

Borough Council Report to Parish Councils March 2021

Petition to improve flood defences

Over the Christmas period there were worrying floods in the borough and these are becoming a more regular occurrence.

Investigations revealed that the [current flood action](#) plan was drawn up in September 2015 whilst there was another [risk assessment](#) in November 2020 it is unclear to see how it follows from the action plan in 2015. In the 2015 plan there are several actions which are still ongoing, and it is unclear whether they have been completed.

Therefore, a petition was started by the Conservative Group to review the causes of the local flooding and seek improvements to the flood defences. It also asks for more action to be taken to increase flood protection in the Borough. You can find more information here:

<http://chng.it/VYvBwZ8g>

This petition was accepted by Full Council on Wednesday 24th February and the Council has committed to set up a “water management forum”, to include Councillors, that will facilitate the promotion of good practice in our communities in relation to flood risk.

Controversial route 'E' for East West Rail a source of increasing concern for Borough residents

The chosen route selected for the East West Rail project - route E - continues to prove controversial and Borough Councillors received a petition this month, signed by over 1600 Bedford residents, objecting to it. The petition was debated at a heated meeting of the Borough Council on 24th February, when a number of residents from parishes in and around the route, put a series of questions to Council Leaders, and calling for the Council to "hold a full public consultation to be followed by a debate at Full Council in respect of the Council's decision to support Route E".

Many residents felt that there had been a lack of transparency around how the Mayor and Borough had come to support route E and felt that not enough information had been put in the public domain. They also demanded to know how route E, previously identified as one of the most expensive of the 5 options A-E, had suddenly become the cheapest option, without any explanation.

The subject of freight also proved controversial, with residents, parishes and Borough Councillors expressing the view that freight had been underplayed in previous discussions, and more information was required, as it forms a key part of the business case for the EWR project.

In the Council debate that followed, the Mayor's and Council leadership put forward a resolution which reconfirmed the Borough's support for a route through the town centre but didn't really address the concerns of the petitioners. Councillors representing the rural wards in the north of the Borough, those most affected by route E, objected to the motion. They feel route E will do irreparable damage to the north Bedfordshire countryside. Equally, Councillors in the south of the Borough wanted to ensure the safe delivery of Wixams station and wanted an EWR route that would not jeopardise this. Ultimately, the Mayor's resolution was not unanimously supported.

The East West Rail project and the route it takes, are likely to be the source of ongoing controversy. Another round of consultation is due soon and residents and Parishes are strongly encouraged to respond.

Further information about East West Rail and any forthcoming consultations can be found here: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/>

Budget 2021/22

Bedford Borough Council have approved an increase in core Council Tax of 1.99% supplemented by a 1.75% Adult Social Care Precept, totalling 3.74% giving an average Band D Council Tax of £1,624.14 which was agreed at Full Council on Wednesday 3rd February.

You can find more details about their budget proposals here:

<http://www.councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s53056/Item%2014%20-%20Revenue%20Budget%202021-22.pdf>

At Full Council on Wednesday 24th February the completed budget was finalised and included the precepts of Police & Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire, the Bedfordshire Fire & Rescue Authority and the Parish Councils.

Garden Waste Collections Restart in Bedford Borough

Garden waste collections restart in Bedford Borough on Monday 1 March, following the usual pause in this service over the winter.

Garden waste can go in the green-lidded bin. Please put this bin out alongside your orange recycling bin by 6am on your next recycling day, and it will be collected every other week.

Grass cuttings, plants and weeds, hedge clippings and more can go in the garden waste bin- please make sure it is all loosely within the bin, not in bags.

To find out when your next bin collection is, please visit www.bedford.gov.uk/bins

£2.7m of Business Support Grants to be paid out in March

A number of local businesses are set to remain closed for the remainder of this financial year, following the Prime Minister's announcement earlier this week about the roadmap out of lockdown.

As a result, Bedford Borough Council is now able to automatically pay £2.7million in business support grant to these businesses. These payments are expected to be in business bank accounts early next week. These grants are set and funded by the Government at a national level and administered by the local council.

Additionally, any businesses with business premises that haven't been required to close but have been badly impacted by lockdown are encouraged to get in touch with the Council and apply for support at www.bedford.gov.uk/bsg, if they haven't already.

Any business that has already received a payment during this national lockdown period- either because it has had to close, or because it has been.

Bedford Borough Council Extends Business Support Grant

Bedford Borough Council is extending its business support grant scheme to support more local businesses.

This will provide support to businesses which do not operate from a business premises but which have fixed business costs and have experienced a significant reduction in income due to COVID-19 restrictions.

To provide support as quickly as possible to as many businesses as possible, a one-off grant payment of £500 or £1,000 (depending on the size of the business) will be made.

These grants will be made as part of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), which is a fixed amount of funding from the Government and is intended to provide support to businesses right up until April 2022. £2million of the ARG will be put towards these grants.

These grants are not intended to replace income that has been lost due to restrictions or provide income to the business owner. The Government has put in place other forms of support to assist business owners whose personal income has been affected by restrictions. Rather, the payment is to assist with fixed business costs.

An online form will be available in the coming days to enable businesses that are eligible for this grant funding to contact the Council at www.bedford.gov.uk/bsg

There have however, been some businesses who claim that the money awarded has been too little. <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/council-extends-business-support-grants-but-amount-offered-disappointingly-low/>

On-street electric vehicle charging points to be installed for residents without driveways

Bedford Borough Council, following a successful bid for over £96,000 to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and in partnership with electric vehicle (EV) charging specialist Connected Kerb, is installing 30 EV charging points in streets across Bedford.

These electric vehicle charging points are being installed in five different streets across Bedford. These are Russell Avenue near Russell Park, Oaklands Road off Kimbolton Road, Cutcliffe Grove off Bromham Road, Park Road West near Bedford Park, and Victoria Road off Ampthill Road.

The charging points will all be on-street to cater for residents who do not have their own driveways and so are unable to charge at home.

These installations are part of the Council's ongoing efforts to support Bedford Borough's transition to greener transport while working to improve local air quality. These sites will help to shape the future of additional borough-wide charge point deployments.

These charging points are expected to be open and available for use by the end of March.

Find out more at www.bedford.gov.uk/electricvehicles

COVID-19 Update

The Government has now set a roadmap out of lockdown which is as follows:

STEP 1 8 March 29 March	STEP 2 No earlier than 12 April At least 5 weeks after Step 1
EDUCATION 8 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and colleges open for all students Practical Higher Education courses 	EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previous step
SOCIAL CONTACT 8 MARCH 29 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise and recreation outdoors with household or one other person Household only indoors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rule of 6 or two households outdoors Household only indoors 	SOCIAL CONTACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rule of 6 or two households outdoors Household only indoors
BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES 8 MARCH 29 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wraparound care, including sport, for all children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised outdoor sport (children and adults) Outdoor sport and leisure facilities All outdoor children's activities Outdoor parent & child group (max 15 people, excluding under 5s) 	BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All retail Personal care Libraries & community centres Most outdoor attractions Indoor leisure inc. gyms (individual use only) Self-contained accommodation All children's activities Outdoor hospitality Indoor parent & child groups (max 15 people, excluding under 5s)
TRAVEL 8 MARCH 29 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay at home No holidays <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise travel No holidays 	TRAVEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays (household only) No international holidays
EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funerals (30) Weddings and wakes (6) 	EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funerals (30) Weddings, wakes, receptions (15) Event pilots
STEP 3 No earlier than 17 May At least 5 weeks after Step 2	STEP 4 No earlier than 21 June At least 5 weeks after Step 3 All subject to review
EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previous step 	EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previous step
SOCIAL CONTACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 30 people outdoors Rule of 6 or two households indoors (subject to review) 	SOCIAL CONTACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal limit
BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor hospitality Indoor entertainment and attractions Organised indoor sport (adult) Remaining accommodation Remaining outdoor entertainment (including performances) 	BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remaining businesses, including nightclubs
TRAVEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays International travel (subject to review) 	TRAVEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays International travel
EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most significant life events (30) Indoor events: 1,000 or 50% Outdoor seated events: 10,000 or 25% Outdoor other events: 4,000 or 50% 	EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal limit on life events Larger events

Borough COVID Information

As of the 7th March in Bedford there have been 13,143 cases since the start of the Pandemic and there have been 101 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of 7th March) please find it below:

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/covid19-weekly-statistics-10march.pdf>

More information available at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/>

COVID test centres in Bedford

There is continued testing in Bedford at Borough Hall and Prebend Street car parks as well as University of Bedfordshire's Polhill Campus

Test results from these sites should come back with 24-72 hours.

The government has updated its advice on testing. If you have any of the symptoms of Coronavirus, you can ask for a test through the NHS website or phone 119.

There are two walk through testing centres in Bedford for residents showing symptoms of Coronavirus.

Drive-through testing is available 6 days/week at Gilbert Hitchcock House, Bedford Hospital and 5 days/week at Borough Hall. Both can be booked through the national testing website.

If you're an essential worker (see list [here](#)) you can apply for priority testing through GOV.UK by following the guidance for essential workers on the government website.

You can also get tested through this route if you have symptoms of coronavirus and live with an essential worker.

If you are unable to get to a testing centre, you can order a home testing kit through the national testing website.

You can find further details on testing on the government webpages.

More information is available here: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/covid-19-testing/>

COVID-19: Increased Support If You Need to Self-Isolate

Bedford Borough Council is making the Test and Trace Support Payment available to more people and has increased the Support Payment to £700. This means this payment will cover the earnings of someone working full time on the Living Wage.

In Bedford Borough, an individual is eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment if:

- they have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, and
- have responded to the Test and Trace messages about their contacts, and
- are unable to work from home, and

Either:

- are currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit, or
- are on a low income (household earns less than £25,000 per year) and can show that self-isolation will result in financial hardship

If anyone has any symptoms of coronavirus: high temperature, new continuous cough, loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, it is really important that they self-isolate and book a test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Also, anyone contacted by NHS Test and Trace and asked to self-isolate, must do so for the full amount of time they are told. Someone may not test positive or show symptoms straight away, but you could still be infectious and spread the virus to others, as it can take 10 days to develop the symptoms.

You can apply for this payment and find out more via our website by visiting www.bedford.gov.uk/TTSP adversely impacted- will receive this further grant automatically.