

Borough Councillors Report GD Parish Council March 2022

Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge

The original s106 which controlled the infrastructure like provision of a golf course. Within this document was the provision of a Pedestrian and Cycle bridge. The cost of this was – at the time – estimated to be £440k. When as chair of the parish council I put forward a proposal that we already had a bridge at Kempston Mill so why not use some of the money to refresh that and the rest to improve the footpaths leading to and from the “stepped bridge” which took you over the Ouse back channel. This would then improve access to Kempston for parents with prams and buggies as well as those with mobility issues, it would also add to sustainability. This was ignored and the project was kicked into the long grass. On the 30th November 2021 an s106 variation order was agreed and signed between Bedford Borough Council and David Wilson Homes. This gave the sum of £688k to the Borough in lieu of the bridge.

The fact that this was being discussed and actioned without reference to either the PC or me as Ward Cllr must be deplored. When the financial crisis hit the developer DWH was allowed to reduce their cost of the development by £13m! This meant a reduction in social housing and other infrastructure buildings like a library, ecumenical centre, public works of art and some reconfiguration on housing density. The bridge over the Great Ouse would of course have been a further connection to Kempston and was planned to bridge the Country Park to Hillgrounds. So, the benefit would have served both communities equally.

When asked about what the intention was for the money this was the response

It is not our intention to use this money to repairs to the existing bridge, which are being funded from other budgets, but to secure a new facility better suited to the needs of all user groups.

What I believe will happen – as there is not really a need for an additional bridge – is that the funds will go into a general reserve. What should happen is that the funds are divided equally between Kempston and Great Denham for projects that those communities see as benefits that they have identified. In GD the argument still exists for better and more user-friendly footpaths leading to and from the Kempston Mill bridge. Ongoing!

Richard Fuller MP Surgery

Our constituency MP Richard Fuller is holding a drop-in surgery on the Thursday 10th March at 6pm-7pm the venue is the Community Hall Great Denham – Mercia Suite.

Bedford Borough ignore residents' responses to their own consultation on cycling in Town Centre

It was revealed that 54% of responders opposed or strongly opposed continuing the current ban on daytime cycling in the town centre.

However, Bedford Borough Council have decided to continue supporting the ban stating they had received support for it from businesses in the town centre and will recommend that it continues at Executive on Wednesday 2nd March.

Budget 22/23

At Full Council on Wednesday 2nd February, Bedford Borough Council agreed to raise Council Tax by 3.99% after rejecting the Conservative amendment to freeze Core Council Tax.

You can read more about it here: <https://rosettapublishing.com/bulletin/2022/02/03/bedford-borough-conservatives-call-for-core-council-tax-freeze/>

The Council Tax resolution which includes all of the Parish Council precepts, went through at Full Council on Wednesday 23rd February and you can see that in full here: <https://councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s59993/Item%2016%20Council%20Tax%20Resolution.pdf>

Residents concerned by Manton Lane feeder road

Road users are claiming that the new feeder lane at Clapham Road roundabout onto Manton Lane has created an 'new accident black spot' and have called for urgent action.

It is claimed that the angle at which the road joins Manton Lane is too acute to see vehicles already on the roundabout.

Concerns have been raised with the Borough but they will not take action, stating the angle meets the legal requirement.

Bedford bus station has deep clean

Over the weekend of February 25-27, Bedford Borough Council commissioned a deep clean of the bus station in the town centre.

General neglect and pigeons within the building are blamed, the portfolio holder for Environment and Transport said that 'the Council is looking to implement further pigeon prevention measures'.

There are further reports by bus users of drinkers in the bus bays and unsubstantiated reports of drug use within the station, however there has been no update on what action will be taken over the anti-social behaviour.

Extra Powers for Council to Enforce On Bedford Roads

The Government has given local authorities the chance to apply for powers to enforce against 'moving traffic offences'. Currently, only the Police can enforce against these offences.

Bedford Borough Council is considering acquiring these powers, and wants to hear the views of local residents, businesses and interested parties.

You can see the full list of moving traffic offences along with further information including how to respond to the consultation here: www.bedford.gov.uk/mtoconsultation

You can respond via email or writing at the following: Email : highway.consultations@bedford.gov.uk

Write to : Traffic Operations, Room 109, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street Bedford MK42 9AP

Comments should be received by 18 March 2022 and may be published.

East West Rail (EWR) update

All Councillors have been invited to a meeting with East West Rail to discuss the forthcoming line. Councillors from all parties have expressed dismay at residents not being invited and hope for more two-way communication in the process.

You can read more about it here: <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/frustration-that-residents-are-excluded-from-east-west-rail-community-discussions/>

Bedford Borough Council Launches Fly-Tipping Information Appeal

Bedford Borough Council has invested in new, portable CCTV cameras that they are deploying at fly-tipping hotspots around Bedford Borough.

The footage will be posted on the Council's 'Caught on Camera' webpage at www.bedford.gov.uk/caughtoncamera. Residents are being urged that if they recognise a vehicle or an individual, to let the Council know on that webpage to assist in their investigations.

Borough COVID-19 Latest Figures

As of the 23rd February January in Bedford, there have been 54,362 cases since the start of the pandemic and there have been 833 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of 23rd February) please find it below:
<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/covid19-weekly-statistics-23Feb22.pdf>

More information available at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/>

Businesses can apply for a new Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant

Applications for the new Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant, which has been funded by the Government, are now open on Bedford Borough Council's website.

The Government announced that further support will be provided to businesses in the hospitality, accommodation and leisure business sectors affected by the Omicron wave through the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant.

The amount eligible local businesses will receive are:

- Qualifying businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or less on 30 December 2021, will receive a one-off grant of £2,667.
- Qualifying businesses with a rateable value over £15,000 and less than £51,000 on 30 December 2021, will receive a one-off grant of £4,000.
- Qualifying businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or above on 30 December 2021, will receive a one-off grant of £6,000.

Visit www.bedford.gov.uk/BSG to find out more about eligibility, and to apply for this grant.

You can find out which type of businesses are excluded at: [Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Omicron discretionary additional restrictions grant scheme

The Government have also provided funds for Bedford Borough to implement a discretionary grant scheme to assist qualifying businesses in the hospitality, leisure, indoor facilities and non-essential retail sectors with further assistance.

The Omicron discretionary grant scheme will pay eligible businesses a one-off grant. You may be eligible if your business:

- Is located in the Bedford Borough Council area.

- Did not receive funding under the main Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant scheme.
- Operates within the sectors in the table below.

Sector	Type of business
Hospitality and Leisure	Restaurants, Cafes, Bars, Shisha Cafes, Conference centres, Pubs, Nightclubs, Bingo Halls, Bowling Alleys, Hairdressers, Beauty, Businesses that cater to the events sector and mobile caterers at events
Indoor facilities	Businesses that normally provide group activities – i.e. art & crafts workshops, community centres/public halls/church or religious halls, fitness studios, squash clubs, sports clubs, boxing clubs, wellness studios, gyms, dance studios, escape rooms, health & fitness centres, soft play centres, riding centres and swimming pools
Non-essential retail	Travel businesses including travel agents and tour operators

Visit www.bedford.gov.uk/BSG to find out more about eligibility, and to apply for this grant.