

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2015-2016

WELCOME

I would like to present my report as Chairman of the Parish Council of Mancetter for the year 2015-2016.

As this has been a year of such controversy and change I am setting aside the format that I have used in the past so as to reflect the issues that Mancetter Parish Council has had to meet.

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, despite the continued pressures imposed by 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 and Proper Officer will explain this in her report together with an explanation of our financial status.

All Allotments at the Ridge Lane site were eventually let and the council is eager to add names to a waiting list so that full tenancy can be achieved in future years.

I would like to thank our Contractors for the excellent service they give to the Parish and the very high standards they have achieved.

I am pleased the number of Groups within the Parish that take part in activities has increased and joined those already well established.

The "re-birth" of the Memorial Hall has made a great contribution to community activity which must continue to grow and it is thanks to the Trustees of the Hall for their efforts and the positive input of Elane Higgins.

The Community Room and Chapel at Ridge Lane has also seen increased activity with a tea and toast drop in and a keep fit group starting up this year.

Functions and Meetings that have been attended by Members of the Parish Council during the Past Year include:

- Area Forum East Meetings
- Warwickshire Association of Local Parish Council Meetings
- Annual Meeting of Parish Councils with NWBC
- Quarry Liaison Group Meetings
- Sarval Liaison Group Meetings
- The North Warwickshire Area Committee of Parish Councils
- Mancetter Tenant Group Meetings
- WALC Training day events
- CSW Emergency Volunteer Group Meetings

- Neighbourhood Plan Group Meetings
- Neighbourhood Watch Meetings
- Action Group Meetings concerning Planning Issues
- Joint Meetings between Atherstone, Mancetter and Witherley linked to Highways England and the A5 Corridor and its associated problems

The Parish 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 Agenda.

Now to the year of all years and the controversy and change.

The greatest issues relate to planning. The Broiler House application reappeared in a new challenge which most probably has distance to go in the form of an Inspector reviewing the NWBC Planning Committee decision to refuse the application.

The Quarry has started its extensive work to extract the last of the diorite stone and to alter the final landscape profiles when final restoration takes place. The quarry is now to be operated by the new Tarmac Company.

Meetings with Highways England alongside Atherstone and Witherley Councils have brought about change along our section of the A5 Corridor. Woodford Lane Junction and Mancetter Island plus Witherley access points have had improvements carried out.

Although not completely satisfactory, it is progress and Highways England now recognises that further change is needed but funding is not yet approved or even found.

The action of Warwickshire County Council in consenting to its own application for a Travellers Transit Site on the former landfill site in Oldbury Road on our actual Parish Boundary has brought about great comment and action from the three parishes of Mancetter, Ansley and Hartshill to challenge the way in which the application has been dealt with. A trio of Parishioners one from each of the three parishes, have funded an application for Judicial Review which has been placed before a Judge for consideration. It is to be noted that NWBC are also opposed to this consent and have at a Full Council Meeting issued a challenge to the County Council. We await the outcome of these actions.

All of this activity has gone on alongside the usual and various planning applications and it has involved a great deal of time.

The advent of the Broiler House at long last has triggered the opportunity to start the Mancetter Neighbourhood Plan which encompasses the whole of the Parish Area.

This process could not be afforded by existing finance within the Parish and so two Grants have been successfully applied for. This has put considerable pressure on our Clerk to complete the extensive application forms which are ongoing with the different stages of Plan Construction and Consultation Process.

A Professional Consultant, Mr Clive Keeble, has been appointed to guide the Parish through the extensive process, and as Parishioners people should already be aware that two consultation questionnaires have been distributed. It is hoped that a Draft Plan will be available in early summer 2016.

The Plan must succeed and I ask that all Parishioners take part in the referendum next year. A Neighbourhood Plan helps the Parish to have a greater say in Planning Issues, and after this year that should be sufficient incentive for all to take part.

During this year the Parish has also seen its largest building taking shape which has changed Mancetter's skyline – The Extra Care Complex.

What of the Changes?

It became apparent during all of this planning turmoil and the continued extra load and commitments placed on the Parish Council that other change was needed.

To this end the following changes have been made after great consideration and debate.

The Parish Website has been reviewed and upgraded to reflect the need for complete transparency. A special thanks is due to John Arrowsmith who re-joined the Parish Council this year, who has carried out this demanding work with the support of the Clerk.

An Assistant Parish Clerk Elane Higgins, has been appointed to help with the administration of the Parish so allowing the Clerk Karen Meads, to continue the financial operation of the Parish including the Neighbourhood Plan work.

For the first time in its history the Parish Council will have a formal office with posted opening times. This is to be based in Mancetter Memorial Hall. It is hoped that this will further enhance access to information for Parishioners.

Another landmark in the progress of Mancetter Parish Council has been the recognition that it has achieved Foundation Level Status under the Local Council Award Scheme.

This again allows the Parish to have greater access to information, funding and its future overall. It is hoped in the near future that Quality or Quality Gold Status can be achieved, but this will need even more activity from the Parish Councillors and not just the Clerks and Proper Officers.

It is during this year of change that I have realised what a both unique and beautiful Parish we have. The Parish has always embraced change, I don't think that any other Parish in the area has had over half of its area excavated. Consider that we have had the outcropping of coal, quarrying, landfill, canal and railway construction as well as major roads going through the Parish.

I give sincere thanks to our Parish Councillors, our Borough Councillors and County Councillor for helping the Parish progress through this year of change.

Chris Tooby is to leave the Parish Council in the coming year and I wish him success in his studies at university.

This does mean that there will be a vacancy in the coming year. Do we have a willing volunteer? because the Parish Council is a team of willing volunteers employing contractors at a local level who all 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 and expenses.

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.

My final thanks go to our Clerk and Proper Officer Karen, who has carried an unbelievable burden this year. I thank Elane for agreeing to join the team and to take on her training programme to qualify as a CILCA Clerk. Wage negotiations and final agreements are yet to be completed, but I am sure this will happen in the coming year.

This ends my report for 2015 -2016.

Trevor Hopkins

Chair of Mancetter Parish Council

24th May 2016.