

## **BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO THE MEETING OF SIMONSTONE PARISH COUNCIL ON 7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

Our sixth Drop-in session was held on 24 February in Simonstone.

I have submitted a further report to LCC Highways of multiple potholes reappearing on School Lane.

Gaye and I have become part of a new political group of five on Ribble Valley Borough Council with three Progressive Liberal Councillors. The Group is called the Green and Progressive Liberal Group and has given us greater access to places on Council Committees than the former Green Group of the two of us. We remain Green Party Councillors and the three Progressive Liberals keep their own description. The Group has no whip so any of us can vote independently of the others on any issue and is currently led by Councillor Stewart Fletcher, the former Leader of the Opposition on the Council.

As a result of the recalculation of Committee places, I have now been put on the Health and Housing Committee in addition to those reported at the February Parish Council meeting.

Last night the Full Council meeting confirmed the budget proposals of the Conservative/Independent Group controlled administration. There is a one-off set-aside carried forward from 2023/24 for additional one-off expenditure which comprises a £1m sum which has been called the Golden Jubilee Fund which will receive bids from any Local Councillor wishing to submit them for suitable projects across the Borough. It is intended that this process will initially be considered by the Budget Working Group and onward through the Council's Committee structure ensuring that proposed projects are checked for feasibility and cost through officer reports. An additional £0.5m has been allocated to Clitheroe Castle grounds improvements in addition to Castle Keep stabilization works already envisaged, taking the total spend on the Castle and grounds to nearly £1m.

As part of the opposition on the Council, we decided to withdraw from the Budget Working Group some weeks ago citing our reason that the controlling administration was not taking on board any of the ideas for capital projects that the opposition parties were suggesting. This enabled opposition parties to work together and to produce Budget Amendments for the expenditure of the total £1.5m that were discussed with the Chief and Deputy Chief Executive and verified as being in compliance with financial regulations. These Amendments

were circulated to all Councillors the day before Full Council Meeting but were voted down by 23 to 13 last night.

Our proposed Budget Amendments were set out on a document presented to Full Council. I would be glad to email a copy of these through with this report if Councillors would like to see what ideas were put forward.

Gaye and I would encourage the Parish Council to think carefully about moving forward with any necessary update of its Neighbourhood or Parish Plan as these plans are very important when future planning decisions are made and RVBC is currently starting to develop its own Local Plan.

Read Parish Council has found suitable sites for four of the community road safety signs that are being stored in Read and Simonstone Village Hall for both Parishes' use and is about to erect the first of these around Read. I hope that Simonstone Parish Council can also find suitable locations for some of these signs on private land with the landowners consent while we all continue to lobby LCC Highways for more appropriate traffic orders and official signage.

Andrew Stephenson MP has visited Blackburn Road and looked at the renewed red rumble strips near Altham Bridge over the River Calder and is making enquiries on behalf of the residents affected by excessive noise after a complaint through County Councillor Mirfin had not been successful in getting investigative action taken.

I'd like to thank County Councillor Mirfin for taking up the residents complaint about temporary concrete blocks still being in place opposite their property following river bank repairs. LCC Highways now seem to be close to removing these blocks and reinstating the missing section of the original river-side wall.

Councillor Malcolm Peplow

7<sup>th</sup> March 2024