

## **Borough Councillor's Update**

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### **Harrold Ward Community Safety Forum** **Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner Kathryn Holloway**

The next Harrold Ward Community Safety Forum will be held in United Reform Chapel in Harrold on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October at 7pm.

The new Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner Kathryn Holloway has very kindly agreed to attend the Community Safety Forum. Do come along if you can, it will be an excellent opportunity for you to get to know our new PCC and to hear her views. Kathryn is determined to ensure a fair deal on policing whether you live in the country or town and has issued her first Police and Crime Plan since her election in May in which she sets 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)

### **Rushden Road Wymington**

Orbit Housing Association is building a small social housing development on the Rushden Road in Wymington which will be let to tenants on the Housing Register. I have asked the Borough Council to ensure these properties are offered first to local residents and those with a connection to the local area. I am pleased that the Council is currently discussing this with the Orbit Housing Association and that part of these discussions will focus on ensuring that people with a housing need in the local villages are not overlooked for these properties given their proximity. Whilst the final details of how this will be achieved are yet to be agreed, it would be prudent for interested persons to ensure that any application for housing is up to date on the choice based lettings system <http://myhomeoptions.org.uk>.

### **New Local Plan 2035**

The Borough Council's Local Plan will set out the extent to which growth in housing, infrastructure and employment is required to the year 2035. The process of developing the plan has included 2 'call for sites', one in 2014 and the other in 2015, which saw the Council invite suggestions for land that could be used to accommodate this growth. In terms of housing, a Council consultation document issued in 2015 set out the requirement to develop between 4370 – 6040 new homes from 2012 – 2032 (the Local Plan has since been extended to 2035) This figure is over and above properties already granted planning permission and likely to be delivered.

This growth will either have to be accommodated by identifying suitable sites for delivery in both the urban and rural areas. Conversely, the requirement could be achieved to a large extent through building new, large scale developments. The Council has, in this regard, received proposals from housing promoters for 4 new settlements. There are three such proposals in our area. These are at Twinwoods with 6,000 homes, Thurleigh Airfield 5,250 homes, and Sharnbrook Lee Farm 4,500 new homes. A further site has been put forward at Wyboston on the A1 for 4,000 new homes. Borough Planning officers are currently considering these sites.

Of the four sites, the Wyboston site appears to offer good accessibility without further constraining access to Bedford town centre via the A6 given its access to other major road networks. Lee Farm offers the potential of a new access road to Santa Pod and the expansion of the existing science park at Colworth House. Please see [www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2032](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2032) for more information on all potential sites.

### **Neighbourhood Development Plans**

Harrold and Carlton and Chellington Parish Councils have now had their parishes designated as Neighbourhood Areas under the requirements of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and are in the process of developing their own neighbourhood development plans. This will enable residents to have a greater say in where development goes in their parishes.

### **Town Centre Decongestion**

Last year the South East Midland Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), which is made up of public and private sector organisations in the region (including the Borough Council), submitted bids to receive Government funding to support a range of schemes designed to drive economic growth.

One of the bids included focussed on alleviating congestion in Bedford town centre. As part of its subsequent Local Growth Plan, the Government announced that the Borough Council would receive £11m for this scheme. Members of the Council's Corporate Services Committee heard in July that the Council is working with the Government on how this sum can be best used to take pressure off the road network, with various options being discussed.

### **Consultation on Discretionary Concessionary Travel Scheme**

The English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) allows ENCTS pass holders to travel without charge on eligible routes between 9.30am – 11am from Monday to Friday and anytime at weekends or Bank Holidays. Eligible ENCTS pass holders are those of state pension age or with disabilities specified by criteria set out by government guidance.

The Council also operates a discretionary scheme allowing ENCTS pass holders to travel for free at any time within Bedford Borough. The decision has been taken by the Council's Executive, however, to consult on introducing a £1 charge for ENCTS pass holders if they are using a bus service before 9.30am. It is estimated that this will save the Council £100k a year. While the proposal would see disabled ENCTS pass holders pay £1 during the specified period, a companion will be able to travel with them for free, as is the case at present.

In addition, the Council has noted that some of the more infrequent rural services mean that it would be impractical for ENCTS pass holders to delay their journey until after 9.30am, thus avoiding the £1 charge. As a result, the proposal states that where only 1 service operates before 9.30am, the ENCTS pass holders will still be allowed to travel free of charge, unless the destination is outside of the Borough, in which case the £1 charge will be payable.

The consultation will end on the 5<sup>th</sup> October. You can respond via Email at [consultingbedford@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:consultingbedford@bedford.gov.uk) or writing to - Consulting Bedford, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP

### **Bin Collections**

Following a public consultation undertaken in the summer, the Mayor's Executive has agreed to implement a proposal to move to fortnightly bin collections. This will mean that black bins will be emptied one week and then orange and green lid bins the next. This will come into place from November this year. In addition, garden waste will no longer be collected between the months of December and February.

The policy has been agreed in the midst of an estimated funding gap of £21.2m by 2019/20. The overall annual saving will be £587k.

### **NHS Review**

The Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes Healthcare Review (BMKHR), which set out much-maligned plans to relocate Bedford Hospital's maternity services to Milton Keynes, is to be taken forward by a new review called the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP).

The Government and NHS England announced early in 2016 that 44 STP 'footprints' would be created across the country, with each area tasked with setting out how NHS and social care services (provided by local authorities) could be more effective and affordable in the long-term. The local STP area covers Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Luton.

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).

It has now been agreed that there should only be 1 review, meaning that the BMKHR will be amalgamated within the STP. It is not clear at this stage whether the plan to close Bedford Hospital's maternity unit will still be pursued.

### **Blue Light Services Collaboration**

Bedfordshire Police, Bedford Fire and Rescue Service and East of England Ambulance Service have reached an agreement to work closer together around forced entry into properties.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in July means that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service will now assist ambulance colleagues when forced entry to a property is needed during a medical emergency, thus freeing up the police to respond to incidents elsewhere.

### **Library Services**

The Council has been consulting in recent months on changes to its library services with a view towards introducing a Library Strategy for 2017 – 2022. This is driven in part by realising efficiencies within the service in the context of the Council's financial challenge.

The following options were put to the public:

- i. External management of the library service by, for instance, a trust, not for profit organisation or private company.

- ii. Increased community involvement in running or supporting the library service which would remain under the Council's management.
- iii. Reducing the number of libraries, with the remaining sites seeing increased opening hours and more involvement from communities and volunteers.
- iv. Reducing opening hours at the 5 static library sites by a half day or full day each week.

The public response to the consultation saw relatively equal support for proposals 1, 2 and 4. These will be taken forward by Council officers in implementing a new option for consideration by the Executive in November 2016.

### **Wellbeing Activities**

In recent months the 'Just Turn Up' scheme has provided individuals experiencing conditions such as anxiety, eating disorders, panic attacks and depression with the opportunity to try their hand at various activities.

The Council has announced that the scheme is to be extended with Wellbeing Swimming Sessions starting on Monday 12 September – and taking place every Monday thereafter, at Robinson Pool, from 3pm – 4pm.

This is in addition to a 'Wellbeing Hub' at the Bedford Central Library, allowing individuals to try yoga and table tennis sessions to improve their mental wellbeing. This scheme will continue to the end of the year as follows:

Wednesdays, 1pm – 2pm: Group Yoga  
2pm – 2.15pm: Refreshments  
Wednesdays, 2.15pm – 3pm: Social Table Tennis

Fridays "The Wellbeing Walk", 11am- 12.30pm, starting 5th August.  
All meet and start from Bedford Central Library. The Wellbeing Hub on Wednesday is £2 each and the Walk on a Friday is Free.

Further details are set out below. For more information, contact Community Sports Activator, Robert Lindsay, on 01234 718825 or email [robert.lindsay@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:robert.lindsay@bedford.gov.uk). Carers and support workers are also welcome to attend.