

MANCETTER PARISH COUNCIL – ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2019  
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is the second year that the Parish Council have decided to separate the Annual Parish Meeting from the Annual Parish Council Meeting.

It is felt that this allows all those attending to spend more time to talk and interact so that the Parish continues to evolve as an expanding community with a strong element of unity.

I can report that it has been necessary for the Parish Council to raise the Precept by 2.8% for the coming year so that it might maintain the quality of service to the Parish that the electorate expect.

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.

At the time of writing, the Council are at the point of changing roles for the clerical staff. Elane Higgins, having completed her CiLCA qualification will take over the full role from Assistant to Clerk and Proper Officer. 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.

Talking of dedication, Karen Meads has served as an outstanding Clerk and Proper Officer, and has assisted the Council through many of the changes which have happened over the past few years. Karen will remain in post for a short time, until she escapes the clutches of the Parish Council in June. At least Karen thought that she was retiring! I have managed to convince Karen to serve as Locum Clerk to cover holiday leave. This will allow right and proper functions of the Cemetery. I hope Karen that you will always remain a friend to the Council and in particular to me. I know that you have a very busy role in other spheres.

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

Martin Bryner has continued to be a Volunteer Footpaths Officer and has submitted a report of general condition.

Our greatest concern at the moment is that Way Markers seem to vanish. – It is walkers doing their journey along our cared for ways who like these as souvenirs!

This year our contractor for the Right of Way Clearance has retired and the Council are in the process of introducing a local man to the role, after he submitted a successful bid to the March meeting.

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. During the year two new Councillors were co-opted to serve on the Council and Peter and Paul have already made a real contribution to the functioning of the Council.

I again thank John Arrowsmith for his Rights of Way expertise and the Parish Website updating.

During the coming year it is hoped that a new contract be made to revise and update the Council website with ultimate command being passed to the Clerk.

Our Borough and County Councillors have been very active in their support for this community. I know that Martin Davis is to retire from public life and at this point I would like to make particular comment on his contribution.

At long last there is a glimmer of hope for the re development of the A5 corridor. The trouble is that, although now at the top of the list for change, it can easily move to the bottom of the pile because change proves too costly or difficult. Remember the time taken to change the Red Gate junction?

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 happen to add that 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.

The Joint meeting of Town and Parish Councils with NWBC has been moved to a date believed to be in June.

Planning enforcement is a difficult area to deal with at the moment.

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

I have always commented that there are two County areas the SOUTH and the NORTH. I hasten to add that our County Councillor, Margaret Bell is equally as frustrated at levels of co-operation and support.

The Japanese Knotweed in Ridge Lane has finally been given some treatment and it is hoped that any regrowth is dealt with promptly.

Road conditions in Ridge Lane are appalling and inadequate patching readily breaks up. Roadside grids are not cleared, which leads to water resting at the road edge and cracking the edges.

Despite tragic road accidents there seems little change in attitude from the County to bring about changes to road layouts in Mancetter because of costs, and yet I have witnessed significant calming measures in other areas of the County.

The Canal and River Trust has spent considerable money on changing logos but still sees fit to leave the Quarry Lane canal bridge in a state of disrepair. "Temporary" fencing was put in place some 15 months ago and the bridge has still not been repaired. This is a serious safety issue for people accessing the tow path.

It is to be noted that the quarry has inspected the steel bridge, which is in their ownership, have declared it unfit for use in the near future and are costing its replacement with a new footway. It is time the Canal and River Trust followed such an example.

The Police are seriously under staffed in this area and constant changes do nothing to promote confidence in the service. This is not a criticism of the officers but the way in which those officers are deployed by the management. Nuisance from minors, traffic speed, ignoring weight limits for HGVs, drugs are all issues which cannot be effectively dealt with without officers in the area. To have some emergency responses dealt with by Rugby is unacceptable!

This Parish Council asked the Police Commissioner about Officer deployment in the area but the resulting response was somewhat misleading and very dismissive. It is time that the Commissioner visited the area. I note that the vast majority of his diary entries relate to the south of the County. The Northern area is seriously ignored. That ends the moans – now the positives!

Our Parish Plan has served as the only element to prevent the immediate demolition of Wathen Grange School and it is hoped that sense will prevail and the structure remain. The Remembrance of World War One by the Parish was one of the most memorable events of the year.

The floral displays still remain in place in both communities and it is hoped that before they are dismantled, they will be reused to commemorate D-Day – perhaps D -DAY 75 YEARS being the replacement.

It is, of course the year for Parish Council elections and it is hoped that in May a strong Parish Council will remain in place.

The Council has always had a policy of being non political and being a group to promote and serve.

As a Council, long-term planning has brought about stability and progress to provide value for money and development of the community of the Parish.

The Parish Councillors are unpaid, which is a little different to other levels of Governance. To this end I believe that Parish Councillors are a special being who often bear the sharp end of criticism but always try their best, often without recognition.

Progress is made in very small steps but always towards positive outcomes.