

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2025/26

On 28th May 2025, at the Annual Council Meeting, I was re-elected as Chairman of Noak Bridge Parish Council by my fellow councillors. I am honoured to continue in this role and would like to thank all councillors for their confidence and support throughout the year. I would also like to recognise Cllr Paul Daft for his continued work as the Vice Chairman.

Councillors' Roles and Responsibilities

During the year, councillors have continued to focus on their respective areas of responsibility to support the village effectively:

- **Cllr Mark Cottrell (Chairman):** Finance, planning, Freedom of Information, and membership of both the Association of Basildon Local Councils and the Basildon Council Liaison Group.
- **Cllr Paul Daft:** looked after the defibrillators, fixed assets, public rights of way, and CCTV.
- **Cllr Chris Bateman:** Responsible for health and safety.
- **Cllr Jacqui Dowton:** Leads on projects and manages the Council's Facebook page.
- **Cllr Terri Sargent:** Leads on the Neighbourhood Plan, newsletter, audit, policy, GDPR, and the Council's website; represents the Council on the Basildon Council Liaison Group.
- **Cllr Lynn Gilliam & Cllr Peter Hawkins:** Support community projects and initiatives.

Key Projects and Community Support

Neighbourhood Plan

A major highlight this year was the formal approval of the Noak Bridge Neighbourhood Plan. Following a referendum held on 16th December 2025, residents voted in favour of adopting the plan. Basildon Borough Council will now take the plan and its policies into account when making planning decisions for the village. I would like to thank Cllr Terri Sargent for her leadership and dedication in bringing this project to completion.

VE Day 80 Commemorations

On 8th May 2025, the Parish Council organised a successful VE Day 80 Beacon Lighting Event on the open space at Wash Road. The event, which included a piper, music, and refreshments, was well attended and brought the community together. As part of the commemorations, a Tommy Bench with access path was installed at Fore Street, and a Tommy Statue was placed on the verge at Wash Road.

Community Support and Grants

The Parish Council has continued to support local groups and initiatives, including:

- **Noak Bridge Community Association:** £13,594.44 to upgrade the heating system in the village hall.
- **Noak Bridge Litter Pickers:** £292 funding to support equipment and insurance.

- **Friends of Noak Bridge:** £131 for a new duck house at Coppice Lane Pond.
- **Essex & Herts Air Ambulance:** £100 donation.
- **Basildon Borough Council Coppice Lane Pond Works:** £3,000 contribution to remove silt and deepen the pond to help retain water in dry weather.

Environment and Village Improvements

- During 2025/2026 we Engaged a handyman to carry out maintenance tasks around the village, including hedge trimming, cutting back vegetation, repairing bollards and fencing, painting, and general tidying. To date, £3,169 has been spent/committed. Residents are invited to suggest additional areas for improvement.
- Installed Christmas lights along Coppice Lane and Bridge Street at a cost of £8,450, and a Christmas tree at Wash Road for £170.
- Installed hanging flower baskets in Coppice Lane at a cost of £1,920.
- Reported streetlight faults and potholes to Essex County Council.

Planning and Governance

- The Council consulted on all planning applications notified by Basildon Borough Council.
- Regular attendance at the Local Council Liaison Group and the Association of Basildon Council meetings ensured that concerns from neighbouring councils were heard and solutions explored.
- Completed annual independent internal and external audits without any compliance issues.
- Commenced a programme to review and update all Council policies, which is ongoing.
- Reviewed banking arrangements to ensure best value and compliance with Financial Regulations.
- Responded to the Government's consultation on Local Government Reorganisation in Essex. The Council's preferred model is the three Unitary Authority model, which may affect Noak Bridge's boundary. A final decision is expected on 26th March 2026.

Finance

- The expenditure budget for 2025/26 was agreed at £41,216.20, resulting in a Band D cost of £41.13 per household.
- The Parish Council continues to ensure careful management of funds and accountability in all financial matters.

Looking Ahead – 2026/27 Projects

Planned projects for the coming year include:

- Continuing the hanging flower baskets and Christmas lights and including additional lights and baskets around the village.
- Ongoing handyman maintenance tasks to improve the village environment.
- Creation of a Duck Trail around the village ponds.
- Upgrading the Little Libraries.
- Reviewing our play areas.

It has been a busy and productive year for Noak Bridge Parish Council, with substantial progress across projects and initiatives that benefit the whole community. I would like to thank all councillors, our Clerk, and the many residents and volunteers who continue to contribute to village life. I look forward to working with you all in the year ahead and encourage residents to attend our monthly Parish Council meetings.

Cllr Mark Cottrell

Chairman

Noak Bridge Parish Council