

RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15



This is the 5th 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 2014 – 15 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
All Saints Church, Renhold from The Spires

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.

8 Parish Councillors were elected or co-opted in May 2011 and have remained unchanged, and Cllr Stuart Harrison was co-opted in 2014 to fill the vacancy left when Cllr Carl Bernard passed away. In May 2015 Cllrs Stuart Andrews, Ian McDougall and Jim Stapleton retired and a new Council was elected / co-opted. 2014 – 2015 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 6 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 under the new scheme introduced in 2015, the NALC Council Awards.

How We Work

The Parish Council met 8 times during 2014-15, meetings being held in the Village Hall and the Chapel. Residents are invited to contribute to all items on the agenda, and 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. Borough Ward Councillors are invited to attend and bring us up-to-date on what the Borough Council is doing that impacts on the Parish: sadly Carole Ellis passed away in 2014 and Renhold lost a champion on its behalf in Borough Hall.

To assist the Parish Council, committees are appointed, and their meetings are also open to residents. The Finance Committee met twice during 2014-15, 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. Councillors informally exchanged views on a number of planning applications when Borough Council deadlines fell between full 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, and especially, 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 2014-15.

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. Parking on roads in the new estates, especially on The Spires, is becoming an issue.

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 and from 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 Parish Councillors and residents have now been trained as part of the Community Speed Watch initiative, and they have been active throughout 2014 - 15 reinforcing the message that there is a speed limit of just 30mph throughout the village. Offending vehicles are reported to the Police who then contact drivers.

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. A particular issue identified by some residents is that the TRO prevents residents of Wilden Road and Salph End from driving through their own village to and from the A421 during the restricted period, which they consider to be unfair. The Parish Council has continued to look for a solution, but we are not confident that there is one. The Parish Council, with local 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 planned to install white 'gates' and / or 'dragons teeth' road markings at the Green End, Wilden Road and Ravensden Road village limits. Unfortunately this did not happen. It was also hoped that average speed cameras would be installed between Top End and Green End, but for technical reasons this too did not happen. Surveys undertaken of traffic volumes and speeds along Ravensden Road and Green End identified in excess of 20,000 and 15,000 vehicle movements respectively over a 7 day period, with a significant proportion of vehicles exceeding the speed limit. These surveys have reinforced the need for any measures to reduce both volumes and speeds of traffic in the village.

The Parish Council can report that the necessary equipment for the average speed cameras is now with the Borough Council which is waiting for an electricity supply to be provided. There will now be cameras at Wilden Road, Top End and Green End, and the white gates will be installed as part of the works. 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 has requested a second set of cameras for Ravensden Road, and has offered a financial contribution to the cost.

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 causes 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 is to have a 20mph speed limit, at an unspecified date, but this will merely slow traffic down and not restrict car parking. At the Parish Council's request double yellow lines have been installed at the traffic lights and on the blind bend before the church to aid traffic flow, and in 2015 – 16 further double yellow lines will be requested to address other problem areas. The Parish Council, with local residents, will keep trying to find a solution to the parking problem.

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 maintenance programme.

The Parish Council will continue to give all of these issues its full attention in 2015 -16, 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 2014 -15 the

Parish Council commented on 27 planning applications, ranging in scale from the new estates to small domestic extensions, garages and garden fences.

Our views are not always accepted by the Borough, but most are. In March 2015 the Parish Council Chairman attended and addressed a Borough Council Planning Committee meeting to promote the Parish Council's views on a specific application, and as a result the Planning Officer's recommendation was overturned by Borough Councillors.

Unfortunately the future of The Three Horseshoes site remains unclear. Unfortunately too, the Borough Council, against the wishes of the Parish Council, has allowed an application for a playing field for the Aspire estates to be constructed on the village side of the bridleway. As a plus, the application for a wind turbine on Ravensden Hill was withdrawn by the applicant.

During 2014 – 15 the Parish Council had the opportunity to comment on proposals by land-owners and developers for 18 sites in Renhold to be considered for development in the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2032. Together these could generate up to 1900 additional homes in Renhold, together with commercial uses such as offices, warehouses and retail. A 4 page response was submitted by the Parish Council, objecting to all 18 proposals, and the Borough Council is likely to consult further in the autumn of 2015.

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, There are now 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 2014-15 this was again set at £17,000, the same level for 3 years now, 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 2014 - 15 the Parish Council's expenditure was within budget, with an underspend overall, although an element of this was collected to be put into the reserves. For 2015 - 16 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, and will now be working with residents interested in developing a Renhold website to promote the village and its organisations.

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 – BUDGET 2014/15

ITEM	BUDGET	EXPENDITURE
Grants		
Good Neighbours	152	0
PCC Churchyard	500	500
Sports Club	600	500
Village Magazine	1750	2076
Contingency	998	700
War Memorial	700	725
Property Repair	1500	990
Bus Shelter	220	220
Grass Cutting	2500	2661
Administration	3097	1859
Clerk of the Council	6300	5682
Long Term Fund	1000	0
Contingencies	2500	0
ITEM	BUDGET	INCOME
Precept	17352	17352
VAT Refund	0	0
Bank Interest	0	24
Grass Cutting	1164	1164
Other income	0	1000

RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL 2014 – 15

CLERK

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Ian McDougal	01234 772776
Ian Slater [Chairman]	01234 772471
James Stapleton	01234 771457

WARD COUNCILLORS 2014 – 15

Carole Ellis	Phil Merryman
Stephen Moon	Sylvia Gillard

At the election in May 2015 Parish Councillors Andrews, McDougal and Stapleton retired. We thank them for their work on behalf of residents over many years, and especially Jim Stapleton who was on the Parish Council for more than 30 years.

Details for the Parish Councillors in 2015 – 16 are on the following page.

RENHOLD PARISH COUNCIL 2015 – 16

CLERK

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WARD COUNCILLORS 2015 – 16

Great Barford

Sheryl Corp
Stephen Moon

Goldington

Anthony Forth
Jade Uko

