

Borough Councillors Report – July/August 2023

Welcome & Thank You

Wanted to start our first meeting back after the summer break with a welcome to our new Parish Clerk Robbin Brough who is an experienced Parish Clerk who also looks after other parishes. Welcome Robbin.

This obviously means farewell to our former Parish Clerk Anna O'Meara after 6 years of dedicated service supporting and recruiting Parish Councillors and helping them on their journey. I wanted to pay particular thanks to Anna for supporting me as both a parish Cllr and for the past 4 years as the Ward Cllr for GD knowing that she was always working in the best interests of GD was a great bonus in me carrying out my role. Thank you, Anna.

Parking at GDVMC

After many attempts to convince the landowner to mitigate the impact on residents from DG and further afield I have now exhausted all avenues in engaging with all parties involved. As a mitigating factor and to support and help those with mobility issues we have proposed a new Traffic Order which would allow 4 to 5 cars to park on Kingswood Way for a limited period (30 mins) whilst visiting the pharmacy. We have also put up signs as you enter Great Denham on Kingswood Way showing the alternative parking options on the Park & Ride. These options and actions will be discussed at tonight's (4th September) meeting. We are now awaiting the outcome of the consultation on the proposed Traffic Order.

Gypsy Traveller Encampment

As most will be aware we had an unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller encampment last week on the former golf course. There are currently several families in and around Bedford and they have been moved on a number of times. As the height restriction barrier in the park and ride was removed for repair, we protected the entrance with concrete blocks. The blocks have now been removed to allow for the return to school and to ensure parents and guardians can access easily.

Estate Management Agents

Following my past two meetings with FirstPort and DWH, we have not made any appreciable difference. I will be meeting again on the 19th of September with both parties. I have also approached RMG and DWH regarding the service and communication issues that residents are having with this agent.

Ward Councillor Surgeries.

Fellow Great Denham residents I will be holding "Ward Councillor surgeries" on Saturdays each month at the Community Hall.

The sessions are for any GD residents to come and discuss issues they feel I could help or support with. The first hour 9-10 is open for drop-in. The second hour 10-11 is for 15-minute appointments. To book these please email me at jim.weir@bedford.gov.uk or text [07528 803981](tel:07528803981)
Dates:

Date	Room	Time
16/9/23	Anglian Suite	9-11am
21/10/23	Mercia Suite	9-11am
25/11/23	Mercia Suite	2-4pm
16/12/23	Mercia Suite	9-11am
27/1/24	Mercia Suite	9-11am
17/2/24	Mercia Suite	9-11am
23/3/24	Mercia Suite	9-11am
27/4/24	Mercia Suite	9-11am

Gutters and Public Realm

I have been concerned for some time about the kerbside weed growth and the block paved areas within Great Denham. I will be taking one of our Environment Officers around Great Denham next week to see if we can get a programme together for the regular removal of the weed growth.

- **Councillor Jane Walker tables motion to give care leavers 'protected characteristic' status.**

Councillor Jane Walker moved a motion with full cross-party support at Full Council on July 12, 2023

The motion solidifies the Council's commitment to prioritising the well-being of care-experienced young people at the heart of everything the Council does. The motion allowed the council to become one of only forty in the country to recognise care-experienced people as a group who are subject to discrimination and protect them from this.

- **Rural Affairs Grant**

A friendly reminder that the Rural Affairs Grant is open for applications. The Scheme invites applications from rural organisations or rural Parish Councils for capital expenditure for projects that are in the interests of their local inhabitants.

Further information can be found on the Council website here: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/grants-and-funding/grants-and-funding-towns-and-organisations>. If you have any problems accessing your saved form or any other problems with the form, please email CommunityWelfare@bedford.gov.uk

- **Kerbside glass collection scheme**

The Council is looking to trial kerbside glass collection in a number of different areas of the borough.

The Council is currently looking into the rounds and types of vehicles/containers that this trial will need – alongside a plan to have collections taking place with different containers and different [collection] frequencies within the trial period. A precise date has not been set but we expect that the trial period may start this year.

- **4 hours free parking trial**

Bedford Borough Council has launched a trial scheme to support local businesses in Bedford Town Centre by offering up to four hours of free parking at Allhallows car park. Shoppers visiting Allhallows

car park can enjoy up to four hours of free parking starting from 1st August 2023, until 1st February 2024.

- **Local Plan 2040 hearings**

The hearing sessions of the Examination of the Bedford Local Plan will be held in two blocks and opened at 12 midday on Monday 12 June 2023.

Block 1 hearings have concluded, the 2nd block will take place:

- Week 3: Monday 11 September to Friday 15 September.
- Week 4: Monday 18 September to Friday 22 September.

- **Caterlink**

Bedford Borough Council offers a buyback school meal service which is contracted out to Caterlink. The contract ended at the end of the 2022/23 academic year requiring the Council to either retender or cease the service.

The original tender, agreed by the previous administration, received no bids with potential bidders citing contract length, capped meal price, meal transport & waste costs as barriers to bidding. As a result, the Council was left with insufficient lead-time afforded to make it viable for schools to undertake individual re-tenders. Instead of ceasing the service, the Council has re-negotiated the contract with incumbent provider Caterlink so the Council can continue to operate this service on behalf of the schools.

The most financially sustainable option negotiated means the school meal price is now £2.72 for primary and £2.82 for secondary schools which is an increase of (22p) £2.40 for Primary and (12p) £2.60 for Secondary.

- **Leisure Contract**

Fusion Lifestyle has been informed that the Council does not intend to trigger the clause in the contract that would allow the contract to be extended beyond that expiry date [31 January 2024].

More information on the Council's leisure strategy in the latter part of this year.

Wider Borough Items

- **Greyfriars police station redevelopment**

Planning permission has been secured for the redevelopment of Greyfriars police station by DLP Planning Ltd on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner of Bedfordshire.

The redevelopment could see 105 new homes plus 'town centre uses' on the ground floor of the building.

The redevelopment forms a key part of regenerating Bedford Town Centre through the Town Deal which will make a significant investment in Bedford Borough.