

Borough Councillor Monthly Report to GDPC November 2025

Making Joint Working Work for Bedford Borough: Why This Matters Now

Your Views Needed

Background:

Bedford Borough, alongside Central Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes, forms a vital economic and social region—home to around one million people. With major developments on the horizon, such as the Universal theme park in Bedford, the expansion of London Luton Airport, and new transport links, our area is at a crossroads. The decisions we make now will shape our future prosperity and quality of life.

Why Formalise Joint Working?

- **Protect Bedford's Interests:**
By formalising our partnership, Bedford Borough secures a seat at the table for all major decisions affecting our area. This ensures our priorities—jobs, health, transport, and housing—are not sidelined by larger neighbours or national bodies.
- **Unlock Funding and Influence:**
Government and investors increasingly look for joined-up local leadership. A formal arrangement strengthens our case for more funding, better infrastructure, and influence with bodies like the Integrated Care Board and national government.
- **Keep Local Control:**
The recommended Advisory Board option gives us flexibility. It does not hand over formal decision-making powers, but allows us to coordinate, share information, and act together where it benefits Bedford. We retain control over our own services and budgets.

I'm keen to know what residents think about broadening our working relationship with our closest neighbours. Please drop me an email with your views.

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Cleat Hill

- The tragic explosion occurred on 19 October 2024, in which two Borough residents lost their lives.
- In the immediate aftermath, the Council worked closely with emergency services to ensure the safety of residents in the area and identify the reason for the explosion, a gas reservoir.
- After working to get the area safe for residents, the company incurred around £2 million in recovery and response costs. To help address the financial pressures of these added costs, the Council submitted a formal application on 27 March 2025 for financial support under the Bellwin Scheme (a UK scheme for emergency/disaster relief to local authorities) for its “immediate response costs” arising from the October 2024 explosion.

- No specific figure has been confirmed by the Government as approved for payment. The reply received by the Council was that they will review the information and then decide what, if any, assistance will be given under the Bellwin Scheme.
- The Mayor will be writing to the Government to urge them to provide the financial support Bedford Borough needs following this tragic incident.

PSPO

- Following a two-month consultation by the Borough Council, a new three-year Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) has been introduced to crack down on persistent anti-social behaviour in Bedford town centre, targeting issues such as street drinking, aggressive begging, spitting, littering, public urination, accessing rooftops or stairwells for anti-social behaviour, and dangerous cycling in pedestrian areas.
- The PSPO will be jointly enforced by Council Officers and Bedfordshire police with clear signage being displayed across the town centre.

Bedford Borough Council launches consultation on future Resources Waste Strategy

- Have your say on how Bedford Borough Council manages waste and recycling in the years ahead.
- Bedford Borough Council has launched a public consultation to help shape the future of its Resources Waste Strategy. Residents are invited to share their views on how waste and recycling services should evolve to meet new national requirements and support a more sustainable Borough.
- Government changes to waste policy mean councils across the country must align their services with national objectives to increase recycling and reuse, reduce carbon emissions, and deliver best value. Without changing current waste habits, new treatment taxes could see Bedford Borough Council facing an additional £1.6 million a year in waste treatment costs by 2030.
- The Council is responsible for collecting and managing all household waste and recycling, It collects residential garden waste, provides special services such as clinical, commercial, and bulky waste collections, operates the Household Waste Recycling Centre (tip) on Barkers Lane, and the mini-recycling sites across the borough. The new Waste Strategy will set out a long-term approach to ensuring these services remain effective, efficient, affordable, and environmentally responsible.
- The consultation is available online now and will remain open until 11.59pm, Sunday, 30 November 2025. Paper copies are also available from Bedford Central Library, Bedford Borough Hub (Horne Lane) and Bedford Borough Hall (Cauldwell Street) for those unable to respond digitally, and these must be returned to us by 5pm on Friday, 5 December.
- To find out more and take part, visit www.bedford.gov.uk/consultations
- Councillor Nicola Gribble, Portfolio Holder for Environment at Bedford Borough Council, said, "Managing waste responsibly is crucial for both our environment and our residents. This consultation is an opportunity for everyone in Bedford Borough to

share their views on how we manage waste and recycling in the future. We want to make sure our services continue to protect the environment, reduce carbon emissions, and provide best the value for money.”

Glass and Food Recycling

- Kerbside Glass Recycling
 - Following a successful trial in several communities, glass will soon be collected in orange-lidded bins across the whole Borough.
 - The trial increased overall recycling tonnage by around 17% and is expected to raise the Borough’s kerbside recycling rate by about 6% - with estimations suggesting the move could reduce carbon emissions by over 4,000 tonnes of CO₂ each year.
- Weekly Food Waste Collection (from April 2026)
 - Every household will receive a 7-litre kitchen caddy and a 23-litre outdoor caddy with a lockable lid.
 - Around 5,000 tonnes of food waste are expected to be collected each year, turning unavoidable food scraps into renewable energy or compost.
 - The service is fully funded to start, with over £1.9 million in government grants already received for vehicles, containers, and setup.

Connect to Work programme

- Bedford Borough Council is taking part in a new Connect to Work scheme to help local residents get back into employment.
- The five-year programme offers 12 months of one-to-one support for people who’ve been out of work for six months or more - particularly those with health conditions, disabilities, or other barriers to work.
- Participants will receive personal coaching, help finding suitable jobs, and ongoing support once they start work to help them stay in employment. The scheme also works closely with services such as mental health, housing, and homelessness support.

Free Parking

- From 3 November 2025, Bedford Borough Council will temporarily suspend the 4-hour free parking offer at Allhallows and Lurke Street multi-storey car parks to help protect vital services and stabilise Council finances.
- Like many councils across the country, Bedford Borough Council is facing significant financial pressures, with rising costs in Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, and Temporary Accommodation, alongside reduced Government funding.
- To maintain financial stability, the Council is reviewing all non-essential spending so that essential frontline services can continue to be delivered. While the 4-hour free parking scheme has been popular and successful in supporting town centre businesses, it must be paused temporarily as part of these measures.
- The Council remains fully committed to reintroducing free parking once its financial position improves.

- In the meantime, residents and visitors can still benefit from:
 - 2 hours of free parking at Queen Street Car Park (Monday–Saturday)
 - Free parking every Sunday across all Council-owned town centre car parks
 - Free parking 6pm–8am at Allhallows, Lurke Street, and Queen Street

Domestic Abuse Survivor Group

- Bedford Borough Council is inviting survivors of domestic abuse aged 16 and over to join a new Survivor Voice group, helping to shape how support is provided across the Borough.
- The group will offer a safe and supportive space for people to share their experiences, highlight what helped in their recovery, and suggest ways services could be improved. Members will meet regularly with Council officers and decision-makers, ensuring survivor perspectives directly influence local policy and practice.
- Anyone of any gender, background, or sexual orientation can take part, with around four hours' involvement per month and support from Victim Support throughout.