

Borough Councillor Update – September/October 2022

Estate Management

I met with the Property Manager of Alexander Faulkner Partnership (AFP) who have taken over some of the properties originally with SDL. The notable is Broadmead Avenue and the debacle of the 7 lampposts costing residents £8,800 per annum. The PM will furnish me with some Bovis contacts and those that operate “Saxon Grove Management Company”. I will be asking them to transfer the lampposts to Bedford Borough so that AFP can step away and residents can escape the eye-watering charges. I have asked for justification of the 75% of the £8,800 which goes on managing the 7 lampposts. I will keep you posted.

Dangerous and Inconsiderate Parking

I have added my request to the Parish Councils to mobilise the Enforcement Team at the Borough to schedule some visits to Anglian Way and the parking issues endangering residents wishing to shop safely.



School Land and application for 95 houses Mercia Road

I am grateful to the PC for pointing out the commentary in the new Borough Design Guide currently out for consultation. Most will be aware that the additional school land is being used as a bargaining chip in trying to get this application passed. The PC has objected to the application due to the design put forward and the inadequate parking arrangements brought about by the continuation of the courtyard design system. The new consultation documents advise against large areas of hard standing as per page 153 shown below in Greenkeepers and highlighting the desirability of moving away from this type of development.

Whilst Planners maintain that the current design guide must be followed both the PC and I have highlighted that this wasn't followed in Danegeld where parking accommodation has been provided in front of houses without any need for courtyards. There is also evidence of this in some areas of Cantley Road. When you add to this the eyewatering Estate Management charges faced by residents it seems even stranger to understand why Borough Planners would not move away from the insistence of the courtyard system. I have written to planners to ask them to reconsider their stance.

Yellow Lines at Junctions

I am receiving many requests from residents regarding access and entry into side roads off Anglian Way and King Alfred Way. Both the PC and I have separately asked DWH to assist in trying to make these junctions safer by deterring parking outside the Highway Code recommendations. This was the response *"Lastly, about double yellow lines, we have always found this to be a difficult issue. There is always a wave of complaints the minute double yellows are put down, so we need to review this before we can commit. What roads are you looking at"?* I haven't yet discussed this with the PC, but I would suggest all road junctions coming out onto the main arterial roads.

Stagsden solar farm plans

Plans for a large solar farm near Bedford have been approved, despite concerns over the loss of farmland.

The development will cover a 79.64ha plot and result in the loss of Grade 3A agricultural land that is very good for consistently producing moderate to high yields of 41 crops. The loss of good quality agricultural land continues to lead younger generations down a path of reliance on exports.

However, despite the loss of good farmland the Borough has approved planning permission.

The Solar farm will be on a 79.64ha development near Stagsden and will have a maximum export capacity of 45.5MW of renewable energy.

Executive Decisions

2nd September – To award the following grant, £928.20, to support the Legacy of Windrush Descendants and Friends (LOWD) Jamaican Independence Day celebrations.

12th September - To formally 'make' the neighbourhood plan for Odell, and to confirm it as part of the development plan covering the Odell neighbourhood area (Odell Parish).

15th September - To approve funding from the Mayor's Climate Change Fund for an application from All Nations Church to fund the installation of LED lighting, in the sum of £4,608.

23rd September - To enable Wilshamstead Neighbourhood Plan to progress to the referendum stage of the neighbourhood plan making process.

26th September - To award the following grant, £1,000, to support Wixams Events Team in the organisation of the Community Christmas Light Switch on in Wixams.

26th September - To award the following grant, £1,000, to support Spiral Freerun CIC to provide equipment for their new facility.

Passing of Graham Bates (Alderman, JP, OBE)

Graham Monro Bates, b.1937, inheritor of the family business, Cyril Bates Drapers until its closure in 1994, passed away Sunday morning, 18th September. He had been heavily involved with the Conservative Party

He served as a Borough Councillor for a total of 35 years (firstly for Queens Park then Biddenham & Bromham), becoming Mayor of Bedford in 1973-74 and was elected an Honorary Alderman on his retirement from the Borough Council.

Our thoughts are with his friends and family.

Adult Services questioned after death of young man

A report into the death of a young man in Bedford is set to ask how he was failed by adult services agencies in Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire.

Bedford Borough Council's Executive heard on Friday (23 September) that the report is due soon.

Bedford Borough Council "Best Start" website

Last year Cllr Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant (Conservatives) raised important questions at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee surrounding what guidance and support the Borough provides to parents/carers when choosing schools.

The Council has since taken this forward with its soon to be named 'Best Start Bedford Borough' website potentially going live this month/soon. The site will function as a 'one-stop' website, which will offer advice to parents/carers for children under five with information about health, education and childcare.

Sustainable Warmth Scheme

Bedford Borough Residents is set to receive £1M of Government grants to help insulate energy inefficient homes on low-income.

After successfully bidding, Bedford Borough Council become a "Participating Authority" in the Sustainable Warmth scheme. The funds will be used to upgrade the energy efficiency of households most impacted by the cost of rising energy prices through solutions like better insulation, renewable heating systems and double-glazing.

The scheme should help lower bills and help tackle fuel poverty. For homes connected to the gas grid, the grant is up to £10,000. Whereas the grant ranges between £10,000 and £25,000 for homes not connected to the gas grid. Bedford Borough residents who have an annual household income under £30,000, under £20,000 after rent or mortgage costs, or whose household is on means-tested benefits, are more likely to qualify for the scheme.

To find out more or check your eligibility, please visit www.bedford.gov.uk/SustainableWarmth.

Midland Road Regeneration

Bedford was awarded over £22million from the Government as part of its Town Deal and is looking to invest £5million for Midland Road.

The Council held a public drop-in session regarding its Midland Road Regeneration project as part of the Town Deal, on Wednesday 7th of September as an opportunity for residents and businesses to learn more about the project proposals and provide their thoughts on the scheme.

The Midland Road regeneration projects include investment to transform this key gateway from the railway station into the town centre. The council want to create a vibrant corridor by investing in both the walking route and the visual impression, with improvements to individual businesses' shopfronts."

New ASC's

New ASC have been confirmed for the following locations:

- A6 south of Bedford
- B530 – Kempston Hardwick
- Ampthill Road, Bedford
- Brickhill Drive, Bedford
- Clapham Road, Bedford
- Harrowden Road, Bedford
- Mile Road, Bedford
- Norse Road, Bedford
- Park Avenue, Bedford
- Wentworth Drive, Bedford
- Bedford Road, Kempston
- Cemetery Road, Kempston (between High Street and Martell Drive)
- Cotton End, Wilstead
- Bedford Road, Wixams
- Rushden Road, Wymington

The AVG cost per set of ASC is £85,000 with a maintenance cost of £2500 per camera. Assuming 2 cameras per site, the cost of installation would be in the region of £1,275,000 with a maintenance cost of £75,000.

National Highway and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey

Recently, Bedford has taken part in the NHT Survey, and its results had been released. This year the survey was sent to 3,428 households across the authority area and 728 members of the public responded. This represents an overall response rate for Bedford of 21.4% compared with the national average of 23.8%.

Key takeaways:

- The Bedford public placed most importance on 'Safety on roads' with a high priority on the 'Condition of Roads'. The public was least satisfied with the 'Condition of Roads' with residents wanting see improvement in the level of service and more spending.
- There was a public reception that there is an increased number of potholes and damaged roads
- For Bedford's residents the main grievances were mostly the condition, repair, and quality of roads. These concerns made up the bulk of the top 10 lowest scores
- Bedford's residents reported the lowest Satisfaction with the speed of repair to damaged roads at 29%.

Stagecoach Bus Timetable and Service.

A number of bus routes are to be axed or changed by a Stagecoach to reflect what it called “new travel habits”. Stagecoach East said a new bus network would be brought in across Bedfordshire from 30 October.

Changes such as cutting the hourly service of the 41 buses to 90 minutes, has made commuting virtually impossible for these residents and only encourages more travel by car. These are completely unacceptable changes, and the Conservative Group does not support the changes made.

Bedford Borough Council Planning Department

In order to address the current pressures and backlog the Borough council will follow these principles to attract and retain planning officers.

- The BBC will ensure that their planners have a manageable workload.
- The BBC will ensure that they pay their planners at an equivalent level to those in neighbouring authorities.
- The BBC will ensure that their planners receive full support from senior officers and from Members.
- The BBC will seek to “grow our own” planners, offering comprehensive training – including support in obtaining planning degrees – to new entrants into the planning service.
- The BBC will look to promote internally as soon as staff are ready for more senior roles.
- The BBC will use Bedford’s characteristics as a microcosm of the country as a whole to build an “offer” to planners wishing to progress their careers in every aspect of development; major or minor applications; rural or urban locations; employment or housing sites; schools, roads, railways and other infrastructure – Bedford can offer everything except a coastline.

Avian influenza (bird flu)/Council encourages public to exercise caution over reported bird deaths

As you may be aware, a single case of avian influenza (bird flu) had been confirmed near Blunham back in late August. Currently, there are no reported cases in Bedford or anywhere else in the Borough however, there have been concerns have been raised about a recent increase in birds dying in and around the River Great Ouse.

Bedford Borough Council are currently unable to confirm their cause of death and are working with Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to investigate. **There is no indication this is linked to Avian Influenza.**

However, we are encouraging resident’s not to touch any sick or dead birds and request that if they find any dead or visibly sick birds in the local area, they are not fed or touched. Instead, cases should be reported to Defra’s GB helpline by calling 03459 335577.

Electoral register checks underway in 2022 Annual Canvass

The annual canvass – which allows the council to keep Bedford’s Electoral Register up to date, ensuring residents can vote in future elections – is now well underway.

As part of the next steps, Electoral Registration canvassers will be knocking on doors of non-responding households to ensure everyone’s details are correct.

Residents can call the council helpline on 01234 718078 if they have any queries about the Electoral Registration Canvassers.

For more information visit www.bedford.gov.uk/household-canvass

Project SEARCH launches at Bedford Borough Council

Bedford Borough Council, Bedford College and DFN Project SEARCH, a leading charity that supports young people with learning disabilities and autism to move into work, launched a new supported internship programme in Bedford Borough (September 2022).

Bedford Borough Council will be the host employer for up to 12 young adults with the interns going on to complete three 10-week work experience placements within Bedford Borough Council.

Traffic Management Act and new Borough powers

As part of the Traffic Management Act (2022) the Government will be giving councils the option to apply for powers to enforce against moving traffic offences. Bedford Borough Council applied for these powers by the deadline of 20th May 2022 and the powers were granted unofficially in June 2022. The Borough is still awaiting the official letter and no updates have been given on its status.

COVID-19 Booster

The autumn booster jab will be offered to everyone aged 50 and over, those who are at higher risk from serious illness such as pregnant women and people with long-term health conditions, along with frontline health and social care workers.

Since Monday 12 September an autumn booster can be booked online for anyone who is:

- 65 or over
- Pregnant
- Aged 5 and over and at high risk due to a health condition or weakened immune system
- Aged 5 and over and living with someone who has a weakened immune system
- Aged 16 and over and is a carer
- A frontline health or social care worker

To find out more about the autumn booster or to book your vaccination [visit the NHS website](#).

Council Active Adult Courses

Booking is now open for Bedford Borough's Active Adults courses.

The courses all start the week commencing 26th September and last eight weeks. These beginner sessions are ideal for people who have never tried a sport or who would like to get back into sports in a relaxed environment.

Find out more about all of these courses on the [Council's website](#).