**Chairman’s Report for Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council, May 2021**

Our covid-lockdown year was rough, difficult, but brought out the best in Strettonites. In early April of 2020 we had started our Stretton Community Action Plan to help those struggling with shopping, isolation etc and immediately had a list of 45 households ready to help – more than we needed by far. Thank you to all of the parish who have helped over the year.

This year, in January, we were very pleased to be able to co-opt 2 new councillors: Jonathan Holdback and Richard Eedle. They have only been able to meet the rest of the parish council on Zoom so far, but as from our AGM on 11th May we are back meeting in real life.

Finally, after nearly 8 years we have 5 new social houses, 11 allotments and a community orchard. Every step seemed to be fraught with difficulties and in the end cost more than anticipated but we must pass on our thanks to Martin Laurence (owner of adjacent land), Jo Barker (County Councillor) and Warwickshire Rural Housing Association for the grants which enabled us to put in the water supply. The allotments were all snapped up and fruit and nut trees have been planted in the orchard. The only thing left to do, when the Land Registry provide us with a reference number, is to register the land as a parish asset – as we have done with the pub.

We put aside £1000 to start up a sustainability initiative in Stretton with Chris Long-Leather leading. In spite of Covid and the need to be Zooming constantly some progress has been made. The main threads of this are: Food and Local Produce, Waste, Transport and Energy, and Biodiversity. Chris has been updating us each parish council meeting. The aim is to put out a newsletter 3 or 4 times a year to every household on these topic and to start projects to build up our sustainability.

Our website has been given a spruce-up by Jon Holdback – I am very grateful for his expertise which I completely lack. We would like to make more use of the website as an up-to-date resource for locals to check into, rather than sending lots of information round on the village email list. We are, of course, aware that about 35 households do not have internet and keeping them up-to-date is one issue I personally do not think I have addressed well enough recently. Our village is being upgraded in November 2021 (so they say..) to Openreach’s Superfast gigabit broadband which is badly needed in some parts of the village and will make working from home an easier prospect.

More light has been shone on public footpaths around the village over the last year and this has shown that there are quite a number of paths missing signs, safe stiles and, in some cases, access. Richard West has taken on the task of the Footpath Officer for the Parish Council but he has found it has been difficult to get any support from WCC Footpath Wardens.

Planning applications have been far fewer in number since last March. On the whole, the PC have been listened to where we did not like what was being proposed, with the same old exception of the lack of progress at the Pitstop site at Rowborough, where the owner failed to fulfil all but one of the 10 conditions which Stratford District Council set. Let us hope that this time next year it will not even be worth mentioning.

One thing which has caused a lot of irritation in the village has been the erratic water supply from Severn Trent when water pressure either dropped suddenly for a few hours or stopped completely, especially for those at the top of the village. A recent email from Sally Weaver of ST apologises and explains what had gone wrong. She is confident that the problems with new pumps at Whaddon Hill have been sorted, although she cannot exclude the occasional burst pipe or power cuts.

Now that we appear to be coming back to some normality, let us hope that our community can pick up where we left off – and we still have the pub! Thank you to all of you, especially our clerk Sue, for all your help and time this last year and let us hope we never have to have another Zoom meeting!

Izzi Hazelwood

Chairman of Stretton-on-Fosse Parish Council