

Borough Councillors Report – July 2023

High level Borough Items

- **By-election in Wyboston Ward, Bedford Borough**

Conservative candidate Julie Cox has been elected Borough Councillor for Wyboston ward following the by-election on 29 June 2023.

The turnout was 34% with the votes split:

- Conservative Candidate, Julie Cox – 610
- Labour Candidate, Ian Robert James Nicholls – 34
- Liberal Democrat, Thomas Luke Townsend – 323

The total seats now held on Bedford Borough Council are:

- Conservative Party – 14
- Green Party – 3
- Independents – 2
- Labour Party – 14
- Liberal Democrat – 13

- **Summer holiday voucher scheme**

Bedford Borough Council is continuing to distribute supermarket vouchers to thousands of families across the Borough over the summer holidays.

The vouchers are funded through the Government's Household Support Grant which is distributed through Department for Work and Pensions.

Over 7000 children will benefit from the scheme.

- **East West Rail (EWR)**

The Council is currently reviewing the details of the proposals to better understand the implications for the people of Bedford Borough.

For reference the current Mayor has previously stated the below which was included on the previous report,

“While we do support investment into our Borough, improved rail links and the EWR project in principle, we have always been clear that any decision involving the loss of homes and destruction of families, lives and countryside would be completely unacceptable.

“The selection of route E would involve a pointless six-line track despite EWR accepting the fact a four-track proposal was feasible and would avoid the destruction of homes.”

He said there was a sense of frustration and anger at the event as “residents felt ignored.

I want to leave no doubt that, unlike my predecessor, I will do everything in my power to ensure their concerns and views are heard."

- **Bedford Borough Council left with £2.27m overspend**

It has been reported that the previous administrations balanced budget for 2022/23 has resulted in a £2.27m overspend.

The large amount overspend has been largely attributed to the costs in temporary accommodation and optimistic assumptions in last year's budgeting process which have not come to light.

- **Local Plan 2040 hearings**

The hearing sessions of the Examination of the Bedford Local Plan will be held in two blocks and opened at 12 midday on Monday 12 June 2023.

Block 1 hearings have concluded, the 2nd block will take place:

- Week 3: Monday 11 September to Friday 15 September.
- Week 4: Monday 18 September to Friday 22 September.

Wider Borough Items

- **POP Bedford launches summer programme at Midland Road creative art space**

The new pop-up creative art space on Midland Road is opening this Wednesday (12 July) for a summer-long programme of creative workshops, artist workspace and exhibitions for the people of Bedford – most of which will be free.

- **Bedford Borough Council tackles fly-tipping**

The mini-recycling site on Old Ford End Road, Queen's Park has seen 20 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) being issued following an increase in illegal dumping of rubbish.

These sites only take specific materials for recycling such as glass bottles and jars, clothes and shoes, with everything put in the bins provided. There was a trend of residents leaving bags of rubbish and bulky waste at the sites which has led to the FPNs being issued.

To combat the issue, the Council has installed CCTV cameras at various mini-recycling sites across Bedford Borough.

- **Beds Urban Sketchers display art at The Higgins Bedford**

A new art display from the Beds Urban Sketchers group opens on 30 June 2023 at The Higgins Bedford and will run until the end of February 2024 and admission is free to all visitors.

- **Greyfriars police station redevelopment**

Planning permission has been secured for the redevelopment of Greyfriars police station by DLP Planning Ltd behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner of Bedfordshire.

The redevelopment could see 105 new homes plus 'town centre uses' on the ground floor of the building.

The redevelopment forms a key part of regenerating Bedford Town Centre through the Town Deal which will make significant investment to Bedford Borough.

Road closures

- **Paula Radcliffe Way**

Multiple repairs are taking place along Paula Radcliffe Way with the first phase of the resurfacing confirmed to begin on Monday, 24th July.

The southbound carriageway, leading towards Bedford, will be closed until early September.

During these closures, traffic will be diverted through Clapham, allowing for the uninterrupted progress of the project.

The lengths affected are:

- Southbound closure from Clapham north slip road to The Great Ouse roundabout 24th July to 1st September 2023.
- Southbound closure will be opened before the Northbound closure is commenced.
- Northbound closure from The Great Ouse Roundabout to Oakley north slip road 21st August to 27th October 2023.