

**Brickhill Borough Councillors  
Update  
February 2023  
From Wendy Rider and  
Charles Royden**



**Freemans Common**

Many Brickhill residents will have received letters from Bedford Borough Council Planning Department about a development on Freemans Common (Application 23/00154/M73). We are aware that this has caused some concern to residents and we want to give some reassurance to those residents who have called us to ask for support. Whilst this might appear to be a new application to build houses on Freemans Common, it actually refers to the existing development of housing on the Woodlands Estate (off Tyne Crescent). This was granted planning permission in 2005 and has since been built. The current application is a purely administrative request to remove a condition on the development relating to affordable housing and no further development is proposed. We hope that this reassures residents but as always we are pleased to meet and discuss any concerns which you may have and our contact details are shown below.

**Cost of Living Crisis**

We have provided £8,000 from our ward fund to Brickhill schools to help provide meals and support to struggling families locally faced with financial hardship. Mayor Dave Hodgson has also announced a number of schemes and grants. Children get free school meals if they live in a household that receives one of the benefits listed at <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals>

This also extends over the school holidays. You can find out where to find financial help by visiting <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/costofliving>

**Potholes**

Avon Drive suffered from numerous potholes around Christmas. Temporary repairs were carried out and now these are being repaired properly. The RAC has warned “The wet weather we’ve had

both before and after the coldest start to winter in 12 years in December is the perfect recipe for potholes to start peppering the roads.” The Pothole Hit Squad is working hard to find and fix potholes across Bedford Borough. If you’re concerned about a pothole or other road issue you can use our website to report it at [www.bedford.gov.uk/roadproblems](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/roadproblems). Use the map to zoom in, or enter a street or postcode, and then tap / click to drop a pin.



You can also see on the map any road problems that have already been reported, they are marked with red pins. Once resolved the pin will be removed.

Over the Christmas period the tar suppliers take a break and so with no tar available council road crews have to carry out temporary repairs with bags of cold fill tar. This is a very temporary measure just to try and make the potholes safer for road users and prevent damage to vehicles. We ask for these temporary repairs to be marked with a 'T' where possible.

If you are reporting a dangerous problem which requires urgent attention, please call 01234 718003. This number is operational 24 hours a day. For all other problems contact customer services on 01234 267422. The council will normally inspect any dangerous problem within 24 hours. They aim to inspect less urgent problems within 10 working days.

### **Tree Planting**

We have allocated funds to purchase trees for streets in Brickhill. If you would like one planted in a verge outside your property please let us know.

### **Traffic Lights at Manton Lane**

Following our requests new equipment has been installed to stop the lights at Bedford Modern from changing to red when there is no school traffic. We have also asked for a review of signage and lane markings on the new roundabouts.

### **Council Budget - Protecting services and keeping Council Tax down yet again**

This year's proposed Budget builds on the Council's record of one of the lowest percentage Council Tax rises of all unitary councils. The Budget ensures we are putting the needs of our residents first yet again. To help with the cost of living crisis, we are continuing to support residents by keeping Council Tax down, freezing charges and protecting key services so that our most vulnerable can get support when they need it most and ensures no libraries or Children's Centres close.

The key headlines are:

- Core Council Tax will rise by 0.9% as well as a 2% rise for the government's Adult Social Care precept. In total 2.9% - well below inflation and below the maximum allowed by government.
- Key services that residents rely on will be protected yet again, despite severe Conservative government cuts.
- Council charges to residents, such as car park charges, will be frozen to help residents with the cost of living crisis.
- A range of initiatives that will help the Council reach its carbon neutral target by 2030.
- Huge capital investments in the Borough's future including 2 new schools and 40 new classrooms, roads and pavement spending, play area refurbishment and town centre renewal.

We are committed to a carbon neutral Council by 2030. We are investing in a range of carbon cutting initiatives such as funding for the supported bus network, pedestrian and cycling improvements, new energy generation and installation of more solar panels. We are also

investing more into our £42 million road and pavement renewal programme and increasing our play area upgrade scheme. The town centre will also receive £23 million from the Town Deal and other high street funding to continue improving the area for residents and businesses.

This Budget was produced in the face of severe financial challenges caused by years of cuts by the Conservative government and £17 million of inflationary pressure. Through good financial management we have been able to make substantial savings in order to balance our budget and protect services.

We have set this Budget whilst continuing to tackle the £90 million of debt that was left for us when the Conservatives ran the County Council. This year we have made even more progress with debt forecast to fall to £60 million. Maintaining a manageable level of debt means we can spend less on debt repayments and more on helping residents, repairing roads and tackling climate change.

### **Doctor Shortage**

The government must invest more in our GP practices and train up more doctors, to ensure patients get the fair deal they deserve. Sign our petition calling for a fair deal for Bedford Borough with an increase in the number of GPs in our area to provide improved access for those in need. - [www.bedfordlibdems.org.uk/en/petition/gp-shortage](http://www.bedfordlibdems.org.uk/en/petition/gp-shortage)



## **Come and meet us at our surgeries**

Brickhill Drive Shops Saturday 4 February 10.00am  
Avon Drive Shops Saturday 18 February at 10.00am  
Brickhill Drive Shops Saturday 4 March at 10.00am  
Avon Drive Shops Saturday 18 March at 10.00am

You can also speak with us or another Lib Dem Councillor every Saturday morning 11.00am - 12 noon at Bedford Central Library  
As your local councillors we will continue to work hard and keep you informed through regular deliveries of FOCUS, surgeries and our website where you can sign up for our Brickhill newsletter. [www.puttingbrickhillfirst.com](http://www.puttingbrickhillfirst.com)

**Wendy Rider**

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