

Clerk's Report for Meeting 23rd March 2026

It is intended that this report be added as an agenda item for the Bishop Wilton Parish Council meeting of 23rd March 2026 and then as an appendix to the minutes thereof.

Following receipt of excessive emails from Cllr Sumpner and a copy of an open personal newsletter that he has published, I included an agenda item on the meeting of 23rd February 2026 **"To consider and review Bishop Wilton Media Policy"**. The reasoning behind this was to reiterate the importance of clarity, accuracy and transparency when publicising parish council matters. The newsletter I have states that the Council have published minutes which contained items that were false or misleading, and that the Council was willing to inform on what they wished the public to hear or believe but kept back that which they did not wish the public to know." It also stated that it was alleged that a member of the public, after an unsuccessful application to become co-opted to the council, had suggested the council was corrupt.

The Media Policy which is based on advice from the National Association of Local Councils, is designed to control the way information is made available to the public. The Council's relationship with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying attitudes and measuring satisfaction.

The general principal is that the clerk will act as press officer.

It transpires that Cllr Sumpner has been sending out regular newsletters commenting on matters that have arisen in a parish council meeting.

Whilst Cllr Sumpner is entitled to express his own personal views, where these differ from those of the Council he should take care not to misrepresent and/or bring the Council into disrepute.

At Mondays meeting Cllr Sumner refused to agree to the Councils Media Policy and refused to adhere to it, stating that he would continue to write his newsletters.

Cllr Warry, as Chair, has previously requested that Cllr Sumpner, refrains from sending long and often frequent emails to members covering matters that should be discussed within the confines of a meeting. It should be remembered that councillors should go into a meeting with an open mind and not a bias towards a particular agenda item.

As members of the Council, it is important that we adhere to policies that are laid down, and that all of these policies are reviewed either annually, or as required, and any amendments where necessary are then agreed by the council. This being the basis of how the Council conducts it's duties.

On Tuesday the 24th February I took advice from ERNLLCA, which is our local branch of the National Association of Local Councils, about Cllr Sumpner creating malicious newsletters specifying names of people and attacking the good name of the Council.

And I also took advice on the ongoing correspondence from Cllr Sumpner regarding his beliefs that parishioners have a right to take chalk from Worsendale Quarry or Chalkpit, and that the Parish Council should support that right.

The advice from ERNLLCA is to

1. cover the issues in a minute reference.
2. Contact the ICO as this councillor is acting as an individual and not with council consent or authorisation.
3. Contact Police with regards to the publication under the malicious communication act 1988, that is causing distress as it has been going on for a number of years, and was a significant contributory factor in the resignation of the previous clerk.
4. Contact the Council's insurance on legal advice around defamation of character, as individuals and councillors are named in correspondence.
5. Consider the Council's health and safety responsibilities towards the clerk.

This report covers item 1 in so much as it is intended to be appended to minutes as an official copy.

Item 2. I have today 25.02.2026 spoken to the ICO and the Council should be aware that the continuing publishing of newsletters by Cllr Sumpner could be construed under a Section 170 offence, of the Data Protection Act 2018, that people share or access information that the data controller has not given permission on.

Section 170 establishes the possibility of criminal offences where a person knowingly or recklessly:

- obtains or discloses personal data without the consent of the controller;
- procures the disclosure of personal data to another person without the consent of the controller; or
- after obtaining personal data, retains it without the consent of the person who was the controller in relation to the personal data when it was obtained.

Dispute

Cllr Sumpner has an ongoing issue with the Council concerning the Worsendale chalk pit.

The pit is owned by Halifax Estates.

Cllr Sumpner believes that the villages have rights to take chalk from the pit, and he has asked that the Parish Council acknowledge and support this. The Parish Council cannot do this as :

- a) Worsendale Chalk Pit is not owned by the Parish Council
- b) no evidence has been provided to the Parish Council that such a right exists, and no residents have come forward saying that their rights are being denied
- c) The Parish Council cannot lawfully make a decision regarding property they do not own
- d) supporting this request could be seen as the encouragement of people to trespass on private land
- e) to allow anyone free access into what is effectively a quarry could have implications with our insurers.

Cllr Sumpner claims in his view, that the Council in the past have acted unlawfully in making statements at meetings regarding the Chalk Pit, and wishes this to be acknowledged.

The Parish Council have resolved that that 'any further discussions over the Worsendale Chalk Pit and things that were allegedly discussed several years ago, are not conducive to current meetings.'

Ongoing

- Cllr Sumpner sent a lengthy email on the 25.02.2026 to one of our Ward Cllrs accusing him of giving misleading information at our last Parish Council meeting, with regard to the Chalk Pit, and again asserting that members of the community have rights to Worsendale Chalkpit.

This email was sent from Cllr Sumpner's Parish Council email address

The Ward Councillor responded to this email on the 9.03.2026 requesting that Cllr Sumpner provide a copy of the official document which states people have a right to access chalk from the chalk pit.

17.03.2026 an Email circulated to Council members and the clerk, but addressed to the Ward Councillor quoting transcripts from the original Bishop Wilton Award 1772 document , and from Pocklington District Council to Bishop Wilton Parish Council, and also from minutes from 18 Aug 1943, 20 Aug 1943 and 3 Dec 1943. Cllr Sumpner states that the he 'hopes this information is helpful to you in arriving at a proper understanding. However, you fail to address the issues regarding the information that you provided to BWPC which was used as justification for giving away the parish keys for the chalkpit gate,' Cllr Sumpner states this was an illegitimate act.

- Cllr Sumpner advised the Clerk and Chair by email on 11.03.2026 that he has received notice from the ICO that the case/complaint that he raised against the Parish Council has been closed due to lack of information.

- It should be noted that the clerk has spent more than 8 hrs in February alone dealing with these matters. This is outside her contracted 25 hours per month.

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