

Renhold Parish Council: Borough Councillors' Update – May 2019

Election Results

Elections for the Mayor of Bedford Borough and Borough Councillors took place on the 2nd May. Dave Hodgson was re-elected Mayor and the Council's political Groups are now represented as follows:

Liberal Democrat 15

Conservative 11

Labour 11

Green 2

Independent 1

Local Plan 2030

The Planning Inspectorate has confirmed that it will undertake the Examination of the Borough Council's Local Plan 2030 in hearings on the following dates at Borough Hall:

Wednesday 29 May 2019 – Friday 31 May 2019

Tuesday 4 June 2019 – Friday 7 June 2019

Tuesday 18 June 2019 – Friday 21 June 2019

Monday 24 June 2019 – Thursday 27 June 2019

The Examination will assess whether or not the Local Plan is legally compliant and 'sound' in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Individuals and representatives of groups who responded to the Council's consultations in 2018 may be asked to make representations, if they indicated at the time that they would like to do so. Members of the public are welcome to attend the hearings. Further details can be seen at www.bedford.gov.uk/examination

East Midlands Trains Franchise

The Department for Transport (DfT) has awarded the new East Midland Railway franchise to Abellio, which will take over from Stagecoach in August.

The East Midlands Railway is the line providing fast trains to Bedford (i.e. those travelling to and from St Pancras in under 40 minutes). Since May 2018 fast trains have not been serving Bedford in peak hours due to an upgrade to the Midland Main Line. The DfT has stated to local media that the peak hours service will return to Bedford (with 2 trains per hour) once the upgrade to the Midland Main Line has been completed towards the end of 2020.

Bedford is currently on the 'Intercity' line which runs from St Pancras to Derby and Nottingham, amongst others. Under the new franchise Bedford will be on the London – Corby line, meaning that those travelling further north will have to change trains at Kettering.

Relief Road Bid

At the end of March the Borough Council submitted a bid to the Government for £15m to deliver a new road to reduce congestion in the Midland Road area. If approved, the road will connect the southern end of Ashburnham Road with Commercial Road (adjacent to Prebend Street and the Post Office depot). No further details have been released at this stage.

Rough Sleeper Initiative

The Council is to receive £383k from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to continue a range of services to support rough sleepers. The money will be used to provide additional units of accommodation and outreach workers.

Hospital Merger

The proposed merger between Bedford Hospital Trust and Luton & Dunstable Hospital Trust is still no further forward. In December a bid from the Trusts for around £150m to enable the merger was refused, meaning that alternative funding options are now being considered.

When the merger was announced in 2017 both Chief Executives pledged that it would see the retention of key services on both sites including maternity, paediatrics and A & E.

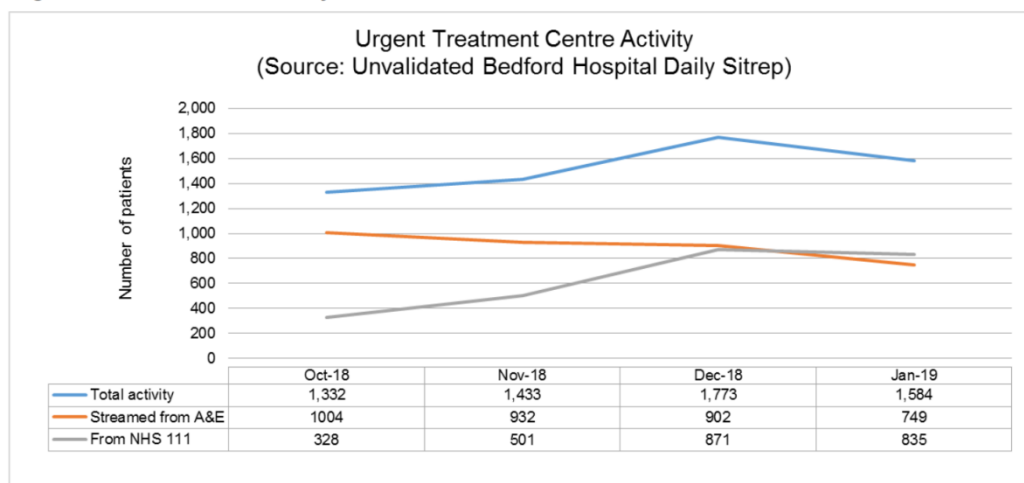
Urgent Treatment Centre

In April the Council's Adult Services and Health Committee received a report from local health commissioners in relation to the performance of health services over the winter period.

Included in the discussion was an update on the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) which opened in October 2018 on the Bedford Hospital site. The UTC provides pre-booked (NHS 111) and 'walk-in' appointments and is open 7 days a week from 11am – 11pm.

The below graph provided to the Committee provides details of activity and shows the UTC is having a positive effect in reducing A & E admissions:

Urgent Treatment Centre Activity



Knife Crime

Bedfordshire Police was awarded £1m from the Government on the 17th April to tackle violent crime. This is in addition to the successful bid for £4.571m in December 2018 for the same purpose. Further details can be seen at: <https://www.bedfordshire.police.uk/news-and-appeals/force-wins-home-office-awards-april19>

Council Website

A feature of the Council's new website is the inclusion of 'customer journeys' which aim to make it easier to report or discuss certain issues. For example, residents can now report potholes, graffiti and noise nuisance using the website. New customer journeys are undergoing testing and are being added to the site incrementally. See www.bedford.gov.uk and click on 'Pay, report, request it'.

Where residents experience difficulty it would be helpful if we were contacted as we believe that there is an underreporting of the problems experienced by users particularly those with more complex issues to deal with or who are less comfortable with on-line form filling.

Cllr Stephen Moon: Stephen.Moon@bedford.gov.uk

Cllr Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant: Phillippa.MartinMoranBryant@bedford.gov.uk