

Borough Councillor Monthly Report to GDPC July 2025

- **Gypsy Traveller Illegal Encampments**

Following two lots of travellers last week (w/c 30th June) on the former Golf Course GD I wanted to pass on my thanks to Council staff for their quick and decisive actions. Both encampments were moved on over a 24-hour period. Robinson & Hall who now have responsibility for the land were also quick to react so thank you to them. It's certainly a much better and quicker response than we ever got from Bidwell's. Unfortunately – as usual – litter and debris litter the site.

- **Fire at waste station Elstow**



Following the fire over the weekend at the Transfer Station in Elstow, we have had to exercise our contingency plans for kerbside collections this week.

Due to the Transfer Station being out of action and the council having to transport the recycling and some bulky waste streams (priority waste streams) further to another licenced site, we have had to take the decision to unfortunately suspend green waste collections from the kerbside across the borough for 2 weeks.

Residents still can use the HWRC at Barkers Lane to take any excess green waste which they wish to dispose of if they are unable to wait until the next green waste collection.

- **Cabinet Changes**



As part of these changes, Deputy Mayor Jim Weir will be stepping down from his role as Portfolio Holder for Finance following the Full Council meeting on 2nd July 2025. He will now lead on:

- External Relations & Business Partnerships, including:
 - England's Economic Heartland (EEH)
 - South Midlands Authorities Board (SMAB) – Co Chair
 - South Midlands Business Board (SMBB) – SMA Lead
 - Devolution Discussions – reporting back to members
- Human Resources
- Information Technology Systems

Updated cabinet:

- Mayor Tom Wootton – Elected Mayor, covering Democratic Services, Asset Management and Rural Communities.

- Councillor Jim Wier – Deputy Mayor Cllr covering External Relations & Business Partnerships, HR, IT Systems
- Councillor Marc Frost – Portfolio Holder for Finance Corporate Services (Transformation, Procurement and Performance)
- Councillor Sarah Gallagher – Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience (inc. Leisure, Recreation and Culture)
- Councillor Andrea Spice – Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Planning and Prosperity (inc. Town Centres)
- Councillor Nicola Gribble – Portfolio Holder for Environment
- Councillor Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regulatory Services
- Councillor Martin Towler – Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods and Communities: Health and Wellbeing
- Councillor Robert Rigby – Portfolio Holder for Valuing Families: Adults Services
- Councillor Jane Walker – Portfolio Holder for Valuing Families: Children's Services

- **Local Plan 2040**

Following a recent letter from the Planning Inspector, it is now clear that the Local Plan 2040 cannot proceed. The Inspector found significant issues with the plan's underlying assumptions, infrastructure delivery, and overall soundness. Concluding that "It is hard to see a credible future for the Plan as submitted."

While efforts were made to address these concerns during the examination process, the issues were too embedded to be resolved through further modification. As a result, a recommendation has been made to withdraw the plan and begin work on a new Local Plan.

Should Council agree to formally withdraw the plan, the Borough will begin preparing a new Local Plan from scratch. This represents a significant opportunity to:

- Ensure growth is supported by robust infrastructure planning
- Reflect the changing local and national policy landscape
- Factor in the expected arrival of Universal Studios, which brings both opportunity and new planning challenge.
- Engage more closely and meaningfully with residents, communities, and parish councils.

We understand there is significant concern about speculative development, particularly in the absence of a 5-year land supply. We will do everything in our power to manage that risk through careful planning decisions and robust engagement.

- **Midland Road Reopens to Two-Way Traffic**

On Wednesday 11 June 2025, Midland Road in Bedford has been reopened to two-way traffic following completion of a major phase in the area's regeneration. This milestone forms part



of the wider Midland Road public realm improvements, funded through the £22.6 million Bedford Town Deal - a government-backed investment aimed at revitalising key parts of the town centre.

The temporary one-way system had been in place to enable construction work, which is transforming Midland Road into a safer, more attractive, and accessible route for pedestrians, residents, and visitors. The improvements are designed to enhance the look and feel of this key town centre gateway, supporting footfall and local business activity.

Led by Bedford Borough Council in partnership with the Bedford Town Deal Board and central government, the Town Deal includes several projects focused on economic growth, connectivity, and public space upgrades.

- **Update on the Closure of Bedford's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)**

The East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST) has confirmed its intention to close the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) located on Hammond Road in Bedford within the next 18 to 24 months. This forms part of a wider plan to reduce the number of EOCs across the East of England from three to two.

Under the proposal, the EOCs in Bedford and Chelmsford will close, while the Norwich EOC will remain operational. A new site in Essex is being considered as a long-term replacement for the two closing centres.

A recent meeting was held between EEAST senior leadership, and the Mayor of Bedford to discuss the plans. EEAST confirmed that they are currently awaiting reports on property availability and population growth across the region, expected in July. During the meeting, EEAST also stated that the Bedford site will not be sold and may be repurposed for other ambulance-related services in the future.

It was highlighted Bedfordshire's recent and projected population growth, especially due to Universal, as important considerations that should factor into the decision. Concerns were raised about the loss of local knowledge and the impact on staff, and EEAST has agreed to return to the Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a more detailed business case.

- **New Local Link Road Opens as Part of A428 Upgrade Scheme**

The new road, Baron Way and Dove Farm Lane, has officially opened, providing a vital connection between Roxton Road and The Lane in Wyboston. This new link is designed to improve safety and access to the A1/A421 Black Cat roundabout and will also help manage traffic from Nagshead Lane and Chawston Lane.

This forms part of the wider £1 billion National Highways project to upgrade the route between the Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet roundabout, including the newly opened Roxton Road bridge.

The overall scheme, which began construction in late 2023, will deliver a new 10-mile dual carriageway linking the A1 and A428, replacing the final section of single carriageway between Milton Keynes (M1) and the east coast ports, such as Harwich and Felixstowe.

Once completed (expected by spring 2027), the project will upgrade both Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet roundabouts into modern, free-flowing junctions, and introduce a new junction at Cambridge Road to improve access to St Neots and the railway station.

- **New Roxton Road bridge officially opens on A428**



Our A428 project team are celebrating another major milestone this spring with the opening of the new Roxton Road Bridge on the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme. Watch the drone footage [here](#). This follows the recent opening of a newly constructed bridge joining the A428 and B1040 roads at Eltisley Junction.

The new bridge forms a key part of the new Roxton Road link, providing a safe and accessible route over the A421 for vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It spans the new west and eastbound slip roads and includes a new free-flow link road running beneath it from the A421 to the A1. This replaces the old bridge which will be demolished in the coming weeks.