

Borough Councillor Update for GD – August/September 2022

Reinstatement of Mini Stonehenge and Memorial area.

Its pleasing to see that both the above areas have been reinstated and all that now remains is to fit the planned benches which I am told are now on order.



Bus Services

Grant Palmer Limited made changes to its timetable. Service 24 will be withdrawn apart from school journeys to Lincroft Academy. According to Grant Palmer, a review of passenger numbers showed very few customers were travelling on service 24 from Great Denham and most customers were travelling from Kempston Road.

Planning

The Borough council has now recruited additional staff with the aim of successful dealing with the backlog of planning applications that have built up over the years. Unfortunately, there are still planners leaving BBC and many planning applicants are writing to me to complain about the amount of time they must wait.

Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) consultation begins

Following the hard work done by the steering group putting the GD NDP together consultation surveys, and leaflets posted to every home showing how to view the plans are now in play. Consultation events throughout September and October will be held at the community hall where residents can talk to members of the steering group about the plans and what they mean to the community. I would urge all residents to look at the plans and add your views through the various consultation options. The Parish Clerk and the Chair of the Steering Group have done a tremendous amount of work over the last two years to get to this stage and I would like to thank them for the commitment they've shown to the community.

The Irony of parking in GD

Many communities find it difficult to park when visiting local shops because of limited parking spaces. We are fortunate in Great Denham that our district centre has plenty of parking right in the middle of the shops. I know it is sometimes difficult to think of others and try to be selfless, but I would ask all those that think they have a special pass that gives them the right to park wherever they like to please consider safety of your fellow residents. Please stop doing this.



Wider Borough News

Executive Decisions

2nd August – Decision to award the following grant - £1,000.00 to support Smart CJS to deliver their Prebend Day Care Centre which provides essential care and support to those facing homelessness in our local community.

4th August – Decision to approve funding from the Mayor's Climate Change Fund for an application from Bedford Pentecostal Church to fund the installation of a more energy efficient gas heating system, in the sum of £8,468 for the reasons set out in this report.

5th August – Decision to accept Grant funding from the DfE to carry out work on their behalf to raise standards in the Early Years. The grant has been signed and accepted for funding up to £27,600 from 1/4/23 to 31/8/23.

12th August – Decision to award the following grant - £1,000.00 to support PBIC to support the Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations.

23rd August - Decision to enter into the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) on behalf of Bedford Borough Council and as a "Participating Authority" in the Sustainable Warmth scheme. £1,881,000 of funding has been allocated to Bedford Borough Council

Elstow Solar Farm goes live

Bedford Borough Council's brand-new solar farm has been fully energised and is now exporting low-carbon electricity to the grid.

The project has cost £4.15m with Bedford Borough Council investing over £2.2million. The project was awarded more than £1.8million from the Southeast Midlands Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) with additional support from HM Government via the Getting Building Fund.

The Elstow Solar Farm is going to play an instrumental role in the council meeting its ambition of becoming net-zero by 2030.

Solar Together Bedfordshire offer

Bedford Borough Council announced Solar Together Bedfordshire, a group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage in May 2022.

Residents who signed up to join Solar Together Bedfordshire recently received an offer letter, which advises them how much installation will cost should they like to proceed with the scheme.

The deadline for residents to reply to their offers is Friday 12 August 2022. If residents have any queries about their quote, they can ask for advice by contacting the Solar Together helpdesk by email: bedfordshire@solartogether.co.uk or by phone: 0800 098 8994 (Monday - Friday, 8am - 5pm).

'Make sure you can vote' urges Bedford Borough Council

The Annual Canvass of households, to update the Electoral Register, is now live. Communications via email and/or letters have been sent to residents of Bedford Borough from the 21st July 2022 to remind them about the electoral register.

The Borough will be sending out further communications to residents that do not respond.

Application for Tesco Express, Harpur Centre

The executive and committee members met regarding the Tesco moving from its current premise in town to a smaller premise inside the Harpur Centre.

Application is to be Determined.

Two New Play areas

The Council officially opened two newly refurbished play areas. One Bedford Park and the other at Jubilee Park.

The play areas have recently opened following extensive refurbishment and upgrades as part of the Council's £500,000 investment in play areas across the Borough this year.

Traffic Management Act and new Borough powers

As part of the Traffic Management Act (2022) the Government will be giving councils the option to apply for powers to enforce against moving traffic offences. Bedford Borough Council applied for these powers by the deadline of 20th May 2022 and the powers were granted unofficially in June 2022. The Borough is still awaiting the official letter, which will confirm these new powers.

Assistance with energy bills and cost of living

£150 Council Tax energy payment

Borough Council are currently running a £150 Council Tax energy payment that is available to all eligible households in Council Tax Bands A to D, and Band E where there is a disabled Band reduction.

The assistance is paid via direct debit however, any household that are not able to pay via direct debit, have or have not completed the online form have been sent reminder letters, with the access code. If residents are eligible, please do remember to complete and forms.

The Governments Energy Bills Support Scheme

The Energy Bills Support Scheme discount, equating to £400, will be administered by energy suppliers and paid to consumers over a 6-month period. Payments will start from October 2022, there is no need for residents to contact energy suppliers concerning this.

This forms part of the £37 billion cost of living assistance package for consumers over winter 2022 to 2023. A further 8 million of the most vulnerable households will be receiving £1,200 of direct support to help with the cost of living.

Household Support Grant for winter 2022-2023

Bedford Borough Council is giving more than 50% of the Household Support Grant funding to families with children that qualify for free school meals. This will help vulnerable families on very low income to meet the cost of food and utilities during school holidays.

There is also a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme which provides a Council Tax Support discount of 100% to households on a low income.

Further help

Any households on a low income or that have experienced an unexpected crisis or emergency that means you cannot afford food, can receive assistance from the Council. If any difficulties have arisen, the Council may be able to refer residents to a Bedford Foodbank for assistance.