



Great Braxted Parish Council

Clerk to the Council:
Lynda Townend

GBPC
Rosewood The Furze
Main Road CM9 6PU
Tel: 07307 891 134

Email: parishclerk@greatbraxtedparishcouncil.gov.uk

2nd September 2025

To: Members of Great Braxted Parish Council

You are hereby summoned to attend

THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING TO BE HELD AT THE PAVILION ON TUESDAY 9th SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 8.00 PM

for the purpose of transacting the following business:

LTownend
Clerk to the Council

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th July 2025 to be taken as read and signed as a correct record by the Chairman ([attached](#)).

3. Declarations of Interest (existence and nature)

Members are reminded that they are required to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Pecuniary Interests or Non-Pecuniary Interests which they know they might have in items of business on the agenda. They are reminded that they will need to repeat their declarations at the appropriate point in the meeting and leave the room if required under the Code of Conduct which took effect in July 2022.

Unforeseen interests must be declared similarly at the appropriate time.

4. Maldon District Councillor Update

To receive a written or verbal update from the District Councillor.

5. Public Participation Session

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

6. Planning

6.1 To consider planning applications detailed below and any planning applications published on the MDC planning website between the circulation of this agenda and the meeting:

6.2 To note the Parish Council's response to a planning application considered outside of a meeting and circulated via email, in accordance with Council resolution 20/15.2.

6.2.1 24/00919/FUL The erection of four new build dwellings (in lieu of Prior Approval for four dwellings, subject of application 24/00072/PACUAR. **OBJECTION** submitted on the 13th August 2025.

6.3 To note planning decisions made by Maldon District Council:

6.3.1 25/00548/FUL Proposed Partial Demolition, Extension and Alterations to Existing Pavilion Braxted Park Golf Club Braxted Park Braxted Park Road Great Braxted. **APPROVED.**

6.3.2 25/00549/LBC Proposed Partial Demolition, Extension and Alterations to Existing Pavilion Braxted Park Golf Club Braxted Park Braxted Park Road Great Braxted. **GRANTED LISTED BUILDINGS CONSENT.**

7. Environment

7.1 Signs on Gates in the Village

8 Finance

8.1 Accounts for Payment

To agree the accounts for payment, made between meetings, for the period between the 1st July to the 31st August 2025. ([attached](#))

8.2 2025 Pay Award

To note the National Joint Council's pay agreement for 2025 and approve the Clerk's backpay. [Report attached.](#)

8.3 Notice of Conclusion of Audit

To note to Conclusion of Audit by the External Auditor ([attached](#)).

9 Policies and Procedures

9.1 Information Technology Policy

To review and adopt an Information Technology (IT) Policy. [Draft policy attached.](#)

9.2 Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Parish Council Meetings

To receive information on the outcome of the Government's consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting in local authorities, and to consider the next steps. [Report attached.](#)

10 Council Website

To receive a report regarding compliance issues with the existing website. [Report attached.](#)

11 Updates

- BT Telephone Kiosk
- CCTV Signs

12 General Announcements

13 Items to be Included on the Next Agenda

14 Date of Next Meeting

11th November 2025.

15 Chairman to Close the Meeting

*THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO BE PRESENT
All reports are available from the clerk*

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held at The Pavilion on 7th July at 8pm

Present:

Councillors R. Collins (Chairman), C. Knapman (Vice-Chairman) M Davis, L Holt, the Clerk and 3 members of the public.

25/37 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Miles.

25/38 Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting

Resolved: that the minutes of the Parish Council meeting, held on the 17th June 2025, were agreed as a correct record and signed by Cllr Holt.

25/39 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they are required to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, Other Pecuniary Interests or Non-Pecuniary Interests which they know they might have in terms of business on the agenda. They were also reminded that they will need to repeat their declarations at the appropriate point in the meeting and leave the room if required under the Code of Conduct which took effect in July 2022. Further they were reminded that unforeseen interests must be declared similarly at the appropriate time.

No interests were declared.

25/40 Maldon District Councillor Update

The District Councillor was not in attendance.

The Chairman provided an update on devolution process.

25/41 Public Participation Session

A member of the public asked why the proposed rabbit-proof fencing was not pursued. Cllr Knapman advised this was due to cost. The member of the public felt the cost was not excessive.

The Chairman noted that current weather conditions are ideal for rabbit breeding. The member of the public suggested a two-year programme to clear the wooded area and address tree damage to the existing fencing. It was noted that the Parish Council has purchased a tonne of topsoil to fill holes caused by rabbit activity.

A discussion took place regarding the benefits of clearing the overgrowth, where the rabbits hide. Cllr Knapman confirmed he will arrange a meeting with the resident and a local contractor to ascertain what work could be undertaken to alleviate the rabbit problem.

A Member of the Public, and previous parish clerk, passed some historic council records to the Clerk who will deposit at the Essex Records Office.

Resolved: that the Clerk will deposit the historic records at the Essex Records Office.

A member of the public enquired about an official opening of the Pavilion and confirmed the first available date as 27th September 2025. The Chairman advised that the Pavilion Management Committee should take the lead on the event, with a few official words and invitations extended to those involved in the project. The Chairman will liaise with the Pavilion Management Committee outside of the meeting.

The Secretary of the Pavilion Management Committee advised the council that the transfer of the Pavilion to the Parish Council, who will act as the Sole Managing Trustee, is now with the Charity Commission.

25/42 To Consider Planning Applications submitted and published by Maldon District Council

25/00548/FUL and 25/00549/LBC Proposed Partial Demolition, Extension and Alterations to Existing Pavilion at Braxted Park Golf club Braxted Park Braxted Prak Road, Great Braxted.

The Parish Council discussed the application and confirmed they have **no objection** to the proposal.

The Chairman reported that building works are ongoing at the Rosedale site, with large construction vehicles observed on site. Maldon District Council's Planning Department has not yet gained access to the site, which is required for assessment in relation to the pending planning application. A site visit is expected in the coming weeks, coordinated by the agent.

Cllr Siddall has called in the application, meaning it will be determined by committee. It was noted that Government checks on unauthorised traveller pitches are meant to be conducted monthly. The most recent data claims there are only six such pitches within the district, although it is known there are at least nine at Rosedale and one at The Orchards.

25/42/1 To Note Planning Decisions Made by Maldon District Council

25/00114/FUL Construction of general-purpose agricultural building at Old House Farm, Braxted Road Kelvedon. **APPROVED.**

25/43 Environment

25/43/1 Car Park and Weed Maintenance

Cllr Knapman reported that DW Maintenance had strimmed the car park area as a goodwill gesture. It was agreed this should be referred to the Pavilion Management Committee to ensure the area is kept tidy. The Pavilion Management Committee Secretary agreed to raise this at the next meeting.

The Secretary of the Pavilion Management Committee noted mixed views among residents regarding tidiness in the village, though there was general agreement that weeds should be sprayed annually. This matter will be passed to the Pavilion Management Committee for further action.

It was also noted that the laurels are now covering the container, and the Pavilion Management Committee will be asked to manage the top of the hedge.

25/43/2 New Pedestrian Gate

Cllr Knapman advised he has been approached by residents that the weight of a 12' gate is too heavy and suggested installing a 4' pedestrian gate next to the existing vehicle gate. A quote had been sought from Roger Clark who could complete the works at a cost of £385.

Resolved: that the council approved the quote of £385 to install an additional self-closing pedestrian gate.

25/43/3 Playground Inspection

The 2025 annual playground inspection was noted. Playsafe, the original installers, are scheduled to carry out a site visit to complete sundry repairs.

Cllr Knapman confirmed he had painted the bars.

25/43/4 Bench Maintenance

Cllr Knapman confirmed he has painted the metal benches and oiled the picnic tables.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Knapman for his attention to this matter and the painting of the playground bars.

25/43/5 Pedestrian Crossing on Tiptree Road

Cllr Davis clarified that the request was for a pedestrian or playground warning sign, not a pedestrian crossing. The Clerk advised that such signage must be requested through Essex Highways.

Resolved: Cllr Davis will provide the Clerk with a What3Words reference for the proposed sign location/s. The Clerk will then contact Essex Highways to request installation.

25/44 Finance

25/44/1 Accounts for Payment

The Council approved the following payments:-

<i>Date</i>	<i>Supplier</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Net</i>	<i>VAT</i>	<i>Total</i>
19/05/2025	Clear Insurance Management Ltd	Insurance premium 20252/26	579.45	0.00	579.45
24/05/2025	Cloud Next	Home hosting domain	49.99	9.99	59.98
24/05/2025	ID Mobile	May phone costs	5.00	1.00	6.00
28/05/2025	L Townend	May salary	262.00	0.00	262.00
28/05/2025	L Townend	Apr-May Expenses	44.00	0.00	44.00
28/05/2025	HMRC	May PAYE costs	65.40	0.00	65.40
31/05/2025	Unity Trust Bank	May Service Charge	6.00	0.00	6.00
06/06/2025	Wallace Arboriculture	May grounds maintenance	380.00	0.00	380.00
10/06/2025	Tolleshunt Turf Farm	Topsoil and grass seed	127.80	13.56	141.36
11/06/2025	Walton Tree Services	Supply woodchip	33.33	6.67	40.00
13/06/2025	Cllr Knapman	Playground equipment expenses	206.41	14.55	220.96
24/06/2025	ID Mobile	June phone bill	5.00	1.00	6.00
27/06/2025	L Townend	June Salary	261.80	0.00	261.80
27/06/2025	HMRC	June PAYE costs	65.60	0.00	65.60
30/06/2025	Unity Trust Bank	June Service Charge	6.00	0.00	6.00
TOTAL:					£2,144.55

Resolved: that the accounts for payment listed above be approved for payment.

25/44/2 Bank Reconciliation

Cllr Holt verified the bank statements and the bank reconciliation to the 30th June 2025.

Resolved: that the council note the bank statements were reconciled to the 30th June 2025.

25/44/3 Budget Comparison

The Council received and noted the budget comparison to the 30th June 2025.

Resolved: that the council received and noted the budget comparison to the 30th June 2025.

25/45 Updates

25/45/1 Gigaclear Meeting

The Clerk advised a meeting is due to take place with representatives from the council and Gigaclear's Community Engagement Manager when Gigaclear has finalised their design for Great Braxted.

25/45/2 Connexions Data Poles

The Chairman provided an update, noting that the taller the poles, the larger the data collection area. Essex County Council acknowledged that residents should have been

consulted but confirmed that planning permission is not required, as telecommunications infrastructure is classed as a key utility.

25/45/3 Rabbit Control

The Clerk advised she had contacted Maldon District Council regarding rabbit control who advised this is not a service they offer but suggested using ferrets. The Clerk also contacted 5 separate pest control providers and none offer rabbit control.

25/46 General Announcements

A member of the public enquired about the CCTV camera signs. The Clerk will contact the supplier for an update.

It was noted the village sign requires re-painting on one side and that this had previously been repainted by a resident. Cllr Holt will contact the resident to enquire if they would be able to re-paint the sign once again.

Repositioning and re-purposing the telephone box discussed. Cllr Holt will speak to the resident whose property the telephone box is located and make enquires regarding the cost to reposition and make good.

25/47 Items to be Included on the Next Agenda

1. Repositioning the telephone box.

25/48 Date of Next Meeting

The next council meeting will take place at 8pm on Tuesday the 9th September 2025.

25/49 Chairman Closed the Meeting

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 21.17

Signed:_____ Dated:_____

Chairman

	<u>Accounts for Payment</u>	<u>For authorisation on 9th September 2025</u>			
Date	Supplier	Item	Net	VAT	Total
02/07/2025	Cllr Knapman	Pavilion expenses	78.18	-	78.18
09/07/2025	Wallace Arboriculture	June grounds maintenance	380.00	-	380.00
17/07/2025	Jan Stobart	COF examination	80.00	-	80.00
17/07/2025	CCLA	Investment Deposit to PSDF	15,000.00	-	15,000.00
21/07/2025	EALC	Clerk Training - Local Council Award Scheme	25.00	5.00	30.00
21/07/2025	Maldon District Council	Q1 Trucam Patrols	259.44	51.89	311.33
24/07/2025	ID Mobile	July phone bill	5.00	1.00	6.00
25/07/2025	PKF Littlejohn	External auditor fee	420.00	84.00	504.00
28/07/2025	L Townend	July salary	294.73	-	294.73
28/07/2025	HMRC	July PAYE costs	73.60	-	73.60
28/07/2025	L Townend	Jun-Jul Expenses	153.07	-	153.07
31/07/2025	Unity Trust Bank	July bank charges	6.00	-	6.00
02/08/2025	Cloud Next	Domain name registration	7.99	1.59	9.58
08/08/2025	Wallace Arboriculture	July grounds maintenance	380.00	-	380.00
26/08/2025	Royal British Legion	Poppy wreath	30.00	-	30.00
27/08/2025	ID Mobile	August phone bill and final payment	2.25	-	2.25
28/08/2025	L Townend	August salary	262.00	-	262.00
28/08/2025	HMRC	August PAYE costs	65.40	-	65.40
29/08/2025	Sky Mobile	August phone bill	6.00	-	6.00
31/08/2025	Unity Trust Bank	August bank charges	6.00	-	6.00
		TOTALS:	£17,534.66	£143.48	£17,678.14



AGENDA REPORT ITEM 8.2

2025 Pay Agreement

Background information

On the 24th July 2025 the National Joint Council's for Local Government Services announced the 2025 Pay Agreement for local council employees.

The NJC encourage employers to implement this pay award as swiftly as possible.

Summary

1. NJC Annual Pay Increase - Effective from 1st April 2025

As a result of the NJC pay award the Clerk's hourly rate has increased by 3.2% from £16.37/hour to £16.90/hour (an increase of 53p/hour). This applies to all hours worked since 1st April 2025.

The Clerk has worked 20 hours per month from April 2025 to August 2025 (5 months), a total of 100 hours.

- **Back Pay Calculation** for the annual pay increase:

20 hours/month × £0.53/hour × 5months = £53.00 total back pay

Recommendation

That the Council note the NJC annual pay award increase of £0.53 per hour, effective from 1st April 2025, and approves the calculation of £53.00 back pay to be paid on the 28th September 2025

National Joint Council for local government services

Employers' Secretary
Naomi Cooke

Trade Union Secretaries
Kevin Brandstatter, GMB

Mike Short, UNISON

Address for correspondence
Local Government Association
18 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ
Tel: 020 7664 3000
info@local.gov.uk

Address for correspondence
UNISON Centre
130 Euston Road
London NW1 2AY
Tel: 0845 3550845
l.government@unison.co.uk

To: Chief Executives in England, Wales and N Ireland
(to be shared with Finance Director and HR Director)
Regional Employer Organisations
Members of the National Joint Council

24 July 2025

Dear Chief Executive,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES PAY AGREEMENT 2025

NB: This circular replaces the one dated 23 July 2025 as it contained rounding errors in some of the hourly rates. The correct figures are now shown as underlined italics in the pay spine at Annex 1.

Employers are encouraged to implement this pay award as swiftly as possible.

Agreement has been reached on rates of pay applicable from **1 April 2025** (covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026). The new pay rates, each increased by 3.20 per cent per annum, are attached at **Annex 1**.

All locally determined pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer, should also be increased by 3.20 per cent, in accordance with Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4¹.

The new rates for allowances, uprated by 3.20 per cent, are set out at **Annex 2**.

The NJC has agreed that from **1 April 2026**, **Spinal Column Point (SCP) 2** will be permanently deleted from the NJC pay spine.

Backpay for employees who have left employment since 1 April 2025

If requested by an ex-employee to do so, we recommend that employers should pay any monies due to that employee from 1 April 2025 to the employee's last day of employment.

When salary arrears are paid to ex-employees who were in the LGPS, the employer must inform its local LGPS fund. Employers will need to amend the CARE and final pay figures (if

¹ The Green Book Part 2 Para 5.4 provides that posts paid above the maximum of the pay spine but graded below deputy chief officer are within scope of the NJC. The pay levels for such posts are determined locally, but once fixed are increased in line with agreements reached by the NJC.

the ex-employee has pre-April 2014 LGPS membership and / or underpin protection) accordingly.

Further detail is provided in section 15 of the HR guide and the Backdated Pay Award FAQs, which are available on the [employer resources section](#) of www.lgpsregs.org

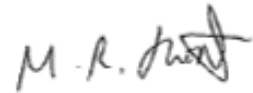
Yours faithfully,

*Naomi
Cooke*

Naomi Cooke



Kevin Brandstatter



Mike Short

ANNEX 1

SCP	01-Apr-24		01-Apr-25	
	per annum	per hour	per annum	per hour
1	<i>Deleted wef 01 Apr 23</i>			
2	£23,656	£12.26	£24,413	£12.65
3	£24,027	£12.45	£24,796	£12.85
4	£24,404	£12.65	£25,185	£13.05
5	£24,790	£12.85	£25,583	£13.26
6	£25,183	£13.05	£25,989	£13.47
7	£25,584	£13.26	£26,403	£13.69
8	£25,992	£13.47	£26,824	£13.90
9	£26,409	£13.69	£27,254	£14.13
10	£26,835	£13.91	£27,694	£14.35
11	£27,269	£14.13	£28,142	£14.59
12	£27,711	£14.36	£28,598	£14.82
13	£28,163	£14.60	£29,064	£15.06
14	£28,624	£14.84	£29,540	£15.31
15	£29,093	£15.08	£30,024	£15.56
16	£29,572	£15.33	£30,518	£15.82
17	£30,060	£15.58	£31,022	£16.08
18	£30,559	£15.84	£31,537	£16.35
19	£31,067	£16.10	£32,061	£16.62
20	£31,586	£16.37	£32,597	£16.90
21	£32,115	£16.65	£33,143	£17.18
22	£32,654	£16.93	£33,699	£17.47
23	£33,366	£17.29	£34,434	£17.85
24	£34,314	£17.79	£35,412	£18.35
25	£35,235	£18.26	£36,363	£18.85
26	£36,124	£18.72	£37,280	£19.32
27	£37,035	£19.20	£38,220	£19.81
28	£37,938	£19.66	£39,152	£20.29
29	£38,626	£20.02	£39,862	£20.66
30	£39,513	£20.48	£40,777	£21.14
31	£40,476	£20.98	£41,771	£21.65
32	£41,511	£21.52	£42,839	£22.20
33	£42,708	£22.14	£44,075	£22.85
34	£43,693	£22.65	£45,091	£23.37
35	£44,711	£23.17	£46,142	£23.92
36	£45,718	£23.70	£47,181	£24.46
37	£46,731	£24.22	£48,226	£25.00
38	£47,754	£24.75	£49,282	£25.54
39	£48,710	£25.25	£50,269	£26.06
40	£49,764	£25.79	£51,356	£26.62
41	£50,788	£26.32	£52,413	£27.17
42	£51,802	£26.85	£53,460	£27.71
43	£52,805	£27.37	£54,495	£28.25

NB: hourly rate calculated by dividing annual salary by 52.143 weeks (which is 365 days divided by 7) and then divided by 37 hours (the standard working week)

Agenda Item 8.3

GREAT BRAXTED PARISH COUNCIL

Notice Of Conclusion of Audit

Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2025

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Section 16 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

1. The audit of accounts for **Great Braxted Parish Council** for the year ended 31 March 2025 has been completed and the accounts have been published.

2. The Annual Governance & Accountability Return including the auditor's certificate and opinion is available for inspection and copying by any local government elector of the area of **Great Braxted Parish Council** on application to:

The Parish Clerk, Lynda Townend

By post to: Rosewood The Furze Main Road Mundon Essex CM9 6PU

By email to: parishclerk@greatbraxtedparishcouncil.gov.uk

During the hours 9.00 to 16.00, Monday to Friday

3. Copies will be provided to any local government elector of the area on payment of £0.20 for each copy of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.

This announcement is made by: Lynda Townend, Parish Clerk and RFO

Date of Announcement: 26th July 2025

Section 3 – External Auditor's Report and Certificate 2024/25

In respect of **Great Braxted Parish Council – EX0092**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2025; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor's limited assurance opinion 2024/25

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with *Proper Practices* and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

None

3 External auditor certificate 2024/25

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2025.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

21/07/2025



AGENDA REPORT ITEM 9.1

Information Technology Policy

Background

As part of changes to the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the 2025/26 financial year, a new assertion, Assertion 10: Digital and Data Compliance will be introduced. This assertion has been added to provide greater clarity and focus around digital governance, replacing elements previously covered under Assertion 3.

To warrant a positive response to Assertion 10, local councils must meet specific requirements relating to digital compliance, email and website management, data protection, and IT governance.

Key compliance requirements include:

- The use of a generic council email account hosted on an authority-owned domain (e.g. clerk@yourtowncouncil.gov.uk). Great Braxted Parish Council conforms to this requirement.
- Ensuring the council website complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.2 AA) and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Great Braxted Parish Council's website **does not** currently conform to this requirement.
- Publication of key documents in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities. Great Braxted Parish Council conforms to this requirement.
- Compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data
- Adoption of an IT Policy, applicable to both council-owned and personal devices used to conduct council business. Great Braxted Parish Council currently **does not** conform to this requirement.

Summary

In line with these requirements, the Council has already taken steps to transition to a

.gov.uk domain for official email accounts. This ensures secure and professional communication and aligns with the expectations of the new governance framework.

To fully meet the conditions of Assertion 10, it is now necessary for the Council to adopt a formal IT Policy. This policy sets out how all members and staff are expected to use IT resources securely and legally, covering topics such as device use, password management, email security, data storage, and responsibilities under data protection law.

A draft IT Policy has been prepared using the template issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and adapted to reflect the needs of this Council. It covers the use of both Council-owned and personal equipment when conducting Council business.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Councillors note the introduction of Assertion 10 to the AGAR for 2025/26 and the associated compliance requirements.
2. The Council formally adopts the draft IT Policy as circulated, to ensure compliance with national standards and demonstrate good governance in digital operations.



*Great Braxted
Parish Council*

Information Technology Policy

	Date	Minute Reference	Review Date
Adopted			

1. Introduction

Great Braxted Parish Council recognises the importance of effective and secure information technology (IT) and email usage in supporting its business, operations, and communications.

This policy outlines the guidelines and responsibilities for the appropriate use of IT resources and email by council members, employees, volunteers, and contractors.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who use Great Braxted Parish Council's IT resources, including computers, networks, software, devices, data, and email accounts.

3. Acceptable use of IT resources and email

Great Braxted Parish Council IT resources and email accounts are to be used for official council-related activities and tasks. Limited personal use is permitted, provided it does not interfere with work responsibilities or violate any part of this policy. All users must adhere to ethical standards, respect copyright and intellectual property rights, and avoid accessing inappropriate or offensive content.

4. Device and software usage

Where possible, authorised devices, software, and applications will be provided by Great Braxted Parish Council for work-related tasks.

Unauthorised installation of software on authorised devices, including personal software, is strictly prohibited due to security concerns.

5. Data management and security

All sensitive and confidential Great Braxted Parish Council data should be stored and transmitted securely using approved methods. Regular data backups should be performed to prevent data loss, and secure data destruction methods should be used when necessary.

6. Network and internet usage

Great Braxted Parish Council's network and internet connections should be used responsibly and efficiently for official purposes. Downloading and sharing copyrighted material without proper authorisation is prohibited.

7. Email communication

Email accounts provided by Great Braxted Parish Council are for official communication only. Emails should be professional and respectful in tone. Confidential or sensitive information must not be sent via email unless it is encrypted.

Be cautious with attachments and links to avoid phishing and malware. Verify the source before opening any attachments or clicking on links.

8. Password and account security

Great Braxted Parish Council users are responsible for maintaining the security of their accounts and passwords. Passwords should be strong and not shared with others. Regular password changes are encouraged to enhance security.

9. Mobile devices and remote Work

Mobile devices provided by Great Braxted Parish Council should be secured with passcodes and/or biometric authentication. When working remotely, users should follow the same security practices as if they were in the office.

10. Email monitoring

Great Braxted Parish Council reserves the right to monitor email communications to ensure compliance with this policy and relevant laws. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act and GDPR.

11. Retention and archiving

Emails should be retained and archived in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Regularly review and delete unnecessary emails to maintain an organised inbox.

12. Reporting security incidents

All suspected security breaches or incidents should be reported immediately to the designated IT point of contact for investigation and resolution. Report any email-related security incidents or breaches to the IT administrator immediately.

13 Training and awareness

Great Braxted Parish Council will provide regular training and resources to educate users about IT security best practices, privacy concerns, and technology

updates. All employees and councillors will receive regular training on email security and best practices.

14. Compliance and consequences

Breach of this IT and Email Policy may result in the suspension of IT privileges and further consequences as deemed appropriate.

15. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. Updates may be made to address emerging technology trends and security measures.

16. Contacts

For IT-related enquiries or assistance, users can contact the parish clerk at parishclerk@greatbraxtedparishcouncil.gov.uk.

All staff and councillors are responsible for the safety and security of Great Braxted Parish Council's IT and email systems. By adhering to this IT and Email Policy, Great Braxted Parish Council aims to create a secure and efficient IT environment that supports its mission and goals.



AGENDA REPORT ITEM 9.2

Remote Attendance and Proxy Voting at Parish Council Meetings

Background

In late 2024, the government carried out a consultation on enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings. This followed the end of temporary COVID-19 provisions that had permitted virtual meetings. The consultation aimed to understand the practicalities and appetite for continuing some form of remote participation, especially at parish and town council level.

The government's official response, now published, supports giving local councils more flexibility to decide how they conduct their meetings—whether in person, hybrid (a mix of physical and virtual attendance), or fully remote in appropriate circumstances.

At present, under Schedule 12, paragraph 10(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, parish council meetings must be held at a physical location.

Key Points from the Government's Response

Remote and Hybrid Attendance: The government supports allowing parish councils to adopt remote or hybrid attendance models if they choose to, though in-person meetings will remain the default.

Proxy Voting: Parish councils will also be given the option to allow councillors to vote by proxy (i.e., allow another councillor to vote on their behalf), although this will not be mandatory.

Local Choice: Councils will be given full discretion to decide whether or not to implement these changes.

Legislation Still Required: These powers are not yet in place. New legislation will be needed before parish councils can legally hold remote meetings or introduce proxy voting.

Guidance to Follow: The government has committed to producing guidance to help local councils understand and implement the changes once the legislation is in force.

Considerations for Great Braxted Parish Council

While the Council is not required to act now, it may wish to start thinking about its position in readiness for the upcoming changes. Key considerations include:

- Whether the Council would be open to allowing remote or hybrid attendance for councillors under certain circumstances.
- Whether proxy voting would be appropriate and helpful for Noak Bridge Parish Council.
- Whether any basic technology improvements (e.g., microphones, camera, screen) might be required to support remote attendance if adopted in future.
- How to manage confidential agenda items during any remote meetings.

Some councils are already preparing by allocating funding to improve meeting technology and reviewing policies. However, at this stage, Great Braxted Parish Council is not required to take any formal steps unless it wishes to.

Recommendations

The Council may wish to:

- Note the government's intention to introduce legislation enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at parish council meetings.
- Decide in principle whether it would be minded to adopt remote/hybrid attendance or proxy voting once legislation is passed.
- Keep a watching brief for further announcements and guidance from NALC, SLCC, or government.

Once legislation is introduced and guidance is published, the Council will be in a position to formally consider and, if appropriate, adopt relevant policies.



Agenda item: 10

AGENDA REPORT

Accessibility and Compliance of the Parish Council Website

Background

Great Braxted Parish Council is required by the Transparency Code for Smaller Authorities and associated legislation to publish a range of essential information on a publicly accessible website. This includes financial reports, governance documents, agendas and minutes, councillor responsibilities, and information about public assets.

It is also a legal requirement under the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 that public sector websites meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standard. These regulations aim to ensure digital content is accessible to all users, including those with disabilities. Guidance on these requirements is available via the UK Government website: gov.uk/guidance/accessibility-requirements-for-public-sector-websites-and-apps.

Summary

An internal review has found that Great Braxted Parish Council's current website (<https://greatbraxtedparishcouncil.gov.uk/>) does not meet WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards. Key accessibility shortfalls include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of text alternatives for non-text content.
- Insufficient colour contrast.
- Poor navigation and keyboard access.
- Incompatible document formats.

This not only prevents some members of the public from accessing key information but also places the council in breach of its legal obligations.

To rectify this, it is recommended that the Council commissions the design and hosting of a new, compliant website. Three quotes have been obtained for comparison:

Company	Set Up Cost	Annual Cost	Platform	Included Features
Aubergine	£499 + VAT	£199 + VAT		WCAG 2.1 AA-compliant design, document upload system, training, hosting & support
VCS Websites	£175 + VAT	£150 + VAT	Drupal	WCA 2.1 AA-compliant , integrated compliance checker, SSL certificate, email support
Parish Council Websites	£749 + VAT	£262.20 + VAT	Wordpress	WCAG 2.1 AA-compliant, includes hosting, support, document repository, accessibility statement

All three providers specialise in parish and town council websites and guarantee compliance with the latest regulations.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council:

1. Acknowledge that the current website does not meet accessibility and transparency requirements.
2. Agree to decommission the existing website and replace it with a new WCAG 2.1 AA-compliant version.
3. Review the quotes and example websites provided by:
 - Aubergine - <https://www.aubergine262.com/parish-town-council-websites/map/>
 - VCS Websites - https://www.vcsnet.co.uk/website_clients
 - Town & Parish Websites - <https://parish-council.website/our-designs/>
4. Select a preferred supplier based on the functionality, design, and support offered.
5. Authorise the Clerk to proceed with the commissioning and oversee the implementation of the new website.