

Borough Councillor Update – August 2018

**Contact Borough Councillor Alison Foster by telephone on 07773371190
or email at ajfieldfoster@gmail.com**

NHS Updates

Putnoe Walk In Centre to Close

The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), the body which organises NHS services locally, has announced its intention to close the Putnoe Walk In Centre from Spring 2019.

This is part of plans to open a new Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) on the Bedford Hospital site. The UTC will provide same-day appointments for minor illnesses over a 12 hour period, 7 days a week via referrals from A & E and the 111 phone service. The BCCG says the rationale of the UTC is to reduce pressure on the Hospital's A & E function and allow clinicians to access diagnostic services (such as X-rays) if necessary.

The BCCG is currently holding a consultation on these plans which ends on the 19th August. Search 'Putnoe Walk In Consultation' to have your say.

East West Rail

Plans have been submitted by Network Rail to the Secretary of State for Transport to begin works as early as 2019 on the western section of the East – West Rail link.

East West Rail will see the development of a new train line between Oxford and Bedford (western section). It is then planned to open a line from Bedford to Cambridge (central section) by the mid-2020s, with the scope in the future for it to extend further into the east of England. Trains running from Oxford to Bedford will stop at: Oxford Parkway; Bicester; Winslow; Bletchley; Woburn Sands, and; Ridgmont. Visit www.eastwestrail.org.uk for more details.

Black Cat Caxton Gibbet

A scheme to reconfigure the Black Cat roundabout and deliver a new dual carriageway from the roundabout to Caxton Gibbet has been delayed to 2021/22 by Highways England.

Last year Highways England consulted on the options for changes to improve the traffic flow of the roundabout as well as proposed routes for the new road. Work was due to begin in 2019/20 but it has now been put back to ensure it is aligned with plans to improve the A1 stretching from the M25 to Peterborough. For more details search 'Highways England Black Cat Caxton Gibbet'.

Homelessness Grant

The Borough Council has received a grant of £307k from the Government to invest in services supporting rough sleepers.

The funding will be used to employ 6 additional support workers and a Rough Sleeper Outreach Co-ordinator who will ensure that the Council works efficiently and effectively with partner organisations. Furthermore, 36 additional units of accommodation will be provided, as well as more emergency accommodation beds during the winter months.

The additional funding follows the opening earlier in the year of the 29 bed Complex Needs Unit on St John's Street, Bedford. This facility provides 24/7 intensive support to help break the cycle of homelessness.

Knife Crime

It was widely reported in July that knife crime increased by 22% in the past year in England and Wales. Bedfordshire Police has subsequently moved to reassure the public that it is taking action to address this.

Bedfordshire Police participates in Operation Sceptre, a national initiative which sees a week of action twice a year to crack down on knife crime. In addition to this, days of action are being held each month and officers are undertaking 'weapons sweeps', to look for discarded or hidden knives, and targeted patrols are held in 'hotspot' areas.

Other actions include test purchases at shops, to ensure the law is being adhered to in not selling knives to those below 18 years of age, and raising awareness in schools.