

January Monthly Report

Universal Studios

- On the 16th December 2025, we received confirmation the Universal Project was granted a Special Development Order by parliament that comes into force on the 12 January 2026.
- The development will be a major visitor destination for our area, with potential benefits including new jobs, opportunities for young people, increased trade for local businesses, and a boost to tourism.
- The Council will continue working with partners and the developer as plans progress, with a focus on making sure local infrastructure and services keep pace - including transport and wider community impacts - so residents and communities are well supported throughout the process.
- Additionally, the Council will be welcoming Universal staff, who will be based on the top floor of the Council's main office while development work progresses.

Greyfriars Junction

- Work to reconfigure Greyfriars Junction is due to start on Monday 5 January 2026 and run through to Autumn 2026.
- The project is intended to unlock development around the former police station site and improve connections from Greyfriars car park to Midland Road, with safer walking and cycling infrastructure and a design that considers current and future bus movements. The Council says it is working with bus operators to reduce disruption, with signage at affected stops. The Italian Statue currently on the roundabout will be restored and relocated to a new suitable location. Residents and businesses will be kept updated through engagement events, including an opportunity to view plans on Thursday 18 December 2025 (11:30am–1:30pm) near the old police station, with further events planned in 2026.
- More information is available here: www.bedford.gov.uk/towns-fund-transporting-bedford-2030

Glass Recycling

- Households across Bedford Borough can now put glass bottles and jars in the orange-lidded recycling bin. This follows earlier trial collections and is expected to support higher recycling rates and better use of materials.
- Residents should rinse glass, leave metal lids on, and remove corks (corks go in the black bin). If the orange bin is full, extra recycling (including glass) can be left next to it in a clear sack or sturdy box on collection day. Bottle banks will remain available for now and will be reviewed over time.
- Additionally, from January–March 2026, the Council will also roll out food waste collections. The Council will deliver food waste caddies ahead of weekly glass bottles collections starting Monday 30 March 2026.

Paula Radcliffe Way

- Bedford Borough Council will carry out drainage and highway maintenance on Paula Radcliffe Way from Monday 5 January 2026 for around 30 days, covering the stretch from the Sainsbury's roundabout to the Thatched Barn. The works include replacing gullies, clearing kerb channels and removing vegetation around drainage basins to improve surface water management and road safety.
- There will be 24/7 lane closures for the duration, with signage in place and emergency access maintained.

Bedford River Valley Park Development

- Bedford Borough Council has entered into a Collaboration Agreement with neighbouring landowners and an Option Agreement with Bloor Homes Ltd to promote a major mixed-use scheme at Bedford River Valley Park, north of the A603 near Willington.
- The development includes:
 - Up to 1,000 new homes
 - A new two-form-entry primary school with early years provision
 - New watersports lakes with associated leisure facilities and public access
 - Extensive public open space, landscaping and habitat creation
 - New walking and cycling routes linking the park to surrounding communities and existing paths
 - New highway access from the A603 and associated infrastructure
- Under the Option Agreement, all planning and promotion work for the scheme will be funded by Bloor Homes. The Council will only contribute towards those costs from future sale proceeds if a land sale goes ahead, and it has secured a minimum land value for its share, ensuring a significant capital receipt once the development is delivered.

Council Workforce

- Between 2010/11 and 2022/23, the Council made extensive use of staff restructures as part of its savings approach, issuing 1,061 exit packages (redundancy and other departures) at a total cost of about £17.7m. That averages roughly 80 exits a year, with the biggest rounds in 2010/11 (145), 2011/12 (126), 2014/15 (134) and 2017/18 (137).
- While that delivered short-term savings, it also meant there was far less "back office" and operational resilience left to absorb today's rising demand and costs in areas like Children Services, Temporary Accommodation and Adult Services, which is part of the reason why the current financial position is so difficult at the Council.
- CIPFA's independent and expert review also confirmed that these decisions created under-capacity, inefficiencies and reduced support for robust oversight and decision-making.