

**Brickhill Parish Council: Update from Borough Councillors Moon and Corp – March 2018**

**Highways and Speed Camera Investment**

Bedford Borough councillors agreed at a meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> February to allocate a projected underspend on the budget for the current year towards highways improvements and new sets of average speed cameras.

The Council is continuing its efficiency programme in response to increased demand for services (the budget for adult social care is increasing to £52.1m in 2018/19; up 13.7% since 2015/16) whilst overall resources remain relatively unchanged year on year.

The Council has been delivering £7.8m of agreed efficiencies in 2017/18. As we near the end of the financial year, it is estimated that there will be an overall underspend of just under £1.8m. Councillors have, therefore, chosen to allocate £1m of this sum for improvements to roads and pavements. In addition, a one-off sum of £0.525m will be spent on average speed cameras, thus reintroducing a service which ceased in 2016 and allowing some of the 60 plus schemes on the waiting list to go ahead. The criteria for prioritising the speed camera schemes are still to be determined.

**Local Plan 2035**

The Council is currently consulting on its draft Local Plan, setting out preferred sites for the development of around 8000 homes to the year 2035.

You may recall that there was an intention to agree the Local Plan by the end of March after the Government stated its intention for local authorities to be subject to a centralised methodology to determine housing targets, rather than each council undertaking their own assessment as at present. The new methodology would increase the Borough's housing need to 2035 from around 8,000 to 14,000 homes. Submitting the Local Plan for examination before the end of March would have seen the Council benefit from 'transitional arrangements', thus avoiding the increased target.

The Government has now announced that the new methodology will not be implemented until the summer. This means that there is now more flexibility around the timeline for agreeing the Local Plan. The consultation has been extended to 5pm on the 29<sup>th</sup> March and it is likely that the final Local Plan will be subject to a vote at a meeting of councillors in May.

A key aspect of the draft submission is the selection of a new settlement to deliver around a third of the new homes to 2035. In this regard, land owners and planning agents submitted 4 sites for consideration, namely: Wyboston; Colworth (Sharnbrook); Twinwoods (between Milton Ernest and Thurleigh), and; Thurleigh Airfield. As part of the consultation, details have now been made available of the viability assessments of the 4 sites at [www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035). The draft Local Plan includes the Colworth site, adjacent to Sharnbrook and Souldrop, as the preferred settlement which will deliver 2500 homes in the Local Plan period and then up to 4500 in subsequent years.

Residents must respond should they wish their comments to be considered once the Local Plan is submitted for consideration to the Planning Inspectorate. Responses can be submitted via [www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035) or by emailing [planningforthefuture@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:planningforthefuture@bedford.gov.uk). Response forms are also available at local libraries and the Customer Service Centre on Horne Lane, while comments can also be sent by post to Local Plan 2035, Planning Policy Team, Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall, Bedford MK42 9AP.

### **Bedford Hospital**

Toward the end of 2017, Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable Hospital stated their intention to undergo a full merger. In this regard, a business case was submitted to NHS regulators in December and it was expected that a decision would be made on whether the merger will go ahead in time for it to be implemented on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018.

It has now been reported that this timescale has been delayed as talks continue around the financial agreements underpinning the merger. In particular, it will not be known until the summer as to the availability of government capital funding which could support improvements to both sites.

The business case reiterated that a full range of services will continue to be provided for patients on both sites. This includes key services such as A&E, maternity and paediatrics at Bedford Hospital.

### **Non-Patient Emergency Transport**

The East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) is to provide non-emergency patient transport services in the Borough after agreeing a contract with the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG – which has responsibility for organising local NHS services).

The contract, which concerns the provision of transport where patients are taken for pre-planned medical appointments, will be fully in place from June. The service was delivered until last year by the now defunct Private Ambulance Service (PAS) which went into administration. The service provided by PAS was the subject of complaints due to repeated instances of failures to pick up patients on time, if at all.

### **Housing Scheme**

A new facility opening in St John's Street, Bedford next month is to provide intensive support to homeless individuals. Clarence House will provide 29 beds and 24 hour specialist support aiming to end the cycle of homelessness and support rough sleepers towards independent living. The facility will be managed by One Housing, which has delivered this model of support successfully in London, and will be linked with other support services.

As of November last year, it was estimated that there were 76 rough sleepers in the Borough.

### **Shared Lives**

The Council is promoting its 'Shared Lives' initiative which supports adults (aged 16 or over) with learning disabilities. Shared Lives sees individuals requiring support try new and varied activities such as going for walk or to the cinema, attending a football match, or even going on holiday under the supervision of a carer.

The Council is looking for volunteers to become Shared Lives carers to support individuals with learning disabilities as they experience opportunities which can make a positive difference to their lives.

Carers will be assessed and receive training. They will also receive financial payments on a self-employed basis and are also eligible for a Shared Lives Tax Break. For more information call 01234 228560 or email [sharedlives@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:sharedlives@bedford.gov.uk)

### **Ford End Road Bridge**

As a reminder, from the 16<sup>th</sup> February to August, Network Rail is to undertake demolition and reconstruction of Ford End Road bridge in Bedford as part of works to electrify the railway line through Bedford. The bridge will be closed to vehicle during this period and traffic will be diverted.

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