

Borough Councillors Moon and Corp report - March 2018

Bedford Budget Council Budget 2018/19

A meeting of Borough councillors on the 7th February determined the Council's budget for 2018/19. As in previous years, demand for services is increasing whilst the overall resources available to the Council will remain relatively unchanged. This has required the Council to continue its programme of service efficiencies through its 'Bedford Borough 2020' project.

Bedford Borough 2020 includes the introduction of a 'Digital Operating Model', which is estimated to achieve annual savings of £10.4m by the beginning of the next decade through the improved use of technology. This will comprise increased opportunities for residents to use 'self-service' functions when interacting with the Council, particularly through the implementation of a new website.

In addition to this, there is a proposed Council Tax increase of 1.75% and a rise of 2% in the Adult Social Care Precept. The revenue gained from the latter must be used on adult social care services, the budget for which has been set at £52.1m next year; a 13.7% increase since 2015/16, reflecting increased demand.

The Council's Capital Programme determines schemes for 'one-off' investment totalling £185.8m over a 4 year period from 2017/18 to 2020/21. This includes several schemes of particular note, including around £19m of Government investment in traffic decongestion schemes at Ampthill Road, Manton Lane and the town centre, as well as £59m of investment in schools' facilities, including the continued implementation of the 2 tier system in the Borough.

Putnoe Walk-In Centre

The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), the body responsible for organising NHS services locally, has announced its intention to close the Walk-In Centre (WIC) at Putnoe Surgery in Bedford.

At a meeting of the BCCG's Governing Body in January, it was agreed that the WIC would remain at Putnoe until the end of September 2018. Thereafter, alternative provision will be implemented through an 'Urgent Treatment Centre' (UTC), based at Bedford Hospital, which will operate a 'like for like service from the Putnoe Walk Walk In Centre'. It will also link with the Hospital's A & E function, allowing non-emergency patients access to diagnostics should further tests be required, and will receive ambulances and appointments via the 111 phone service.

In addition to the UTC, the BCCG has expressed its intention to extend GP opening hours into evenings and weekends, giving patients more options to book appointments. The BCCG says it will engage with patients in the coming months to determine the future of services.

Ford End Road Bridge

From the 16th 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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