

Government Budget

The Chancellor presented the Government's Budget to the House of Commons on the 29th October. The following announcements are of particular relevance to the Borough Council:

- Small retailers will benefit over the next 2 years from a 1/3 cut in their business rate bills.
- A £675m Future High Street Fund will be established. Councils will be encouraged to bid for funds to support urban regeneration.
- The Council is to receive £620k in the current year to assist with adult social care pressures. The Council will also receive a share of an additional £410m for adults' and children's social care next year.
- £20m has been committed to accelerate planning for the East West Rail link between Bedford and Cambridge.
- English councils will receive £420m this year to repair potholes.

Urgent Treatment Centre

Bedford Hospital's new Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) opened its doors on the 1st October 2018. The UTC provides same-day appointments for minor illnesses over a 12 hour period, 7 days a week via referrals from A & E and the 111 phone service as a means of reducing pressure on the Hospital's A & E function.

The UTC saw 250 patients in its first week. The Council's Adult Services & Health Committee will review the performance of the facility in the coming months.

Visitor Information Centre

On the 17th October a new Visitor Information Centre opened at St Paul's Church, Bedford. Opening initially on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays between 10.30am – 4pm, it has been established by volunteers wanting to promote the Borough a tourist destination.

Covanta

On the 10th – 11th October the High Court heard a Judicial Review of the decision of the Environment Agency to grant a permit to US firm Covanta to build a waste incineration plant at Stewartby. The case was brought by the campaign group Bedfordshire Against Covanta Incinerator. A decision is yet to be made by the court.

National Adoption Week

The Council marked National Adoption Week in October by urging people who are interested in adopting a child in care to get in touch. The Council's Adoption Team can provide more information via 01234 718718 or adoptionandfostering@bedford.gov.uk.

Flu Vaccine

The Council has issued a reminder to parents and guardians that 2 and 3 year olds are eligible to receive the flu vaccine to protect them in the colder months. Children aged 4 are also eligible if they were 3 years old on the 31st August 2018.

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