

### **Local Plan**

The draft Local Plan 2030 is now being considered by the Planning Inspectors. They will consider the plan, the submissions and the compliance or otherwise of the plan with national guidelines. They will reach a view, after public hearings, on, for example, the dumping of 500 houses on green field sites in villages such as Great Barford (also near Renhold is the proposed Graze Hill development) rather than using available brownfield sites. We have argued that is a breach of national guidelines. The impact of those new estates is not restricted to the chosen villages as the traffic generated will also affect surrounding villages. We have asked to speak at the public hearing where we intend to make that and other points.

### **Council Budget**

The Borough Council's budget was agreed at a meeting of councillors on the 6<sup>th</sup> February with a net expenditure of £127m. It will be funded by a Council Tax of 1.49%, with an additional 1% for the Adult Social Care precept; that is a £36.3 per year rise for the average Band D property.

Demand for adult social care continues to be one of the main pressures on the Council's revenue budget, with spending in this service area just under £51m in 2019/20. There is, therefore, a need for the Council to continue its savings programme, with £5.3m of efficiencies to be delivered next year. The total net revenue budget is £128.6m.

The Council also has a Capital Programme for 2018/19 – 2021/22 which covers spending on 'one-off' schemes. The total value across the 4 year period is £213.2m and includes projects such as the 'Transporting Bedford 2020' road decongestion scheme (£18.4m, with £15.5m being provided by the Government) and Wixams Railway (£27.4m, although this is most likely to be taken over by the East West Rail project).

### **East West Rail**

A consultation has been launched on proposed routes for the central section of the East West Rail (EWR) scheme from Bedford to Cambridge.

EWR will enable a new train line between Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge, with the potential in the future to extend further to Norwich. It has been unclear for a number of years as to where the line will link with Bedford but the consultation has now provided some, albeit vague, information as to the options.

There are 5 options, 3 of which mention the use of an unspecified 'Bedford South' station, which is likely to combine with the long-awaited Wixams station; an alternative site is possible but unlikely. Each of those 3 run to the south of Bedford. One of those 3, Route A, is the cheapest of all the options and is generally regarded as the most likely.

Two options, Routes D & E, would go north of Bedford with the line going through the town centre and linking with the existing Bedford Midland station. They would be likely to affect Renhold as they envisage passing close to Bedford to the north. Either one, particularly D would come very close to or through the Parish although the plan is not helpful as each route option is shown only as a broad swathe of land with no specific indication of any preferred line within the marked area.

For more details on the route options and how to respond to the consultation see <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/haveyoursay>

### **Rough Sleeping**

There has been a 33% reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the Borough in the past year following the provision of new services, although the Borough still has a very high number at 7.4 per 10,000 households compared to the national figure of 2 per 10,000 households. The annual rough sleeper count, which took place in November, showed that there were 51 rough sleepers, compared with 76 in 2017.

Following the receipt of a £307k Government grant, support has been put in place through the recruitment of extra support staff and units of temporary and emergency accommodation. Support is also provided by a range of local organisations, with co-ordination through the Bedford Homeless Partnership. While the news of progress is welcome, clearly there is still a lot more to do. For more information see <https://bedfordhomeless.org.uk/>

### **Volunteers Needed to Support Children in Care**

The National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) provides a network of volunteers to mentor and support children in care. NYAS is currently looking to recruit new volunteers as part of its Independent Visitor Programme.

The volunteers will receive training before being assigned to their young person. Volunteers act as positive role models by engaging them in new experiences, as well as sharing interests and hobbies. For more information email [volunteers@nyas.net](mailto:volunteers@nyas.net) or call 0808 808 1001.

### **Alzheimer's Society Scheme**

The Alzheimer's Society is publicising a new service in Bedford Borough. 'My Future Plans' provides one-to-one support for those who have been diagnosed with the disease and their carers to discuss future care arrangements. For further details call 01234327380 or email [sam.marshall@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:sam.marshall@alzheimers.org.uk)

### **Winter Maintenance**

The Council's website provides updates on winter maintenance, including gritting operations. It also notifies residents of changes to school and adult services transport, bus services and waste collections. See <http://apps.bedford.gov.uk/winterupdates/>

**Cllr Stephen Moon: 01234 870061 and [shmoon@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:shmoon@tiscali.co.uk)**

**Cllr Sheryl Corp: 07734888988 and [sheryl.corp@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:sheryl.corp@bedford.gov.uk)**