



## REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE PARISH COUNCIL 23/24: -



The Parish Council have continued to meet regularly over the last twelve months. At the 2023 AGM, Nicola Gribble was elected as Chair, and Martin Warwick as Vice Chair. The Parish Council did co-opt Darren Rayner recently which now means the Council have representation from all three areas off Norse Road alongside existing serving Councillors which means Salph End, Church End, Green End and Water End are all represented currently on the Parish Council. The serving Parish Councillors for 2023/4 were: Warwick, Dean, Brunsdon, Roberts, Cardinale, Gribble, and Rayner, with there being two vacancies at present.

2023/24 continued to be another busy and productive time for the Parish Council, with a range of important village matters being dealt with. It has remained challenging without a full complement of Councillors, so again the Parish Council has been working at a reduced capacity and would like to reiterate that anyone who is interested in joining the Council or finding out more please do get in touch.

Renhold Parish Council continues to work hard on behalf of residents, with attention to detail given to planning matters looking at a range of different domestic applications at every meeting. The Parish Council have remained determined to stay engaged in the important public consultations surrounding key items, which have continued again to be an enormous focus at meetings given the significance of the proposals on the Renhold community.

One of these items was the Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2040 planning strategy framework document, which saw the significant area allocated within the village for employment. The site known as EMP6 – Business Park, Land at Water End and St Neots Road. The Renhold community alongside the Parish Council made robust objections throughout the public consultations, this was continued during the Local Plan public hearing sessions which ran from June through to September. Councillor Gribble and the Clerk attended, sharing concerns with the Inspector on behalf of residents. The Inspector found the Local Plan document unsound in November, which was a welcome outcome.

Like the Local Plan process, the planned East West rail route, has meant enormous amounts of volunteer and the Parish Clerk's time needing to be focused on ensuring wherever possible the Parish Council remained up to date on all the latest developments around such a significant infrastructure project. Attendance and engagement has continued with Council representatives at the local Stakeholders Group, BFARE events, along with regular dialogue with Richard Fuller MP, have all been pursued and the Parish Council are most grateful to those Renhold residents who have supported with this. The East West Rail process has been frustrating with timeframes every changing, with at the time of writing now a general election having called the expected consultation has been placed on hold.

On every meeting agenda the Parish Council make sure they engage in the range of residential planning applications received - this last twelve months has seen around 40 (down on last year) applications reviewed, with the Parish Council carefully considering each application individually with, where appropriate, objections being made, usually with concerns such as over development or impact on street scene. Where possible the Council take the opportunity to carry out an in person site visit so feedback can be given from a Councillor(s) to help the Council have a better understanding of the proposed changes and to aid the discussion.

Again, Renhold Parish Council have a pro-active approach, so not just applications where the Parish Council is a statutory consultee are considered, but also the Parish Council engage in permitted development and prior notification certificate applications to reiterate the importance of key local features relating to street scene are taken into account by the determining Officer. Planning appeals have also been engaged with to show that the Parish Council remain committed throughout the entire planning process to ensure the local perspective remains represented.

Planning enforcement is also an area that is important to Renhold Parish Council, with items being reported where necessary to the local authority, to ensure there is consistency with the local and national planning policies being applied. Residents who contact the Council worried about a local issue, are signposted on how to engage in this area if they have a concern with an item.

Again this year the Parish Council have been very grateful to those who have give their time to support the development of Renhold Neighbourhood Plan. The Working Group is a very valuable asset where a number of dedicated residents are kindly working hard on collating a Plan document which sets out the clear objectives for the local community. The Parish Council wish to thank all those who continue to support and engage in this important planning strategy document for Renhold.

Parish Councillors all kindly volunteer their time, to support improvements, and make sure Renhold's voice is heard across a range of different ways. This is done with representation at Bedford Borough Council led events, so in addition to planning and development, this has meant Renhold Councillors have engaged with: Town and Parish Council Network meetings, meetings with Richard Fuller MP, CPRE training event, Bedfordshire Association Town and Parish Council training events, meetings with Borough Council Officers on local projects in the parish, bus service operator, Borough Council Portfolio Holders, Aspire walk round plus liaison with Orbit homes, website development, village asset inspections, and when opportunities arise, engaging with Bedfordshire local community Police team and Police Crime Commissioner on a range of local matters.

Renhold is fortunate to have so many dedicated individuals who share their ideas on parish improvements, act as critical friends when needed, and enable democratic decisions to be made. With there continuing to be a good level of residents attending Parish Council meetings and engaging in the Open Forum, which is always encouraged and everyone is welcomed.

The Parish Council have continued with raising the profile of Renhold, whether it is securing safer highways for road users through to having more effective communications with residents. Renhold Parish Council does not stand still.

The Council have remained prudent with the precept calculations over the last few years, looking to maintain a low per household contribution, yet also being mindful of moving forwards with village improvements.

The following are just some of the recent achievements:

- Donations made to the British Legion for Remembrance Day, Dday, along with support for the village to mark this important occasion
- Village grass cutting
- Jubilee village event financially supported
- Engaged in the village Christmas tree festival
- Various village asset maintenance and repairs as required

- Financial contributions to support Renhold Magazine, Renhold Churchyard maintenance, Renhold Neighbourhood Plan Working Group
- Publicly accessible community noticeboards throughout the parish
- Funding of the Parish Council website development to improve accessibility of information
- Invoked the general power of competence
- Financial commitment for enabling community safety camera installation to be pursued
- Financial commitment to increasing access to defibrillators in the parish
- Engaged on proposed woodland creation in the parish, Village Hall Trustees engagement

Do remember the Parish Council have a formal application process for organisations requesting financial assistance which is available to anyone wishing to apply for help.

The Parish Council are continually striving to ensure Renhold remains a village with a rural feel, reporting highway issues and maintenance needs within the village as and when they arise, and supporting suitable planting schemes as well. The logging of these issues often take time to be followed up: Borough Councillors, Parish Councillors and the Clerk, remain persistent. There have also been regular communications and on-site meetings with various Borough Council Officers to highlight the local issues. Whilst Bedford Borough Council are the local highways authority, the Parish Council remain focused on improving highways safety so dialogue is frequent with Officers as well as the local Police.

The Council receives updates from the Police and works with them in efforts to reduce crime and traffic speeds in Renhold. This is an endless task but there have been several successes and positive outcomes over the year through collaborative working. This passion in Renhold to improve highways safety and to slow vehicle speeds down extends past the Parish Council to the many volunteers who kindly give their time with Community Speedwatch. Thanks to all those involved with the various activities that support many different initiatives to raise awareness of the speeding issues experienced, from downloading the Speed Indicator Device data to standing on the roadside.

The Council has continued to engage with the Ward Councillor Nicola Gribble who has supported the Parish Council with having its voice heard.

As the Parish Council look forward to another busy year supporting residents throughout the parish, please remember if you are interested in joining the Parish Council it is great time to come forwards.