

Monthly Borough Report April 2024

- **Council potentially owed millions in uncollected capital receipts.**

The Executive have been investigating the disaggregation agreement between Bedford Borough Council (BBC) and Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) to ensure all money BBC is owed has been collected.

A preliminary investigation has uncovered various pieces of land noted in the disaggregation agreement that have either been sold off or developed, proceeds of which should be split on the basis of 63% CBC and 37% BBC between April 2009 and March 2030. But the Borough has received no capital receipts for and/or failed to collect this for successive years.

A very significant amount of land (199.167 acres) is being investigated which could have resulted in a significant amounts of money, that could have prevented cuts to services and eased financial pressures for many prior years, being completely missed out on.

The Executive is now working with its Officers and CBC to further investigate the status lands the Borough believes it has not received capital receipts and will pursue all measures to ensure any money owed, is collected.

- **Kerbside Glass collection**

The Council will be conducting a 9-month trial collecting glass directly from residents' orange lidded bins, being more convenient for residents. A decision will be made in early May in selected areas to begin the trial which aims to capture an estimated 1,500 additional tonnes of glass that ends up in domestic black bins. Areas will be chosen in early April.

What can you recycle?

- Glass bottles (any colour or size)
- Glass jars (e.g., for sauces, jam, baby food)
- Non-food glass bottles (e.g., perfume, aftershave, face cream)

What can't be recycled?

The following glass items are not accepted in the trial and should continue to be placed in the black bin or taken to the Household Waste Recycling Centre:

- Drinking glasses
- Glass cookware (e.g., Pyrex, microwave oven plates)
- Vases
- Window or greenhouse panes

- **Bus service**

The Council currently spends £3.7m on supporting bus operations on public transport, not including school buses. The majority of this (£2.3m) is on concessionary fares which had been cut in the budget for 2023/24 from £2.7m to £2.3m (**This budget was set before the 2023 local elections**).

The cut was mandated in order to making savings however, the Council was later made aware by Stagecoach and Grant Palmer, this funding was crucial to their business in order to support their service. The cut would result in significant alternations to the service and routes in Bedford Borough as a result.

In order to cover the cut the previous administration moved £440k from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP+) to cover the cut. The grant only totals £546K So, instead of using this fund to support and improve bus routes and services in Bedford Borough, 80.59% was used to cover the cut.

Additionally, in 2021 when the Borough submitted a bidding document under the BSIP funding round from the Central Government we were unsuccessful and did not receive any funds. Conversely, Luton and CBC received £19.1m and £3.7m respectively. So, the £546k was a consolation prize in 23/24, we will receive the same amount again in 24/25.

Additionally, for the last 13 years the whole of the Borough's bus service operations and routes have not been reviewed. Despite the financial pressure and historic lack of management, the current administration will be conducting a long overdue review of the whole bus service operations and routes. They are also looking at some new models of operation to see if smaller buses in the rural areas might be able to feed into more main routes.

- **Bedford Borough Council provides £242,800 Funding Boost for Kempston Pool**

A £242,800 grant has been secured by Bedford Borough Council as extra funding for Kempston Pool.

The funding will provide rooftop solar panels as well as improved metering and controls, giving long-term cost and energy efficiency savings. This will enable the site to become 36% self-sufficient from the grid, providing the council with the opportunity to invest in further energy efficiency technology and potentially battery storage to further decarbonise the site.

- **Freedom of the Borough for RAK Chicksands**

Bedford Borough Council agreed at a special Full Council meeting to confer the prestigious Freedom of the Borough upon the United Kingdom Strategic Command - Chicksands. It will grant the Command the esteemed right of Freedom of Entry to the Borough, allowing its personnel to march through the streets of the town centre on ceremonial occasions with colours flying, bands playing, drums beating, and bayonets fixed.

- **Grant Palmer 44 service**

Despite financial pressures the Council extended the Grant Palmer 44 service on the 26th February benefitting users of Elstow Park and Ride site, along with residents and commuters in Flitwick and Ampthill. The service is being extended by the Council utilising the Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP+) grant funding from the Government and ensures continued accessibility and convenience for residents and commuters.

- **More money to manage Drainage**

Due to inherited budget restrictions the Council has limited equipment and resources however, the Council will be using £470,000 which will be used to conduct more highways work to hire more equipment and put together a cyclical drainage programme so drains and gully's are more efficiently cleansed.