

Monthly Report November

Cleat Hill

- The tragic explosion occurred on 19 October 2024, in which, two Borough residents lost their lives.
- In the immediate aftermath, the Council worked closely with emergency services to ensure the safety of residents in the area and identify the reason for the explosion, a gas reservoir.
- After working to get the area safe for residents, the incurred around £2 million in recovery and response costs. To help address the financial pressures of these added costs, the Council submitted a formal application on 27 March 2025 for financial support under the Bellwin Scheme (a UK scheme for emergency/disaster relief to local authorities) for its “immediate response costs” arising from the October 2024 explosion.
- No specific figure has been confirmed by the Government as approved for payment. The reply received by the Council was that they will review the information and then decide what, if any, assistance will be given under the Bellwin Scheme.
- The Mayor will be writing to the Government to urge them to provide the financial support Bedford Borough needs following this tragic incident.

PSPO

- Following a two-month consultation by the Borough Council, a new three-year Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) has been introduced to crack down on persistent anti-social behaviour in Bedford town centre, targeting issues such as street drinking, aggressive begging, spitting, littering, public urination, accessing rooftops or stairwells for anti-social behaviour, and dangerous cycling in pedestrian areas.
- The PSPO will be jointly enforced by Council Officers and Bedfordshire police with clear signage being displayed across the town centre.

Green Waste Consultation

- Bedford Borough Council has launched its Budget Consultation for 2026/27. One of the options being considered is introducing a charge for green waste (garden waste) collections.
- This proposal follows advice from central government civil servants, who have asked the Council to explore all options to improve financial resilience, including service charges already adopted by neighbouring authorities. The suggested fee would be around £1 per week for households using the green bin service.
- Many Councillors have previously stated they do not support charging for green waste and opposed its introduction.

Connect to Work programme

- Bedford Borough Council is taking part in a new Connect to Work scheme to help local residents get back into employment.
- The five-year programme offers 12 months of one-to-one support for people who've been out of work for six months or more - particularly those with health conditions, disabilities, or other barriers to work.

- Participants will receive personal coaching, help finding suitable jobs, and ongoing support once they start work to help them stay in employment. The scheme also works closely with services such as mental health, housing, and homelessness support.

Free Parking

- From 3 November 2025, Bedford Borough Council will temporarily suspend the 4-hour free parking offer at Allhallows and Lurke Street multi-storey car parks to help protect vital services and stabilise Council finances.
- Like many councils across the country, Bedford Borough Council is facing significant financial pressures, with rising costs in Adult Social Care, Children's Services, and Temporary Accommodation, alongside reduced Government funding.
- To maintain financial stability, the Council is reviewing all non-essential spending so that essential frontline services can continue to be delivered. While the 4-hour free parking scheme has been popular and successful in supporting town centre businesses, it must be paused temporarily as part of these measures.
- The Council remains fully committed to reintroducing free parking once its financial position improves.
- In the meantime, residents and visitors can still benefit from:
 - 2 hours of free parking at Queen Street Car Park (Monday–Saturday)
 - Free parking every Sunday across all Council-owned town centre car parks
 - Free parking 6pm–8am at Allhallows, Lurke Street, and Queen Street

Domestic Abuse Survivor Group

- Bedford Borough Council is inviting survivors of domestic abuse aged 16 and over to join a new Survivor Voice group, helping to shape how support is provided across the Borough.
- The group will offer a safe and supportive space for people to share their experiences, highlight what helped in their recovery, and suggest ways services could be improved. Members will meet regularly with Council officers and decision-makers, ensuring survivor perspectives directly influence local policy and practice.
- Anyone of any gender, background, or sexual orientation can take part, with around four hours' involvement per month and support from Victim Support throughout.

Glass and Food Recycling

- Kerbside Glass Recycling
 - Following a successful trial in several communities, glass will soon be collected in orange-lidded bins across the whole Borough.
 - The trial increased overall recycling tonnage by around 17% and is expected to raise the Borough's kerbside recycling rate by about 6% - with estimations suggesting the move could reduce carbon emissions by over 4,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year.
- Weekly Food Waste Collection (from April 2026)
 - Every household will receive a 7-litre kitchen caddy and a 23-litre outdoor caddy with a lockable lid.
 - Around 5,000 tonnes of food waste are expected to be collected each year, turning unavoidable food scraps into renewable energy or compost.
 - The service is fully funded to start, with over £1.9 million in government grants already received for vehicles, containers, and setup.

