

## **Borough Councillors Report – July 2023**

### **High level Borough Items**

- **Councillor Jane Walker tables motion to give care leavers 'protected characteristic' status**

During Full Council, Councillor Jane Walker moved a motion with full cross party support.

The motion solidifies the Council's commitment to prioritising the well-being of care-experienced young people at the heart of everything the Council does.

- **Summer holiday voucher scheme**

Bedford Borough Council is continuing to distribute supermarket vouchers to thousands of families across the Borough over the summer holidays.

The vouchers are funded through the Governments Household Support Grant which is distributed through Department for Work and Pensions.

Over 7000 children will benefit from the scheme.

- **Bedford Borough Council to invest into Homeless service**

Bedford Councils Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation service does not have the staff to meet service demands.

The number of homeless families or individuals needing temporary accommodation has increase by 181%, going from 220 in April 2020 to 620 in April 2023. The previous administrations budget did not provide enough resources to meet demand – this means the Councils homeless service is under staffed/resourced.

Employees are taking on caseloads that are more than double national standards which has resulted in a significant backlog of cases. The missing resources means the Council now face £5.7m in potential overspends in order to keep the service running for the next financial year.

The current administration has outline they plan to invest in this service to address the backlog/staffing issues so costs can come back under control.

- **Borough Council faces £2.269m overspend for the financial year 2022/23**

Bedford Councillors recently received a report detailing a £2.269 million budget overspend for the financial year 2022/23 that occurred prior to the election under previous administration.

The financial pressures comes as result of operational overspends in a number of key service areas, including:

- £284k on Adults Social Services
- £7.025m on Childrens Social Services
- £2.419m on Environmental Services
- £4.073m on Corporate Services
- **Kerbside glass collection scheme**

The Council is looking to trial kerbside glass collection in a number of different areas of the borough.

The Council is currently looking into the rounds and types of vehicles/containers that this trial will need – alongside a plan to have collections taking place with different containers and different [collection] frequencies within the trial period.

A precise date has not been set but we expect that the trial period may start this year.

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- **Local Plan 2040 hearings**

The hearing sessions of the Examination of the Bedford Local Plan will be held in two blocks and opened at 12 midday on Monday 12 June 2023.

Block 1 hearings have concluded, the 2<sup>nd</sup> block will take place:

- Week 3: Monday 11 September to Friday 15 September.
- Week 4: Monday 18 September to Friday 22 September.

### **Wider Borough Items**

- **POP Bedford launches summer programme at Midland Road creative art space**

The new pop-up creative art space on Midland Road opened Wednesday (12 July) for a summer-long programme of creative workshops, artist workspace and exhibitions for the people of Bedford – most of which will be free.

- **Defibrillator Circuit**

The Circuit is a national defibrillator network that aims to help save lives. Registering defibrillators on this platform will help to provide emergency services with a comprehensive overview of their locations, enabling them to maximise their utilisation and effectiveness.

To register a defibrillator on The Circuit, responsible individuals can easily visit [www.thecircuit.uk](http://www.thecircuit.uk).

- **Bedford Borough Council reminds residents to renew tax credits**

Tax credits customers have less than a month remaining to renew their claims.

The deadline is Monday, 31<sup>st</sup> July, the quickest and easiest way for individuals to renew their tax credits is digitally via <https://www.gov.uk/manage-your-tax-credits> or via the HMRC app: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/download-the-hmrc-app>.

Residents struggling financially, please check out the help and support available to you locally on Bedford Borough Council's website at [www.bedford.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/costofliving)

- **Bedford Borough Council tackles fly-tipping**

The mini-recycling site on Old Ford End Road, Queen's Park has seen 20 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) being issued following an increase in illegal dumping of rubbish.

These sites only take specific materials for recycling such as glass bottles and jars, clothes and shoes, with everything put in the bins provided. There was a trend of residents leaving bags of rubbish and bulky waste at the sites which has led to the FPNs being issued.

To combat the issue, the Council has installed CCTV cameras at various mini-recycling sites across Bedford Borough.

- **Beds Urban Sketchers display art at The Higgins Bedford**

A new art display from the Beds Urban Sketchers group opens on 30 June 2023 at The Higgins Bedford and will run until the end of February 2024 and admission is free to all visitors.

- **Greyfriars police station redevelopment**

Planning permission has been secured for the redevelopment of Greyfriars police station by DLP Planning Ltd behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner of Bedfordshire.

The redevelopment could see 105 new homes plus 'town centre uses' on the ground floor of the building.

The redevelopment forms a key part of regenerating Bedford Town Centre through the Town Deal which will make significant investment to Bedford Borough.

### **Road closures/Local Items**

- **Planning permission granted for 24 new homes in Turvey**

A planning application for new homes in Turvey was approved by Bedford Borough Council's planning committee on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June. Permission was approved (subject to conditions) following a vote by committee members.

The application will see 24 new homes in the Village, on an allocated site that is within Turvey's neighbourhood plan and the previous administrations local plan.

- **Paula Radcliffe Way**

Multiple repairs are taking place along Paula Radcliffe Way with the first phase of the resurfacing confirmed to begin on Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> July.

The southbound carriageway, leading towards Bedford, will be closed until early September.

During these closures, traffic will be diverted through Clapham, allowing for the uninterrupted progress of the project.

The lengths affected are:

- Southbound closure from Clapham north slip road to The Great Ouse roundabout 24th July to 1st September 2023.
- Southbound closure will be opened before the Northbound closure is commenced.
- Northbound closure from The Great Ouse Roundabout to Oakley north slip road 21st August to 27th October 2023.

There are a number of road closures expected to cause delays on the A421 and A1 the coming weeks

- A1, from 9am to 3.30pm until July 27, diversion route on behalf of National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc length effected is both directions, Biggleswade north roundabout to Sandy roundabout
- A1, from 9pm to 5am until July 29 will experience lane closures and roundabout ring management due to horticulture (cutting and planting) on behalf of Ringway. The length effected is both directions on the A1 Buckden to Biggleswade
- A1, from 9pm to 5am until August 18 where there will be a carriageway closure and lane closures for central reservation on behalf of National Highways this will effect both directions of junction 10 to Black Cat roundabout
- A421, from 8pm to 6am until December 19 there will be carriageway closures and lane closures for barrier/fence safety repairs on behalf of National Highways which will effect both directions of the M1, junction 13 to Marsh Leys interchange
- A45, from 8pm July 31 to 6am August 1 where there will be lane closures due to maintenance work slight delays which will affect the A45 northbound
- M1, from 10pm July 31 to 5am August 1 where there will be lane closure for communications on behalf of National Highways which will affect the M1 northbound, junction 12 to junction 13
- A1, from 8pm August 1 to 6am August 2 there will be an exit slip road closure, entry slip road closure, lane closure and diversion routes due to horticulture (cutting and planting) on behalf of Ringway which will affect the A421 westbound, Water End Interchange