Adopted: July 2026
Next review: June 2027

WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH PARISH COUNCIL – INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND POLICY

This policy was first adopted by Westerleigh Parish Council in February 2023.

1. Introduction

This Strategy has been produced with regard to Government Guidance on Local Government investments (third edition) 2018 for periods after 1 April 2018.

This Local Government Guidance applies to parish councils, providing their total investments exceed or are expected to exceed £100,000 at any time during the financial year. Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council has an annual regular income of around £120,000 from Precept and Solar Farm Community Benefit. (Excludes CIL which is not regular).

2. Investment Objectives

The Parish Council's investment priorities are the security of reserves and liquidity of its investments.

Over and above the balance of the Parish Council's Current account, the Council will aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. All investments will be made in sterling. Borrowing money purely to invest, or to lend and make a return, is unlawful and this Parish Council will not engage in such activity.

3. Specified Investments

Specified Investments are those offering high security and high liquidity, made in sterling and which mature in no more than a year.

For the prudent management of its treasury balances, maintaining sufficient levels of security and liquidity, Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council may use deposits with banks or building societies or other approved public sector investment funds.

4. Non-Specified Investments

These investments have a greater potential risk, such as investment in stocks and shares and the Parish Council will not participate in such investments, which are considered not to offer the level of security and liquidity required.

5. External Borrowing Strategy

The Parish Council acknowledges the importance of borrowing funds and the financial impact on the Council and the local community. The Council will agree borrowing for specific capital projects (as defined in section 16 of the 2003 Act), and gain approval for borrowing by sending an application to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). All borrowings must be approved by full council.

The Parish Council will ensure the following criteria when considering requesting a borrowing approval:

- The borrowing should only be used for the purpose of Capital expenditure as defined by Section 16 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- Any unallocated balances including, where appropriate capital receipts beyond those required for the prudent financial management of the council, should be used in the project for which the borrowing is required.
- The Parish Council should have a realistic budget for the servicing and repayment of the debt, taking into account the future effect on the Council's precept and cash flow.

- The Council must not mortgage or charge any of its property as security for money borrowed.

The Parish Council will pursue the best possible terms when borrowing but will generally use the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The Parish Council considers that the fixed term rates offered by the PWLB are relatively inexpensive and that PWLB loans are most likely to offer stability for the financial planning of the council.

The Parish Council will determine the period of each loan which should not exceed the period for which the expenditure is forecast to provide benefit to the Council i.e. useful life of the asset.

Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council does have a PWLB 15 yr loan which was for £75000 drawn down in 2020.

6. Governance and Risk

There will be due regard to the Financial Services Compensation Scheme and the Parish Council will aim to spread ‘specified investments’ over a range of different providers in such a way as to limit exposure and minimise risk. NOTE on 1 December 2025, the FSCS deposit protection limit rose to £120,000.

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) in consultation with the Full Council will determine the maximum periods for which funds may prudently be committed (which will not exceed one year) so as not to compromise liquidity.

The Parish Council will monitor the yield on investments by having regard to the general financial, economic and political environment nationally.

All resolutions relating to investments will be noted in the minutes.

7. Review and Amendment

The Parish Council’s investment position will be reviewed regularly by the Responsible Financial Officer and reported to the Full Council for consideration.

This Investment Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Finance & General Purposes Committee and approved by Full Council.

The Parish Council reserves the right to make variations to the Strategy at any time, subject to the approval of the Full Council. Any variations will be minuted and made available to the public.