

RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL

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RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL **Democracy and Citizenship**

Renhold Parish Council has produced this document to show examples of how it achieves promoting democracy and citizenship within the parish.

Definition

Democracy – ‘government by the people; a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system’.

Citizenship – ‘citizenship is a term generally used in one of two ways. In strictly legal terms it refers to a person’s membership of a state or nation, and the legal rights and responsibilities that this brings. In a wider sense it describes the process through which individuals engage and participate in society and how they exercise their rights and responsibilities’.

An outline of the Council’s commitment

All of the Councillors and the Clerk share responsibility for promoting democracy and citizenship within Renhold, bring their ideas, thoughts and suggestions regularly to the Parish Council meetings. During discussion on a wide range of varied topics the Council consider and think about innovative approaches to promote activities in the village which engage with local residents.

Examples of activities

The Parish Council use the monthly village newsletter to publicise the role of both the parish council and parish councillors in the local community, the newsletter is distributed to every household within the parish, is available in the village shop and is also sent to local stakeholders. In addition, the Council maximise the use of the parish website to provide a lot of information on Council activities which contains much material and Council documentation to show transparency of work and to encourage residents to be involved.

The Parish Council were very keen to ensure the recent local elections including the Parish Council election were well publicised throughout the village, this was done through all the relevant paperwork and statutory notices being displayed on all six of the notice boards within the village. The Council discussed the elections at their Parish Council meeting as an agenda item to further raise public awareness and clarify the process and procedures involved, which in turn was therefore recorded in the minutes of that meeting and so also available on the parish website. The Clerk attended parish election specific training run by the local authority Bedford Borough Council prior to the elections ensuring a good knowledge of understanding for when questions were raised or directed at the Clerk from either the Parish Council or members of the public enquiries. Information was placed in the village newsletter prior to the elections to inform residents of the process, encouraging those interested in coming forward and giving direction on the procedures involved.

The Council also ensure they promote activities through the Local Government Association’s ‘Local Democracy Campaign’, examples being the displaying of the posters promoting the recent local elections in the village notice boards. Also, when information is received this is relayed to both Councillors and members of the public during the ‘correspondence received’ agenda item at every Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Council are very proud that the residents of Renhold are actively involved, and regularly attend Parish Council meetings, attendance is between 5 and 54 members of the public at meetings. The Council achieve this by ensuring notices are continually displayed on all the six notice boards in the village detailing the date, time and venue of the next Parish Council meeting. In addition, the information about meetings is displayed continuously on the parish website including the whole schedule for the coming year, as well as being included in every article contained within the parish newsletter. Another method the Parish Council use is that the Clerk will regularly contact members of the public electronically who have expressed an interest in a local matter to inform them if at a

forthcoming meeting a topic they are interested in will be discussed and encourage them to raise awareness to their neighbours and friends in the village as well.

The Parish Council has also been very pro active over recent years in relation to highways issues in the village, which had been greatly affecting a number of residents throughout the village. The Parish Council liaised and ensured that the local authority took note of the resident's strong feelings on this subject. The Borough Council then finally took some action in recognising the need for a solution, in the form of a Traffic Regulation Order being proposed. A letter detailing the draft TRO and the Parish Council are proposed amended TRO was delivered to every property in Renhold, together with details on how to support the proposal. In some parts of the village this was followed by door-knocking to collect letters of support. The Parish Council also ensured the Village Hall was open for 7 hours on a Sunday to allow residents the opportunity to attend and speak to Parish Councillors and representatives of the village before signing letters and a petition. The result was in response, the Parish Council received 2 letters of objection, and standard support letters containing over 220 signatures. Jon Shortland the Bedfordshire County Highways Watchman commented that this demonstrated a very high level of support.