

## MANCETTER PARISH COUNCIL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2018

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This year the Parish Council have decided to separate the Annual Parish Meeting for Mancetter from the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

The decision to do this has been taken to allow all those attending to spend more time to talk and interact so that the Parish continues to gain in strength as a community and not have to be conscious that everyone has to be herded out for the second meeting to take place.

I can report that it has been necessary for the Parish Council to raise the Precept for the coming year so that it might maintain the quality of service to the Parish that the electorate expect.

Much of the rise has been because of the total withdrawal of the Government Transition Grant. In the final year of this Grant NWBC decided to retain the whole amount available to bolster their own funds rather than apportion an amount to Parish and Town Councils.

The core team that keep the Parish running remains unchanged, and without unequalled help and support there would be a rapid decline in standards and the brilliant service offered.

Karen Meads remains our Clerk and Proper Officer but by the end of the financial year will relinquish more of her work commitments to Elane Higgins our Assistant Clerk who will eventually take over the full role. This has been a long- term plan to maintain the stability of the Council Administration, as without properly qualified and dedicated Clerks a Parish such as ours cannot operate properly and effectively.

The role of Parish Clerks has changed radically in the last few years and is a very demanding role. It is not simply recording a few meeting minutes and adding together a few sums.

Rob Drakeford and Barry Stevenson remain the Contractors and the power behind the immaculate Graveyard, Cemetery, The Green and the Allotment Roadway.

Martin Bryner has continued to be our Volunteer Footpaths Officer and has submitted a report of general conditions. We still employ the same Contractor to carry out any essential clearance work over and above any County Support. I would like to thank Tarmac for their supportive funding towards this work.

Many thanks also go to the team of Parish Councillors who have attended training courses and events. I again thank John Arrowsmith for his Rights of Way expertise and Parish Website updating.

At the same time, I report two sad events this year. Firstly, Tony Benham retired from the Parish Council because of family illness and then Bob Twining sadly passed away after being admitted to hospital suffering from side effects of his extended illness.

Our Borough and County Councillors have been very active in their support for this community.

There is still an active pressure group for substantial changes to take place along the A5 Corridor. To this end there was a parliamentary debate and I am sure that everyone here will rush to read the eleven- page report! Like all important issues, that is to us, the debate ran out of time and I will never know if Boudicca's chariot suffered a flat tyre which in turn led to her defeat!

It is now time for me to have a little bit of a moan about other levels of governing and service that we as a Parish interact with. I will hasten to add these are my personal observations.

NWBC are generally the good guy and are supportive with the majority of their services. Of particular note the Street Scape team who have been prompt in clearing reported fly tipping in the Parish. They could have given greater support with the troubles caused by Contractor Vehicles working on the Cadman development in Mancetter. They were given early warning of potential issues after similar problems with the Laurel development. To this end the Parish Council raised the issue with NWBC at the joint meeting of Town and Parish Councils in January. Hopefully the building work likely to take place in Ridge Lane will not suffer with the same problems. Third time lucky for complaints.

Warwickshire County Council appear to be failing the Parish on a number of counts.

I will hasten to add that our County Councillor Margaret Bell is equally as frustrated at levels of co-operation and support.

It is about 3 years since a growth of Japanese Knotweed was reported in Ridge Lane and it still is not treated. Road repairs that have been carried out are to a poor standard. A Parishioner recently reported to me that contractors had sat for two hours in their vehicles without working. Road patching is shoddily done and has little long- term value. The County should be challenging the quality of work carried out. Roadside grips are not cleared which allows water to puddle and leads to road edge cracking. The greatest challenge has been to make certain that the Travellers Site Liaison Group remains active to avert problems. This is a very costly site in terms of public expenditure and as yet I cannot see it being cost effective without other district councils in the County having similar sites. I was disturbed to hear a very active and supportive County Councillor state in a recent meeting that he had no knowledge of the County Charter which is the document by which the different levels of local government should interact with each other. So much for democratic debate and agreement on issues.

I am disgusted at the Canal and Rivers Authority attitude to the bridge conditions in Quarry Lane. Since 1998 has raised concerns about the structure. The brickwork has steadily fallen into disrepair to the point that it is almost at road level at one side and is still declared safe. It is an eyesore at the very least and as part of the canal heritage needs to be properly restored.

Laurel Gardens gives cause for concern. It has become evident that as part of our contribution to the Emergency Plan for Warwickshire little is known about safety procedures at the site. At least two residents have been found wandering and have been in some personal danger. It is hoped that a meeting will allay these concerns and proper protocols can be put in place to deal with situations.

Since Area Forums have been abandoned it is difficult to keep a working relationship with the police. It was pleasing to have a police attendance at the last Parish Council meeting of this year.

After a moan, now the sugar sweetener.

Our Parish Neighbourhood Plan has been formally adopted. It is a document that cannot be ignored and hopefully will give the Parish some level of consultation and protection in the future. So, what of the status that this Parish Council has attained and brought about over the last few years.

We have trained Clerks in post with a proper pension structure in place.

We attained Quality Status at Foundation Level and are in a strong position to progress this further.

For the first time a Parish Office has been established and we communicate through our own website and reports in the local magazine. We have a Neighbourhood Plan. We keep a Parish Archive and would be happy to add to it.

We will keep progressing as we do not hold with the "Vicar of Dibley" concept of a Parish Council.

The group of willing volunteers who employ contractors at a local level who all take pride in the Parish are what brings about the positive rather than the negative points.

We aim to keep such attitudes and standards for the future for as long as our Parishioners allow us to, as we answer to the Parish.

We need new Councillors to join us to continue with the positives.

2019 is the year to elect a full council and in between we need to co-opt the support of two more Councillors to help us fulfil our work within the community.

This ends my report for 2017-2018.

Trevor Hopkins

Chairman of Mancetter Parish Council.