

Monthly Report February

Council passes 2026/27 Budget

- Bedford Borough Council has approved the Mayor's 2026/27 budget, delivered against a backdrop of surging costs in adult social care, children's services and temporary accommodation and a £1.1m cut in Government funding.
- That includes additional funding for Children's Services and Adult Services, continues investment in roads and resurfacing, ASB Officers, and confirms the Council will continue to maintain speed cameras in parishad areas.
- Council Tax will rise by 4.99% (2.99% core + 2% Adult Social Care precept) to help meet unavoidable cost pressures, alongside ongoing efficiency work.

Exceptional Financial Support (EFS)

- The Government has published its latest list of councils receiving Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) for 2026/27. Bedford Borough Council has been given in-principle support of £58.0 million for 2026/27, with £22.0m (support agreed in-principle for 2025-26).
- EFS is a type of Government support that helps a council manage short-term financial pressures while it delivers longer-term savings and improvement plans.
- It gives the Council permission to effectively "go overdrawn" for a limited period of time, with the Council only paying back what it actually uses. In practice, if £22m is available but only £15m is used, then only £15m would need to be paid back.

New Finance and Improvement Executive Committee

- The Executive has set up a new Finance and Improvement Executive Committee to strengthen financial oversight and accountability, and to support delivery of the Council's improvement work.
- Meetings will be live-streamed, so residents can follow progress on the Council's improvement work and will include cross-party representation.

Best Value Inspection

- Bedford Borough Council will be undergoing a Best Value Inspection over the next three months. The Mayor and Executive have said they welcome the inspection and see it as a constructive form of scrutiny to help ensure residents get the best value services possible.
- The Council will cooperate fully with inspectors and treat this as an opportunity to strengthen performance, raise standards and improve reliability of services.

Garden waste collections restarting

- Garden waste collections (green-lidded bins) will restart from Monday 2nd March.
- As a reminder, items that can go in the green bin include grass cuttings, leaves, plants, weeds, flowers, hedge clippings and bark. Please do not put food waste, soil, rubble or large branches.
- More information on bin guidance and collection dates: www.bedford.gov.uk/BinsAndRecycling

Anti-Social Behaviour Officers

- The 2026/27 Budget includes £96,000 to fund two additional Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Officers in addition to the two ASB officers funded by Bedfordshire Police.
- Unlike the police-funded officers, who are focused on the town centre, the Council-funded officers can be deployed flexibly - to the town centre, Queens Park, Shortstown, or anywhere the need is greatest for patrols and early intervention.
- This builds on work since December, when ASB activity helped contribute to a reduction in violent and public order offences, making the town centre feel safer for residents, visitors and local businesses.
- The Council will also continue joint work through the Town Centre Task Force, bringing together Council services and Bedfordshire Police to coordinate intelligence-led action and prevention.

Open Space Management (OSM) charge will not be coming back

- As a result of the 2026/27 budget residents in these Kempston West and Great Denham will not be doubled taxed as the open Space Management charge will not be reintroduced in these areas.

International sport is back at Bedford International Athletics Stadium

- Bedford International Athletics Stadium (BIAS) has recently undergone a £700,000 refurbishment to improve the quality of the facility.
- The completed works include replacement of the running track and athletics surfaces, plus the purchase of maintenance and competition equipment, including repairs to the throwing cage.
- Following the improvements, on the 7th February the stadium had successfully hosted international level sporting event, showing that Bedford Borough is more than capable of attracting major competitions.

Universal development - growing local presence

- The Universal development is gathering momentum, with the organisation now taking space on the top floor of the Council building.
- This creates a stronger day-to-day presence in the Borough and should help speed up engagement with local partners and stakeholders.

Potholes and road maintenance (January 2026)

- The Council has delivered around 38,976 m² of carriageway resurfacing/patching and 5,113 m² of footway resurfacing, alongside other repairs and renewals.
- Teams attended 714 streets for carriageway pothole repairs (plus 13 streets for footway potholes) and carried out wider maintenance works on many additional streets.
- Routine gully cleansing continued with around 1,800 gullies cleansed, with extra drainage cleaning also completed as part of resurfacing schemes.

East Park Energy

- Bedford Borough Council is involved as the Host Authority, supporting the national Development Consent Order (DCO) process locally. Officers have advised they are

currently preparing a draft Local Impact Report (this is still in preparation and not yet a formal submission).

- A Preliminary Meeting and public hearings are scheduled for 17 - 18 March 2026.

Fostering for Bedford Borough Council

- Bedford Borough Council is looking for more local families to foster, helping some of our most vulnerable children grow up in a safe, supportive home environment.
- The Council provides support for carers through Mockingbird, a group that gives foster families a stronger network, including respite, advice and practical support.
- Bedford has now launched its third Mockingbird Constellation, building on the success of the first two, which currently support 19 families who also support one another.
- The programme was developed by The Fostering Network and has been introduced locally with Department for Education funding.
- Foster carers may also be eligible for help such as Council Tax support and subsidised access to leisure facilities, alongside the usual fostering support.
- If you are considering taking on this important role, you can find out more information at <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/fostering/who-can-foster> or contact us fostering@bedford.gov.uk