

# RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL

## ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14





This is the 4<sup>th</sup> report that Renhold Parish Council has prepared for delivery to every property in the Parish. It presents information on the Parish Council's activities during 2013 – 14 and shows how your money, in the form of the Parish Precept, has been spent. We hope you find it interesting, and welcome feedback on the content and format.

Ian Slater  
Chairman  
Renhold Parish Council

Front Cover  
Renhold War Memorial, as we remember the start of the Great War.

## **THE PARISH**

The Parish of Renhold encompasses the original village, essentially a collection of 'ends', and the 3 new estates off Norse Road – Cranbourne Gardens, Aspire and The Spires. Renhold Brook forms the Parish boundary with Bedford. For the Parish Council the village and the new estates present different issues, as reflected in this report.

## **THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The Parish Council comprises 9 Parish Councillors and the Clerk to the Parish Council. 5 Councillors are elected to represent the village ward and 2 each for the Cranbourne Gardens and Spires wards. The Clerk is a paid officer appointed by the Parish Council to keep the Parish Council's business in order.

The Parish Councillors were elected or co-opted in May 2011 and have remained unchanged until October 2013, when sadly Councillor Carl Bernard passed away. Councillors' details appear at the end of this report.

The Clerk is an on-going appointment. Mrs Lizzie Barnicoat has now been our Clerk for 5 years, during which time we have modernised and improved the way the Parish Council works. We hope you notice the improvements

In October 2011 Renhold Parish Council was awarded Quality Council status, in recognition of how it works, the processes it has in place, how it involves local residents, and many other matters. This is national recognition, and we now have to work to continually improve our standards in order to maintain this status.

## **How We Work**

The Parish Council met 8 times during 2013-14. Meetings are held in the Village Hall and residents are invited to contribute to all items on the agenda. There's a specific Open Forum item on each agenda when residents can raise matters they are concerned about for the Council to consider. Meetings start at 7.30pm, and we aim to finish by 9.00pm. Our Borough Council Ward Councillors, Carole Ellis and Stephen Moon, usually attend and bring us up-to-date on what the Borough Council is doing that impacts on the Parish: sadly Carole Ellis has been laid low by sickness and we have not seen her for some months.

To assist the Parish Council, committees are appointed, and their meetings are also open to residents. The Finance Committee met twice during 2013-14, and made recommendations to the Council in respect of matters such as the Parish Precept. The Highways Committee and Employment Working Group did not need to meet during the year, although Councillors met Grant Palmer to discuss bus services to the village. Councillors informally exchanged views on a few planning applications between Council meetings, the decisions then being endorsed by the Council at its next meeting.

Parish Councillors attend many other meetings as representatives of the Parish Council. These are principally with the Borough Council's Town and Parish Network, the Borough Assembly, the Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, and with our MP. There are also workshops and training sessions on being a Councillor and on the rapidly changing planning system, and meetings with Officers from the Borough Council and the Police – for example on traffic issues.

In Renhold, Parish Councillors are not paid for their work and Councillors have not claimed expenses either. The cost of the Clerk is determined in relation to national scales.

## **HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC**

Traffic issues have again dominated the Parish Council's agenda in 2013-14.

In the new estates the issues centre on on-going maintenance, including weed control, which in turn revolves around when roads, footways, open spaces and drains will be adopted and become the responsibility of the Borough Council. The Parish Council has supported local residents in endeavours to progress adoption and to provide maintenance by the house-builders in the meantime. Interestingly, roads and open spaces on the Aspire development will be retained and maintained in perpetuity by Orbit Homes.

In the village the issues relate essentially to the failure by the authorities to enforce measures already in place to address speeding, rat-running and overweight traffic, and the traffic issues associated with Renhold VC Lower School. A 7.5 tonne weight limit is supposed to protect Hookhams Lane from excessively heavy goods vehicles [HGVs]. The Traffic Regulation Order [TRO] is supposed to protect Church End to Water End from traffic using this route as a short-cut to the A421 bypass, and speed limits are supposed to protect residents throughout the village from speeding traffic.

The Parish Council, greatly assisted by Keith Herkes, has tried to progress action on these matters throughout the last year.

A number of Councillors and residents have now been trained as part of the Community Speed Watch initiative, and it is hoped we will become active in the summer of 2014, reinforcing the visible message that there is a speed limit of just 30mph throughout the village.

We have continued to report overweight lorries in Hookhams Lane to the Borough Council and understand that officers do contact the firms so identified to advise them of the restriction.

The TRO continues to be a problem. Although the Borough Council and Police have again used number plate recognition cameras few repeat offenders were identified and we have requested an early repeat of the cameras in 2014. An issue identified by some residents is that the TRO prevents residents of Wilden Road and Salph End from driving through their own village during the restricted period, which they consider to be unfair. The Parish Council tried to identify whether exemptions could be granted to local residents, but this is not possible. The TRO cannot be extended to the whole village, which would mean all residents lived within it and could therefore drive through, because this would block access from Bedford to Ravensden, Wilden and villages to the north of Renhold. While we continue to look for a solution, we are not confident that there is one. The Parish Council and residents fought hard to get a TRO to protect residents within it from excessive volumes of speeding traffic, and this requirement continues to exist.

In order to reinforce the speed limit message, in 2014 the Borough Council will install white 'gates' and / or 'dragons teeth' road markings at the Green End, Wilden Road and Ravensden Road village limits.

More significantly, in 2014 average speed cameras will be installed by the Borough Council and operated by the Police at Top End and Green End. The Parish Council has requested a second installation at either end of Ravensden Road, but at present funding for these has not been identified. Evidence elsewhere where average speed cameras have been installed is that motorists who cannot speed look for alternative routes, so the cameras have the potential to reduce both the numbers of vehicles and their speeds. Offenders will receive a fixed penalty ticket.

The Parish Council, with help from our Ward Councillors, has made a financial contribution to the average speed cameras, gates and dragons teeth.

The issue with traffic at Renhold Lower School centres on the volume of parking at the start and finish of the school day. This affects the whole of Church End, causing traffic congestion and greatly increased risk of accidents, and causing annoyance to residents whose drives may be obstructed. It also affects the punctuality of bus services when buses cannot get through the congestion. The school has staggered starting and finishing times to try to reduce the numbers of vehicles at any one time, but observation shows parents are slow to leave in the morning and start to park from 2.00pm onwards in the afternoon. The school is to have a 20mph speed limit, at an unspecified date, but this will merely slow traffic down and not restrict car parking. The Parish Council, with local residents, will keep trying to find a solution.

There are then the day-to-day issues of road and footpath repairs, which we report to the Borough Council, and the Parish Council identifies the priorities each year for inclusion in the Borough Council's annual programme.

The Parish Council will continue to give all of these issues its full attention in 2014 -15, but residents must understand that the Parish Council has no formal powers on highway matters and so cannot, itself, resolve them.

## **PLANNING**

The Parish Council is consulted by Bedford Borough Council on all planning applications in the parish and on all planning policy documents as they pass through their various stages. In 2013 -14 the Parish Council commented on 23 planning applications, ranging in scale from the Lafarge sand and gravel quarries and the Aspire estate to small domestic extensions, garages and garden fences.

Our views are not always accepted by the Borough, but most are. In addition to the Parish Council, the Borough Council consults with neighbours adjoining the proposed development, with its own technical



officers and with officers in local, regional and national bodies involved with the environment and conservation. The technical consultations carry more weight than locally expressed views and can mean that the Parish Council's comments are not reflected in the decision. 3 planning applications have raised particular concerns.

The Parish Council objected to the proposed wind turbine in Ravensden early in 2013, and there is still no decision over a year later.

The Parish Council objected to the proposal to convert The Three Horseshoes to a dwelling and construct 2 additional dwellings in its grounds. The proposal would have meant the loss of one of the two public houses in the village, with especial implications for residents and for football teams playing at the playing field, and the application proposed to include the access to the playing field within the garden of one dwelling. The Borough Council refused the application, as did a Planning Inspector on appeal, and the applicant has now applied for permission to demolish the pub building. The Sports Club has proved they own the access, which is now removed from the site.

Orbit Homes are developing the Aspire estate, which includes a playing field and changing facilities. In order to develop more houses they have applied to Bedford Borough Council for planning permission to build houses on the land set aside for the playing field, and to build the playing field on the village side of the bridleway, in what the Parish Council considers to be open countryside and so setting a dangerous precedent. The Parish Council objected to this application and a decision is awaited from the Borough Council.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

Much of the work in relation to traffic and planning is principally directed to improving the Parish's environment. The Parish Council is responsible for cutting the grass verges, The Parish Council has

supported occasional litter picks, but during 2011-13 volunteers were signed up by the Borough Council as Street Champions for most roads in the village and some in the new estates, and they undertake regular litter picks that have greatly improved the Parish's environment.

## **FINANCE**

The Parish Council is funded by the Parish Precept – you may have seen it referred to on your Council Tax bill. In 2013-14 this was set at £17,000, the same level as the previous year, and this is split between the residential properties in the parish. As more houses are built off Norse Road, the amount required from each property in Renhold is reduced. As a responsible council the Parish Council has regard to future events when setting the precept, and is also accumulating savings to address requirements such as the average speed cameras. We provide grants to a number of local organisations. The budget is summarised at the end of this report. In 2013 - 14 the Parish Council's expenditure was within budget for all but one item, with an underspend overall, although an element of this was collected to be put into the reserves. For 2014 - 15 the Parish Precept has remained at £17,000.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

The Parish Council has continued to develop an e-mail circulation list to facilitate the speedy and economic circulation of information to residents. It has continued to express concern at the loss of our 'local bobby', and supported action by relevant authorities to deal with anti-social behaviour, especially on The Spires.

There are reports each month in the Village Magazine on the Parish Council's activities, and you can always attend a meeting if something in particular interests you.

## **RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL**

### **CLERK**

Mrs Lizzie Barnicoat, 30 King William Close, Kempston, MK42 7BA,  
Tel 01234 841835, E-Mail [lizzie\\_barnicoat@hotmail.com](mailto:lizzie_barnicoat@hotmail.com)

### **COUNCILLORS**

Stuart Andrews [Vice Chairman]      01234 341246

Carl Bernard – died October 2013

Susan Brunsdon                              01234 266281

Margaret Dean                                01234 771520

Albert Gurney                                01234 870044

Jim Leydon                                     01234 870705

Ian McDougal                                 01234 772776

Ian Slater [Chairman]                       01234 772471

James Stapleton                              01234 771457

### **WARD COUNCILLORS**

Carole Ellis

Stephen Moon

Full contact details are in the Village Magazine each month.

## RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL – BUDGET 2013/14

ITEM	BUDGET	EXPENDITURE
Grants		
Good Neighbours	152	0
PCC Churchyard	500	500
Sports Club	600	600
Village Magazine	1750	1925
Contingency	998	600
War Memorial	700	575
Property Repair	1000	355
Bus Shelter	220	220
Grass Cutting	2500	2101
Administration	3097	1960
Clerk of the Council	6300	4538
Long Term Fund	1000	0
Contingencies	2500	0
ITEM	BUDGET	INCOME
Precept	17000	17000
VAT Refund	0	1638
Bank Interest	0	22
Grass Cutting	1164	1164