

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2014-2015

WELCOME

I would like to present my report as Chairman of the Parish Council of Mancetter for the year 2014-2015 under the following headings:-

- A Financial Statement
- B Traffic Issues and Police Matters
- C Cemetery
- D Allotments
- E Environment, including Footpaths and Rights of Way
- F Amenities
- G Grants
- H Planning
- I Future Targets
- J Close

A Financial Statement

The Balance of Reserves at the start of the year £38,575.89

The Balance of Reserves at the end of the year £ 41,597.94

These figures have been reached after accounting for creditors and debtors, as shown in the Annual Accounts.

The accounts are available for inspection by interested Parishioners, but will not be audited externally until later in the year. The accounts have been audited during this financial year by the Parish Council's Internal Auditor, as recommended by current legislation. The accounts for the year 2013-2014 were formally adopted after their external audit and copies of these can be made available upon request from The Clerk and Proper Officer for the Parish Council as hard copy and at a future date to yet be confirmed will also be made available on line.

The precept for the coming year has been set at the minimum necessary to allow the Council to carry out its development programme for the next 12 months. The precept was set at £21,153. This is again a small rise and still represents a total rise of only £1,917 over the last nine years. The Council will continue to try to maintain a quality service at a good value cost for the Electorate, regardless of current pressure from Central Government and pressures of reduced services from the other local tiers of Government.

Due to the way in which Central Government continues to make payments to Local Authorities, the final precept settlement continues to be complex and changes year on year. The result of such pressure requires careful consideration by any Parish or Town Council before precepts are set. The Clerk will briefly explain this in her report.

B Traffic Issues and Police Matters

Police issues are still largely dealt with at Area Forum, level and I would urge Parishioners to attend the Area Forum East meetings and make use of the consultation facility.

I am pleased to remark upon the increased readiness of our current Constables and PCSO's to respond to information received, and certainly at a Neighbourhood Watch Meeting in Ridge Lane involving adjoining Parish members from Birchley Heath, our new Inspector gave a firm undertaking to be more responsive despite staffing constraints.

There is increased local concern about increased traffic flows along the A5 corridor and to this end there have been joint meetings with Atherstone Town Council and Witherley Parish Council. This has resulted in a meeting with the Highways Agency representatives and responsible contractors for the A5. It is early days, but it is hoped that due to such pressure some improvements will be made to the Mancetter traffic island and further along the A5 at the Witherley village access points, and possibly the Woodford Lane junction.

The August Badgers Running Event which affected a number of road access points in the Parish, caused difficulties for Parishioners getting to work and it is hoped that proper consultation will take place if it should become an annual event.

C Cemetery

The maintenance of the Cemetery/Churchyard is in the hands of the same Contractor. At all times public comments have been most positive and the on-going working relationship with the Contractor remains excellent.

Our second Handyman Contractor has continued in the various tasks and bulb/corm planting programme included the 1914-1918 memorial which has proved an excellent display this spring despite early failure of poppy seed growth.

This year cannot go past without mention of the removal of the Scots pine which caused, in its final stage of felling, the unplanned demolition of some of the cremation area walls. Immediate decisions were taken to put the repair and reconstruction work into place. A known local worker with a known work ethic and skills level was employed to start work and the tree feller's insurance company contacted to bypass the normal quotation process. Work was completed before the Christmas/New Year break which is a known time of increased visits to memorials in that area.

Repainting of the cemetery railings will take place in the coming year.

A contract has been made with Tom White Waste Limited for a fortnightly bin collection from the cemetery of waste which cannot be composted.

D **Allotments**

All the allotments at the Ridge Lane site are let, and now yet again, the Council is eager to add further names to the waiting list.

In the coming year a small section of allotment is to be set up with a number of raised beds for use by the Ridge Lane Youth Club. This is to help youngsters gain a greater understanding of growing crops of flowers and vegetables, and perhaps, who knows, gain some future allotment tenants!

E **Environment**

The Contractor has maintained the bus shelters on a monthly basis and has at the same time cleared the areas of any litter so as to support the Streetscape Teams.

Instances of fly tipping have increased in the past year and it almost seems necessary to have constant contact with the Streetscape Team.

Thanks goes to Martyn Briner, our volunteer Footpaths Representative, for his detailed reports on the Rights of Way conditions in the Parish. A copy has been forwarded to the County Council.

John Arrowsmith has given help with issues relating to changes to routes of Rights of Way relating to the new quarry works.

The Parish Council has received its contract for maintenance of Rights of Way in the Parish.

Talks have taken place about the repositioning of one of the information boards for the Roman Walk.

F **Amenities**

The Community Schoolroom has continued to be used for all Parish Council Meetings.

Youth activity at Ridge Lane continues to have a steady attendance record, again with increased variation in activities – the gardening has already been mentioned. I again thank the group of volunteer workers for their time and effort.

The Parish website is an active communication medium and in the coming year will be modified and updated to conform to the Freedom of Information changes. The monthly page submitted by The Clerk to Mancetter Matters gives an update on some of the issues affecting the Parish.

The Parish Notice Board for Mancetter has been refurbished by the original manufacturer free of charge.

G **Grants**

The Parish Council will continue to give an annual grant to the Mancetter Matters publication. This is in recognition of the Parish Council's information page.

Two further grants have been made this year:

A £200 grant has been made to the Mancetter Scouts to help them purchase buoyancy aids for their boats.

A £100 grant has been made to St Peter's Church to assist with costs for their Roman Day to be held in July.

H **Planning**

Planning issues in the Parish have been commented upon where appropriate.

The quarry have submitted an application to recover stone from a more difficult section of their workings. At this point in time it seems most likely that the application will be approved because the timescales will not change, nor will quantities of stone/tarmac leaving the site on a monthly quota.

Although on the edge of our Parish, the Sarval site (formerly de Mulders), has nearly completed a major refit running into several millions of pounds.

Work has at last started on the (Mancetter) school field site and the Parish Council recognise the likely difficulties with the associated works.

The most controversial application was that submitted for a broiler house development on the edge of Mancetter. Never has there been so much public reaction to a planning application. At the moment that application has been withdrawn but the applicant still has a period of time to resubmit an alternative proposal.

I **Future Targets**

- a) The Parish Council will continue to press for the improvement of services within the Parish.
- b) Community Hall provision will continue to be supported where necessary.
- c) Youth support will continue when and where activity takes place.
- d) Maintenance of Rights of Way will continue, although WCC remain the enforcement authority.
- e) To work with other agencies in the Parish to bring about enhanced Parish provision.
- f) To continue dialogue with the Borough Council and other groups in the Parish and progress the development of a Mancetter Parish Plan.
- g) To continue to progress to at least the new Foundation Quality Status for Town/Parish Councils.
- h) To support the personal development of all Councillors and any new training programmes to support The Clerk.

J

Close

The following functions/meetings have been attended by members of the Parish Council during the past year:-

Area Forum East Meetings

Warwickshire Association of Local Parish Council Meetings

Annual Meeting of the Parish Councils with North Warwickshire Borough Council

Quarry Liaison Group Meetings

The North Warwickshire Area Committee of Parish Councils

Mancetter Tenants Group Meetings

CSW Emergency Volunteer Group

Crime Commissioner's Public Consultations meeting at Nuneaton

Mayor's Civic Service

WALC Training day events

The joint meetings to discuss the A5 corridor traffic issues.

The new Mancetter Parish Plan group.

The Council has continued to afford quality time at the start of our meetings for discussion with Borough Councillors, our County Councillor and other active groups.

The public question time is always on our agendas.

As we know, the new year is to bring about an Election, including one at Parish level. At this point in time I know that three long serving Parish Councillors are to retire – three excellent Councillors who have given time, effort and wisdom to the progress of Mancetter Parish. I hope that replacements can be found to fill and trained to fulfil the roles of such volunteers.

Jean Marshall has served the Parish for 28 years.

Bryan Hanson has served the Parish for 8 years.

Jill Mawson has served the Parish for 8 years.

This is a grand total of 42 years of voluntary service – nothing can replace such commitment to their duty of caring for the society and community they live in.

That is what a Parish Council is – a team of volunteers employing contractors at a local level - who take pride in the Parish. Much of the work is over and above the minimum required and agreed, which is given without worry for personal payment or expenses. We aim to keep such attitudes and standards for the future – as long as our Parishioners allow us to – we answer to the Parish.

My final thanks go to our Clerk and Proper Officer, Karen, who continues to run an efficient and effective office. Because of the increased responsibilities needed to keep this Council functioning the Council has awarded her a double increment this year – maybe with a few extra pennies she could now treat herself to a 'day trip out'.

This ends my formal report for 2014-2015.

In final recognition of service I have a gift for each retiring Councillor, which I hope the remaining Councillors will approve of.

Trevor Hopkins, Chairman
19th May 2015