Annual Report from District Councillor - Great Staughton Ward (Hail Weston, Gt Staughton, Perry, Grafham, Ellington parishes)

I was elected by a majority of the residents of the ward a year ago with one of the higher turnouts in the district, and with around 60% of the vote. I thank you for the privilege of serving as your District Councillor.

The year has been full of event. For the first time in 40 years, the council is in no overall control and has been run by a coalition comprising the Liberal Democrats, the Independents, Labour and 1 Green.

They were fortunate to have inherited a well-run and financially sound council, and benefited greatly this last year through a generous central government settlement - better than many expected.

Sadly, however, despite this, the coalition increased all our council tax, increase One Leisure charges, and finally voted themselves a pay increase. This was after the full Council declared a Cost-of-Living Crisis at one of its early meetings. I, along with my fellow Conservatives opposed these moves.

The Council also declared a Climate Emergency, and unveiled an ambitious Environment Strategy and this was fully supported by all but a few councillors. I am currently the Shadow Executive Councillor for the Environment and have a good working relationship with the Executive Councillor.

The council has contributed to several joint authority consultations, specifically on transport and I have been vocal in ensuring the rural voce has been heard, as sadly too much focus has been placed on the towns and cities - particularly Cambridge.

In terms of the ward, it has been a busy year attending meetings of the 5 parish councils. It has been a pleasure getting to know the councillors and the villages they represent.

I have also been kept busy with various planning issues in the north and the south of the ward - Gt Staughton/Staughton Moor and Ellington. The middle remains relatively quiet on the planning front. I'll continue to support the PCs in their dealings with HDC planning, as well as helping individual residents in navigating the HDC bureaucracy.

The coming year promises to just as busy as the Council embarks on updating the Local Plan as well as introducing the new Places Strategy, starting to deliver the Environment Strategy, recruiting a new Chief Executive, and ensuring the coalition delivers best value for money for the residents of Great Staughton ward.

Stephen Cawley
District Councillor, Great Staughton Ward
Huntingdonshire District Council
May 2023