

Borough Cllr Report to Great Denham PC September 2024

Open Space Management Charge Invoices

Message from the Boroughs Finance Dept. "We have now completed the work to identify the owner-occupied properties and the rented properties. The service is working to finalise the information to go out with the bills to the owner-occupied properties and the letter to the landlords to confirm that the saving has been passed to the tenant. Once I have this the team are ready to send the bills out within a few days".

Great Portway Parking Issues

I have received complaints regarding parking on Great Portway and the difficulty exiting some of the entrances and exits onto Great Portway due to visibility splays and constant bottlenecks that require reversing. If the PC wish me to get Highways to look at this again, please let me know.

We're making good progress with the EV charging proposals.

The strategy will come to Exec for approval on October 16th (it will be circulated to colleagues for comment imminently and be with you for review in the first week of September). It has been revised following the public consultation we ran earlier in the summer. If it is adopted by Exec our plans will then be final and in the public domain. Additionally, a report will go to the Climate Change Committee and a briefing not to Environment OSC. In parallel with this, we are developing the invitation to tender for the new charge points funded by the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure scheme. We expect to go out to tender in October, subject to the approval of our ITT from the LEVI Support Body. We will have three dedicated officers to deliver our EV charging plans. The first of those roles is currently being advertised, and we will start recruitment for the other two before we go out to procurement. **I have asked that these Officers make contact with estate management agents to support the installation of points in parking courtyards.** Additionally, I understand Andy Prigmore has been speaking to you about plans for a trial of cross-pavement gullies, and I defer to him on that.

Fly-tipping and environmental crime

Fly tipping is on the increase, so Bedford Borough Council is urging residents to be vigilant and report any instances of fly-tipping. The Council remains committed to tackling environmental crime and has once again achieved a successful prosecution against a fly-tipper.

Council Secures Prestigious Award for Supporting Armed Forces Community

Bedford Borough Council has been awarded the highest honour for employers who go above and beyond in supporting the Armed Forces community.

Preparatory works for new Wixams train station announced

Network Rail, in partnership with Bedford Borough Council, has announced the start of preparatory work for the new Wixams station. These initial stages will involve establishing a site compound and undertaking enabling work. The works as they stand have been costed at £60m but if the Universal

Theme Park goes ahead the station will become a four-platform station and the government will take over the costs of the station – so fingers crossed.

River Festival Changes Welcomed

This year RF saw changes by setting aside – St Mary's Gardens – as a family-focused area and a SEND area slightly away from the heavier crowded areas. Many groups and organisations for children set up in this area and families with young children stated they thought it was a very beneficial change and really felt secure and able to enjoy all that was secure with a great view of the boat races. Estimated crowd of 300,000 over the two days with very little trouble or cause for concern. Over 90 volunteers turned up at 06:30 on Sunday morning to clear litter and get ready for the Sunday crowd – thank you to all those volunteers.

Universal Meetings

“With regards to Universal and the pending submission of their Special Development Order (SDO) application. Company representatives will be in Bedford next week and W/C 16 September. They have requested meetings be arranged with strategic stakeholders to keep in touch ahead of the upcoming consultations and seeking approvals process. Universal are presenting at the member / partnership briefing on Wednesday 4 September at 6:30pm and have asked that sessions be arranged in Borough Hall with relevant Parish Council chairs and clerks etc (those who were previously given individual briefings earlier in the year). I will keep you informed of the dates and times meetings are arranged”.

‘What Ukrainian Independence Day means to me,’ by Bedford Borough Council’s Diana as Ukrainian Flag raised at the old town hall

Ukraine is both a very young and very old country, having won its independence when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, but able to trace its history as an independent nation to the Kievan Rus' in the ninth century. Could you offer a home to any of the Ukrainians who have fled the Russian invasion and come to Bedford Borough?

Bus Changes on Rural Routes

Bus services and patronage on buses have altered drastically since the pandemic. The Council is therefore to review the current services to see if they are still meeting the needs of residents and the changing patterns of working life especially with so many people working from home. The rural services that were operated by Grant Palmer have changed from the 1st of August and Stagecoach have been appointed to run these routes until the review which will mean new contracts will be awarded from the 1st of April next year 2025. Consultation will be undertaken with both Cllrs and the general public about the proposed changes.

Grants from External Sources

[National Lottery Community Fund](#) distributes over £600m a year to communities across the UK. You can apply for funding over and under £10,000. There is a quick way to apply for smaller amounts of funding between £300 and £10,000 through the [National Lottery Awards for All England](#).

SportEngland has:

- [Small Grants](#) that could you help people in your community become more physically active. Grants are between £300 and £10,000.
- [Community Asset Fund](#) is dedicated to enhancing the spaces in your local community that give people the chance to be active.

[Football Foundation](#) provides funding to strengthen and bring communities together through football - from new pitches, kits or building new teams.

[Leverhulme Trust](#) supports research and education.

[Lloyds TSB Foundation](#) partners with small and local charities across England and Wales, helping people overcome complex social issues.

[Peter Harrison Foundation](#) is an independent grant-making trust which supports voluntary and community organisations working in any part of the UK.

[The Nestlé Trust](#)

Information to help residents struggling to cope with the rising cost of living, particularly with food and energy costs.

The links below will take you to the appropriate external or Borough sites.

Cost of Living Hub

Visit UK Government's [Cost of Living Hub](#) to find out what support is available to help with the cost of living. This includes income and disability benefits, bills and allowances, childcare, housing and travel.

Free school meals and school holiday vouchers

Your child may [qualify for free school meals if you receive certain benefits](#).

During the upcoming school holidays, the Council will be providing families receiving income-related free school meals with a £15 voucher for each child. The £15 voucher will be provided for each week of the school holiday.

Help with energy bills

The [Citizens Advice Bureau provides lots of advice about the help that may be available with energy costs](#).

You can [find advice about how to cut down on your energy and water use to save money here](#) and on the [Energy saving trust website](#).

The [Better Housing Better Health](#) team is offering support to local residents to keep warm and well at home, improve the energy efficiency of their homes and save money on their energy bills.

Help paying your rent

If you are of working age and on a low income you may be able to receive help with the cost of rent through [Universal Credit](#). If you already receive Universal Credit, help with rent should already be included in your Universal Credit payment.

People who are pension-age and on a low income may be entitled to [Housing Benefit](#).

If you are already receiving Universal Credit or Housing Benefits and this does cover the full cost of your rent, you can [apply to the Council for a Discretionary Housing Payment](#).

Help with food

If you are on a low income and have an unexpected crisis or an emergency that means you cannot afford food, the Council may be able to help by referring you to Bedford Foodbank. Please contact 01234 718033 for more information.

If you are on a low income and have an unexpected crisis or an emergency that means you cannot afford food, the Council may be able to help by referring you to Bedford Foodbank or the Ethnic Foodbank. Please contact 01234 718033 for more information. You can also contact [CVS Bedfordshire for local organisations who can provide help with food](#).

Difficulty paying Council Tax or other Council bills or invoices

Please contact us if you cannot pay any money owed to the Council - we may be able to help.

Residents with the lowest income do not pay any Council Tax due to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Unlike many Councils, Bedford Borough still offers a discount of up to 100% to households with the lowest income. This is worth over £400 of extra help a year to a household in a typical band B or band C property.

- If your circumstances have changed and you think you may now qualify for Council Tax Support, please tell us by going to our [Council Tax Support page](#) to claim online.
- If you are having immediate difficulty paying your Council Tax bill, please get in touch with our trained advisors who will be able to help. Telephone us on 01234 718097.

Universal Credit and other welfare benefits

If you are on a low income you may be entitled to Universal Credit, this includes people who are working or self-employed. You can [apply online for Universal Credit](#).

See more information from the Government about [other types of welfare benefits](#).

Pension credit

[Pension Credit](#) gives extra money to help with living costs if you're over State Pension age and on a low income. You might get extra help if you're a carer, severely disabled, or responsible for a child or young person. Pension Credit is separate from your State Pension, and you can get Pension Credit even if you have other income, savings or own your own home.

Free advice about money management, dealing with debts, claiming benefits and more

Bedford Citizens Advice can offer free and confidential help with managing your money, dealing with debts and a wide range of other advice. Visit [Bedford Citizens Advice](#) or phone 01234 867944.

If you are a bpha tenant, you can find further advice from its [Money Advice Service](#).

[Christians Against Poverty \(CAP\)](#) offers free debt advice and support. Visit the website or phone 0800 328 0006.

Crisis or emergency grant

If you are on a low income and have an unexpected crisis or an emergency the Council may be able to help with [a crisis grant](#).

Household support grants

Bedford Borough Council is prioritising grants to vulnerable households that have the lowest level of income as assessed through the Council Tax Support application process, which provides a high level of detail regarding the household income.

For full details about the Household Support Fund, please visit the [Household Support Fund 2023-2024](#) page.

Help with a bank account, affordable loans and savings

[Bedford Credit Union](#) is a not-for-profit financial co-operative owned and controlled by its members offering fair loans, savings and banking services for people in and around Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. It is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Savers' deposits are fully protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

Email info@bedfordcreditunion.org.uk or 01234 346352 for more information.

Help for Anglian Water customers

Anglian Water is offering tailored [affordability support](#) to its eligible customers.

Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2)

The [Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 \(HUG2\)](#) is a new government grant scheme to fund energy-saving upgrades for residents with off-grid gas heating systems who are most likely to be impacted by the high cost of energy bills. If your home is cold, poorly insulated and you struggle to pay your energy bills, you might be eligible for free home improvements.