

## **Borough Councillors Report to Parish Council January 2022**

### **Bedford Borough release budget**

The papers for the Budget have been released and are available here:

<https://councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=5563>

It is proposed there will be a 2% rise for Adult Social Care precept and an additional 1.99% rise in core Council Tax which means the total rise is planned to be 3.99%.

This will be debated at Full Council on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

### **£16m boost for Education in Bedford next year**

Schools in Bedford Borough will receive a total of £179m next school year from central government. This includes an additional £16m just granted.

The funding can be used to meet a wide range of operational costs from hiring specialist teachers and facilitating training, to buying more educational materials such as textbooks. It will also help specialist providers provide the right care and support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

### **Bedford Borough Businesses get Covid-19 Support from Central Government**

Bedford Borough has received funding from the Additional Restrictions Grant to provide the following assistance to Bedford Businesses:

- £48,000 to the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) Growth Hub to support their small and medium size enterprise recovery support programme in Bedford Borough.
- £40,000 to the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce towards their global trade business support programme to assist businesses in Bedford Borough to expand into export markets.
- £50,000 to BedfordBID to undertake activities to increase custom for town centre businesses and to encourage customers to feel safe to return to the town centre.

### **Bedford Borough Receive £202k as part of Welcome Back Fund**

The activities agreed for the use of the Welcome Back Fund (WBF) total £202,500 and are summarised as:

- Additional planting at various town centre locations
- Enhanced communications campaign

- Temporary benches in town centre and embankment
- Temporary bins in town centre
- Floor signage at various council owned buildings
- Lighting for the Corn Exchange

Bedford Borough were originally allocated £308,000 as part of the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund which the WBF is part of. That means there is a remaining allocation of £105,500 which can still be spent by March 2022, subject to a successful project change request.

### **Bin collection update**

Bedford Borough Council have renewed their waste collection calendars. You can check your bin collection day and download a calendar here:

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-waste/household-bins-and-recycling/check-bin-collection-day/>

### **Permit Scheme Introduced for Businesses Operating in Bedford Parks**

From 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, any fitness instructors are required to have a permit card. All instructors with a permit card will have been risk assessed and properly insured.

A list of authorised fitness groups and instructors will be put on the Council's website, so people looking for a new workout group will be able to check which groups have are licensed to run in Bedford Borough Parks.

### **Bedford Receives £25k from Arts Council England**

Bedford Borough has received £25,000 from Arts Council England to deliver a project to develop a Strategic Cultural Vision in conjunction with the Bedford Cultural Partnership (BCP). Bedford Borough are making a £10,000 contribution to the project.

The grant funding will enable the commissioning of relevant expertise to provide the momentum and facilitation skills required to document and share a cultural vision and strategic aims for the Borough that will focus and embed the energy of the developing BCP and local cultural sector stakeholders.

### **Homelessness Prevention Grant funding of £177k**

Bedford Borough Council has accepted increased Homelessness Prevention Grant funding of £177,961. This money is provided by Central Government to assist Bedford Borough in delivering the following:

- To fully enforce the Homelessness Reduction Act and contribute to ending rough sleeping by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness
- Reduce family temporary accommodation numbers through maximising family homelessness prevention
- Eliminate the use of unsuitable bed and breakfast accommodation for families for longer than the statutory six week limit.

### **Bedford Borough Strategy to Address and Reduce Domestic Abuse published on 5th January**

The Bedford Borough Strategy to Address and Reduce Domestic Abuse was published on 5<sup>th</sup> of January following consultation. You can see the strategy here: [Bedford Borough Strategy to Address & Reduce Domestic Abuse 2021 - 2026 \(windows.net\)](#)

The implementation of this strategy will be funded by a Government Grant of £335,779.

### **Bedford Borough Council to fund maximum of nine Average Speed Camera's across Bedford**

Bedford Borough Council will fund a maximum of 9 ASCs across the borough for the municipal 2022/23 year. The criteria on how these 9 'core sites' will be chosen is set out in the Average Speed Camera Policy.

There is an option for 'Community Concern Sites' to be installed which must also meet set criteria, including 100% funding from third-party sources.

### **Rural Affairs Grant**

There is currently £77,000 of uncommitted funds in the Rural Affairs Grant. If you want to see the requirements for this grant they are available by clicking the relevant web form here: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/advice-and-benefits-grants/grants-for-financial-assist/>

### **Update on 'Transporting Bedford' Road Works**

There are several works going on around Bedford Town Centre during the winter period.

This includes work at St Paul's square, Ampthill Road and between Victoria and Britannia Road, so do expect delays.

There has also been progress on the Northern Gateway project with the widening of Clapham Road between the two roundabouts complete, along with the dedicated left hand turn lane from Clapham Road into Manton Lane.

Works have started on the central reservation of the dual carriageway, introducing a permanent right-hand turn into Sainsbury's so people won't need to use the Clapham Road/Manton Lane roundabout to U-turn.

The works had been creating major traffic jams for residents but they will now take place overnight, with the re-opening of the second lane and manual traffic lights being put in place between Paula Radcliffe Way and Clapham Road roundabouts to ease delays.

### **Bedford Borough Council ends fossil fuel pension fund investments**

At Full Council on Wednesday 12 January, an amended motion was carried to end further fossil fuel pension fund investments and write to Bedfordshire Pension Fund and the Border to Coast Pension Partnership to ask them to phase out all funds from fossil fuels following cross-party agreement from the Conservative, Lib Dem and Labour Groups.

The Green Party had originally submitted a motion calling for more extreme and immediate changes to climate change policy and refused to compromise from their position.

### **Council Invites Charities and Voluntary Organisations to Bid for Funding**

Bedford Borough Council has called for local charities and voluntary organisations to apply for funding that will help them to support members of communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Those that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 could include people from black and minority ethnic communities or persons with disabilities.

The funding can be used for activities including introducing physical infection control measures in community buildings, improving understanding around COVID-19 safety advice, assisting people in need of financial support due to COVID-19 and funding additional staff to work with at risk groups.

Groups that apply for the funding, which is available through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund, will be required to set out how it will be used to benefit residents who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. All applications should include:

- The name of the organisation applying
- The year the organisation was established, e.g. date a charity was registered
- The amount of funding that you are applying for
- Details of how the funding will be used and how this will help residents who are likely to be disproportionately affected by COVID.

- Confirmation that the charitable/voluntary organisations has a bank account in the name of the organisation.
- A copy of your most recent audited or independently verified accounts.
- The name and position of the person making the request.

Requests for funding should be emailed to [community.welfare@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:community.welfare@bedford.gov.uk) before 23:59 on Tuesday 25 January 2022. Any requests received after this date will not be considered.

### **East West Rail update**

East West Rail have said they will announce their preferred route alignment in the first half of 2022.

### **Borough COVID-19 Latest Figures**

The first case of the 'Omicron' variant was confirmed in Bedford Borough on 7 December 2021, it is known to spread quicker than previous variants and residents are being urged to be cautious and work from home where possible.

### **Cases remain high in Bedford**

As of the 12<sup>th</sup> January in Bedford, there have been 41,237 cases since the start of the pandemic and there have been 2,819 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of 12<sup>th</sup> January) please find it below:

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/covid19-weekly-statistics-12Jan22.pdf>

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

### **Bedford providing free taxis to and from Vaccination centres**

Bedford Borough Council are providing free taxis for anyone in the borough getting a vaccine.

To get your free taxi ride, you just need to call one of the taxi operators from the list available at [www.bedford.gov.uk/VaxiTaxi](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/VaxiTaxi), give them the reference BBC VACCINE, and let them know where you need to be picked up and dropped off.

## **Businesses can apply for a new Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant**

Applications for the new Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant are now open on Bedford Borough Council's website.

The Government announced that further support will be provided to businesses in the hospitality, accommodation and leisure business sectors affected by the Omicron wave through the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant.

The amount eligible local businesses will receive are:

- Qualifying businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or less on 30 December 2021, will receive a one-off grant of £2,667.
- Qualifying businesses with a rateable value over £15,000 and less than £51,000 on 30 December 2021, will receive a one-off grant of £4,000.
- Qualifying businesses with a rateable value of £51,000 or above on 30 December 2021, will receive a one-off grant of £6,000.

Visit [www.bedford.gov.uk/BSG](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/BSG) to find out more about eligibility, and to apply for this grant.

You can find out which type of businesses are excluded at: [Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)