

SIMONSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

www.simonstone-pc.gov.uk

Date:	06 November 2025		
Place:	St. Peters School Church Hall, Simonstone		
Present:	Councillors: D. Peat (Chair), A. Duckworth, C. Pollard, M. Vaughton, J. Hampson, R. McKelvey, S. Finn. Borough Councillor: M. Peplow.		
In attendance:	Clerk to the Council (Dr A Haines), 3 members of the public.		
Meeting started:	19:00	Meeting closed:	21:00

250611/

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

None received.

Absent: Cllr Greera Stevenson.

2. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETINGS HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2025.

Councillors have agreed to approve the minutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS.

Cllr C. Pollard declared an other registrable interest as Secretary of Martholme Greenway Group.

Members were reminded that they need to fill in and return declaration of interest forms to the clerk.

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

3 members of the public in attendance: 2 representatives of Whalley Rotary Lions Club and 1 representative of the Martholme Greenway.

John Barker, Chair of Martholme Greenway: The Martholme Greenway have submitted a request for support from Simonstone Parish Council (agenda item 10) for their SPF bid for improvements to a 500 m section of the path between two bridges, which gets soft when it rains. The funding will be used to replace the path with a metalled (crushed stone, recycled mat) surface which will make the route more accessible over the winter months. This has been approved by Sustrans, and the SPF funding is for the cost of the materials. The project is looking for the support of Simonstone Parish Council with the application in the form of approval that it is within the public interest to carry out this work.

5. FINANCE REPORT.

The Clerk submitted a report seeking approval for the accounts to date, the Reconciliation of Receipts and Payments and the Schedule of Payments (Appendix I).

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- Approve the accounts to date.
- Approve the Reconciliation of Receipts and Payments, Schedule of Payments for Sept-Oct 2025, and receipts for period 1st April-31st Oct 2025.

6. BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS.

The clerk submitted a report for members to review the council's budget requirements for 2026-27 as a precursor to agreeing the 2026-27 council precept (Appendix II). Concerns were raised over the lack of budget provision for SPIDS, Parish Plan requirements, highways alterations and for PROW/biodiversity in light of recent funding cuts. Cllr Peat reminded members of the current high reserves (~£13, 000) that will cover this for 2026-27.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Approve the budget of £12,239 for 2026-27 and request a precept of £9,500, covering the remaining budget requirements with reserves (£1669) and the councils own income streams and grants ((£1070).

7. PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY – 'SCHOOL FIELD' FOOTPATH CONSIDERATIONS

The Clerk submitted a report outlining considerations surrounding the school footpath, including RVBC funding decisions, landowner responses and additional cost implications (including legal, resurfacing and Lengthsman costs). Cllr Peplow has argued strongly in favour of the footpath bid at working party meetings with Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC) and has resisted requests for funding from landowners on the basis that the landowner's contribution to the community is in kind. Malcolm has advised the parish to check whether the deadline of 1 January 2026 under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 affects this decision. It was proposed that Simonstone Parish Council pass on landowner correspondence and footpath details to Lancashire County Council (LCC) requesting that they process the PROW dedication and liaise with the landowners. Cllr Hampson noted that Treescape also carry out risk assessments and public consultations if involved with project. Cllr Duckworth raised the objections that no risk assessments have been carried out, there has been no consultation with the Highways Agency/local residents regarding parking on Harewood Avenue. Cllr Peat noted that the footpath improvements/PROW have been raised twice: once via newsletter and also in the recent questionnaire.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Forward correspondence from landowners to LCC, stating that the preliminary enquiries for the path upgrade from Harewood Avenue to School Lane to a PROW have been approved by Huntroyde Estate and No. 9 School Lane subject to conditions outlined in correspondence (proposed Cllr Peat, seconded Cllr McKelvey. Cllr Duckworth not in agreement).
- b. Check Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 deadline outlined by Cllr Peplow.

8. OVERHANGING TREES

The hedges of several properties on Bealey Avenue, Carleton Avenue, Lawrence Avenue, School Lane and Whalley Road are encroaching onto the pavements and restricting pedestrian access. The clerk has written to one resident already requesting that their hedge be taken back to the boundary line but the subsequent work has not been sufficient.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Write to all residents involved requesting that they cut back their hedges to the boundary line by the 1st December 2025, otherwise LCC will be requested to cut vegetation with costs forwarded to residents.

9. MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2026

The clerk submitted a report informing the council of the proposed meeting dates for 2026.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Approve the proposed meeting dates for 2026: 8th January, 5th March, 7th May (Annual Meeting/Annual Parish Meeting), 2nd July, 3rd September, 5th November.
- b. Update the 2026 meeting schedule on the parish website.

10. MOTION TO VOTE IN SUPPORT OF MARTHOLME GREENWAY GROUP SPF BID.

Members voted on the motion "That this council recognises the benefits that the creation of the Simonstone greenway has brought to residents of Simonstone and the wider public and supports the grant application for improvements to the footpath surface."

All members present voted in favour of supporting the motion. Cllr Pollard abstained from voting due to interests declared in item 2.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

Support the motion (proposed Cllr Peat, Seconded Cllr Finn).

11. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY ARRANGEMENTS

The council were informed that three wreaths are to be laid at 11:30 am at St Peters' Church on 09/11/2025. Notices have been put on the website and Facebook Page informing residents. Andrea Townsend of Murphy's Army has sent thanks to Simonstone Parish Council for supporting Animals In War by purchasing a purple poppy wreath.

12. FESTIVE PREPARATIONS

12.1. The council were informed that Simonstone Parish Council have sold 30 tickets for the meal at Higher Trappe Hotel, with 6 tickets remaining available. Read PC have sold 44 tickets. Tickets cost £11.50 each.

12.2. Cllr Vaughton would like the council to use RVBC funding to purchase more festive lights overhanging the hedges of parish gardens.

12.3. The Lengthsman will put the lights up the week before the 28th of November and fit a timed switch. Cllr Hampson proposed battery purchases to the cost of £10-15. The Christmas light switch on will take place at 4pm on the 28th of November.

12.4. Cllr Hampson enquired how the Parish Council will be supporting the School's Elf Day.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Pay Higher Trappe £295 via BACS on the same day that cash from sales is taken up to the Hotel by Cllr Vaughton 2 weeks before the event date.
- b. Purchase 2 x festive lights at a total cost of £106.66 plus £21.33 VAT.
- c. Grant £100-150 towards St Peter's School Elf Day.

13. MAINTAINANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARISH GARDENS

The clerk submitted a report informing members of the maintenance arrangements for the Parish Gardens. RVBC have informed the council that the land is unregistered, and therefore LCC have no responsibility for maintenance. Cllr Hampson informed members that the land is held under covenant to the school, and that the education authority has been making decisions on the land's use. It was also noted that the Lengthsman scheme, which has been used for maintaining the gardens previously, is coming to an end soon and going forward the council will have to find people to do individual jobs. The lengthsman's hours need to be monitored closely.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Leave maintenance of the Parish Gardens as they are currently.
- b. Log hours requested of Lengthsman (clerk) and cross reference these against timesheets.

14. UPDATE ON DEFIBRILLATOR

The clerk submitted a report informing members of updates to the defibrillator purchase. Cllr Peat has approached the Ambulance Service and the Rotary Club but had no success in acquiring funding. The clerk has approached British Heart Foundation for a grant but has been unsuccessful. Rev. Sue has confirmed that she is happy for the defibrillator to be housed inside the yellow box currently outside St Peter's Church, which is maintained by the school. It has a trickle source power supply but no lock on

the box. This will need to be replaced. A new box would cost £450. The ambulance Service recommends the Defib Store for new purchases.

Whalley Rotary Lions, Caroline: They have put a defibrillator in Whalley and Billington Brass Band Club, every time the pads are used they need replacing, therefore it is important to keep spare pads. Recommend Parish Council to contact local businesses for funding and run a fundraiser. They also raised concerns that if the previous defibrillator (installed 2016) was not maintained, will a new one be looked after properly? Cllr Finn confirmed that it would be put on the circuit and maintenance will be kept on top of.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Liaise with school as the defibrillator will benefit pupils as well as the wider community.
- b. Raise the maintenance of the box/lock replacement/funding with the school.
- c. Look at fundraiser options with school/PTA.

15. PLANNING REPORT.

The clerk submitted a report on the relevant planning applications that had been submitted since the last Council meeting. Members were reminded that weekly planning applications and decided lists of planning applications are available to view on the RVBC website by using the link below:

https://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/weekly_lists

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

Note the report and respond to planning department with comments.

16. CRIME FIGURES.

The Clerk submitted a report updating members on the latest crime statistics up to November 2025 as provided by PCSO Katie Ferguson.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

Note the report.

17. PARISH PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE

Cllr Duckworth provided an update to members on the recent parish plan questionnaire. There were 45 responses to the original needs and wants open invitation. This determined the most important parish priorities which went into the questionnaire recently delivered. There have been 120 responses so far, and Cllr Duckworth is in the process of collating these, and producing histograms to analyse data. The cut-off date for responding to the questionnaire was the 31st October 2025. The total cost of producing the questionnaire booklets was £248. The external post boxes were very useful, with most of the returned questionnaires delivered here.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Consider the future use of the purchased post boxes.
- b. Reimburse Cllr Duckworth for the external post boxes purchased.
- c. Dedicate a private meeting to discuss outcome of the parish plan.

18. VE DAY REMEMBRANCE BENCH

Cllr Pollard provided a verbal update on the status of the bench: the bench is now installed. Cows in the field at the river are scaping against the bench installed there and have loosened the fittings. There needs to be a fence around it.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

- a. Request Lengthsman put a fence around the river bench.
- b. Add both benches to the asset register.

19. CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA.

- a. Cllr Hampson attended the LCC and LALC conference. There will be another conference on the 24th of November at Foxfield's, with elections for vice chair, area member and secretary.
- b. The clerk has received a response from Debbie King at LCC regarding PROW/biodiversity funding stating that the grant offers have been withdrawn due to budgetary restraints. It was acknowledged that councils accepting the offer have carried out some great work in their local areas, and the impact of the withdrawal of the fund is being monitored by the service.
- c. Cllr Stevenson (Norse) has failed to attend 3 consecutive meetings over the last 6-month period with no record of sending apologies (In July apologies were only received from Cllr McKelvey and Cllr Peplow).
- d. Cllr Hampson provided an update on Treescapes who are providing funding for putting up hedgerows along Public Rights of Way as well as miniature forests. She stressed the importance of moving fast on this; however, Hunteroyd's permission would need to be sought in the first instance.
- e. Cllr Duckworth has looked at the recent call for sites sent out by the Ribble Valley Borough Council. 20 houses are being proposed at Haugh Head off Whin's Lane, behind the tennis courts.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

Write to Cllr Stevenson asking if she wishes to remain a councillor, and if so could she please respond by the 22nd of November or she will no longer be a member of Simonstone Parish Council.

20. BOROUGH COUNCILLOR REPORT

Cllr Peplow submitted his report of the consideration of the Parish Council (attached, appendix III).

Other matters raised not on report:

- a. Ribble Valley Borough Council have not supported a move towards splitting the Ribble Valley towards MP boundaries. Merging with Preston and Lancaster would be preferable, however Blackburn with Darwin is pushing to merge with areas of the Ribble Valley to benefit from industry at BAE, Clitheroe and Fort Vale.
- b. Cllr Hampson queried whether there will be a push towards a 3 weekly/monthly bin collection. Cllr Peplow highlighted that Ribble Valley is the only council operating a weekly collection, as he personally doesn't agree with this in terms of efficiency (most bins aren't full when emptied). He would support a 2-weekly bin collection; however, Cllr Peplow and Cllr McCrum don't have a majority on the council. If reorganisation does happen, we will likely lose our weekly bin collection. In the next few years there will be waste options provided for food waste, which will be emptied weekly.

21. FUTURE MEETINGS 2025: 8 JAN 2026, 5 MARCH 2026.

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL: Agree that the next meeting would take place on 8 Jan 2026 and 5 Mar 2026.



Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to Simonstone Parish Council.

Appendix I: Finance Report September-October 2025.


Schedule of payments for approval (1 Sept to 31 Oct 2025)						
Date	Ref	Payee details and description	Gross (£)	VAT (£)	Net (£)	Due date
01/09/25	admin	Easy websites	46.20	9.24	55.44	paid
03/09/25	admin	USE IT computers	3.50	0.70	4.20	paid
08/09/25	admin	DM payroll	60.00	12.00	72.00	paid
08/09/25	admin	USE IT computers	16.30	3.26	19.56	paid
12/09/25	admin	Use It Computers	19.56		19.56	paid
12/09/25	sundry	Npower Christmas light electricity bill	6.22	0.31	6.53	paid
16/09/25	admin	Clerk salary - Anna September 25	352.30		352.30	paid
24/09/25	admin	BP: Anna Haines, Envelopes	2.08	0.42	2.50	paid
24/09/25	admin	BP: Anna Haines, Stationary - notebooks	3.47	0.69	4.16	paid
24/09/25	sundry	BP Royal British Legion - wreaths	100.00		100.00	paid
24/09/25	admin	BP Anna Haines, Book of stamps	6.96		6.96	paid
30/09/25	admin	UNITY bank Unpaid cheque inwards fee	6.00		6.00	paid
30/09/25	admin	UNITY bank Service charge	6.00		6.00	paid
01/10/25	admin	Easy websites	46.20	9.24	55.44	paid
03/10/25	admin	BP Anna Haines: Clerk printing expenses	7.20		7.20	paid
03/10/25	admin	BP Anna Haines, Clerk mileage expenses	13.50		13.50	paid
03/10/25	admin	BP Anna Haines, Paper	3.33	0.66	3.99	paid
03/10/25	amenity	BP Ark Plastics, Bench	585.00	117.00	702.00	paid
03/10/25	admin	BP media village, questionnaire printing	248.00		248.00	paid
09/10/25	admin	clerk salary - Anna Haines October	352.50		352.50	paid
09/10/25	admin	UNITY bank unpaid cheque inwards fee	6.00		6.00	paid
14/10/25	admin	SLCC clerk training FILCA course	120.00	24.00	144.00	paid
14/10/25	sundry	BP Andrea Townsend, Purple poppy wreath remembrance day	27.50		27.50	paid
15/10/25	admin	Use IT computers	3.50	0.70	4.20	paid
31/10/25	admin	Service charge	6.00		6.00	paid
			2,041.32	178.22	2,219.54	

Note: Approval is not usually sought for people or organisations where the Parish Council has a contractual relationship or has already been agreed by Council

Receipts for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

Bank		Income Streams								
Date	Reference	Details	RVBC Precept	VAT Repay	RVBC Grants/Other	Other Grants	UKSPF	Sundry	Account switches	Totals
07/04/2025	1	RVBC Precept	9,000.00							9,000.00
14/04/2025	2	VE Day Grant			500.00					500.00
29/04/2025	3	HMRC VAT Claim		1,004.66						1,004.66
27/05/2025	4	Christmas Lights			150.00					150.00
29/09/2025	5	RVBC Concurrent functions grant			396.00					396.00
17/10/2025	6	HMRC PAYE						469.45		469.45
22/10/2025	7	Transfer from Barclays to UNITY savings							9,207.86	9,207.86
22/10/2025	8	Transfer from Barclays to UNITY savings							0.30	0.30
31/10/2025	9	Credit Interest (savings account)						10.93		10.93
Total:			9,000.00	1,004.66	1,046.00	0.00	0.00	469.45		20,739.20

Summary of Receipts and Payments

	£			
Balance carried forward at 1st April 2025:	5,024.21			
Add total receipts to date:	20,739			
Less total payments to date:	-9,166.99			
Balance:	16,596.42	 <div data-bbox="1101 638 1316 772"> <p><i>If these two figures are different an explanation is required.</i></p> </div>		
	£			
Unity Trust Bank Balance as at 31/10/25:	16,596.42			
<p>The Switch from Barclays Bank to Unity Trust Bank took place on 16 August 2024. Amount transferred = £15,086.93 Switch Authorised by: - David Peat - Clifton Pollard - Stephen Finn</p>				
<p>The Switch from Barclays Bank (savings) to Unity Trust Bank (savings) took place on 22 October 2025. Amount transferred = £9,208.16 Switch Authorised by: - David Peat - Clifton Pollard - Stephen Finn</p>				

ACCOUNT STATEMENTS

				BARCLAYS BUSINESS PREMIUM ACCOUNT		UNITY SAVINGS		UNITY CURRENT		TOTAL
				£		£		£		£
Balance carried forward at 31 March 2025:				9,134.10		NA		5,024.21		14,158.31
30 September 2025				9,194.86		NA		8,478.21		17,673.07
31 October 2025				0.00		14,510.93		2,085.49		16,596.42

Appendix II: Budget Considerations and precept proposal

Proposed Cashflow - based on Actual and Projected Expenditure 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026

		Income													
		Stream	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
RVBC Precept	Precept	9,000.00													9,000.00
RV in Bloom	RVBC Grant														0.00
HMRC VAT Return	VAT Repay	1,004.66													1,004.66
Concurrent Funding	RVBC							396.00							396.00
Other RVBC Grants	RVBC Grant	500.00	150.00								250.00				900.00
Other Income	Other								469.45						469.45
Other Funding	LCC														0.00
Totals:		10,504.66	150.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	396.00	469.45	0.00	250.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11,770.11	

Expenditure										
Forecast 2025- 26										
2025-26 Apr-Sept Actual £								2025-26 Projected Spend £	2025-26 Budget £	2026-27 Proposed Budget £
Expenditure Stream	Actual £	OCT	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March			
ADMIN EXP										
7 Clerk Salary	2,290.57	394.55	394.55	394.55	394.55	394.55	394.55	4,657.87	4,116.00	5,709.99
10 HMRC Income Tax	257.40							257.40	1,032.00	149.50
12 Clerk Expenses	15.00	12.00	12.00	12.00	12.00	12.00	12.00	87.00	120.00	150.00
11 Payroll services	72.00					72.00		144.00	120.00	149.47
1 Use-It	182.48	31.00	31.00	31.00	31.00	31.00	31.00	368.48	275.00	382.48
2 Easy Web	332.64	55.44	55.44	55.44	55.44	55.44	55.44	665.28	665.00	690.56
4 LALC Subs. training	249.62							249.62	425.00	259.11
5 Auditor	125.00							125.00	100.00	125.00
6 Licenses/GDPR	0.00	50.00						50.00	100.00	51.90
14 Insurance	234.61							234.61	300.00	243.53
9 Bank charges	36.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	6.00	72.00	80.00	74.74
17 Training/Other Subs	0.00		144.00					144.00	100.00	200.00
AMENITY EXP										
3 RVBC Payments	540.79							540.79	0.00	561.34
16 Lengthsman/Other Maint	2,197.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,197.50	1,225.00	1,500.00
13 Amenity etc.	71.90	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	371.90	500.00	386.03
8 Defrib./Bus Shelter	150.00	1,200.00						1,350.00	150.00	155.70
15 Room Hire	245.00							245.00	250.00	250.00
SUNDRY EXP										
18 Grants	435.00	100.00	100.00					635.00	500.00	500.00
19 Remembrance/Other	0.00		130.00					130.00	500.00	200.00
20 Christmas	56.53	150.00						206.53	500.00	500.00
Totals:	7,492.04	2,048.99	922.99	548.99	620.99	548.99	548.99	12,731.98	11,058.00	12,239.34

Comparisons as at 20/10/2025

	FINAL ACCOUNTS 2023/24	BUDGET 2025/26	PROJECTED INC/EXP 2025/26	BUDGET 2026/27
INCOME	£	£	£	£
RVBC Precept:	8,400	9,000	9,000	9,500
Concurrent and other grants:	0	0	1,046	670
HMRC VAT Refunds:	0	0	1,005	400
LCC, sundry and other grants:	0	0	469	0
	8,400	9,000	11,520.11	10,570.00
EXPENDITURE				
Administration Expenses:	£	£	£	£
Clerk Salary	0	4,657.87	4,116.00	5,709.99
HMRC Income Tax	0	257.40	1,032.00	149.50
Clerk Expenses	0	87.00	120.00	150.00
Payroll services	0	144.00	120.00	149.47
Use-It	0	368.48	275.00	382.48
Easy Web	0	665.28	665.00	690.56
LALC Subs. training	0	249.62	425.00	259.11
Auditor	0	125.00	100.00	125.00
Licenses/GDPR	0	50.00	100.00	51.90
Insurance	0	234.61	300.00	243.53
Bank charges	0	72.00	80.00	74.74
Training/Other Subs	0	144.00	100.00	200.00
Total	0	6,911.26	7,333	8,186.27
Amenity Expenses:	£	£	£	£
RVBC Payments	0	0.00	541	561.34
Lengthsman/Other Maint	0	1,225.00	2,198	1,500.00
Amenity etc.	0	500.00	372	386.03
Defrib./Bus Shelter	0	150.00	1,350	155.70
Room Hire	0	250.00	245	250.00
	0	1,725.00	3,110	2,853.07
Sundry Expenses:	£	£	£	£
Grants	0	500.00	635	500.00
Remembrance/Other	0	500.00	130	200.00
Christmas	0	500.00	207	500.00
	0	1,500.00	972	1,200.00
T on Expenses to be Reclaimed:		0.00	350.81	400.00
Total Expenditure:	£	£	£	£
		10,136.26	11,414.72	12,239.34
SUMMARY:	£	£	£	£
Income:	0	9,000.00	11,520.11	10,570.00
Expenditure:	0	-10,136.26	-11,414.72	-12,239.34
	0	-1,136.26	105.39	-1,669.34
BALANCE:	£		£	
Balance brought forward at 1 April:		5 balance carried forward:	14,158	
Add surplus / less deficit for the year:		2025/26 Balance to date:	16,578	
Balance to be carried forward:		Overall Balance:		

Summary

£

Proposed Budget for 2026-27

12,239

The difference between the proposed budget of £12, 239 and the requested Precept of £9,500 will be made up from the Council's General Reserves (£1669) and the Council's own income streams, grants etc (£1070).

Precept:

Previous Years

Year	Tax Base	Band D Tax £	Tax Band % Change	Precept £
2019/20	496	16.94		8,400
2020/21	497	16.9	-0.24	8,400
2021/22	502	16.73	-1.01	8,400
2022/23	500	16.80	0.42	8,400
2023/24	500	16.80	0.00	8,400
2024/25	498	16.87	0.42	8,400
2025/26	504	17.86	5.70	9,000
2026/27	503			9,500



Figure provided by RVBC

BOROUGH COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO SIMONSTONE PARISH COUNCIL ON 6 NOVEMBER 2025.

Ribble Valley Shared Prosperity and Jubilee Fund Bids:

Read and Simonstone Village Hall (Registered Charity) (Scheme 1) – Provide accessible WC – grant offered subject to a successful full application = £100,000

The Council should have been in contact with the applicants to invite a full application some time ago. I wish the Trustees of Read & Simonstone Village Hall the best of luck with the application and project.

Simonstone Parish Council (Parish/Town/District Councils) – Improve the footpath connecting the Padiham end of Harewood Avenue to School Lane in Simonstone - £9,750 (+ £2,250 match funding)

I have spoken strongly in favour of this bid in the RVSP & Jubilee Fund Working Group and am aware that Council Officers were going to request that the Parish Council seeks a funding contribution from the Huntroyde Estate as the private landowner and evidence that the Estate has a designated right of way across its land. I advise the Parish to check whether the deadline of 1 January 2026 under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 affects this case. I resisted the request for funding from Huntroyde on the basis that the Estate's contribution to the community is in kind i.e. consenting to the upgrade of the path for community benefit without any betterment to the Estate. Sadly, I did not win the day on that issue so I hope that continued dialogue between the Parish, RVBC and Huntroyde will give us a positive result and a much safer route to School for many of Simonstone's children.

Martholme Greenway Group (Constituted Community Groups) – Improve the footpath surface on the Simonstone Lane to Gooseleach Wood section of the Great Harwood Loop - £10,000 (+ £10,000 match funding)

The Martholme Greenway Group was asked to provide details of its constitution to Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC) which was done and accepted. It has also been asked to provide evidence that its bid is supported by Simonstone Parish Council. I very much hope that Parish Councillors can provide this support tonight confirmed by the Clerk to

RVBC. I have spoken strongly in favour of this bid in the RVSP & Jubilee Fund Working Group and stressed the already heavy usage of the path linking Simonstone Lane to Gooseleach Wood and its great value as a natural community asset.

I am looking forward to meeting the Council's new Chief Executive Sarah Threlfall who takes over from Marshal Scott in early January due to Marshal's retirement. She lives fairly locally in the Ribble Valley and everyone involved in the selection process agreed that she was an exceptional candidate. I would like to record my thanks to Marshal for his service to Ribble Valley Borough Council for many years and for his advice and assistance since I was elected as a Councillor in May 2023.

There is nothing further of significance to report on local government reorganisation since my report in July. The competing proposals for change in the absence of consensus among Lancashire's Councils will be sent to the Secretary of State on 28 November and a public consultation will then start early in the New Year.

I proposed a Motion to Full Council on 14 October seconded by Councillor McCrum to declare a Climate Emergency and to accelerate, widen and deepen the actions the Council is taking on climate change and biodiversity loss. We asked for a recorded vote and the Motion was carried by one vote. I was very pleased that our Motion was supported by all but one Independent Councillor which was enough to deliver a majority with the support of the Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups. The meeting has been covered in the online and print media. The Council has already noted the declaration on its website and is in the process of implementing the measures called for through the Committee system where possible. It reaffirms the Council's aspiration to become carbon neutral by 2030 and adds a target for the Council to work towards the wider Borough becoming carbon neutral by 2050. It requires the Council to participate in the LGA's Climate Change Knowledge Hub and complete a baseline assessment of the Borough-wide carbon emissions for the Ribble Valley. One of its key requirements is that the Council engages with the wider Ribble Valley community, representatives from different economic sectors, community groups and residents on how to move towards the carbon neutrality of the whole Borough by 2050. This means that the Climate Emergency Working Group will be tasked with opening up its work to groups like Readstone Environment Group, Martholme Greenway and Parish Councils to work with them in

developing local actions and projects. The Council will support the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of local energy generation and supply in our local economy.

One of the first things I noticed when I was campaigning in Simonstone was how much local residents were already doing for their environment – EV's with home chargers, solar panels, doorstep and milk deliveries in glass bottles. Many people are already ahead of our politicians on environmental concerns but should be able to expect greater leadership and support from their elected representatives.

Although this Motion was passed by Full Council and is a very positive step for our future generations, it saddens me that the consensus for action on environmental sustainability that existed until very recently in the political mainstream is now beginning to break down at this most critical time. There will be a long way to go through Council Committees before we begin to see the results feeding through, but I promise that I will be tracking progress carefully and will not hesitate to speak out if I think that any aspect of this Motion is not being implemented quickly without good reason. If local government reorganisation goes ahead, any successor council will have the opportunity to build from where this Council left off.

The urgency of climate change and nature loss and their impact on the cost of living and quality of life cannot wait for local government reorganisation. Although I am acutely aware of the great pressures on Council Officers to work on possible changes to Lancashire's councils, my view remains clear that our future generations would never forgive people like me who have been put in a position of trust by voters if I could have done more but always found excuses not to do so.

Our next Councillor Drop-in Session will be held in the Hub Room of Read & Simonstone Village Hall from 10-11am on Saturday 22nd November.

Councillor Malcolm Peplow

5 November 2025