

Councillor Janet Battye: ward member for Levens and Crooklands

Annual Report to Parish Councils: April/May 2026

I have continued to try to work closely with the Parish Councils in my ward, to share information with them about the services and plans of Westmorland and Furness Council:

Changes within W & F: **Miranda Cannon** joined us in January this year as the new Chief Executive, on the retirement of Sam Plum, the first C Exec of the new Council. Miranda came to us from Salford Council and lives locally. Her major tasks in this first period are to reshape the Management of the Council both to take us into the second phase of the new Council but especially because of the reduction in government funding; and to lead “transformation” of the new Council for which she is promoting the principles of W & F being community focused; digitally enabled, and financially sustainable, with an emphasis on developing prevention services so that people can stay healthier, safer and more independent for longer.

Speeding traffic: This is a continuing concern through the ward. The second year of 20mph speed areas will come into place shortly: in my ward this includes Heversham and Levens. Consultation is now starting on a third round. I am supporting Preston Richard Parish Council asking for 20mph on Low Park and in the village of Endmoor but that will now be for a future scheme, and with their continuing concerns about speeding on the A65 through Endmoor; and Helsington PC are asking for a 30mph limit in Brigsteer village (where there is currently no speed limit other than the national 60mph).

Pot holes, resurfacing roads and white lines: I encourage Parish Councils and local people to report problems on HIAMs on the Councils website, as well as reporting them myself. Several roads are included in the maintenance programme for the coming year: Levens Lane in Levens, part of the Crooklands to Milnthorpe road. I’m also asking for some other stretches to be resurfaced: Beathwaite Close/Greengate Crescent in Levens. Please let me know of others causing concerns.

Streetlighting: W & F are now completing the transfer of these assets from PCs to their ownership to make it easier to maintain and replace them when necessary

Dog fouling: W & F now has two Officers working in this problem and they are visiting to both remove any that they find, and put posters up reminding people to take it away. They will take enforcement action if notified: preferably by email: locality@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Waste recycling and collection: The new service has finally been agreed with the new recycling collection (two smaller bins and paid-for green waste collection) planned to start from June onwards. This will harmonise the service across the whole of W & F.

Electric vehicle charging: W & F have funding to help install public EV charging points, aiming for all Council car parks to have them by 2030, and to increase them at partner sites (Town/Parish Council, and community groups). I’ve been encouraging W & F to look at village halls in this ward because there are no Council car parks. Some PCs have already responded.

Local Plan: W & F is now required to find sites for 1,330 houses/year and is just completing the second “call for sites”. Assessments will start later this year. I’m aware that a number of sites have been put forward around the ward which makes me concerned about the future of “villages” as we know them, with poor access, limited infrastructure (gas, electricity, water/sewerage) and bus services. My preference is for the continued use of small-scale “brownfield” and in-fill sites. In briefing sessions, I continue to ask about local housing need.

Planting for pollinators: Part of the local Nature Recovery Strategy, W & F is working with Cumbria Wildlife Trust to plant up more small areas around villages etc and I’m pleased that some PCs are looking at this.

Current public consultation: A Place called home: your living choices in later life. To help W & F ensure that there’s the right mix of housing and support for us as we get older.

Home to School Transport: The policies need to be reviewed and revised but some of the services are “discretionary”. This budget is considerable overspent so W & F is having to re-examine how it provides these services because of the reduction in government funding.

Locality Board: In South Lakeland, we’ve been looking at developing local youth work (through the CYP working group), climate change and nature recovery (with grants for solar panels for village halls), and Highways services. Small grants will continue to be available next year.

Councillor grants: Last year, I gave £500 each towards white-lining a passing place on Levens Lane by the Playing Fields (Levens Parish Council) and a SID at Gatebeck (Preston Patrick Parish Council) to help enforce a 20mph limit.

Lead Member for Children’s Services: For this important role, I am a member of Cabinet. Current developments include **Children’s Rights** aiming for W & F to become child-friendly, giving children and young people a voice in developing services. I’m particularly interested in a child’s right to play.

Education Sufficiency: With decreasing numbers of children locally (so increasing vacancies and budget deficits), W & F is looking at schools and the need for SEND services (esp in light of government proposed changes).

School Governors: There’s a “Local Authority Nominated” governor on most school governors and we’ve changed the system to encourage more local people to be interested in doing this.

Care sufficiency: The growing success of Best Start Family Hubs, early prevention and support for families, is leading to a reduced number of cared-for children and we’re planning to help more families care for their own children (Kinship care), more foster parents and local children’s homes. There’s also more long-term help for Care Leavers.

Apprenticeships: W & F now has 164 apprentices at all levels, linked with training, across most services. 38 have completed recently and more are being recruited. This helps to meet skills shortages across W & F and provide good work/career opportunities to local people.

Devolution: Finally, to note that Cumbria Combined Authority has now started, with Mayoral election planned for May 2027.