



Noak Bridge Parish Council

Minutes

**Held at Noak Bridge Village Hall, Coppice Lane, Noak Bridge SS15 4JS on
Wednesday the 28th May 2025 @ 7.00pm**

Present

Chairman: Cllr Mark Cottrell

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

In attendance: Lynda Townend (Clerk) and 4 members of the public

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

48/2025 Election of Chairman

Cllr Cottrell called for nominations for the position of Chairman for the Civic Year 2025-26. Cllr Dowton nominated Cllr Cottrell. The nomination was seconded by Cllr Gilliam. There were no other nominations. 6 Councillors voted in favour of Cllr Cottrell for the position of Chairman, casting a majority vote.

Resolved: that Cllr Cottrell be elected as Chairman for the 2025-26 Civic Year.

49/2025 Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Cllr Cottrell signed the Declaration of the Acceptance of office in the presence of the Clerk.

50/2025 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Alex Myers and Stuart Allen.

Resolved: the apologies were noted.

51/2025 Declarations of Interest

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

Cllr Sargent declared an Other Registrable Interest for matters relating to the Noak Bridge Community Association as Chairman of the Association.

Resolved: that Cllr Sargent declared an Other Registerable interest for agenda item 11 for matters relating to the Noak Bridge Community Association due to her role as Chairman of Noak Bridge Community Association.

52/2025 Minutes

Members reviewed the minutes from the Parish Council meeting held on the 26th March 2025 covering Minutes 33/2025 to 47/2025 inclusive.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th March were received as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

53/2025 Appointment of Vice Chairman

The Chairman called for nominations for the position of Vice Chairman for the Civic Year 2025-26.

Cllr Downton nominated Cllr Daft. The nomination was seconded by Cllr Gilliam. There were no other nominations. 6 Councillors voted in favour of Cllr Daft for the position of Vice Chairman, casting a majority vote.

Resolved: that Cllr Daft be elected as Vice Chairman for the 2025-26 Civic Year.

54/2025 Public Participation Session

A member of the public voiced concern regarding the impending road works. It was noted leaflets has been delivered to affected properties.

Resolved: that Cllr Sargent will write to Cllr Buckley to confirm the restrictions which will be in place.

A member of the public noted the Perspex in the little libraries has been broken.

Resolved: that Cllr Downton will liaise with the handyman who previously repaired the libraries to obtain a quote for repair.

Cllr Gilliam noted a vintage phone booth would provide a secure area for the library to be housed and agreed to investigate the cost.

A member of the public asked if the bins, located near the recycling bins near the village hall, could be replaced with a larger bin or emptied more frequently.

55/2025 Borough and County Councillor Reports

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

- She recently attended informative planning training, which is mandatory for councillors wishing to sit on the Borough's Planning Committee. The training included a discussion around recent government legislation affecting Green Belt land. The introduction of the 3 'Golden Rules' affect the Green Belt five primary purposes: preventing urban sprawl, stopping towns from merging, protecting the countryside from encroachment, preserving the setting of historic towns and aiding

urban regeneration. Green Belt can now be reassessed as Grey Belt. i.e. if it was pre-developed land. The Benson's Farm application was referenced in this context which is expected to be considered by the Planning Committee in early autumn.

- Planning decisions can only be based on existing policy, which may make it more difficult to justify refusal in the future.
- A planning exhibition regarding a proposed development of 1,100 homes at Dunton Road is scheduled to take place in two weeks' time.
- Basildon Borough Council currently does not have a five-year housing land supply. While developers are obtaining permissions, many are not proceeding with construction. This raises concerns about how the council can resist speculative applications going forward.
- Updates were provided on deferred applications at Felmores and Wash Road, both of which relate to sheltered housing schemes. There is currently no confirmation on when these applications will return to committee for a decision.

56/2025 Update from Councillors from the ABLC

Cllr Daft attended the recent ABLC meeting and provided with Council with the following updates:

- The meeting covered standard business, including the appointment of a new Treasurer. There was discussion on how to strengthen engagement with Basildon Borough Council.
- Recent beacon lighting events across the district were noted as successful.
- General planning matters were discussed.
- A briefing was provided on the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC), highlighting the organisation's loss of Essex County Council funding and its forthcoming move from its current premises.
- Cllr Jim Devlin from Billericay Town Council gave a presentation on the topic of local government devolution. A recording of the session will be made available.
- The next ABLC meeting will be the AGM and will include guest speakers.
- Further discussion took place regarding items for the next Borough Liaison Meeting.

Cllr Sargent enquired whether any items had been submitted for discussion and Cllr Daft confirmed that none were raised. It was noted that discussions at the meeting had been largely inconclusive.

Cllr Sargent requested copies of the ABLC agenda and minutes; these will be circulated once received.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

57/2025 Neighbourhood Plan Update

Cllr Sargent advised that the examination of the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing and the Council is currently awaiting the final examiner's report.

To date no questions have been received by the Examiner and there are no further updates to report at this stage.

58/2025 Community Projects

Cllr Sargent had declared an Other Registerable interest on this agenda item due to her role as Chairman of the Noak Bridge Community Association.

58/2025/1 Noak Bridge Community Association Heating Project – Grant Administration

A member of the public provided an update on the heating project at the Noak Bridge Community Hall. Works commenced on Monday the 26th May 2026. The existing gas boiler has been removed which will be replaced with an electric boiler compatible with the building's new solar panels. Old radiators have been taken out, and new ones were delivered on Wednesday the 28th May 2025. Low-temperature grille covers are due to follow. Electrical work is scheduled to begin on Monday the 2nd June 2025. It was noted the existing three-phase power supply was beneficial to enable the connection of the new heating system.

The Council was provided with a report detailing legal guidance received from the EALC concerning the requirements should the Council wish to purchase goods directly for the project in order to reclaim VAT.

Resolved: that the Council agreed to make the agreed grant payment of £13,594.44 to the Noak Bridge Community Association in support of the heating project.

59/2025 Banking and Finance

59/2025/1 Confirmation of Banking Arrangements

The council confirmed their banking arrangements for 2025/26 will remain with the Metro Bank, Santander and Unity Trust Bank.

59/2025/2 Confirmation of Signatories

Signatories to the council's bank accounts will remain as follows:

Metro Bank – Cllrs Cottrell and Daft

Santander - Cllrs Cottrell and Sargent

Unity Trust Bank – Cllrs Bateman, Dowton and Gilliam

59/2025/3 Financial Risk Assessment

The Council received and reviewed the updated Financial Risk Assessment for 2025/26, along with accompanying notes outlining the changes made.

Cllr Sargent proposed that references to the Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) be amended to "professional bodies", in order to reflect a broader range of expertise and acknowledge the current uncertainty surrounding the EALC's future operations.

Resolved: That the Financial Risk Assessment for 2025/26 be approved, subject to the above amendment.

59/2025/4 Fixed Asset Register

The council reviewed and approved the Fixed Asset Register for 2025/26.

Resolved: that the Fixed Asset Register for 2025/26 be approved.

59/2025/5 Statement of Internal Control

The council reviewed and approved the Statement of Internal Control for 2025/26.

Resolved: that the Statement of Internal Control for 2025/26 be approved.

59/2025/6 Deposits

The council were advised the following deposits had been received since the beginning of the financial year:

1. VAT reclaim for 2024/25 for the amount of £3,491.06 was deposited into the Santander account on the 25th April 2025.
2. Santander Business Savings account interest of £1,060.97 was deposited into the account on the 1st April 2025.
3. Metro Bank interest of £59.53 was deposited into the account on the 30th April 2025.
4. The half year precept of £20,638.27 was deposited into the Santander Current account on the 1st April 2025.

Cllr Sargent raised a concern that the interest earned on the Metro Bank Account is causing the total balance to exceed the £85,000 Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) protection limit.

Resolved: that the Council approve a transfer of £1,000 from the Metro Bank Account to the Santander Business Savings Account to ensure the Metro Bank balance remains within FSCS protection limits.

The update on deposits was duly noted.

59/2025/7 Regular Payments

In accordance with Financial Regulation 6.6 the council reviewed and approved a list of regular payments and direct debits which will be made outside of meeting schedules, if required.

Resolved: that the Council approved the following payments which will be made outside of meeting schedules, if required:

1. Clerks salary and expenses
2. Nest Payment
3. HMRC payments

4. Information Commissioners Office payment
5. Mobile phone cost
6. Noak Bridge Community Association for hall hire

59/2025/8 Accounts for Payment

The Council received and approved the following accounts for payment:

Date	Supplier	Item	Total
03/04/2025	Ward Arboriculture Limited	Supply and plant Christmas tree	588.00
03/04/2025	VCS Websites	Invoice 1430 website training costs	120.00
24/04/2025	Bluestone Planning	Objection letter to planning app. 25/00171/OUT	1,149.00
24/04/2025	L Townend	April salary	736.34
24/04/2025	Royal British Legion	VE Day Statue	650.00
24/04/2025	PPL PRS	Music Licence	139.76
24/04/2025	DM Payroll Services	Administration of payroll 2025/26	84.00
24/04/2025	Noak Bridge Community Association	Hall hire 23/04/2025 - Inv 164 NBPC	50.00
25/04/2025	HMRC	Q4 2024/25 HMRC costs (Feb & Mar)	436.51
25/04/2025	HMRC	April HMRC Costs (to be paid by Direct Debit on the 22 June 2025)	238.17
	EALC	NALC and EALC affiliation fees	682.60
10/05/2025	Zoom Communications	Subscription to 22 April 2026	155.88
	Amazon	Bunting for VE Day	90.39
	Matts Generators	Provision of generator and lights for VE Day event	175.00
	Essex Community First Aid Events Volunteers	First Aid provision VE Day	150.00
	Epping Forest Pipe Band	Musician Services for VE Day	250.00
25/05/2025	L Townend	May salary	681.61
25/05/2025	Nest Pension	May pension costs	25.62
25/05/2025	HMRC	May HMRC Costs (to be paid by Direct Debit on the 22 June 2025)	237.33
28/05/2025	Noak Bridge Community Association	Hall hire 28/05/2025	50.00
29/05/2025	John Watson	Internal Audit Fee	180.00
TBC	Basildon Borough Council	Recharge for beacon servicing	TBC
		Total	£ 6,870.21

Resolved: that the accounts for payment for April and May be approved.

59/2025/9 Bank Reconciliation

The Council received and **noted** the Bank Reconciliations to the 30th April 2025.

59/2025/10 Budget Comparison

The Council received and **noted** the budget comparison to the end of April 2025 and noting the council had spent £4,031.61, 3% of the 2025/26 budget.

59/2025/11 Unity Trust Term Deposit

The Council received a report and recommendations following advice the Unity Trust Term Deposit account required a minimum deposit of £85,000.

Resolved: that the council would increase the deposit to £85,000 in a 12 month term deposit account held with Unity Trust Bank.

60/2025 Internal Auditor for the 2025/26 Financial Year

The council considered three quotes from separate auditors to conduct the 2025/26 internal audit.

Resolved: that John Watson be appointed to conduct the internal audit in 2025/26 at a cost of £187.50.

Resolved: that the Council further agreed to change the internal auditor for 2026/27 in line with best practice.

61/2025 Parish Council Insurance

The council considered quotes from three insurance providers.

Resolved: That the council appoint/approve the quote from Zurich for a three year term to insure the council's assets for 2025/26 at a premium of £931.19.

62/2025 Memberships and Subscriptions

The council reviewed and approved the memberships and subscriptions for 2025/26 agreeing to continue membership with:

1. Association of Basildon Local Councils
2. Essex Association of Local Councils
3. Information Commissioners Office
4. National Association of Local Councils
5. Parish Online Mapping Software
6. Society of Local Council Clerks
7. Zoom Communications

Resolved: That the council will maintain membership of the above bodies in 2025/26.

63/2025 Annual Return for the Year Ending 2024/25

63/2025/1 Internal Audit Report 2024/25

The council received and approved the the Internal Audit Report 2024/25 and the report from the Internal Auditor which was conducted on the 21st May 2025.

Resolved: that the council receive the Internal Audit report for 2024/25 and the report from the Internal Auditor.

63/2025/2 Internal Audit Recommendations

The Council received the Internal Auditor's report along with the Clerk's proposed action plan addressing the recommendations made.

Councillors discussed a discrepancy between the Internal Auditor's report and the Action Plan regarding the frequency of inspections for the playground and Pétanque Court. The Internal Auditor's report referenced the need for regular inspections, while the Action Plan specified monthly inspections.

Resolved: that the Council consider transferring ownership of the Pétanque Court to the Noak Bridge Community Association, with this proposal to be discussed further at the next meeting.

Resolved: that the Clerk investigate accredited playground inspection companies and present options at the next meeting for the Council's consideration.

Resolved: that the Council approve the action plan of corrective measures in response to the Internal Auditor's findings, subject to the deferment of item 4.1 regarding inspection frequency.

Three members of the public left the meeting at 20.20.

63/2025/3 Section 1 Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the Year Ended 31st March 2025.

The Chairman read to the Council the statements contained in Section 1 of the Annual Return and the Council agreed that each statement has been complied with.

The Council approved the signing of the Annual Governance Statement of the year ended 31st March 2025 by the Chairman and the Clerk.

Resolved: that the Council approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024/25 and the Chairman and Clerk duly signed.

63/2025/4 Section 2 – Accounting Statements of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the Year Ended 31st March 2025.

The council noted and agreed the financial data in Section 2 of the Annual Return and approved the signing of the Accounting Statement for the year ended 31st March 2025.

Resolved: that the Council approve Section 2, the Accounting Statements, of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2024/25 and the Chairman duly signed.

63/2025/5 Dates for the Period of Public Rights and Publication of Annual Return.

The Council noted the Dates for the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights will commence on Tuesday 3rd June 2025 and end on Monday 14th July 2025.

Resolved: that the period of public rights was noted as commencing on Tuesday 3rd June 2025 and end on Monday 14th July 2025.

64/2025 Policies and Procedures

64/2025/1 Standing Orders

The Council reviewed the updated Standing Orders which are based on the NALC model document.

Cllr Sargent requested the wording for clause 25 a) on page 26 be amended to read 'Unless approved by the Council no councillor shall :'

Resolved: that the council adopt the 2025 version of the NALC model Standing Orders with the above amendment.

64/2025/2 Financial Regulations

The Council reviewed the updated Financial Regulations which are based on the NALC model document.

Resolved: that the council adopt the 2025 version of the NALC model Financial Regulations.

64/2025/3 Policy and Procedure Review

The Council was asked to review a number of policies and procedures; however, it was felt that the volume of documents was too great to consider effectively within a single meeting.

Resolved: that this agenda item be deferred, and the Council agreed to review three to four policies per month on a rolling basis throughout the year.

64/2025/4 Review the Terms of Reference for Committees

The council reviewed the Terms of Reference for the Personnel and Neighbourhood Plan Committees.

Resolved: that the council re-adopt the Terms of Reference for the Personnel and Neighbourhood Plan Committees without amendment.

64/2025/5 Appointment of Members to Serve on Committees and Outside Bodies.

The council discussed the appointment of Members to serve on the council's Appeal, Personal and Neighbourhood Planning Committees.

Resolved: that Cllrs Cottrell, Dowton and Sargent be appointed to serve on the Personnel Committee.

Resolved: that Cllrs Bateman, Daft and Gilliam be appointed to serve on the Appeal Committee.

Resolved: that all councillors be appointed to serve on the Neighbourhood Plan Committee.

64/2025/6 Appointment of Members to Serve on Outside Bodies.

The council discussed the appointment of Members to serve on the Association of Basildon Local Councils (ABLC) and the LCLG.

Resolved: that Cllrs Cottrell and Daft be appointed to represent the Council at the ABLC meetings.

Resolved: that Cllrs Cottrell, Sargent and the Clerk be appointed to represent the Council at the BLCLG meetings.

64/2025/7 Roles and Responsibilities

The Council agreed the following Member's roles and responsibilities for 2025/26.

Finance – Cllr Cottrell

Planning – Cllr Hawkins

Freedom of Information – Cllr Cottrell

Neighbourhood Plan – Cllr Sargent

Audit – Cllr Sargent

Newsletter – Cllr Sargent

Website - Cllr Sargent

Policy – Cllr Terri Sargent

GDPR - Cllr Sargent

Defibrillators – Cllr Daft

Fixed Assets - Cllr Daft

PRoW - Cllr Daft

CCTV - Cllr Daft

Projects – Cllr Downton

Health & Safety – Cllr Bateman

64/2025/8 Register of Member's Interests

Members were reminded to always keep their Register of Interests and memberships up to date with Basildon Borough Council.

Cllr Daft left the meeting at 20.42.

Cllr Daft returned to the meeting at 20.44.

65/2025 Planning

65/2025/1 The Council considered the following planning application published by Basildon Borough Council and the publication of the agenda for this meeting:

65/2025/1/2 25/00451/FULL Replacement of all UPVC windows, front, back and side doors with new composite units at 33 Durban Lane.

Resolved: that the Council has no objection to the planning application, but requests that the proposed replacement door be installed in a colour that closely matches the existing door, rather than the suggested 'Chartwell

Green', in order to maintain visual consistency with the surrounding properties.

65/2025/1/3 25/00560/FULL Renewal of planning permission CC/BAS/87/10 for the existing temporary classroom. Noak Bridge Primary School.

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

65/2025/2 The Council noted the planning decisions made by Basildon Borough Council on the following planning applications:

65/2025/2/1 25/00272/TPOBAS 2 metre reduction on an oak tree. 5 Handleys Chase. **Application Permitted.**

65/2025/2/2 25/00311/S211 various tree works at 1-73 Kenilworth Place. **Closed.**

65/2025/3 Delegated Authority to Respond to Planning Applications

The Council considered whether to delegate authority to the Clerk to respond to planning applications received outside the scheduled meeting cycle, following consultation with councillors via email, in cases where calling an additional meeting is not deemed necessary.

Resolved: That the Council does not delegate authority to the Clerk to respond to planning applications outside the meeting schedule. Instead, the Clerk is instructed to request an extension to the response deadline from Basildon Planning Department, when required, to allow consideration at the next scheduled meeting.

66/2025 VAT Charged for Projects

Councillors discussed the administration of grant funding and the council's ability to reclaim VAT, under Section 33 of the VAT Act 1994 provided special conditions are met and when/ if this approach should be considered.

Resolved: that this matter be deferred until an updated grant awarding policy is considered by the council.

67/2025 Correspondence

No correspondence was received.

68/2025 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on the 23 July 2025 commencing at 7.00pm, in the village hall.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.14

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Cllr Mark Cottrell