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Statement read by Dr Nick Redman on behalf of Stanton Surgery, at the meeting of Stanton Parish Council on 13th August 2020.

For those who do not know me, my name is Nick Redman, and I am a GP and the senior partner at Stanton Surgery. Those that do know me, will know that I am generally a calm and measured person, and not someone to engage in rhetoric. Therefore I hope that my statement to you today will be considered with this in mind.

Firstly, I would like to say on behalf of myself, and my twenty-odd in number colleagues who work tirelessly to keep Stanton Surgery running, how utterly appalled we collectively are at the actions of Councillors Spicer, Thorndyke and Hart at the planning committee meeting on 5th August, in asking the committee to refuse our planning application. An application to replace our Portakabin with a permanent extension, which received **no objections at all** from the community, and was recommended for approval by the planning officer, should have been passed without any issue, and would have been, but for the councillors' intervention.

It has probably not escaped councillors' notice that it has been a difficult time for all healthcare providers lately. We noted the comment made in the planning committee meeting alleging that we had taken advantage of the coronavirus pandemic as the best time to push through our planning application. Frankly, what a dreadful thing to suggest. Staff are exhausted, but continue to provide services, and indeed increased services, to support our population throughout the pandemic. Our team has found those comments to be extremely upsetting. Coronavirus has accentuated the need for additional space. It has been a massive challenge to continue to deliver services, adhere to social distancing and keep our patients and team safe in the very limited facilities we have.

We are clinicians, not politicians, and our priority is to provide the best care possible to our patients, but we have to do this within the constraints of NHS bureaucracy, and also now, apparently, the politics and agenda that you are creating.

We have tried to navigate the system for the best part of ten years in order to find a solution for the practice that enables us to continue providing vital services to our patients, whilst working within those constraints. We have explored and developed numerous options to advanced stages, including the development of a new surgery at Hopton, and the development of the former middle school site in Stanton. I and the other partners have spent several tens of thousands of pounds ensuring that all of these options were progressed to the necessary degree to properly assess their viability. I would like you all to imagine for a moment how the practice staff feels right now, seeing the only viable solution available to us placed in such jeopardy by the councillors' actions.

We have discussed the planning committee meeting outcome with West Suffolk CCG and informed them of our need to now close our patient list to new registrations. This, I am afraid, is the direct result of the councillors' interventions. Our three years' temporary planning permission for the Portakabin expires at the beginning of October. We were given that

permission contingent on a permanent solution being in place by the end of the three year period. Incidentally, we had to push the planners to allow us three years, rather than the two that they wanted, on the basis that NHS approval for these projects is only granted after a prolonged process.

If the councillors are genuinely concerned about traffic problems on The Chase, we have to assume that they will also be objecting to any extension of planning permission on the Portakabin, as this and the proposed extension contain the same number of consulting rooms and will therefore be equivalent in terms of the traffic created. A Portakabin is leased, not owned, and is an extremely expensive way of adding extra space to a premises. Once the three year contract with Portakabin is up, we have no guarantee that the CCG will agree to reimburse the practice what are likely to be very significant monthly rental costs. So now, with the risk of losing the Portakabin, it would be irresponsible to take on new patients, as if we lose that space we will certainly not be able to serve our **current** patients properly, let alone any new ones.

I would add at this stage that there has been a significant reduction in traffic to the surgery since the coronavirus pandemic emerged, as we have consulted patients remotely wherever possible. Traffic is likely to remain reduced even after the pandemic has run its course, as in common with most other GP practices, we have found that telephone and video consultations work very well for a lot of cases. We intend to continue offering them first and then only asking patients to come in to the surgery if it is clinically indicated.

We are perfectly happy to support you with your future proposals for the hub, as you had told us that you would support us with the extension proposal, but we have to consider the local population's needs **now**. Councillors trying to suffocate the practice's only sensible medium term solution, without even having the courtesy to discuss the matter with us, is not a constructive way of working, and certainly not the correct way in which to advance your proposals.

If the hub proposal fails, and our understanding from the CCG is that they will **not** be in a position to support funding of the proposal, you will have **no contingency whatsoever** for the health needs of the population locally. We will have had to close our list, reduce our number of clinicians, and de-register around 1,500 patients. Any new patients, including those from all of the new developments that are on the horizon, will not be able to register in the village, but will have to travel to neighbouring practices.

The deadline set by NHS England to use the funding allocated to us for the extension project is the end of March 2021. If we do not meet the deadline, that funding will be lost to us. It **absolutely cannot be reallocated** at this stage to a different project – NHS processes simply do not allow this and cannot be contravened, however well connected we think we are. We did explain to Councillors Spicer and Hart in a meeting with them last December that whilst we were happy to support them looking into the possibility of a healthcare hub in Stanton, the practice needed to push on with our extension regardless. It was implied that we had the council's support.

To sum up, refusal of planning permission for the extension proposal will cause severe difficulties in local healthcare provision and so today I am absolutely imploring all councillors to get behind the practice and resolve to fully support our planning application when it is reconsidered by the planning committee towards the end of September. Thank you.