

Clerk's report for Bishop Wilton Parish Council meeting 27.04.2026

The following are two emails that have been sent to our chairman following the March council meeting. Where it was agreed to pay the clerk for extra hours worked during March incurred in dealing with issues outlined in the clerk's report for the meeting 23.03.2026 and attached as appendix to the minutes of that date.

"Dear Phil,

I appreciate that you have lots to do. We are all busy people but please reply to this email.

If I heard correctly the clerk assured the last meeting that it was okay to make an extra charge for work not requested by the council. Effectively an employee deciding to work unauthorised overtime, work that could have been completed over a longer time scale within normal hours (there was no urgency) and which included simple tasks that could have been carried out by any councillor who might have a personal concern – this would not have involved the clerk at all. Parishioners should not be paying for councillors misusing the clerk's time.

Having read and reread the our financial regulations (Sunday morning) the Clerk has delegated powers for purchases (goods, services or works) for up to £500 but nowhere is it stated that a clerk can pay themselves for voluntary extra work. Approval by the council after the event has no relevance. Item "1.2 Financial Regulations - Councillors are expected to follow these regulations and not entice employees to breach them..." Did anyone entice? Please let me know under what regulation the clerk charged the council for the extra hours in February? If there is one then it needs to be changed, no organisation can permit employees to choose to make charges without prior authorisation.

I have a draft letter here to the auditors on this matter but on advice this is on hold. I have no wish to incur any additional cost to council over a £149.27 payment to the clerk but I will not have the cost put down totally to myself – that would not be the truth. Had you replied to my original email no further correspondence might have been necessary but you have said that you did not want to get into a conversation on the matter. Offers to talk about issues have been ignored previously, this is a breakdown in communications.

You were forewarned regarding allowing the clerk to become involved in differences of opinion between individual councillors, as caused the previous clerk personal crises. This has now happened, I believe the clerk has been misused.

Minutes – your statement in the draft that my emails could cost £1500 in not the truth. I will contest this figure in public if necessary. The clerk's spent time writing a report and making call to ERNLLCA and ICO calls etc. about other issues (not reported in the draft). This time was unrelated to council emails. This unsupported inflation of likely costs likely to bring the council into disrepute. It cost you nothing to reply to an email and the clerks replies were very short and cannot have taken much time. Likewise Cllr Haywood's statement that emails were costing the council money and some should be ignored is out of order. All would agree that It is important the words and actions of councillors don't convey the wrong impression and bring the council into disrepute or cause the council ridicule.

Regarding the letter from the village hall committee and three reports of supposed damage to grass – Why were these not immediately passed to me at the time? That would have been the sensible thing to do. Now let me have copy of the letter from the Village Hall committee regarding alleged damage as I wish to reply to this personally. Having looked at the area again on Saturday morning,

when on an extra visit to the play area to treat weeds, there was no damaged or yellowing grass where I drove. Care has always been taken to consider conditions and a route had been taken beyond the boundary line of the cricket pitch. No damage has occurred and the grass has sprung back up again as it will after Cllr Richartson passed over it with the mowers on Saturday.

When checking the play equipment dog walkers talk with me, the obscured street lamp in Worsendale has been reported twice. Parents with children speak, on the last occasion a father had his children thank me for checking the swings. My usual list of equipment includes: a bag of rock salt, small step ladder, yard brush and selection of hand tools.

For interest I have attached the very first personal message sent as a councillor to parishioners. This was delivered, with the help of three concerned members of the public, to almost every house in the village, the hamlets and some surrounding farms. Thinking about this, as the Parish Pump is delivered in Bugthorpe perhaps it should have gone there too.

I checked on progress at the bus stop shelter briefly on Friday afternoon, as arranged. Shelter was largely finished, just cutting out the seat prior to fitting. Was given advice on wood treatment and left as firm had Ingrid's number to ring when all was finished. Anne went up on Saturday afternoon and gave it an extra sweep out. Looks good."

Clerk's Comments: It is noted that as I had already incurred additional hours, above my 25 hours per month, during February, and accordingly in March I reported the extra hours for both months to a member of the Personnel Committee.

My contract of employment states that " I may be required to undertake other duties to meet the requirements of the job" and "that I may be asked to work additional hours which will be paid at my normal rate of pay or take time off in lieu"

Cllr Sumpner's comment ' that it costs nothing to reply to an email' is not correct. Lengthy emails as above take time to read, and absorb and further time, in correlating a response. Time is not free.

Dealing with emails is part of the clerk's role and is itemised in the job description.

Further email sent 21.04.2026 from Cllr Sumpner

On 21 Apr 2026, at 14:46, r.sumpner@bishopwilton-pc.gov.uk wrote:

"Hi Phil,

Following up on my email of last week – I have written to the auditors regarding the unapproved time, additional to contracted hours, worked by Sandra on the her "report".

After consideration I feel the report to be intimidating and threatening and it appears to have been written or contributed to by more than one hand. It contains claims that Sandra would not likely have made had she not been provided with partial information and for that reason it is unbalanced and one-sided. I feel Sandra has been the subject of coercion, as it appears, was the PC's previous clerk and had been placed in a difficult position where her integrity was challenged as a result of the action of certain Cllrs. This possibility was suggested to you some time ago.

For the above reasons I have also sent an annotated copy to ERNCLA for their records and the ERYC Monitoring Officer for consideration. Later I plan to write the Society of Local Council Clerks as I feel

clerks in general need provision for support and protection when subject to coercion from individuals or groups of councillors. They must be able retain their independence and resist being used as an instrument to hide behind and criticise others – that is not their job. I'm sure a clerks task is becoming increasingly complex without this, councillors need to appreciate this reality.

When the draft minutes are approved I will put my side of this story to the parish. I have attached my first personal newsletter for information. This was issued after a series of eight sets of minutes were published which contained misleading or inaccurate information, integrity had collapsed. The document was distributed to most households in the village, the hamlets and some outlying farms by a small number of individuals who were concerned, at the time, about the PC's governance. The personal newsletter received general support with one exception. A friend of Cllr Haywood's attended the next meeting and suggested we should work as a team (I agree) but the chair closed questioning when he was asked his thoughts on truth. Additionally Cllrs Kress written proposal supporting the no confidence vote was considered defamatory and removed from the minutes by Cllr Hammond at the suggestion of ERYC Legal and Democratic Services.

Got to go now but, as before, please get back to me if there is anything here that you wish to discuss or have me enlarge on.

Regards, Roy"

And response from the Chair

" Hello Roy

Cc other Councillors & Clerk for openness

Thanks for your email updating the Parish Council on your recent actions.

I can't find the email you sent me last week on this matter, the last one is dated 31/03/2026 - 3 weeks ago is that correct? Other than the one headed Country Roads. If I have missed one I apologise.

Regarding your reporting to the auditors, ERNLLCA, ERYC Monitoring Officer and the Society of Local Council Clerks, I welcome and support all your time and actions. In my view the any scrutiny of the way Bishop Wilton Parish Council operates has to be beneficial and allows us to improve our procedures.

I can assure you the clerk's report is simply that and all Sandra's own work (at continued added to cost to our local residents) based on the recommendations from ERNLLCA.

I can't comment on actions of the Parish Council before my election in May 2023, I don't recognise the name of the councillor you refer to as being on the council whilst I have been Chair.

As you are busy there is no need for a follow up conversation, I am fully aware of current issues in the Parish Council.

Regards

Phil"

On the 22.04.2026 I received an email from the internal auditor confirming that he has received a letter concerning a potential breach of Standing Orders and Financial Regs regarding extra hours, which I have responded to.

A copy of the 1st Occasional Newsletter is below as Appendix 1

This report, compiled entirely by my own hand as per the previous months report, shall be attached as an appendix to the minutes of the meeting to be held on the 27th April 2026.

Appendix 1

An Occasional News Letter 1 Sumpner

Roy

Hello – a personal message

If you have read the latest Parish Pump you might be wondering why Cllr Viki Cress proposed a vote of no confidence in myself and what she expected would result were the proposal passed - Cllr Kress was absent when her proposal was read out by Cllr Leo Hammond at the November meeting. I was curious too as was ERYC representative Ward Cllr, David Rudd who asked the councillors present what they expected to happen were the motion passed. No one on the PC was able or willing to provide an answer, councillors remained silent. Doing something without a reason makes no sense while having a reason and not disclosing it is less than honest. So, what were their hopes?

My feelings are that the actions of certain council members have been designed to attack me personally and that this has been at the cost of souring relationships within the council and wasting their time at meetings. Some members of the public attending meeting have noted this. As our Clerk has resigned, we now have a new but temporary Clerk. The Clerk has many responsibilities: guiding the council through the legal rules that govern councils, dealing with the council's finance, what they can and cannot spend your money on etc. and of course recording and keeping minutes from meetings.

The minutes have been the subject of contention for some time, an issue that keeps reoccurring. One councillor has resigned, writing that the council was being less than transparent in its communication with the public. Here is an example – The draft minutes for the meeting of 25th October were sent to councillors by the author Cllr Leo Hammond as acting minute writer. In return I emailed expressing concerns about the faithfulness of his account, all councillors are aware that audio recordings are made of meetings so accuracy is an easy thing to check. When the first draft was presented to the next meeting the following issues were raised:

An omission, Item 3 Clerk's Resignation: here the Clerk made a statement, an important part of which was not reported introducing a negative slant to the minutes. Importantly the Clerk did say that her career was "taking a different direction and that she would be happy to recommend the council to any incoming clerk". A more positive note but the draft was not amended.

An addition, Item 4 Open Forum: this is not part of the meeting but gives a chance for anyone to ask questions of the council, give a presentation, make a statement etc. Speaking of Worsendale Chalk Pit a member of the public was reported to have expressed the opinion "*that this issue was once again wasting Parish Council time and resources*". The word "resources" was added by the writer, it had not been spoken. This may appear a small point but the writer then added to what had been said by including that the person had also said that they did not feel it fair that parishioners should "*endure the financial burden of Worendale (sic) Quarry*". This was entirely an invention by the writer or perhaps another councillor and not something spoken by the member of the public at the meeting. This passed into the minutes unchanged.

An inaccuracy, Item 16 Worsendale Quarry: the draft here said Cllr Sumpner claimed to have a Bill of Sale. No such claim was made, what I did have with me was copy of an advertisement for a sale of land and property from 1917 and this was shown to interested councillors. The first reference to a Bill of Sale was changed but a later reference remained leaving that section confusing.

When draft minutes are put to a meeting for approval the procedure allows councillors to raise matters of accuracy. In this case the inaccuracies were pointed out to the meeting. Some discussion took place and just one change, the first reference to a Bill of Sale, was made. Any change to the draft should have been written on the original copy and signed by the Chair. The omission and additions remained. With the exception of myself the council proceeded to approve the minutes as true record.

This is just one example, there are others but some councillors appear to be under the impression that agreeing something as true makes it true. Additionally, we have cases of councillors who were not present at a particular meeting agreeing that the draft minutes for that meeting were correct, quite how do they square that?

I am concerned about the Clerks resignation but when looked at in the context of six other resignations including the previous Clerk, over recent times there is something of concern here. Were this a small business organisation serious question would be asked regarding staff turnover. If you have any questions about these or other issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me or any councillor.

Roy
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