to demonstrate community support for the plan to the inspector.

A newsletter is currently being drafted to inform residents about the consultation and how they can submit their responses. Basildon Borough Council has produced posters to promote the consultation, which will be sent to Cllr Sargent who will distribute to fellow councillors.

Cllr Sargent requested that Cllr Downton publicise the consultation on the Council's Facebook page.

Additionally, Cllr Sargent suggested holding a drop-in session where residents could review the plan and discuss any questions.

**Resolved:** That the update be noted.

### **20/2025      Community Projects**

#### **20/2025/1    Little Libraries**

Cllr Downton reported difficulties in obtaining three quotes for the repair of the door lock and roof leak. However, she has met a local handyman who has generously offered to carry out the repairs free of charge once the weather improves.

**Resolved:** That the Council expresses its sincere gratitude to the resident for their kind offer to complete the repairs.

#### **20/2025/2    Noak Bridge Playground**

The Council discussed whether to fund repairs to the playground, given that the developers have indicated they will contribute towards this as part of their S106 investment in the area. The consensus was to keep the matter under review and seek further clarity on the timeline for developer contributions, ensuring they are held accountable.

**Resolved:** that the Council monitor the situation.

**20/2025/3 Noak Bridge Litter Pickers**

The Council received a letter from the Noak Bridge Litter Pickers requesting a contribution toward the cost of new litter-picking equipment and public liability insurance.

A member of the public reported that the group has collected 178 sacks of rubbish to date and now has 50 members, with an average of 12 volunteers attending each organised litter pick. He also proposed providing branded hi-vis vests and mugs as a reward for members who have completed six litter picks and requested that the Council consider supporting this initiative, bringing the total funding request to £608.

The Chairman and Members congratulated and thanked the group for their dedication and hard work in keeping the village clean.

**Resolved:** That the Council award the Noak Bridge Litter Pickers a grant of £608 to support the purchase of litter-picking equipment, public liability insurance, and branded items for regular volunteers. Payment will be reimbursed on production of an invoice by the group.

**21/2025 Finance**

**21/2025/01 Accounts for Payment**

The Council received and approved the following accounts for payment:

Date	Payee	Item	Net	VAT	Total
25/02/2025	L Townend	Part January & February Salary and expenses	875.32	0.00	875.32
25/02/2025	HMRC	February PAYE costs	40.71	0.00	40.71
25/02/2025	L Townend	Council laptop repair	25.00	5.00	30.00
28/02/2025	Noak Bridge Village Hall	February hall hire	50.00	0.00	50.00
12/03/2025	Mythic Beasts (VCS Websites)	Registration of gov.uk domain	192.00	38.40	230.40
13/03/2025	VCS Websites	Build, domain & email set up	583.00	0.00	583.00
		<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,766.03</b>	<b>43.40</b>	<b>£1,809.43</b>

**Resolved:** That the accounts for payment for February be approved.

**21/2025/02 Bank Reconciliation**

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

**21/2025/03 Monthly Budget Sheet**

The Council received and noted the budget comparison to the end of January 2025 and noting the council had spent £44,070.84 to date.

### **21/2025/04 Revised Payment Process – Dual Authorisation**

Councillors received and noted the Revised Payment Process report, sought clarity on how the process would work with the council's current bank accounts.

It was noted the Council's Financial Regulations stipulate the process of two councillors authorising each payment should be followed.

Cllr Sargent advised the Council if the mandate on the Santander Business Account was altered to 'two to sign' the debit card facility would have to be removed.

Councillors recognised the flexibility a debit card offers the councils when making cash purchases.

**Resolved:** That the council would add the clerk to the bank account at the end of the Clerk's probationary period.

**Resolved:** That the Clerk looks at options for high interest bearing accounts.

### **21/2025/05 Clerk's Pension Scheme**

Councillors received and noted the Clerk's Pension Scheme report, considering the financial implications and flexibility of available options.

**Resolved:** That the Council proceed with enrolling the Clerk into the National Employment Savings Trust (NEST) scheme, recognising its lower employer costs while fulfilling the Council's auto-enrolment duties.

### **21/2025/06 Council Mobile Phone Contract**

Councillors received and discussed a report on the consideration of a mobile phone contract for the Council, recognising the benefits for data protection, continuity, and professional communication.

**Resolved:** That the Council agreed to purchase of a dedicated, sim-only mobile phone contract, delegating authority to the Clerk to secure the most cost-effective contract, acknowledging that advertised prices may vary.

## **22/2025 Policies and Procedures**

### **22/2025/01 Investment Policy**

Councillors received and discussed the report proposing the Council adopt an Investment Policy, acknowledging the need for prudent management of surplus funds and compliance with internal audit recommendations and statutory guidance.

**Resolved:** That the Council agreed to adopt the Investment Policy which will be reviewed annually, with an end-of-year investment report prepared by the Clerk for the Council to consider.

### **23/2025 ABLC Meeting Update**

Cllrs Cottrell and Draft attended the recent ABLC meeting and provided the following updates:

- Concerns were raised by all councils regarding the high number and volume of planning applications being approved, as well as the approval process itself.
- to discuss collective views regarding Basildon's Local Plan Consultation
- It was agreed that all councils would meet prior to the next Liaison Meeting to discuss the collective views regarding Basildon's Local Plan Consultation with a view to compile a single report to present to Basildon Borough Council.
- An updated "Who's Who" list was circulated, along with an update on waste services.

### **24/2025 Greater Essex Devolution Consultation**

The Chairman advised that the Greater Essex Devolution Consultation is now open and will run until 23:59 on 13th April 2025. The outcome of this consultation will determine the future structure of local government.

Cllr Ball explained that devolution would result in the upper tier of government being combined under the strategic direction of an elected Mayor, who would be responsible for planning, adult services, education, police, fire, and crime.

Under the proposed changes, district and borough councils would be merged into three to five unitary authorities. A local marketing strategy will be developed to engage with residents on the consultation.

Cllr Sargent advised she had attended a briefing held by Essex County Council and that a briefing was available to Clerks via the EALC.

Councillors discussed whether the Council should submit a formal response.

**Resolved:** That the Council will not submit a collective response to the consultation, but individual councillors will respond as they see fit.

### **25/2025 VE Day 80 – A Shared Moment of Celebration**

Cllr Downton provided the council with an update on arrangements discussed so far, which included:

- A fish and chip van to be located on the field at no cost to the council.
- Timings for the event would be from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.
- Scotties and the pub to be approached to support the event.

- St John's Ambulance will need to be in attendance.
- Cllr Sargent will liaise with the school if they would like to be involved.
- The contractor to light the beacon will need to be engaged.
- Permission to use the field to be obtained from Basildon Borough Council.
- The appointment of a MC for the event.

The Council discussed purchasing assets from the Royal British Legion to commemorate this important date including a wooden bench to be installed at Fore Street Green and a Tommy statue to be placed at Bridge Street, near the village sign.

**Resolved:** that the council will purchase a bench (3-seater, including fixings) and the original Tommy statue at a cost of £1,505.

**Resolved:** that the Council agreed a budget of £3,000 for the beacon lighting event and a further budget £1,500 to spend on promotional items from the Royal British Legion.

## **26/2025 Planning**

The Council **noted** the objection response to planning application 25/00075 submitted by ADP Consultant's, on behalf of the Council.

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

**26/2025/1 25/00171/OUT** Hybrid application for a phased development of up to 300 residential dwellings (C3 Use Class) to include 1. Detailed application (Phase 1) for the first 100 dwellings, new vehicular and pedestrian accesses from Wash Road, provision of green infrastructure including a new community park, resident allotments, surface water drainage basins, swales and foul water pumping station, all hard and soft landscaping works, residents and visitors car parking and 2. Outline application (Phases 2 and 3), for up to 200 residential dwellings, community use buildings, surface water drainage basins, a second foul water pumping station, new vehicular and pedestrian accesses from Wash Road, and all associated infrastructure works.

**Resolved:** That the Council will instruct Bluestone to write an objection letter on behalf of the Council for this planning application.

## **27/2025 Appointment of an Internal Auditor**

The Council considered a report and three quotes from Auditors to appoint for the 2024/25 internal audit.

**Resolved:** That the quote from John Watson be accepted at a cost of £180 be appointed as the Internal Auditor to the Parish Council for the 2024/25 financial year.

## **28/2025 Clerks Membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks**

The Council considered contributing to the Clerk's annual membership fees of the Society of Local Council Clerks.

**Resolved:** That the Council will contribute to the cost of the Clerk's SSLC membership fees.

### **29/2025 Borough and County Councillor Reports**

Cllr Buckley provided the following updates :

- Essex County Council has set a budget which has increased by 3.75%. This is the second lowest in the county and includes the 2% social services levy.
- Council has well managed funds and there are no short-term issues with cash flow.
- The Police, Fire and Crime Commission have increased their budget by 5.88%.
- The Government has provided additional funding which will save the PCSO positions, but further economies will need to be made.
- £12m has been allocated to Highways.

Cllr Ball added to the update including:

- Next year will be the Year of Opportunity, following Years of Reading and Numeracy to ensure a golden thread to providing employment opportunities.
- The Local Government White Paper on Devolution has been silent on the role of Parish Councils but confirmed they will remain.

Cllr Sargent advised:

- Basildon Borough Council has increased their council tax by the maximum of 2.98%.
- Basildon Borough Council plans to replace the reusable blue and white recycling bags with single use plastic bags. This has raised concerns of increases in waste going to landfill, the associated costs involved and reliance on single use plastic.

### **30/2025 Public Participation Session**

A member of the public confirmed damaged curb stones, reported over five years ago are being repaired.

Malcom advised to continue reporting issues to Tony or Malcom using a What 3 Words.

A member of the public advised the planned closure of Harding's Elms Road did not occur. Cllr Buckley confirmed this was due to neighbouring road works and is still scheduled for repair.

A member of the public suggested sharing the Neighbourhood Plan consultation with local, active, social media groups.

A member of the public advised four of the fourteen streetlights, previously reported as faulty, were still not working. An updated list will be sent to Cllr Buckley.

A member of the public advised the Friends of Noak Bridge have recently removed reeds from the pond, planted flower troughs and are applying to install an information board in the area.

A member of the public circulated a picture taken of Shotgate High Street showing floral arrangements in hanging baskets and tiered planters and enquired if they Council would be supportive of this for the 2025/26 growing season.

A member of the public enquired if the Council would be supportive of, and agreed in principle to, the community group organising a Christmas Fayre which would involve closing Coppice Lane to Hall Street and inviting stall holders to set. Care would be needed not to clash with the Christmas events held at neighbouring parishes/towns.

**31/2025 Correspondence Received**

No correspondence was presented.

**32/2025 Meeting Dates**

The Council received a draft schedule of dates for meetings in the civic year 2025/26.

**Resolved:** That the meeting dates be agreed with the exception of the December meeting date which should be removed.

The date of the next meeting will take place on the 26th March 2025 at 7pm in the village hall.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.58

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cllr Mark Cottrell