

Manduessedum - Mancetter Village

(Place of War Chariots)

**M**ancetter **P**arish **C**ouncil

 Serving the People of Mancetter and Ridge Lane

**PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

**OF THE PARISH OF MANCETTER**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council of Mancetter,

held on Tuesday 28th January, 2025, at the Schoolroom

of St Peter’s Church Mancetter, commencing at 7pm.

**Present:**

**Chairman** Mr T Hopkins.

**Parish Councillors** Mr H Blackburn,Mrs G Forknall, Mr P Mann, Mr J Tither.

**County Councillor** Mrs M Bell

**Borough Councillor** Mr K Barnett

**Parish Clerk** Mrs E Higgins.

**Item 1 – Welcome, Apologies and Vacancy Update.**

Mr T Hopkins welcomed everyone to the meeting where the council accepted apologies received from

Parish Councillors G Davis who was out of the area, and S Healy due to illness.

Borough Councillor D Clews had a Licensing Meeting, and PCSO Charley Payne had operational

commitments. There have been no expressions of interest for the Parish Councillor Vacancy.

**Item 2 – Recording of the meeting.**

The meeting was recorded on the Dictaphone provided by the Parish Council. The recording will be erased following the production of the draft minutes. There was no other recording of the meeting.

**Item 3 – Notice of Interest.**

Interests were declared by Councillors Forknall, Hopkins and Tither who are allotment holders in Ridge Lane. Given that only five councillors were present at the meeting, the Parish Clerk in her capacity as legal officer to the Parish Council, declared that the council was not quorate for Item 9b. A formal decision on the issue could not be made at this stage without issuing a dispensation; however, given the financial nature of the agenda item, the Clerk could not recommend that such a path be taken. The advice was accepted and it was agreed to move the item to a future meeting before the end of the financial year.

**Item 4– Public Question Time.**

There were no members of the public present at this meeting.

**Item 5 – Police, County and Borough Councillor Feedback.**

There was no Police presence at the meeting. Future reports will be amalgamated with Hartshill Parish, rather than producing separate data.

**County Councillor feedback.**

Councillor Bell announced that Mr Graham Stanley (Warwickshire County Council Highways) would be attending the next scheduled Creating Opportunities meeting on 4th February, and will provide briefing notes as preparation for further discussion.

WCC has given the B4111 Nuneaton Road a Category Two listing, which is a road in need of action as a part of an accident reduction scheme. This will involve a degree of road resurfacing and the application of anti-skid surfacing material. Works are likely to take place around May to June of this year.

The design for the Ridge Lane / Monks Park Lane / Birchley Heath Road junction improvement scheme has been finalised and awaits feedback from both Councillor Bell and the Parish Council. Further details are to follow.

With regard to the proposed installation of a Puffin Crossing, on Nuneaton Road in the area of the Parish Church, a feasibility scheme has now been designed. The precise location of the crossing has yet to be determined by the County Council.

Lamp post columns for the Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS), in Mancetter, have been identified and agreed. A final quotation from Westcotec, for the price of each column, is awaited, but it has been confirmed that a likely charge to the Parish Council of £75.00 will be levied on each occasion the sign is relocated.

Councillor Bell has been informed that a plan for the positioning of the Village Gateway signs, both for Mancetter and Ridge Lane, has yet to be approved by WCC; however, Councillor Bell believes that this issue had been agreed previously. Councillor Hopkins informed councillors that the current position of the village sign for Ridge Lane does not comply with the latest regulations and the sign will need to be moved as a consequence.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Tither, relating to the final designs of the village signs, Councillor Hopkins declared that a meeting will be held with the design team (Nuneaton Signs) before the end of the current financial year. The design for the Ridge Lane sign has been finalised, whilst more feedback is awaited from the Mancetter community regarding the Mancetter sign. The Chairman also confirmed that the gateway sign, at present located in Harper’s Lane, will be repositioned on the Parish boundary line in Manor Road.

Councillor Bell noted the parish council request for action to be taken on the muddy public footpath outside a property on Nuneaton Road, created by moving soil from builders’ bags placed on the highway. The Locality Officer from WCC investigated the issue and met with the owner of the building material, who gave an assurance that the obstruction would be removed. Councillor Bell confirmed that the owner had complied with the request, and that the footpath had been cleaned; however, it was also noted that some damage had been caused to the verge area. An assurance was given by the owner that the verge would be restored as soon as weather conditions allowed.

 Councillor Bell reported that the main point of discussion, at present, is the issue of local government reform and the implications for County Council Elections, scheduled for May 2025. At the time of this meeting no decision had been made public whether or not the elections will be held this year, or postponed until 2026. Councillor Barnett (NWBC) stated that a meeting to discuss the issue, involving the Secretary of State, was scheduled for 30th January, 2025, whilst Councillor Bell added that were the elections to be postponed ‘certain legal matters and procedures’ would need to be investigated. Councillor Bell explained that if Warwickshire County Council’s bid for Unitary status was placed by National Government within the first tranche the County election would be postponed, but if the County bid fails, plans will still need to be formulated for the establishment of Unitary status by March.As yet there is little agreement across the county [County and Town and Borough Councils] for how the Unitary Authority would be established, with feelings and opinions crossing [political]party lines. Councillor Bell explained that the establishment of a Unitary Authority could happen in a variety of ways, but the costs involved in reorganisation at County level are likely to be high. A figure quoted at County level of some £20,000,000 might prove to be an underestimate, and given the financial challenges at present faced by both WCC and local councils alike, such a figure is far from insignificant.

Some claims that the move to a Unitary Authority could make savings of between £20 and even £80 million were challenged and much is likely to depend upon the what level of local representation is wanted. Councillor Blackburn expressed concern that local decision making could be lost and expressed the feeling that WCC is already unfamiliar with the north of the county. Furthermore, the possibility of a future Warwick based Unitary Authority seeking to unite with the already established West Midlands Combined Authority was a matter for concern. The position of Coventry, surrounding towns and parish councils, and the roles to be played by each was also raised. Councillor Bell added that such points have been subject to discussion elsewhere, but much uncertainty surrounds the issue at present.

Councillor Tither asked if the move to a Unitary system would result in increased responsibilities for Parish Councils. There has been some movement away from this idea, which was raised some two years ago when a Unitary Authority was first mooted at County level. The idea was seen as being unworkable. Councillor Bell suggested that even under the Unitary system it was likely that the county would still need five ‘district councils’ if people were to be represented fairly, if various different services were to be organised effectively, and if council tax rates could be realigned appropriately.

Possible advantages and disadvantages of the Unitary Authority system were explored amongst which reference was made to the experience of other local authorities where the system had been adopted.

Councillor Hopkins raised the issue of nuisance caused by groups of people riding motorcycles and quad bikes in a dangerous and anti-social manner, largely in the Baddesley – Baxterley area extending across Mancetter parish towards Arley. Given the concern and unrest about such activities amongst local residents a request was made that Councillor Bell should raise the issue with the County Police and Crime Commissioner as soon as possible.

Following reports in the local press regarding Councillor Bell’s attendance at a meeting to discuss developments along the A5 (with a particular mention of effects on the Woodford Lane Junction) Councillor Mann enquired about reported possible plans for the building of up to two thousand houses on the Leicestershire side of this A5 junction. It was understood that this area is outside the bounds of Mancetter Parish, but that any such development would have consequences for residents within the parish. Councillor Bell was able to confirm that she was aware of plans, but could add no further details other than that reported in the press. Mention of further proposed developments along the A5 included the siting of a new Rail Parkway Station, at a point between Nuneaton and Hinckley, possibly where the railway crosses the A5 beyond Sketchley Island.

**Borough Councillor Feedback**

Councillor Barnett informed the meeting that NWBC had received a planning application relating to the traveller site at Kirby Glebe, but little detail could be provided at this stage other than the Borough’s planning board were discussing the enforcement of planning issues for this site. Concerns about anti-social activities in the area of the site (examples being stone throwing at vehicles crossing the Clock Bridge and suspected misuse of the electricity supply system) were discussed briefly.

Councillor Bell departed the meeting at this point, having been thanked for providing such extensive feedback.

**Item 6– Minutes of the last meeting.**

Acceptance of the draft minutes from the 26th November 2024 was proposed by Councillor Blackburn seconded by Councillor Tither, and agreed unanimously as a true record of proceedings.

A copy of the minutes was officially signed by the Chairman, and will be available as usual on the parish council website.

**Item 7 – Devolution plans for Warwickshire.**

This item was covered extensively within the County Council Feedback.

**Item 8 – Consideration of options for a review of the Mancetter Parish Neighbourhood Plan**

Councillor Hopkins (Chairman) reported that an informal meeting had taken place with local resident Mr Ian Ritchie, who has offered to assist the council with work to review the existing Parish Neighbourhood Plan [PNP]. Any work will be offered on a voluntary basis. Mr Ritchie who, together with playing an active part in local opposition to the proposed chicken broiler application in recent times, is well qualified to undertake such work, as a recently retired long standing Chartered Architect, with experience as Chairman of the Tamworth Conservation Area Advisory Committee.

**Item 9 – Finance**

1. All payments made have been issued for formal signing in accordance with the financial regulations of the council.
2. This item was deferred to a future meeting, due to the lack of a Quorum.
3. The Clerk drew to attention of councillors the publication of The Good Councillors Finance Guide, (2025) which, the Clerk explained, draws together all that is required from a financial point of view for the operation of the council. The publication is a result of planned changes for future audits and devolution, which may increase the financial decisions to be taken by Parish Councils.

Councillor Barnett took his leave at this point.

1. The Chairman invited councillors to consider plans to lay a foundation for the appointment and training of a future Parish Clerk in the longer term. The issue of extending (and financing) the hours worked by the current Clerk, in light of an ever-increasing workload, was discussed as part of the November 2024, meeting; however, as the matter was not proposed and seconded formally at that stage the issue could not be enacted upon. The Chairman called for this to be rectified now and that the proposal for the Clerk to work up to 25 hours per week should come into effect from February 1st 2025. The motion was proposed by Councillor Blackburn, seconded by Councillor Tither, and approved unanimously.

Councillor Hopkins (Chairman) called for the establishment of a financial reserve to enable the Parish Council to structure a new Clerk Training Programme.

The Clerk announced that the sum of £10,000 had been added to the proposed budget to enable the council to proceed with the proposal should the council wish to open a recruitment programme. The Clerk explained that Devolution is very likely to increase further the workload of the Clerk(s), and with the finance necessary to be placed in the budget the Parish Council will have the option in future to decide what course of action should be taken. Councillor Hopkins stated that this approach would protect parish taxpayers against a sudden large increase in costs being imposed at a later date, and as a result recommended that Councillors approve the addition to the budget.

1. Councillors were in receipt of a breakdown showing the proposed budget figures for the year 2025-2026, as prepared by the Clerk. A sum of £500 allocated to the Neighbourhood Plan rolling reserve, to add to the sum of £1000 set aside in the 2024-2025 budget, was discussed. The Neighbourhood Plan would be open to public consultation when the draft is published before final submission to NWBC. Costs of room hire, printing etc. would be incurred in the process, and although the current Plan is not set to expire until 2029 the rolling reserve to meet future costs needs to be built-up. Monies were being put aside as designated funds, but these could be reallocated to another budget at a future date if they are not required for the original purpose. **It was proposed by Councillor Blackburn, seconded by Councillor Mann and resolved unanimously to approve the budget for the year 2025 to 2026.**
2. Details showing a range of potential precept options had been prepared by the Parish Clerk, who then provided councillors with a breakdown of what the likely chosen increase agreed at the meeting would realise percentage wise. Options ranged from a rise of 2% based roughly on the current inflation rate, through to 5% and a higher level at 10%. Councillors were advised to consider the budget figures, what expenditure the Parish Council was proposing to commit to, the amount held in the Council’s current account, and what might be raised as income all of which would lead to the determination of the precept.

Directing councillors to the latest edition of the Finance Guide for Parish Councils the Clerk explained how the guide advised councillors to maintain three to twelve months’ operating costs at all times to prevent councils falling into financial difficulties. Operating costs for Mancetter Parish Council were given as being around forty to fifty thousand pounds per annum and once the necessary reserves were accounted for, setting a precept that could meet such costs and commitments as outlined above, whilst taking the greatest care to protect parishioners as far as possible from further increased costs it was clear to councillors that, after the pros and cons of the lower and higher figures were debated:

**Option B to increase the precept figure for 2025-2026 to £37,000, giving a percentage increase for band D in precept value of 8.03%. The motion to accept this figure was proposed by Councillor Tither, seconded by Councillor Forknall and passed unanimously.**

**Item 10 – Recent Correspondence, Consultations and Meetings involving the Parish Council.**

a) Correspondence was noted, and the clerk checked that the system for emails was accessible for all councillors.

b) The list of Parish Council meeting dates proposed for the new financial year were approved.

 It was noted that the meeting to be held on 29th April (the Official Annual Meeting for Residents) would take place in Mancetter whilst the similar, but informal meeting for 17th September would be held at the Ridge Lane Chapel and Community Hall.

c) Councillor Tither reported that a date for a meeting with NWBC, in relation to the recreation ground at Ridge Lane, had not been forthcoming from the Borough Council. He explained that the process had been delayed as the Council needed to add two other recreation grounds, alongside that in Ridge Lane, before the it could offer a full tender for works to be undertaken. The issue, it was hoped, should be resolved by July of this year.

d) Following a meeting with Andy Timmins, the Parish Clerk presented leaflets, adhesive labels and signage for lamp posts which have been produced for distribution in the campaign against dog fouling. The resources are to be divided between Mancetter and Ridge Lane, where locations for the signage have been identified.

e) Feedback from the Town and Parish Council Reference Group was recorded in the briefing notes for the meeting and councillors were pointed toward the English Devolution White Paper, accessible as a pdf through the Internet.

f) The Clerk informed councillors that the artwork for the new village signs was awaiting final approval following a planned meeting between Mr Phipps of Nuneaton Signs and the architect.

The design for Ridge Lane has already met with approval whilst that for Mancetter awaits final approval. Locations for the signs have been agreed. Installation is to be undertaken by Nuneaton Signs, who will invoice the County Council for the work done.

**Item 11 Planning Matters and New Applications since the previous meeting.**

1. **Planning Matters**

**Update on approved and pending applications**

 PAP/2023/0492 Railway Cottage, Quarry Lane and PAP/2024/0465 32 The Spinney, Mancetter, received approval notices.

 Seven applications remain pending (PAP/2023/0324 White Hart, Ridge Lane, PAP/2024/0113 Coachman’s Cottage Purley Chase Lane, PAP/2024/0209 Brooklands, PAP/2024/0526 Ardenhurst, PAP/2024/0154 and PAP/2024/0160 Greenacres, all of Nuneaton Road, and the County Council Minerals Application NWB/24CM013 Mancetter Quarry.

**b)New Planning Applications**

The Chair drew the attention of fellow councillors to the notes provided on the agenda regarding the new planning applications listed below:

* PAP/2024/0186 Kirby Glebe Farm, Atherstone Road, Hartshill – Change of use to land 150 metres south of Kirby Glebe to accommodate four Traveller pitches.
* PAP/2024/0588 Crown Stables, Nuneaton Road – Prior approval for proposed conversion of agricultural barn into one bungalow.
* PAP/2024/0590 Crown Stables, Nuneaton Road – Proposed conversion of former stables into two bungalows.

**Item 12 Date of Next Meeting:**

Tuesday 25th March, 2025

7.00pm Schoolroom, St. Peter’s Church

As no further issues were raised the meeting closed at 9.00pm.



Manduessedum - Mancetter Village

 (Place of War Chariots) **M**ancetter **P**arish **C**ouncil Serving the People of Mancetter and Ridge Lane