

Borough Councillor Update for Great Denham PC– January 2023

Happy New Year

As we enter 2023 and the first PC meeting of the year, we are also entering the last four months of the municipal year and the end of the four-year cycle before the elections in May. It will be interesting to see how the public perception of national politics impacts what is happening locally. As I have continued to say throughout my tenure as your Ward Cllr national issues are for your MP and local issues with me. The only time that changes is when I – on behalf of residents – use our MP to get something done that the Borough are either reluctant or unable to do. A good example is today – Monday 9th Jan – when Richard Fuller MP will be asking the following question in Parliament.

*“Thousands of my constituents are paying an additional “tax” if they are living in new developments. Estate Management agents – appointed by developers – are charging between 75-90% management/overhead fees for the limited service they offer. The system is set up in such a way that challenging the fairness of these exploitive charges is almost impossible. The Property Ombudsman can only deal with the complaint handling by the agents and not the exploitive aspects of the charging regime. **Can the Property Ombudsman TORs be revisited, and more powers be given to allow punitive action against agents and developers where this is happening? This is happening not just in one organisation but is systemic throughout the industry.***

A recent survey has placed all these companies with a very bad, or bad, overall satisfaction rating of 96%. Despite this the agents won’t engage in a constructive way with either residents or local Cllrs. It is plainly obvious to those on the receiving end of this system that legislation must be enacted to change the system and give residents some easier routes to challenge”

Estate Management Charges Update

By far the largest email and social media comms I get refers to this issue. As most residents have found to their cost and frustration getting responses from the managing agents is a bit like hens teeth! I too share that frustration, so it has led to me raising an official complaint against Barrett Development plc – which incorporates DWH – apart from an acknowledgement from the CEO I also received the following.

Good afternoon

I acknowledge receipt of your complaint dated the 19th of December 2022 addressed to David Thomas, Chief Executive. It is important that we arrange for the right person to look into this matter and provide a response. I have therefore recorded your concerns as a formal complaint with a complaint start date of the 20th of December 2022.

Your complaint has been forwarded to John Dillon, the Regional Director for the East Region who will write to you within ten calendar days from the complaint start date. They will outline the decision or the proposed next steps to investigate and address the issues raised. This the highest level within our Formal Complaints Process and their determination at this stage will provide you with the Company’s final position in this matter.

You may already have made contact with our Divisional team, however, your concerns are now recorded within our Formal Complaints Process and will be investigated thoroughly, at a local level and within the timescales detailed above. I can confirm that processes are in place to ensure David Thomas and the Divisional management team remain regularly updated on the progress of your complaint.

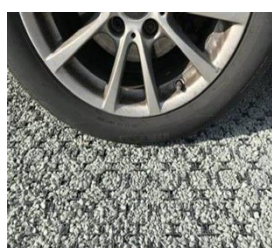
Please be assured that we take all complaints seriously and are committed to complying with the requirements of the applicable Consumer Code. You can find full details of our Formal Complaint Process on our website.

Yours sincerely

James Nichols
Group Head of Customer Care

Two Directors of the company have made contact and they are speaking to FirstPort initially before setting up a meeting where we will all attend to hear the issues that residents constantly raise with me.

Parking



Whilst the first overspill carpark is complete the second is on schedule to be completed within the next 48 hours. Fears that the surface would still prove difficulty in bad weather can be dispelled as the stone and mesh surface has good footings underneath.

Work has started today on the pedestrian crossing but it would appear that there won't be any railings to deter illegal and dangerous parking. The BT footings have been uncovered and I was informed that the concrete footings for railings would interfere with these. I think the solution therefore is for the placement of bollards to stop the parking on the pavement. Both the PC and I will be discussing with Highways what the options would be. I've written to Andy Prigmore to ask him to review the options available to tackle the issue.



Executive Decisions

2nd December - To award a grant of £3,790 to Cardington Parish Council towards the replacement and enhancement of the pathway along the West Green, subject to the project being fully funded and any legal requirements necessary for the completion of the project.

2nd December - To approve grant funding support which is provided under the Trees for Climate Programme for the land located at Octagon Farm North in partnership with the Forest of Marston Vale Trust.

5th December - To approve the proposed Rural Settlements List for 2023/2024.

9th December - To award Age UK Bedfordshire £20,000 to support their Get Set for Winter Campaign for residents who are struggling with the cost of living, energy bills and keeping warm.

9th December - The decision is to accept up to £2.3m awarded by Dept. for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to deliver the High Street Heritage Action Zone.

13th December - To approve that arrangements to progress the Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan to the referendum stage of preparation are made.

16th December - To award Bedford Bowls Club £5,000 as a contribution to the purchasing and installation of an automated watering system for the bowling green located in Bedford Park.

19th December - To accept a grant of £69,509.50 from the Department for Transport from the Transport Fund in respect of socially necessary bus services as set out in the attached report.

20th December - To approve funding a climate change fund for the application from Great Denham Community Hall to fund the installation of 71 solar modules on the hall roof and battery storage, in the sum of £20,000.

5th January - To accept funds of £66,058 from Active Travel England/Department for Transport for revenue funding to develop active travel scheme.

Apply for Primary, Lower and Middle school places for 2023

If any guardian/parent has a child due to start school or move up to middle school this September, they must apply to their preferred school by Sunday 15 January for the best chance of getting a place.

Bedford Borough Council's online admissions system is open to all parents and carers who live within the Borough and whose children are due to start primary or lower school or transfer to a middle school in September 2023.

The online admission system is available at www.bedford.gov.uk/onlineadmissions and will close for primary, lower and middle school applications on Sunday 15 January 2023.

Financial Settlement

The Levelling Up Secretary Michael Gove has today (19 December 2022) confirmed an almost £60 billion package for councils in England for the next financial year. The settlement means councils across England will benefit from an additional £5 billion – a 9% increase on last year's settlement.

The agreement for next year includes a one-off Funding Guarantee that ensures every council in England will see at least a 3% increase in core spending power before any local decisions around council tax are taken.

Councillor Ward funds

There will be Ward Fund Allocations for 2023 – 25, actual figures have not yet been provided but it is suspected that the funds will need to be slightly higher than the previous allocation as we have had an increase in electorate across the Borough.

Drop-off sites for real Christmas Trees to be recycled

From Thursday 29 December to Tuesday 10 January, there will be eight Christmas tree recycling sites across Bedford Borough. People can drop off real Christmas trees at any time. They will be collected by council staff and recycled at GBRs Ltd.

Sites include:

- **Hillgrounds Road, Kempston** - opposite the shops near Hartwell Drive
- **Jubilee Park, Bedford** - opposite North Lodge, Canvin Way

- **Milton Ernest Garden Centre**, Radwell Road off the A6
- **Mowsbury Park Car Park**, Wentworth Drive, Bedford
- **Podington Garden Centre**, High Street, Podington
- **Roxton Garden Centre**, A421 near the A1 Black Cat Roundabout
- **Seasons Garden Centre**, Bedford Road, Wixams / Wilstead
- **Household Waste Recycling Centre**, Barkers Lane, Bedford

Bedford Council use Government funding to give thousands of Bedford Borough families shopping vouchers this Christmas

Funded through the DWP's Household Support Fund, Bedford Borough Council will continue to provide each eligible child £15 per week.

DfE funding accepted by Bedford Borough Council

The Council has accepted funding by the Department of Education, £9833.02, to support the development of a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) employment forum to increase the number of young people (aged 16-25) benefiting from Supported Internships.

Dept. for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities funding accepted by the Mayor

The Council accepted up to £2.3m awarded by Dept. for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to deliver the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Government scheme. This will enable the Borough to deliver projects proposed in the UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan for the period April 2022 – March 2025.

For example, the plan focuses on three key priorities with town centre improvements among them, projects such as the Midland Road regeneration are an example of this.

Bedford received grant from DfT and £2 bus fare.

The Council accepted a grant of £69,509.50 from the Department for Transport to protect socially necessary bus services from January to March.

Additionally, the Council has also accepted a further £66,058 from Active Travel England/Department for Transport. The funding will be used to develop an active travel scheme and development, public engagement on schemes and data collection and evidence. The funding also provides one full time Active Travel Officer for one year.

Additionally, residents across Bedford Borough are set to benefit from a £2 cap on single bus journeys from January to March 2023. This £2 fare cap is being made possible by a £60 million Government initiative that aims to protect bus services across the country.

Bedford Borough Council uses government funding to replace trees on residential streets

These replacement trees will be purchased via the Local Authority Treescapes Fund which is part of the government's Nature for Climate Fund. The funding will be used to reinstate historic tree pit locations across the Borough, who will receive £159,800.00.

Bedford Borough Council contribute to Age UK's "Keep well this winter"

Bedford Borough Council is giving Age UK Bedfordshire £20,000 to provide additional frontline services to older people who risk being overwhelmed by the current cost of living.

Potential charges for green waste collection left open

At Full Council the Mayor refused to rule out the possibility of a charge on green waste collection. Charges typically range from £35 - £45 for a single green bin, with a 1-year subscription plan.

Butterfly Bridge Refurbishment

Refurbishment works are planned at Butterfly Bridge, Bedford with the bridge closing from 9th January for up to 4 months.

Bedford Borough Climate change fund

Great Denham Community Hall is receiving funding for the installation of 71 solar modules on the hall roof and battery storage, in the sum of £20,000 from the Borough Councils Climate change fund.

The Climate Change fund 2020-2024 can provide up to 50% match funding (from £5,000 up to £20,000) for improvements that reduce carbon emissions and energy costs of community buildings within Bedford Borough. Projects can be made up of multiple building improvements up to the maximum grant available.

King Charles III Coronation

The UK will mark the Coronation of King Charles III with a three-day bank holiday weekend from Saturday 6 May to Monday 8 May 2022.

For the celebration Bedford Borough Council is waiving the usual administration fee for street party road closures.

For anyone wishing to hold a street party over the extended bank holiday weekend, the Council asks that applications are submitted by 1 April 2023. Residents can email road.closures@bedford.gov.uk to request a street closure

Local Plan 2040

A consultation took place between 15th June 2022 and 29th July 2022. A total of 1,449 individual representations were received from 595 respondents.

As a reminder the next Local Plan must be submitted for examination by January 2023. BBC concluded, following review, that nothing in the representations received has altered the conclusion reached by officers.

Representations were given received on the:

- **HOU13 land at Gibraltar Corner, Kempston Rural –**
 - Representations noted that this will have adverse impact on existing residents including traffic issues, highway safety, noise, drainage capacity / flooding, loss of farmland, rural land and greenspace, loss of views, impact on wildlife, not enough health and other services, already enough development in the parish / don't need

more houses, danger of coalescence, query timing of masterplan preparation, historic environment impact. Petition 247 signatures.

- **HOU14 Kempston Hardwick New Settlement –**

- Representations noted that there could be historic environment impacts, impact on County Wildlife Site, traffic and environmental impacts, Concerns about inclusion of reference to Kempston Hardwick station, concerns about type of employment proposed (reference to innovation uses) and need for development to await completion of strategic placemaking framework (Policy HOU12), scale of development too big, concerns about reliance on EWR, consider alternative access arrangements, lack of facilities to support scale of growth. Petition 256 signatures

A small addition to the Plan is the inclusion of two new settlements close to two new rail stations on the proposed East West Rail line at the former brickworks at Kempston Hardwick, and at Little Barford to the east of the Borough.

For brevity not all issues not be listed however, they can be accessed through the appropriate portals on the [council's website](#).

Council Tax for 2023/2024

As part of current budget setting process, the January Executive will consider:

- That a provision of 1.50% be made in the Council Tax Base in respect of losses on collection.

For further detail please view related documents via the council's [online portals](#).

Bin Collections

As a reminder, the holiday timetable will continue until 7th January, Saturday, after which the standard collection timetable will resume.