**Stapleford Parish Council: Chairman’s Report 2019-20**

**Parish Council**

* At the start of the year Stapleford Parish Council went to the Civic Affairs Committee at South Cambs District Council and were given consent to increase the number of Counsellors from nine to eleven. In the circumstances the nine candidates who submitted nominations were duly elected without a contest. Subsequently two further people were co-opted but with one resignation we are still left with one vacancy. Applications for this vacancy will be welcomed.
* In the year just past we said goodbye to Anne Rudge and Lesley Watts, noting their loyal support and hard work and we welcomed Belinda Irons and Kerry Byrne as Clerk and Assistant Clerk respectively.

**Finances**

* Finances have remained tight throughout the year with this Council inheriting unbudgeted expenditure and a small increase in the Parish Precept was agreed for the current financial year. Increases for the hire of the Pavilion and Recreation Field were also made with a view to increasing their sustainability.

**Outreach & Social**

* About 10% of the village responded to the Section 106 Capital Projects Initiative Questionnaire with ideas for improved sports facilities and improvements to the Pavilion with sustainability in mind ranking highly in the responses. As already indicated your Council plans to bring forward proposals for specific projects, having earlier in the year provided the funds for an all-weather strip on the cricket square for the use of the cricket teams.
* There was a well-attended Village Weekend held in June and we are grateful to the Committee for making such a success of this.
* We are pleased that we have just been able to launch the Stapleford Parish Council website and new mail email addresses for all Parish Councillors and thanks go to the Councillors who invested their time and for support from Stapleford Online. Our vision is that the new website becomes the first port-of-call for Parish news and events and in hosting supporting documentation.

**Investment**

* Plans are well advanced for the cemetery to bring into use the land acquired some years previously, and despite the cost, the laying out of a new path and layout is regarded as essential work.
* There was a lot of interest generated when the long-promised speed indicator signs were installed in Haverhill Road and London Road and anecdotally speed limits in the village are more widely being observed as a result.

**Planning**

* We are supporting the Cambridge Great Park concept being promoted by leading Cambridge architects to preserve some of the intrinsic value of local countryside and to enhance our woodland and down-land areas. We will continue to resist any incursions into the Green Belt as a result of speculative development, noting that our green spaces are under greater threat than ever before.
* Various exhibitions and presentations have been hosted through the year including the new South Cambridge Station proposals, the Babraham Clean Energy Scheme and East West Rail.
* Your Council has made strong representations to the Greater Cambridge Partnership objecting to amongst other issues the environmental intrusion and the economic lost opportunity of their proposals for a busway cutting through the chalk down-land around the edge of the village.
* Jointly with neighbouring Parish Councils we opposed the Welcome Trust proposals to greatly enlarge their Genome Campus at Hinxton, sadly a battle lost. More encouraging is the Secretary of State’s decision to refuse consent for the Agri Park development.
* Closer to Stapleford the Huawei (first stage) development gained approval on the former Spicers site with the promise of improved off-road links between the village and the site.

**Closing Remarks**

* Finally, a big acknowledgement to Gillian Pett and Carol Davies for initiating the Stapleford Self-Isolation Support Team, noting the contacts they established throughout the village and the level of support being provided. Thankfully I am not aware of any lives lost in the village due to Covid-19 and as we begin slowly to emerge from lock-down we will all get used to new ways of life but still maintaining our community spirit.

Howard Kettel 13/5/2020