

CASTLE SOWERBY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 22 January 2026 at 7.00pm in Millhouse Village Hall

Councillors present: Mrs Philippa Groves (Chair), Kath Worrall (Vice Chair), Mr Sidney Asbridge, Mr Gerald Bainbridge, Mr John Bell, Mrs Helen Kerry, Mr Richard Little & Mr Jonathan Stalker

In attendance: Westmorland & Furness (WAF) Councillor Mr Colin Atkinson (7.18pm onwards) & Ms J Cornah Wade (Clerk)

Apologies: Councillor Mr Michael Strong

1. **Apologies for absence** – to receive apologies for absence.
There were no apologies
2. **Requests for Dispensations, Declarations of interest, Gifts and Hospitality** – to receive any requests for Dispensations, Declarations of Interest from Councillors relating to items on the agenda, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct
Councillor Little declared an interest in item 12(a)(iv) and withdrew from the discussion for that item.
3. **Public participation** – to receive questions from members of the public relating to items on the agenda, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.
No members of the public were in attendance

At the Chair's discretion, as per Standing Orders 1.a, agenda items 1 to 9 were considered prior to agenda item 4

4. **Report from the Westmorland & Furness (WAF) Councillor**
WAF Cllr Atkinson provided the following update:
 - a. **Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27–2028/29.** Cllr Atkinson reported on the provisional settlement, noting that government funding is significantly lower than previously forecast. This creates a substantial budget gap for the Westmorland & Furness Council over the next three years. Further savings will need to be identified at pace for 2026/27 with more extensive service reductions anticipated from April 2026 onwards and in subsequent years. A summary of the report is provided at Appendix A.
 - b. **Waste collection.** Cllr Atkinson acknowledged recent issues with missed waste collections. He advised that service performance is expected to improve going forward.
 - c. **Proposed Solar Farm at Hutton End.** Cllr Atkinson reported that a strategic meeting regarding the proposed solar farm at Hutton End will take place in Kendal on 4 February. Members of the public wishing to attend are required to register in advance with Jacquie Curry, Senior Democratic Services Officer (jacquie.curry@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk).
5. **Minutes** – to confirm the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 December
The Council **RESOLVED** that the Minutes from the meeting on 4 December be accepted as a true record and were signed by the Chair.
6. **Update on progress from the previous Minutes**
The Clerk/Chair provided a report on the progress of outstanding items which do not require further decision.
 - a. **Register of Interests** – The Chair reminded Councillors to complete the revised WAF Register of Interests and send to the Clerk.

- b. Noticeboards (Sowerby Row and Millhouse) – it was agreed that the Council would apply for funding to replace these with two A3 noticeboards upon conclusion of the 2024/25 external audit.

7. Finance

a. Bank Reconciliation

- i. The Council **RESOLVED** To receive and note the monthly reconciliations and balances to 24 November and 24 December 2025:

	November	December
Barclays Bank: Community Access	£7,594.09	£6,632.25

- ii. **Bank Statements** – to acknowledge scrutiny and acceptance of the previously circulated bank statements

The bank statements for 24 October and 24 December 2025 was reviewed and accepted

- b. **Invoices for Payment** - to consider and approve invoices totalling £360.68¹ for payment itemised on the payment schedule and confirm payments already made totalling £105.00. The Council **RESOLVED** to approve the following payments totalling £385.68:

Voucher	Date	Description	Supplier	Net payment	Payment inc VAT
28 CQ200010	01.02.26	Mileage	Clerk	14.40	14.40
29 CQ200011	01.02.26	Salary January	Clerk	160.64 ²	160.64
30 CQ200013	02.03.26	Salary February	Clerk	185.64	185.64

The Council **RESOLVED** to agree to confirm the following payments totalling £105.00 already made by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Council in accordance with Financial Regulations 5.15 (ii) and by the Clerk 6.9 (i):

Voucher	Date	Description	Supplier	Net payment	Payment inc VAT
26 CQ200008	04.12.25	Councillor Training	CALC	60.00	60.00
27 CQ200009	04.12.25	Room Hire	Millhouse Village Hall	45.00	45.00

c. External Audit – Notification of Certificate of Exemption 2022/23 and 2023/24

The Council noted confirmation from the External Auditor that, following the Council’s approved exemptions for 2022/23 and 2023/24, no External Auditor’s Report or Conclusion of Audit certificate will be issued unless an objection is received or the exemption is found to be invalid.

d. External Audit – Limited Assurance Review 2024/25

The Council noted correspondence from the External Auditor arising from the 2024/25 Limited Assurance Review, with full details set out in Appendix B.

¹ Revised downward from £385.68 due to amended voucher 29

² Revised from £185.64 to reflect HMRC deduction

8. Governance and Consultation

a. Policy Adoption – to consider adopting the following policy.

- I. Risk Assessment - to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (Reg. 6): Councils *must* have a system of internal control, including risk management

Cllr Worrall presented an offer of a free market appraisal from Halliday Consulting of the parish council landholding assets, which the Council considered and agreed to accept.

The Council then considered the Risk Assessment and **RESOLVED** to adopt it, noting that amendments relating to Assets, grit bins, and landholdings (Hewer Hill Quarry, Kell Springs and Cow Gill) will be reviewed at a future meeting pending the outcome of the market appraisal.

9. Fibrus – Community Engagement and Telegraph Pole Installation

To receive an update following last year's community engagement session regarding issues arising from Fibrus works, and to consider whether Fibrus are actively engaging with residents in relation to the current telegraph pole installation. To agree any further action required by the Parish Council

Cllr Worrall had received a letter from Viberoptix, summarised at Appendix C. She noted that last year an almost identical communication had been sent stating there would be road closure from Rushgill Bridge to Cockley Beck from 22 to 24 March 2025 to install fibre. No work was undertaken and she hoped this would not be repeated. The Council reviewed the correspondence and noted that communications remained intermittent. WAF Cllr Atkinson agreed to follow up the matter with Fibrus.

10. Cumbria in Bloom – County Emblem Award 2026

To consider entering the Cumbria in Bloom County Emblem Award 2026 at a cost of £25 (2025 price), and, if agreed, to begin initial planning for the submission, including identifying potential locations, themes, community involvement opportunities, and any associated budget requirements.

The Council **RESOLVED** to enter the County Emblem Award 2026 and agreed to review initial plans at the next meeting.

11. Inglewood Edge Recycling Centre

Cllr Groves provided an update on the recycling site. A report from the WAF Contracts Officer confirmed that the Council is reviewing collection data, container capacity and the condition of the fenced enclosure. Options under consideration include repair, replacement or extension of the enclosure, with any extension requiring consultation with Highways. Financial implications are also being assessed. A further update will be provided once the review is complete.

12. Planning

- a. **Planning Applications** - to consider all recent applications received from Westmorland and Furness Council detailed below and any other planning applications submitted between the circulation of this agenda and the meeting:

- i. **Application Reference: 2025/2228/FPA**

Proposal: Erection of slurry store

Location: Land to East of Well House, Heskett Newmarket, Wigton CA7 8HT

[Planning application: 2025/2228/FPA | Westmorland & Furness Council](#)

The Council considered the application and **RESOLVED** that there were no comments or objections to the proposal.

ii. Application Reference: 2025/2458/FPA

Proposal: Change of use of agricultural building to extend existing dwelling and associated alterations

Location: Low Cowrigg, Raughton Head, Carlisle CA5 7DU

[Planning application: 2025/2458/FPA | Westmorland & Furness Council](#)

The Council considered the application and **RESOLVED** that there were no comments or objections to the proposal.

iii. Application Reference: 2025/2470/LBC

Proposal: Listed Building consent for the replacement of 24 single glazed timber windows with steel framed double-glazed windows

Location: Thistlewood Tower High Bridge Dalston Carlisle CA5 7DS

[Planning application: 2025/2470/LBC | Westmorland & Furness Council](#)

The Council considered the application and **RESOLVED** that there were no comments or objections to the proposal.

iv. Application Reference: 2025/2464/FPA

Proposal: Construction of a slurry lagoon.

Location: Low Moor Dyke Heskett Newmarket Wigton CA7 8HS

[Planning application: 2025/2470/LBC | Westmorland & Furness Council](#)

The Council considered the application and **RESOLVED** that there were no comments or objections to the proposal.

b. Notices of Decision – to note any notices of decision received.

The Council noted the following notices of decision

- i. 2025/2325/PAPP at Bank End Farm, Heskett Newmarket CA7 8HR for ‘prior notification under schedule 2, part 6, class A, for an agricultural storage building’
Permission for development – 19 December
- ii. 2025/2004/NMA at Duck Pond Barn Sowerby Row Carlisle CA4 0QG for ‘nonmaterial amendment for the creation of 2 window openings and centralisation of the existing doorway on the front elevation; and inclusion of 1 additional Velux window and repositioning of 2 Velux windows in front elevation roof, attached to approval 20/0160
Permission for development – 9 January

c. For information only – no consultation required

The Council noted the following application

- i. 2025/2356/DISC at Land at How Hill, Hutton Roof, Penrith CA11 0XY for ‘the approval of details reserved by conditions 4 (biodiversity gain plan) and 5 (production of a 30-year Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP)), attached to approval 2024/2297/FPA’

13. Correspondence – to note correspondence received not otherwise on the agenda where decisions are not required (other than adding to the agenda for a future meeting)

Nothing additional had been received

14. Items for information or next Agenda only – all items for the next agenda to be submitted to the Clerk by Friday 13 March

Castle Sowerby Parish Council – Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 22 January 2026

- a. Noticeboards – The Clerk to source options and costings for consideration
- b. Photographs for the website – Councillors to identify parish locations or features suitable for inclusion on the website

15. Date of next meeting – Thursday 26 March 2026 at 7.00pm in Milhouse Village Hall

The meeting closed at 8.10pm

X

Cllr P Groves
Chair

Date: 26.03.26

castlesowerbypc@outlook.com

Appendix A - Summary of Westmorland & Furness Council Budget Update (for information)

Westmorland & Furness Council has received its provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026/27–2028/29. The settlement confirms significantly reduced government funding compared with earlier forecasts, creating a substantial budget gap over the next three years.

The Council reports that:

- Government funding will be £11m lower in 2026/27, £25m lower in 2027/28, and £40m lower in 2028/29 than previously planned.
- The removal of the “remoteness adjustment” in the national funding formula disproportionately affects rural authorities, including Westmorland & Furness.
- Council Tax growth assumptions used by Government are higher than local reality, widening the financial gap further.
- As a result, the Council must identify additional savings for 2026/27 at pace, with further and more significant reductions required in subsequent years.

The report notes that many efficiency measures have already been taken, meaning that service reductions are now likely from April 2026 onwards, with further transformation and prioritisation required in later years. The Council highlights particular risks for rural communities and for older and vulnerable residents due to higher delivery costs and existing inequalities in access to services.

The full report, considered at the Full Council meeting on 22 January, is available online here:

<https://westmorlandandfurness.moderngov.co.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=25964&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI12306>

Appendix B – External Audit Correspondence and Clarifications

1. Exempt Status 2022/23 and 2023/24

The External Auditor has confirmed that, as the Parish Council claimed exemption for both financial years, no External Auditor's Report or Conclusion of Audit certificate will be issued. No further communication will be provided unless an objection is received from an elector or evidence emerges that the Council was not entitled to claim exemption.

2. Limited Assurance Review Queries 2024/25

The External Auditor has raised the following points requiring clarification as part of the 2024/25 review:

a. Control Objective B – Internal Audit “No” Response

- An explanation is requested for the ‘No’ response to Control Objective B on the Internal Audit Report, as the supporting document only provides explanations for the ‘No’ responses in Section 1 of the AGAR.

The Internal Auditor recorded a “No” for Control Objective B due to weaknesses identified in the financial documentation and reconciliation processes during 2024/25:

1. **Missing invoices and receipts** During reconstruction of the accounts, the Clerk identified missing invoices, receipts and supporting vouchers inherited from the previous administration. Although many documents have since been located or replaced, not all payments were fully supported at the time of audit.
2. **Monthly bank reconciliations not completed** Monthly reconciliations had not been carried out or documented during the year, resulting in non-compliance with Financial Regulations and the requirements of Control Objective B.

b. Public Rights Period

The Auditor noted that the Public Rights period had not commenced due to late submission.

The Public Rights period will run from Tuesday 13 January 2026 to Monday 23 February 2026. The statutory Notice has been published on the Council's website and parish noticeboard, and a copy of the completed form has been provided to the Auditor.

c. General Reserves

The Auditor has requested an explanation for the high level of general reserves, noting that the Council's general reserves (Box 7 less ring-fenced funds) exceed the recommended range of three to twelve months of net revenue expenditure.

The council's general reserves (Box 7 less ringfenced funds) are currently above the recommended range of three to twelve months' net revenue expenditure. This position has arisen due to historic under-spending and incomplete financial administration during the period 2022–2025, prior to the appointment of the current Clerk. During this period, several items of routine and recurring expenditure were not paid, including:

- Insurance premiums for two consecutive years (normal annual cost £196; under-spend £392)
 - Internal audit fees for two years (normal annual cost £50; under-spend £100)
 - Website hosting costs for three years (annual costs £140, £150, £150; under-spend £440)
- Training, stationery and administrative costs, which were not incurred in 2023/24 or 2024/25 (estimated under-spend £70–£300)

In total, this represents an identifiable under-spend of approximately £1,002–£1,232 over the three-year period. This aligns with the increase in general reserves shown in Boxes 7 across the 2023, 2024 and 2025 AGARs. The council anticipates that reserves will return to a more appropriate level as normal expenditure patterns resume.

Appendix C – Summary of Viberoptix Works Notification Letter received 22 January

Viberoptix, working on behalf of Fibrus, has issued a notice to residents regarding upcoming government-funded broadband infrastructure works. The project aims to improve internet connectivity in the area and will involve excavation and installation of equipment including ducts, chambers, and poles.

- **Work Schedule:** The works are scheduled to begin on 2 February 2026 and are expected to be completed by 9 July 2026.
- **Location:** The affected route includes the road from Rushgill Bridge via Sowerby Row, with works impacting surrounding streets and verges.
- **Scope of Work:** Approximately 1km of ducting will be installed on grass verges, along with 393m of additional infrastructure, 9m of carriageway track, 8 chambers, and 21 poles.
- **Access Arrangements:** Local access for residents and emergency vehicles will be maintained where possible, though temporary restrictions may occur. Businesses with specific access needs are invited to contact the Penrith office to discuss arrangements.
- **Emergency Contact:** Residents and businesses can reach Viberoptix's Penrith Office at 01768 838216 for urgent queries or access concerns.