

Borough Council Report to Parish Councils May 2021

Councillor concerns about face to face meetings

Bedford Borough Councillors are concerned by the Governments' decision to enforce face to face meetings for Councillors, especially with the new Indian variant that is spreading through Bedford.

Bedford Borough Council are looking for workarounds for this at the moment with a number meetings being turned into 'workshops'. This will then allow committees to meet in a shorter meeting that can have a minimum amount of members to allow the meeting to be quorate.

The June 2nd Full Council at the Corn Exchange is still due to go ahead.

East West Rail - Public Meetings

Bedford Borough Council held two virtual meetings to hear views from residents and businesses on what they wish to see in the Council's response to the current East West Rail Company consultation.

There was a presentation and they will present the results and answers of this in due course (before June 2).

However, some residents are upset with how this meeting took place and some of the comments made by Bedford Borough Council. <https://www.bedfordindependent.co.uk/letters-councillors-own-communities-and-environments-are-under-threat/>

East West Rail - Bedford Borough Council supports 4 track route

Bedford Borough Council commissioned SLC (who are consultants) to write a report on whether a 4 track route would be viable for EWR. They believed that EWR should be able to go ahead with a 4 track route. Hopefully, this would lead to those residents whose homes are at risk under a 6 track plan, being allowed to keep their homes.

EWR have also responded to some residents' complaints, which included the following: "Following the 2019 consultation, we carried out further work to assess if the existing Midland Mainline tracks north of Bedford Midland station would have sufficient capacity to accommodate the new East West Rail services without reducing the existing passenger and freight capacity. After considering a full set of options we found four tracks would not be sufficient, and this is why we are presenting a six-track proposal during this consultation."

You can see BBC's official press release along with report here: [Council Calls for Protection of Homes North of Bedford Station · Bedford Borough Council](#)

We do continue to strongly urge you to respond to the EWR consultation before it closes on 9 June: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation>

Fusion facilities now open

All Fusion facilities apart from Oasis Swimming Pool are now open. Oasis Swimming Pool will open on Wednesday 19th May.

Bookings can be made up to seven days in advance, via download of the Fusion Lifestyle app or visit www.fusion-lifestyle.com to register and use the booking facility.

For centre opening times and timetables please visit www.fusion-lifestyle.com/centres/mowsbury-golf-and-squash-centre

Boundary Commission update

On May 11 the Boundary Commission released their latest draft recommendations. They are available to look at on the following website where you are also able to respond:

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/have-your-say/20441>

The deadline for responding is 5th July.

They have also written a report explaining their decisions here: <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/Eastern/Bedfordshire/Bedford/New%20Draft%20Recs/Bedford%20new%20draft%20recommendations%20report.pdf>

Bedford Borough libraries reopen

Bedford Central and Kempston libraries reopened from 12th April 2021, with Putnoe Library opening on 19th April 2021. Bromham and Wootton libraries opened on 26th April 2021. You can check the website for opening hours and further service updates on the Virtual Library website.

Initially the libraries will be open for managed browsing, allowing you to select your own books. Essential computer use will also be available and people are encouraged to book a session in advance if they can, as fewer computers are available due to social distancing. You can book a 45 minute session at <https://bedford.imil.uk/>

Please wear a face covering when you visit the libraries, unless you have a legitimate reason not to, and remember to make space between yourself and other people and to regularly wash or sanitise your hands. Customers will also be asked to use the NHS Test and Trace app, or if you are not able to your contact details will be taken for the same purpose.

With libraries opening, the current Select and Collect service will reduce. Staff selected bundles will no longer be available, but you can request individual titles for free using the library app or by calling the library. The books will be issued to your card when they are ready, so all you need to do is pick them up from the collection shelves in the relevant library.

During this initial period of reopening, please don't worry if you are unable to visit a library – loans have been extended for a further period plus you can renew your books online or by telephone.

The Mobile Library also returned from the week beginning 12th April 2021. Due to the small space, customers will not be able to browse the shelves on the vehicle, but will be able to request books using the Select and Collect service and collect them from a Mobile Library stop. A temporary change to routes will be in place and details will be available shortly via the Virtual Library.

Bedford Borough takes action on fly-tipping

At an Environment Scrutiny Committee on April 22, the officer in charge for waste management announced that Bedford Borough Council has started taken against fly-tipping.

In fly-tipping hotspots the Council have put up cameras and those caught face prosecution and fines.

Bedford Borough Council wants to hear your views on local bus services.

Your responses will help the Council establish its priorities and what the most important things are for residents, when it invites bids to run the rural bus services across Bedford Borough later this year.

The Council is looking to understand how residents of the Borough currently use transport, if this has changed during COVID, and how the public transport offer could be improved in the future.

Residents and interested parties can have their say via the quick and easy form on the Council website at www.bedford.gov.uk/bustravel or by calling 01234 718005. The deadline for responses is Friday 11 June.

COVID-19 Update

The Government has now set a roadmap out of lockdown, we are now into step 3

STEP 1
8 March 29 March

EDUCATION
8 MARCH

- Schools and colleges open for all students
- Practical Higher Education courses

SOCIAL CONTACT
8 MARCH 29 MARCH

- Exercise and recreation outdoors with household or one other person
- Household only indoors
- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors
- Household only indoors

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES
8 MARCH 29 MARCH

- Wraparound care, including sport, for all children
- 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)

TRAVEL
8 MARCH 29 MARCH

- Stay at home
- No holidays
- Minimise travel
- No holidays

EVENTS

- Funerals (30)
- Weddings and wakes (6)

STEP 2
No earlier than 12 April

At least 5 weeks after Step 1

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors
- Household only indoors

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- 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

- Domestic overnight stays (household only)
- No international holidays

EVENTS

- Funerals (30)
- Weddings, wakes, receptions (15)
- Event pilots

STEP 3
No earlier than 17 May

At least 5 weeks after Step 2

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- Maximum 30 people outdoors
- Rule of 6 or two households indoors (subject to review)

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- Indoor hospitality
- Indoor entertainment and attractions
- Organised indoor sport (adult)
- Remaining accommodation
- Remaining outdoor entertainment (including performances)

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays
- International travel (subject to review)

EVENTS

- 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%

STEP 4
No earlier than 21 June

At least 5 weeks after Step 3

All subject to review

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- No legal limit

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- Remaining businesses, including nightclubs

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays
- International travel

EVENTS

- No legal limit on life events
- Larger events

Borough COVID Information

As of the 9th May in Bedford there have been 13,711 cases since the start of the Pandemic and there have been 146 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of 9th May) please find it below:

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/Covid19-weekly-statistics-12May.pdf>

The Indian variant, which is believed to spread rapidly is now the dominant strain in Bedford. Bedford Borough are asking residents' to proceed with extreme caution and it is believed that the number of cases will continue to rise.



Bedford Borough #HandsFaceSpaceFreshAir @BedfordT... · May 15 ···

Cases are rapidly rising in Bedford Borough and we're urging everyone to remain cautious and take steps to slow the spread of COVID-19. With a variant of concern identified locally, it's important that we all play our part.

✓ Follow the Hands, Face, Space and Fresh Air advice.



Bedford Borough Council have also written to the Government to ask them for a surge in vaccinations to protect all residents quicker.

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

COVID rapid tests in Bedford

You can have an assisted rapid test at the Faraday Community Centre, Kelvin Ave, Bedford MK42 9ND (no need to book, just turn up on the day). Testing is available from 7am to midday, and from 1pm to 7pm, Monday to Friday.

Alternatively you can collect a pack of 7 tests to use at home from the following locations, or they can be [ordered online for home delivery](#).

Home test kit collection sites:

- Faraday Community Centre ([search location and opening times](#))
- Participating community pharmacies ([search location and opening times](#))
- Prebend Street and Polhill Avenue local testing sites ([search location and opening times](#))
- Bedford Central, Kempston, Putnoe, Wootton and Bromham libraries during their normal opening hours

Rapid tests are quick and easy to do, but their accuracy improves with practice and training, so if it is your first test we recommend that you have an assisted test at the Faraday Centre before collecting your home test kit.

Anyone testing at home will need to register their results online or by calling 119. If the result is positive they should self-isolate and book a confirmatory PCR test by visiting [GOV.UK - get a Coronavirus test](#).

Bedford residents who are in contact with other members of the public as part of their work are now able to access free, rapid Covid-19 (coronavirus) tests and are encouraged to take a test twice a week.

This includes retail workers, childminders, bus and taxi drivers, construction workers and tradespeople like plumbers or electricians. Testing is also available for pregnant women and their partners prior to attending key maternity appointments.