

# CASTLE SOWERBY PARISH COUNCIL

## Risk Assessment 2025 / 2026

<b>Document history</b>		
<b>Note of changes</b>	<b>Version number</b>	<b>Date of approval and adoption</b>
Approved & adopted	1	22 January 2026
Reviewed		

<b>Review sheet</b>		
<b>Each entry in the table below summarises the changes to this Policy and procedures made since the last review (if any)</b>		
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Version Description</b>	<b>Date of Revision</b>
1		

Risk assessment is a systematic general examination of working conditions, workplace activities and environmental factors that will enable the Parish Council to identify any and all potential inherent risks. The Parish Council, based on a recorded assessment, will take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible.

This document has been produced to enable Castle Sowerby Parish Council to assess the risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them.

<b>FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Area of Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)</b>	<b>Management/Control of Risk</b>	<b>Review/Assess</b>
<b>Precept</b>	Adequacy of precept in order for the Council to carry out its statutory duties	(1 x 2) = 2	To determine the precept amount required, the Council regularly receives budget update information.  At the precept meeting Council receives a budget report, including actual position and projected position to the end of year and indicative figures or costings obtained by the Clerk. With this information the Council maps out the required monies for standing costs and projects for the following year and applies specific figures to budget headings. Taking into account the reserves, income and expenditure, the Council resolves to agree the precept amount to be requested from Westmorland and Furness Council. The figure is submitted by the Clerk in writing. The Clerk informs the Council when the monies are received.	Existing procedure adequate
<b>Budget Provision and Reserves</b>	Insufficient available funds	(1 x 2) = 2	A full budget needs to be submitted to the Council prior to the Precept request. This should include funds placed in reserve for future projects, a contingency fund and at least three months' running costs	Contingency and running costs to be considered
<b>Financial Records</b>	Inadequate records	(1 x 1) = 1	The Council has Financial Regulations which set out the requirements.	Existing procedure adequate
	Financial irregularities	(1 x 3) = 3	The Council should have a Councillor responsible for Internal Control who inspects the finance records regularly. Any irregularities should be identified on inspection.	Review the Financial regulations at least every other year and when legislation dictates.

Subject	Area of Risk	Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess
<b>Bank and Banking</b>	Inadequate checks	(1 x 1) = 1	The Council has Financial Regulations which set out banking requirements.	Existing procedure adequate
	Bank mistakes	(1 x 1) = 1	Monthly reconciliation to identify any mistakes, presented to Council bi-monthly	Existing procedure adequate
	Payment mistakes	(1 x 2) = 2	Cheque payments should follow the agreed cheque payment procedure. The Clerk to provide hard copies of all invoices together with a payment schedule for the meeting. Councillor authorisers to check all details prior to authorising payments.	Cheque Payment Procedure should be reviewed on a bi-annual basis
	Signatories	(1 x 1) = 1	To ensure that payments can be made in a timely manner, Council to confirm bank signatories and banking authorisers (cheque signatories do not necessarily have to be authorisers) are up to date. There should be at least three Councillors capable of authorising payments.	Review annually in May
	Credit references	(1 x 1) = 1	The Bank performs credit references on signatories.	Existing procedure adequate
	Non-performance / delivery of third parties	(1 x 1) = 1	Avoid pre-payments wherever possible. Vet suppliers thoroughly.	Existing procedure adequate
<b>Financial reporting</b>	Information communication	(1 x 1) = 1	Financial information is a regular, bi-monthly, agenda item (Finance Report) and discussed / reviewed and approved at each meeting.	Existing procedure adequate
<b>Grants</b>	Receipt of grants	(1 x 1) = 1	All receipts of grants to be recorded at the following meeting.	Ad hoc
	Payment of Grants and Power to pay using S137	(1 x 1) = 1	Ensure that grants are acceptable to pay without General Power of Competence. All such expenditure goes through the required Council process of approval, minuting and listing accordingly. Note S137 limits.	Grant Policy to be implemented

Subject	Area of Risk	Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess
Charges – rents receivable	Payment of rents	(1 x 1) = 1	The Parish Council receives no rents.	Query: wayleave
Best Value Accountability	Work awarded incorrectly	(1 x 2) = 2	Normal Parish Council practice would be to seek, if possible, more than one quotation for any substantial work undertaken. For major work competitive tenders must be sought (in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations). If problems are encountered with a contract, the Clerk would investigate the situation and report to the Council.	Existing procedure adequate and detailed in Financial Regulations
	Overspend on services	(1 x 2) = 2		
Payroll and Salary	Salary paid incorrectly	(1 x 1) = 1	Salary agreed once NALC briefing has been published; paid by Cheque. Salary payment is processed by an external provider. Two Councillors sign the cheque and two Councillors authorise payments.	Existing procedure adequate
	Unpaid tax to HMRC	(1 x 2) = 2	Payments monitored by Payroll Provider. Monthly payment by Cheque if required. Councillors when reviewing payments for approval to include in checks.	Existing procedure adequate
Employeea	Fraud by staff	(1 x 1) = 1	Requirements of Fidelity Guarantee Insurance adhered to with regards to fraud.	Existing procedure adequate
	Health and safety	(1 x 1) = 1	All employees (currently the Clerk) to be provided with adequate direction and safety equipment needed to undertake their role.	Monitor health and safety requirements and insurance annually
	Clerk resignation / sickness	(1 x 2) = 2	Councillors may act in a temporary capacity at nil pay. Contingency required for advertising, sickness cover etc.	Consider contingency in budget
VAT	Reclaiming	(1 x 1) = 1	The Council has Financial Regulations which set out the requirements.	Existing procedure adequate
Annual Audit/Return	Submit within time limits	(1 x 2) = 2	Employers Annual Return is completed and submitted online with the prescribed time frame by the Clerk.	Existing procedure adequate

Subject	Area of Risk	Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess
	Submit within time limits	(1 x 2) = 2	<p>External Audit Annual Return completed and signed by the Internal Auditor and then completed and signed by the Chair and Clerk / RFO before 30 June and published on the website. If the PC payments and receipts are below £25,000, the PC may agree that there is no need for a Limited Assurance Review and that Exemption is acceptable; the Certificate of Exemption must be completed and sent to the External Auditor by 30 June</p> <p>All paperwork must still be completed and published whether or not it is sent to the External Auditor. The PC may still have a Limited Assurance Review, and the paperwork must be completed and sent to the External Auditor and published on the website,</p>	Existing procedure adequate
	Public Inspection of Documents	(1 x 1) = 1	By appointment only, in a convenient public place. For the safety of the Clerk, public are welcome to inspect documents, but with a Councillor present. The Annual Inspection dates Notice must be for 30 working days and cover the first 10 working days of July.	Existing procedure adequate
	Internal Audit	(1 x 1) = 1	Appoint an independent Internal Auditor.	Existing procedure adequate
	Review of Effectiveness of Audit	(1 x 1) = 1	The Council must review its requirements of the internal Audit including scope, independence, competence, relationships and planning following the completion of the Internal Audit.	Existing procedure adequate
<b>Legal Powers</b>	Illegal activity or payments	(1 x 2) = 2	All activity and payments within the powers of the Parish Council to be resolved at full Council Meetings, including reference to the power used under the Finance section of Agenda and Finance Report.	Existing procedure adequate, can be improved by referencing power to spend
<b>Minutes, agendas, notices, statutory documents</b>	Accuracy and legality	(1 x 2) = 2	<p>Minutes and agenda are produced in the prescribed manner by the Clerk and adhere to the legal requirements including publishing on the Agenda and Minutes section of the Parish Council website (<a href="http://www.castlesowerby-pc.gov.uk">www.castlesowerby-pc.gov.uk</a>).</p> <p>It is a requirement of Councils under £25,000 that draft Minutes are published within one month of the meeting. They are</p>	Existing procedure adequate

Subject	Area of Risk	Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess
			circulated in advance of the next meeting and approved and signed by the Chair of the meeting at a full Council meeting.	
	Standing Orders	(1 x 1) = 1	Originally adopted in May 2021 Reviewed and updated in October 2025 to new NALC model.	Existing procedure adequate
	Financial Regulations	(1 x 1) = 1	Originally adopted in May 2021 Reviewed and updated in October 2025 to new NALC model.	Existing procedure adequate
	Business conduct	(1 x 1) = 1	Agenda displayed according to legal requirements.  Business conducted at Council meetings should be managed by the Chair.	Members adhere to Code of Conduct.
<b>Councillors</b>	Losing a Councillor	(1 x 2) = 2	When a vacancy arises there is a legal process to follow which leads to either a by-election or a co- option process. The more usual is a co-option which starts with an advert, acceptance of applications, consideration of applicants and co- option vote at a Council meeting.	Existing procedure adequate
	Losing more than six Councillors to make the Council inquorate	(1 x 3) = 3	If there are more than six vacancies at any one time, the Council becomes inquorate and the District Council will take over the running of the Council (at the Parish's expense).	Procedures of Westmorland and Furness Council are adequate
<b>Election costs</b>	Risk of the cost of an election	(1 x 2) = 2	Risk is higher in an election year. The cost of a byelection is estimated to be approximately £3.00 per elector. There is a need to build up reserve of £469 to ensure costs of the election in 2027 are covered if needed.	Existing procedure to be reviewed to ensure reserve is sufficient
<b>Members Interests &amp; Code of Conduct</b>	Conflict of interests	(1 x 1) = 1	Declarations of interests by members at Council meetings.	Existing procedure adequate
	Code of Conduct	(1 x 1) = 1	Code issued by WAF and adopted in December 2025. It is issued to each Councillor on election to Office.	Existing procedure adequate / on receipt of new guidance from WAF
	Register of members' interests	(1 x 1) = 1	Register of members' interests forms reviewed regularly.	Members take responsibility to update register.

Subject	Area of Risk	Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess
<b>Insurance</b>	Adequacy	(1 x 2) = 2	The insurance arrangements are reviewed fully on a three-year basis with interim annual checking. Review of risk and adequacy of cover (loss / damage, public liability, consequential loss and fidelity guarantee) should be conducted annually. Full review of renewal costs, currently annual.	Check limits annually and review full policy every three years.  Renewal 31 July 2026
	Cost	(1 x 2) = 2		
	Compliance	(1 x 2) = 2		
	Public Liability (statutory)	(1 x 2) = 2	Insurance at £12,000,000	
	Employers Liability (statutory)	(1 x 2) = 2	Insurance at £10,000,000	
	Fidelity Guarantee	(1 x 2) = 2	Insurance at £250,000	
	Libel and Slander	(1 x 2) = 2	Insurance at £250,000 (excess greater – 10% of claim or £1,000 whichever is lower).	
	Personal Accident	(1 x 2) = 2	Employee, Member & Volunteer operative	
<b>Data Protection</b>	Policy provision	(1 x 1) = 1	The Parish Council is registered with the Information Commissioner and has a Data Protection Policy approved March 2026  The renewal is paid annually by Cheque	Ensure renewal occurs <b>Policy to be implemented</b>
<b>Freedom of Information</b>	Policy	(1 x 1) = 1	The Council has a model publication scheme in place approved March 2026. To date there have been no requests under FOI.	Monitor any FOI requests <b>Policy to be implemented</b>
	Provision	(1 x 2) = 2	The Parish Council is aware that if a substantial request was submitted it could create a number of additional hours' work.	
<b>Document Retention</b>	Policy	(1 x 1) = 1	The Parish Council adopted a Document Retention Policy in March 2026.	Existing policy adequate <b>Policy to be implemented</b>
<b>Website / email</b>	Maintenance of domain name. Reputational harm.	(1 x 1) = 1	Retention of gov.uk domain name ensures that the domain cannot be used by another. Dedicated clerk email address connected to the gov.uk domain instills public confidence.	Existing procedure adequate

Subject	Area of Risk	Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess
<b>Contracts and contractors</b>	Maintenance contractors	(1 x 2) = 2	Standing Orders 2025	Existing procedure adequate
<b>Council Meetings</b>	Adequacy	(1 x 1) = 1	The Parish Council meeting is held in a venue considered to have appropriate facilities for the Clerk, members and the public.	Existing procedure adequate
	Recording of meetings	(1 x 1) = 1	While it is legal for recordings to be made of meetings, out of courtesy, and in accordance with the <b>Recording of Meetings Policy</b> , members of the public are requested to inform the Chair if they wish to record the meeting. The Parish Council will also make a recording if necessary.	Existing procedure adequate if policy implemented
<b>Council Records</b>	Paper: loss through, fire, theft, damage	(1 x 2) = 2	The Parish Council records are stored at the home of the Clerk and at the Westmorland and Furness Records Office. Records include historical correspondence, minutes, insurance, bank records.	Damage (apart from fire or flood) and theft is unlikely and so provision is adequate.
	Electronic: loss through, fire, theft, damage or corruption of laptop	(1 x 2) = 2	The Parish Council electronic records are stored on the Clerk's laptop held with the Clerk at her home. The data is constantly backed up to OneDrive in the Cloud and a physical backup is performed monthly. Microsoft Defender antivirus is kept up to date.	Existing procedures adequate

<b>PHYSICAL EQUIPMENT OR AREAS</b>				
<b>Assets</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Likelihood (1-3) x Impact (1-3)</b>	<b>Management / Control of Risk</b>	<b>Review/Assess</b>
<b>1. Grit bins<sup>1</sup></b>	i. Location ii. Location iii. Location	(1 x 1) = 1	Annual inspection conducted in June. Ensure filled with salt by WAF in the autumn. Check maintenance.	Undertaken as part of spring/summer asset review <b>Procedure to be implemented</b>
<b>2. Noticeboards</b>	i. Millhouse Village Hall ii. Sowerby Row	(1 x 1) = 1	Full annual inspection. Regular monitoring when Clerk/Chair post notices, annual maintenance and repair or replacement as required using personnel deemed qualified by the Council. Any reports of damage to be included on next agenda.	Bi-monthly
<b>3. Land<sup>2</sup></b>	i. Hewer Hill Quarry ii. Kell Springs & associated access track iii. Cow Gill	(1 x 1) = 1	Full annual inspection.	Undertaken as part of spring/summer asset review <b>Procedure to be implemented</b>
<b>4. Maintenance of land and assets</b>  <b>Perhaps not relevant?</b>	Village-Wide Grass cutting Verge cutting Tree pruning Shrubbery maintenance	(1 x 1) = 1  (1 x 1) = 1 (1 x 1) = 1	Obtain copies of all contractors' Public Liability Certificates or written confirmation of cover. Ensure terms of all new undertakings include indemnity of the Council by the Contractor Schedule review of contracts including responsibility and performance.	Existing procedure adequate

<sup>1</sup> Update with full number and locations

<sup>2</sup> Update pending Market Appraisal

Risk Prioritisation

The table below is recommended by the 2025 Practitioners' Guide is issued by the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP)

Risk prioritisation is an assessment of the severity of impact if something were to happen and how likely it is to happen

Likelihood x Impact = Risk Priority

How Likely	Highly likely	3 (3x1)	6 (3x2)	9 (3x3)
	Possible	2 (2x1)	4 (2x2)	6 (2x3)
	Unlikely	1 (1x1)	2 (1x2)	3 (1x3)
		Negligible	Moderate	Severe
	Impact			

Taken from the 2025 Practitioners Guide, Section 5.93

Addressing risks:

Risk is unavoidable, and every organisation needs to take action to manage risk in a way which it can justify to a level which is tolerable. The response to risk, which is initiated within the organisation, is called 'internal control' and may involve one or more of the following standard responses:

- Tolerate the risk - for risks where the downside is containable with appropriate contingency plans; for some where the possible controls cannot be justified (e.g. because they would be disproportionate); and for unavoidable risks, e.g. terrorism.
- Treat the risk - a common response which can mean imposing controls so that the organisation can continue to operate; or setting up prevention techniques.
- Transfer the risk – buying in a service from a specialist external body or taking out insurance. Some risks cannot be transferred, especially reputational risk.
- Terminate the activity giving rise to the risk - it may be best to stop (or not to start) activities which involve intolerable risks or those where no response can bring the risk to a tolerable level.

Areas where there may be scope to use insurance to help manage risk include the following:

- The protection of physical assets owned by the authority – buildings, furniture, equipment, etc. (loss or damage).
- The risk of damage to third party property or individuals as a consequence of the authority providing services or amenities to the public (public liability).
- The risk of consequential loss of income or the need to provide essential services following critical damage, loss or non-performance by a third party (consequential loss).
- Loss of cash through theft or dishonesty (fidelity guarantee).
- Legal liability as a consequence of asset ownership (public liability).

The limited nature of internal resources in most authorities means that those wishing to provide services often buy them in from specialist external bodies.

Areas where there may be scope to work with others to help manage risk include the following:

- Security for vulnerable buildings, amenities or equipment.
- Maintenance for vulnerable buildings, amenities or equipment.
- The provision of services being carried out under agency/partnership agreements with principal authorities.
- Banking arrangements, including borrowing or lending.
- Ad hoc provision of amenities/ facilities for events to local community groups.
- Markets management.
- Vehicle or equipment lease or hire.
- Trading units (leisure centres, playing fields, burial grounds, etc.).
- Professional services (planning, architects, accountancy, design, etc.).