

Borough Council Report to Parish Councils January 2021

Grove Road Footpaths.

Following a number of communications on the poor state of repair of the footpaths in Grove Road I met with Andy Prigmore to see if we could accelerate the repair work? He was conscious that they were on the list of Highways work and agreed to see if they could be brought forward.

Village Medical Centre (Great Denham)

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) carried out a further inspection of the medical centre on 12th November following an earlier report which rated the service as “Inadequate” the evaluation has moved to “requires improvement” as can be seen below three of the inspected elements have moved to good whilst two still require improvement. On the 12th October, a new appointment was made to the role of Business & Operations Manager (Josephine Morrison) and her initial findings and update are attached. However due to Covid-19 there are a large number of staff either shielding or self-isolating or recovering from COVID-19 and thus staffing the phones and admin is proving very difficult and long delays will unfortunately occur in phones being answered. After speaking to staff this morning (8th Jan) I was informed that some staff will be returning to work next week so things should start to show improvement. The CQC report can be found here.

[The Village Medical Centre \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk)

Overall rating for this location Requires Improvement —

Are services safe? **Good** —

Are services effective? **Good** —

Are services caring? **Requires Improvement** —

Are services responsive to people's needs? **Requires Improvement** —

Are services well-led? **Good**

COVID-19 update

The United Kingdom was placed into a National Lockdown yesterday. You must not leave, or be outside of your home except where necessary. You may only leave the home if you have a reasonable excuse such as:

- Essential activities
- Fulfilling legal obligations
- Education and childcare
- Meeting others and care
- Exercise and recreation
- Medical reasons, harm and compassionate visits
- Communal worship and life events
- permitted to form one
- seek medical assistance or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm (including domestic abuse)
- attend education or childcare - for those eligible

You can exercise or visit a public outdoor place:

- by yourself
- with the people you live with
- with your support bubble

- or, when on your own, with 1 person from another household

Colleges, primary (reception onwards) and secondary schools will remain open for vulnerable children and the children of critical workers. All other children will learn remotely until February half term.

You can find more information about the national lockdown regulations on: [National lockdown: Stay at Home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-lockdown-stay-at-home)

In Bedford there has been 5965 cases since the start of the Pandemic and there has been 1127 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days. This means there have been 650.3 people per 100,000 in Bedford (as of Dec 27) which has risen by 171.9 over the last 7 days which shows how rapidly the virus is currently spreading.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of Dec 30) please find it below:

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/covid19-weekly-statistics-30dec.pdf>

More information available at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/>

COVID test centres in Bedford

There is continued testing in Bedford at Borough Hall and Prebend Street car parks as well as University of Bedfordshire's Polhill Campus

Test results from these sites should come back with 24-72 hours.

The government has updated its advice on testing. If you have any of the symptoms of Coronavirus, you can ask for a test through the NHS website or phone 119.

There are two walk through testing centres in Bedford for residents showing symptoms of Coronavirus.

Drive-through testing is available 6 days/week at Gilbert Hitchcock House, Bedford Hospital and 5 days/week at Borough Hall. Both can be booked through the national testing website.

If you're an essential worker (see full list) you can apply for priority testing through GOV.UK by following the guidance for essential workers on the government website.

You can also get tested through this route if you have symptoms of coronavirus and live with an essential worker.

If you are unable to get to a testing centre, you can order a home testing kit through the national testing website.

You can find further details on testing on the government webpages.

More information is available here: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/covid-19-testing/>

Business Support Grants for Local Businesses

With the announcement that Bedford Borough entered Tier 4 from Saturday 19 December, businesses that are required to close will be receiving a business support grant.

These grants are set and funded by the Government at a national level and administered by Bedford Borough Council.

Businesses that received a grant from the Council due to the last national lockdown because their business was required to close, and businesses that were required to close again under the Tier 4 restrictions a further grant will be paid automatically. These businesses have already been contacted by the Council to let them know when to expect their grant.

The Council should have sent grants automatically by bank transfer on Monday 21 December, which means they should already have been received.

In addition, if a local business ratepayer believes they are eligible for this grant funding but did not receive a grant during the last lockdown they are asked to fill out the online form at www.bedford.gov.uk/bsg which will be available from Monday 21 December.

Any businesses who have not received the grant but believe they should have should contact Bedford Borough Council to discuss the matter and should there be problems they should contact their Ward Councillor.

PSPO to Tackle Street Drinking Comes Into Force

Following public consultation, Bedford Borough Council has approved a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to tackle street drinking and related anti-social behaviour in the area of Bedford town centre. This replaces the old Alcohol Free Zones.

This PSPO is set to come into force from Wednesday 16 December and is set to remain in place for three years initially.

This PSPO would prohibit people consuming alcohol or having an open container of alcohol in the defined area, to prevent anti-social behaviour. It covers the town centre from the Embankment in the south, St Cuthbert's Street in the east, Landsdowne Road, Roff Avenue and De Parys Avenue in the north, and Ashburnham Road in the west.

Once in place, the Order gives the Police and authorised officers' powers to enforce against those breaking it. This enforcement can range from asking the person to surrender the alcohol, issuing a Community Protection Notice, a criminal behaviour order, to issuing a fixed penalty notice. The Council will continue to offer support for people where appropriate, such as referral to alcohol support services.

This PSPO proposal followed a wide-ranging consultation conducted by the Bedford Borough Community Safety Partnership in 2019, where alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in the town centre came back as a key concern for people.

In the consultation to introduce this Order, 90.7% of the over 500 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal.

Public Reminded to Report Dead Wildfowl to DEFRA

Following confirmation of some bird flu cases in Bedford's wild bird population, the Council is reminding people to contact DEFRA if they spot any dead swans, geese, ducks or any other wild birds.

Avian Influenza (bird flu) spreads from bird to bird by direct contact or through contaminated body fluids or faeces, or via contaminated feed, water or by dirty vehicles, clothing and footwear. It isn't an airborne virus.

An 'Avian Influenza Prevention Zone' was declared across the whole of England in November, and from today all bird keepers in England are required to keep their birds indoors.

Public Health advises that the risk to public health from bird flu is very low. While some strains can pass to humans, it is very rare and requires very close contact between the human and infected birds.

Nevertheless, the public are reminded to not touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds. If you find any dead wild birds such as swans, geese or ducks you should report them the DEFRA helpline on 03459 33 55 77. There will be notices going up along the Embankment with this information and further advice.

Executive meeting on Wednesday 6 January 2021

Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report is available here:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s52805/Item%2006%20BBSCB%20Annual%20Report%202019%20-%202020%20covering%20report.pdf>

Adoption of housing strategy to cover 2021-26. The Housing strategy is available here:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s52809/Item%2007%20Housing%20Strategy%20Appendix%20B.pdf>

Transfer of environmental agency control measures at Duckmill and Newnham

Weir<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s52810/Item%2008%20Transfer%20of%20Environment%20Agency%20public%20safety%20measures.pdf>

Budget 2021/22

5. Details

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to determine the estimated surplus/deficit on the Collection Fund as at 31 March in respect of Council Tax prior to 15 January. This will enable the precepting authorities to take into account their share of any surplus or deficit before finalising their precepts for 2021/2022.

The table below identifies the actual surplus as at 31 March 2020, the estimated deficit on the Collection Fund relating to Council Tax as at 31 March 2021, and how the deficit is to be shared in accordance with current regulations:

Estimated Deficit Calculation	£		£
Balance in the Collection Fund relating to Council Tax as at 31 March 2020 after allowing for bad debts			615,000
Less: Surplus/(Deficit) paid in 2020/2021 (based on forecast made in previous year)			
Bedford Borough Council	434,318		
The Police & Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire	57,124		
Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority	27,828		
			519,270
			95,730
Add: Estimated Surplus/(Deficit) in 2020/2021			(1,151,613)
Estimated Surplus/(Deficit) at 31 March 2021 for Distribution (see below)			(1,055,883)
Share of Estimated Surplus/(Deficit) Calculation	2020/2021 Precept	% ⁽²⁾	Share of Deficit
	£		£
Bedford Borough Council (including Parishes) ⁽¹⁾	97,244,328	83.62%	(882,961)
The Police & Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire	12,925,401	11.11%	(117,360)
Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority	6,119,287	5.26%	(55,562)

5.25 The analysis below sets out the calculation of the proposed 2021/2022 Council Tax Base:

	2021/2022 Band D Equivalent Properties	2020/2021 Band D Equivalent Properties	Notes
Gross Tax Base taking into account the current dwellings shown in the Valuation List as at 30 November	67,992.89	66,790.79	Note 1
• Reduction due to Council Tax Support discounts	(8,679.50)	(5,691.47)	
• Adjustment due to anticipated growth	502.86	771.75	
Adjusted Tax Base	<u>59,816.25</u>	<u>61,871.07</u>	
• Less Provision for Losses on Collection of 1.50%	(897.25)	(928.07)	Note 2
Recommended Tax base 2021/2022	<u>58,919.00</u>	<u>60,943.00</u>	
Increase / (Decrease)	(2,024.00)		
Increase / (Decrease) as %	(3.32%)		

It is unclear how much Council Tax will be raised by, though we are expecting a rise as the Council are expecting the tax base to decrease by £2m

It is possibly by borrowing they will try to cover some of the deficit but currently Bedford Borough is uncertain of how much support that they will get from the Government as part of COVID measures.

We generally revise this report over the month, and we will keep you updated on this part of the report once the situation becomes clearer.

Councillor Coombes responds to local residents concerns about planning.

Cllr Coombes gave support for local residents who have been experiencing issues with the Planning Department urging them to listen to residents' concerns. As I am sure you are aware many parishes have experienced a multitude of problems with Bedford Borough's Planning Department and you may be interested to listen to his speech here:

<https://www.facebook.com/BedfordConservativeGroup/videos/1322776161391837>