

## **BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO THE MEETING OF READ PARISH COUNCIL ON 6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

I attended a site meeting with Wayne Smith, Neighbourhood Specialist from Onward Homes at Acre Mount on 20 February and met a couple of the tenants. I am following up housing disrepair and dog fouling matters raised at the meeting.

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

The damaged road sign on Portfield Lane that I reported to LCC Highways in January has been repaired.

I have received another report from a resident on Straits Lane of recurrent recent surface water flooding at the junction of Windsor Close and Straits Lane. This is an ongoing problem that I will continue to speak to LCC Highways about as when I visited, all nearby road drains looked clear. There is clearly an underlying problem that needs to be resolved.

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.

There has been some activity on Hammond Ground recently which had the appearance of a site investigation activity of some kind. Gaye and I met some local residents on George Lane on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss how we may be able to assist them in finding out what if anything is happening.

Gaye and I would encourage the Parish Council to think carefully about its Neighbourhood Plan as these are very important when future planning decisions are going to be made.

Councillor Malcolm Peplow

6<sup>th</sup> March 2024