

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2013-2014

WELCOME

I would like to present my report as Chairman of the Parish Council of Mancetter for the year 2013-2014 under the following headings:-

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

A Financial Statement

The Balance of Reserves at the start of the year £42,321.51

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

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 External Auditor, as recommended by current legislation. The accounts for the year 2012-2013 were formally adopted after their external audit and copies of these can be made available upon request from The Clerk and Proper Officer of the Parish Council.

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 £24,900.00. This is a small rise and still represents a total rise of only £1,500 over the last eight years. The Council will continue to try to maintain a quality service at a good value cost for the Electorate, despite current pressures from Central Government.

Due to the way in which Central Government makes payments to Local Authorities the final precept settlement continues to be complex and the Clerk will briefly explain this in her report.

B Traffic Issues and Police Matters

Police issues are still 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.

When speaking to Parishioners there is a strong feeling of a lack of contact with officers and this has been even more noticeable since our PCSO Ashley left the area to take up a new appointment with the Transport Police. Our new PCSO has failed to attend any Parish Council meeting.

At another level Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Ron Ball, promised during the WALC Briefing Day 2013 that when appointed, his “ambassador” would attend Parish Council meetings. This certainly has not happened for Mancetter.

The Neighbourhood Watch Group at Ridge Lane remains active, but would ask, that although in the adjoining Parish; that Birchley Heath residents, jointly take part as issues between the two villages, particularly with vehicle movements etc. are common to both.

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 his various tasks and continuing the bulb/corm planting programme; planting 3000 crocus bulbs in the cemetery area this autumn.

The pathway from the Gramer Cottages, through the Lower Grave Yard to the cemetery has been rebuilt. Our contractor for this work was one of only two quotations submitted. On the more positive note the contractor selected was local to the area and showed great consideration in the way the work was carried out and completed the job on time and at a lower price than that quoted. The reason for this being that the Parish Council is extremely grateful for the support given by the quarry to the Parish in gifting the tarmac coatings.

D Allotments

All the allotments at the Ridge Lane site are let, and now, yet again with only one additional name on the waiting list, the Council is eager to add further names to that list.

Notice was served on one tenant for failing to maintain cultivation to a reasonable standard.

Effective recycling of materials was achieved by getting the cemetery pathway contractor to deliver the old tarmac to the Ridge Lane allotment site for repairs to the roadway.

The Handyman Contractor carried out the appropriate levelling of materials.

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.

There are continued instances of fly tipping in the Parish, particularly Steppey Lane.

I will ask John Arrowsmith, our Footpaths Representative, to give what is to be his last report on the Parish Footpaths. At this point I would like to thank him on behalf of the Council for the great help he has been to us.

The Parish Council continues to fund a contractor to help keep the Rights of Way in the Parish maintained.

The Civic Society has set up the information boards on the Roman Walk and I am hoping for a report from the Society during the meeting.

Some grit bins have been replaced in the Parish but it is to be noted that the County Highways Department will only fill bins at the known existing sites.

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, with an increased variation in activities. There is a need to thank the group of volunteer workers, including the qualified (retired) Youth Leader.

It is a great shame that the Mancetter Youth Group appears to have failed because of paid leadership being withdrawn. Surely there is a need for more public support from volunteers thus following the Ridge Lane model.

The Parish website remains an active communication medium but there is always need for new items/ articles to update the site. The monthly page submitted by the Clerk to Mancetter Matters gives an update on some of the issues affecting the Parish.

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 information page.

Gramer Cottages applied for a grant to supply a grit bin for their resident's use. The application fulfilled the Council's criteria and therefore the application was successful.

H Planning

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

At this time, the quarry is giving consideration to submitting an application to recover stone from a more difficult section of their workings. This will involve a considerable quantity of over burden being moved onto adjoining land with associated landscaping. It will not involve or need an increase in timescales or quantities of stone / tarmac leaving the site on the monthly quota.

Final approval has been given for the school field site to be developed. The Parish Council asked for consideration to be given for additional car parking and the need to look seriously at traffic issues at the Manor Road/ Church Walk / Harpers Lane junction.

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 when 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 as the Localism Bill continues to progress.

- g) To continue to work towards the new Quality Status for Town /Parish Councils when the new requirements become available.
- h) To support the personal development of all Councillors.

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
- ❖ De Mulder Liaison Group Meetings
- ❖ The North Warwickshire Area Committee of Parish Councils
- ❖ Mancetter Tenants Group Meetings
- ❖ WALC training day events.
- ❖ C.S.W. Emergency Volunteer Group meetings.

Perhaps a first – a joint meeting with representatives from Ansley Parish Council, hosted here, to discuss traffic issues across our Parish Boundaries.

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. I have to report to the meeting that County Council contact has been minimal, but that this has been due to personal matters for that Councillor. We look forward to a new working relationship after the election in May.

The public question time is always on our agendas.

Sincere thanks are offered to the Vice Chair, Jean Marshall, and the other Councillors who give continuous voluntary support to the Parish. I especially mention Bryan Hamson and wish him continued progress towards better health. The 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 keeps all of us Councillors on our toes! Incidentally, we decided to award her an increment for her hard work – I can assure the Parish that the final pennies she will get will not be paying for any luxury cruises etc.

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This ends my report for 2013-2014.

Trevor Hopkins, Chairman
20th May 2014