

CHAIRMANS REPORT MAY 2020

Hello Everyone, fellow councillors and residents of Huncote,

I would like to start by saying how very proud I am of the way our village is responding during these very strange times. The Corona virus/COVID 19 pandemic is affecting everyone in a way unimaginable at Christmas. The links on our website www.huncote-pc.gov.uk links you to the relevant websites and access for any support you may need during this pandemic, including the Blaby District Council Community Hub website.

I would like to say a huge "Thank You!" to all NHS Workers, carers and essential workers for maintaining our services and keeping us all safe. The Thursday evening 8 o'clock clap gives us all a chance to show our gratitude for essential workers also it helps neighbours to maintain a connection. If you require assistance, please contact any of your parish councillors and they will endeavour to respond as soon as they can.

The Parish Council held its election process in May 2019 and 4 councillors were elected. Huncote Parish should have 8 Councillors. During last year 2 parishioners came forward to offer their services as councillor and it was decided to co-opt Liam McEntee and Matt Jones onto the Council. If any parishioner would be interested in joining our current team of 6 they would be made most welcome. Please feel free to contact either myself or Stuart Bacon if you would like any information on how to do this.

You may be aware of a planning application to extend the works at Croft Quarry. Within this application is a proposal to construct a footpath from the new Jelson estate off Narborough Road towards the existing nature walk, with a footbridge crossing Thurlaston Brook. This work would be carried out within the first 2 years of approval. The plan includes improvements to the deteriorating embankment steps and the existing nature walks. It is also proposed to upgrade the current path, Footpath V57 running around Croft Hill, to a width of 3 metres. The plans are available on line at Leicestershire County Council's website www.leics.gov.uk. Huncote Parish Council has a paper copy of the plans, available via the Parish Council Clerk should anyone wish to examine them. Most of the quarried stone is to be removed by the existing rail network so it should not involve an increase in lorry movements.

Acresford Quarry was due to close and stop all work by the end of 2020. This may need to be extended due to the current lockdown restrictions.

One of the planning conditions for the new development at the top of Denman Lane was to improve the standard of the footway that runs from Narborough Road, Huncote to Huncote Road, Narborough. The local highways authority said it is not possible to widen this to the current regulatory width. This was debated at a site meeting with our local MP, Alberto Costa; District and County Councillor, Maggie Wright; Huncote Parish Council Chairman and Parish Clerk and an officer from the Countryside housing development. We offered an alternative of the installation of a vehicle activated speed signs. Countryside's response has been they will only carry out their legal responsibilities. MP, Alberto Costa and the attending Councillors were not impressed with this attitude and we will continue to press for this as a reasonable alternative.

Junction improvements at Huncote Road and B4114 Coventry Road are due to commence week ending 30 May 2020. This will include the construction of a right-hand filter lane on Huncote Road for those vehicles exiting right at the junction.

The Fosse Village Neighbourhood plan should have been put forward to a referendum this month. Due to the current restrictions all elections and referendums have been cancelled. A bit of good news; the Government have stated that existing neighbourhood plans ready to put to referendum should now be regarded as significant and carry maximum weight relevant to any planning applications within the local area. However, the plan may still have to be put to a referendum.

All households were delivered a letter from Alberto Costa surveying opinions on the Hinckley National Rail Freight Hub, currently in its early planning stages. The response from his questionnaire concluded that this was not the right location for this hub and this was also debated in Westminster Hall. We need to be aware that the company still intend to put forward plans later this year. The company are required to be fully

consultative and will be holding various open days around the affected villages. We will keep you fully informed of these as they come up.

I am pleased to say that the Parish Council supplied a grant to the library this year to enable them to continue with this valuable resource. Any group within the village can apply for grants from Huncote Parish Council, unfortunately individuals cannot apply for this type of grant. Access to grant applications can be found on Huncote Parish Council's website.

The park has suffered with ponding and soggy ground conditions during the heavy rainfall experienced over the winter months. Thankfully the area is beginning to dry out and becoming usable again.

Croft Junior Football club are currently leasing the sports field adjacent to Huncote Leisure Centre. They have just purchased new goal posts which are taken down for safe keeping when not in use. Numerous children are members of the club which is growing to become one of the largest football clubs in the area. We wish them well in their ventures.

Huncote Hornets are due to be hosting the British BMX Championships on weekend, 28 August 2020 at the BMX course at Huncote Leisure Centre. We wish them luck with this brilliant event and hope it successfully goes ahead.

The Parish Council has just completed the process of setting up a village emergency plan to comply with government legislation. We are intending to gather a local register of essential contacts for volunteers with any essential emergency skills. The register would be kept within the emergency plan by the Parish Council to be used for any grave, emergency situation. Fortunately, we have never had to utilise such a plan.

During the lockdown the government requires all Parish Council's to carry out parish meetings via virtual communication methods. Huncote will be using 'Zoom' and will publicise each parish meeting, including details on how to link to the meetings, via the parish website. You can also 'dial up' using your phone – again details are on the website link and this method may have to continue well into 2021. Technology is wonderful, and we must all be getting very used to communicating with friends and family this way. I am amazed at how quickly we are all adjusting to this, especially me as I'm such a techno-dinosaur.

I would like to thank the Council Clerk, Stuart who is having to filter through all this information regarding COVID 19. You would not believe the amount of emails he has to sift through from each government department. The rules and regulations of what we should or should not be doing are very strict and constantly changing which leads us having to alter arrangements at the last minute.

I would like to thank everybody for all their hard work they provide to the Council. Parish Council work is purely voluntary. Maggie Wright, County & District Councillor has an outstanding attitude to her parishioners and constituents and always promptly follows up any enquiries that are put to her. Maggie will be with us for at least another year as elections have been postponed until May 2021. Bruce and Dave, our local handymen, give excellent service and work above and beyond any of our expectations.

Although the Post Office is temporarily closed, I am anticipating it will re-open very soon. I would like to thank everyone in Huncote for their positive input and kindness during this pandemic. Thank you to the Facebook groups; for the art work in various windows; the bunting and pompoms brightening the village; for the sculptures scattered around the village; the nature videos; to the school children for staying at home and missing out contact with their friends, family and teachers; to those delivering medication to Huncote residents; to CSB Timber Merchants for enabling people to carry out their DIY tasks; to all our local shops for remaining open and for their food deliveries to those requesting their service.

I would like to give you all a virtual hug.

Finally, I would like to add "Stay Safe" everyone.

Alec Knight, Chairman of Huncote Parish Council.