

## **Borough Councillor's Update – July 2016**

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### **Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Healthcare Review**

A controversial plan to relocate maternity services at Bedford Hospital to Milton Keynes Hospital has been put on hold.

The Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Healthcare Review (BMKHR) began at the behest of NHS England and hospital regulators in 2014, although it has been overseen by the bodies responsible for organising NHS services in both areas, namely the Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).

The intention was set out from the beginning to amalgamate services between Bedford Hospital and Milton Keynes Hospital to secure efficiencies and improve service quality. This led to concerns that as the smaller of the sites, Bedford Hospital would see its key services threatened. This prediction has been shown to be correct, as the latest review report has recommended an option that would see maternity services transferred from Bedford to Milton Keynes; a proposal that is completely unacceptable.

This plan is despite a credible alternative being put forward by Bedford-based clinicians for Bedford Hospital to keep the majority of its services, including maternity, which would be better integrated with community and GP services. The long-term financial sustainability of this option has been backed up by a review commissioned by Bedford Borough Council, supported by all political groups.

Shortly after the latest BMKHR Report was published, it was announced that the review would be put on hold. The reason given for this decision was that the review's 'direction of travel' needs to be 'consistent' with another review called the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), which is looking at amalgamating NHS services and council-managed social care services in Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Luton. It is unclear when the BMKHR will resume.

### **Stroke Services**

Bedford Hospital will from July no longer have a Hyper Acute Stroke Unit (HASU) following the resignation of one of its consultants.

HASUs are responsible for treating patients in the crucial 72 hour period after a stroke, particularly by identifying and removing blood clots. Bedford Hospital's HASU operated from Monday – Friday between the hours of 9am – 5pm, with patients in need of the service outside of these hours taken to Luton & Dunstable Hospital, which has a 24/7 HASU.

Following NHS Midlands and East Stroke Reviews of 2012 and 2014, plans were already afoot to stop providing hyper acute stroke services in Bedford, meaning the resignation has simply accelerated the process. These reviews proposed that there should be 3 HASUs in the region, instead of 4, with Bedford losing out due to the other sites having a 24/7 service (namely Luton & Dunstable, Watford and Stevenage (Lister Hospital)).

From July, patients who would have previously accessed the HASU at Bedford Hospital will instead be taken to Luton & Dunstable or Stevenage. They will then be brought back to Bedford Hospital to access rehabilitation and inpatient services after 72 hours if they are in a stable condition but are unable to go home. The Stroke Association has been quoted in the local media as saying it 'warmly welcomes' the new 'strategic' approach to stroke services in the region.

### **NHS Consultation**

The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) is consulting on 3 changes to service provision, namely:

- To end the prescription of gluten-free foods on the NHS, unless a patient is at risk of dietary neglect.
- To stop providing on prescription over the counter medicines and painkillers for short term conditions such as cough and cold remedies, antihistamines and some skin products.
- To cease the commissioning of most fertility services, including IVF.

The consultation ends on the 24<sup>th</sup> July. For more information see [www.bedfordshireccg.nhs.uk](http://www.bedfordshireccg.nhs.uk)

### **Policing**

Bedfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) has issued her first Police and Crime Plan since her election in May. Kathryn Holloway has set out the following priorities for Bedfordshire Police:

- A return of more visible policing across the county
- To rebuild public confidence in Bedfordshire Police
- To ensure police are there when needed most after 999 calls
- Putting victims at the centre of policing and prosecutions
- A fair deal on policing whether you live in the country or town
- Protecting the police to protect the public
- Genuinely being a Commissioner for all communities
- Working with partners to break the cycle of crime

She has also published a Rural Crime Strategy, which includes actions such as the appointment of a Rural Crime Liaison Officer with responsibility for working with farmers and parish councils, as well as the extension of a scheme to appoint Special Constables with specific responsibility for the rural areas. For more information see [www.bedspsc.org](http://www.bedspsc.org)

### **Special Constables**

Bedfordshire Police is undertaking a recruitment drive for Special Constables.

Special Constables have the same powers as a Police Constable and are required to volunteer for at least 16 hours a month. In the last year Special Constables in Bedfordshire made over 500 arrests and stopped over 2000 vehicles.

For more information on how to become a Special Constable, see the 'Recruitment' section of [www.bedfordshire.police.uk](http://www.bedfordshire.police.uk)

### **Bin Collections**

The Council is consulting on plans to move to fortnightly bin collections as of later this year. It is suggested that the proposal will save over £500k and will help the Council close its funding gap.

For more information and details of how to respond to the consultation see the 'Council and Democracy' section of [www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk). The consultation ends on the 22nd July.

### **Library Strategy**

The Borough Council has launched the second phase of its consultation on the future of its library services. After an initial consultation held earlier in the year, the following options have been put forward for consideration:

- External management of the library service by, for instance; a trust; not for profit organisation, or; private company.
- Increased community involvement in running or supporting the library service which would remain under the Council's management.
- Reducing the number of libraries, with the remaining sites seeing increased opening hours and more involvement from communities and volunteers.
- Reducing opening hours at the 5 static library sites by a half day or full day each week.

The consultation closes on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July. It can be accessed under the 'Council and Democracy' and then 'Consultations' sections at [www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)

### **Customer Services**

The Council has decided to close its Payments Office situated at Horne Lane in the town centre. This is an efficiency measure and is also said to be in response to an increase in the volume of payments made online and over the phone for bills such as Council Tax and business rates. If residents want to make payments in person they can still do so at Post Offices and 'PayZone' outlets.

### **A421 Link Road**

Highways England confirmed at a meeting of the Council's Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee in May that a defunct junction linking the A421 with the Interchange Retail Park will not be re-opened.

Members of the Committee were told that as the road is in close proximity with 2 other junctions it would cause a safety issue if it were re-opened given the volume of vehicles leaving and joining the A421.

It was hoped that re-opening the road could alleviate traffic congestion at the Cowbridge junction and nearby Amphill Road, but the Council will now have to look at other options.

### **NHS Health Check**

Adults aged between 40 – 74 are entitled to a Health Check once every 5 years. For more information contact your GP surgery or search for 'NHS Health Check' on the Council's website.

### **Foster Carers**

The Council is looking for new foster carers for children in care. If you are interested please call 01234 718718 or email [adoptionandfostering@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:adoptionandfostering@bedford.gov.uk).

### **River Festival**

The biennial River Festival will be held on the weekend of the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> July.

The event attracts around 250,000 people with a fun fair, stalls, entertainment, music and fireworks. For more information visit [www.bedfordcornexchange.co.uk](http://www.bedfordcornexchange.co.uk)

### **Ward Fund**

My Ward Fund allows me to allocate funds to community projects. If you would like to suggest a scheme you feel would benefit please do not hesitate to get in touch.