

Borough Councillor's Annual Report 2017/18
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Bedford Budget Council Budget

- The Borough Council has agreed its budget for 2018/19. As in previous years, demand for services is increasing whilst the overall resources available to the Council will remain relatively unchanged. This has required a continuation of its programme of service efficiencies.
- Bedford Borough 2020 will see the introduction of a 'Digital Operating Model', which is estimated to achieve annual savings of £10.4m by 2020 through improved technology, including more opportunities for residents to use 'self-service' functions when interacting with the Council.
- Service efficiencies totalling £3.8m will be delivered in 2018/19. A Council Tax increase of 1.75% has been agreed, along with a rise of 2% in the Adult Social Care Precept.
- The Council's Capital Programme determines schemes for 'one-off' investment in schemes totalling £185.8m from 2017/18 to 2020/21. This includes £19m of Government investment in traffic decongestion schemes, £5.5m in Disabled Facilities Grants monies from the Government to support independent living and £59m for school facilities.
- The Council is delivering £7.8m of efficiencies in 2017/18. As we near the end of the financial year, it is estimated that there will be an overall underspend of just under £1.8m. Councillors have allocated £1m of this sum for improvements to roads and pavements and £0.525m for new average speed cameras.

Local Plan 2035

- The Council has set out preferred sites for the development of around 8000 homes to the year 2035 in its draft Local Plan (see the below table and www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035).
- A key aspect of the draft submission is the selection of a new settlement to deliver around a third of the new homes to 2035. Land owners and planning agents submitted 4 sites for consideration, namely: Wyboston; Colworth (Sharnbrook); Twinwoods (between Milton Ernest and Thurleigh), and; Thurleigh Airfield. The Mayor's draft Local Plan includes the Colworth site as the preferred settlement to deliver 2500 homes in the Local Plan period and up to 4500 thereafter. It has been stated that a key reason for the selection of Colworth is the possibility of a new rail station linking the settlement with Bedford and London.

Local Plan 2035 Plan for submission	Amount of residential development
Urban area	2,420
Edge of urban area	210
Brownfield site Stewartby Brickworks	1,000
Colworth garden village	2,500
Group 1 villages – Key Service Centres	
- Bromham	500
- Clapham	500
- Gt Barford	500
- Sharnbrook	0
- Shortstown	0
- Wilstead	0
- Wixams	0
- Wootton	0
Total Group 1 villages	1,500
Group 2 Villages – Rural Service Centres	
- Carlton	25-50
- Harrold	25-50
- Milton Ernest	25-50
- Oakley	25-50
- Roxton	25-50
- Stewartby	0
- Turvey	25-50
- Willington	0
Total Group 2 villages (mid point)	225
	7,855

- The draft Local Plan also includes 2420 homes in the urban area, which means there is no longer a need for 'edge of urban' sites at Salph End, Renhold and Gibraltar Corner, Kempston. A 500 home allocation for Wilstead has also been removed, while a 600 dwelling development in Sharnbrook will not go ahead if the Colworth settlement is agreed. Conversely, 500 homes are still scheduled in each of Bromham, Great Barford and Clapham

Transport Infrastructure

- The Government has committed to an 'expressway' between Oxford and Cambridge which will improve Bedford's eastern and western transport links. Last year Highways England consulted on plans to reconfigure the Black Cat roundabout as well as providing a new dual carriageway from the Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet. We are awaiting news of the preferred options.
- The Council announced its 'Transporting Bedford 2020' project for £22m of decongestion schemes for Bedford town centre. This has been backed with £19m of Government funds while the Council, along with contributions from developers, will add a further £3m. For more information search 'Transporting Bedford'.
- The Chancellor's last Budget announced that the western section of the East West Rail line from Oxford to Bedford will be running by 2024. A new 'East West Rail Company' has been established to accelerate delivery of the next part of the line from Bedford to Cambridge. The preferred route in or around Bedford has yet to be chosen. See <http://www.eastwestrail.org.uk/>
- It was announced by East Midlands Trains (EMT) and Govia Thameslink Railway in December that peak East Midlands Trains services will not stop at Bedford or Luton from May 2018 until the completion of the Midland Main Line upgrade in 2020. Off peak services will continue as normal. For information see: <https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/travel-information/plan-your-journey/bedford-changes>

Health and Social Care

- In September Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable Hospital announced their intention to merge. A business case was submitted to NHS England but there has been a delay regarding the financial arrangements. In particular, it will not be known until the summer as to the available Government capital funding (the merger includes plans for £150m of upgrades to facilities on both sites). The Chief Executive has confirmed that key services such as A&E, maternity and paediatrics will be retained at Bedford Hospital.
- The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), the body responsible for organising NHS services locally, announced in January its intention to close the Walk-In Centre (WIC) at Putnoe Surgery in Bedford from October 2018. Thereafter, alternative provision will be implemented through an 'Urgent Treatment Centre' (UTC) based on the Bedford Hospital site, which will operate a 'like for like service from the Putnoe Walk In Centre'. It will also link with the Hospital's A & E function, allowing non-emergency patients access to diagnostics should further tests be required, and will receive ambulances and appointments via the 111 phone service. In addition to the UTC, the BCCG has expressed its intention to extend GP opening hours into evenings and weekends, giving patients more options to book appointments.
- The Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) review is continuing to assess options to amalgamate health and social care in Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes. See <http://www.blmkstp.co.uk/>
- The Council continues to see increased demand for adult social care with the budget for this service being set at £52.1m next year; a 13.7% increase since 2015/16.
- In October, the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) announced a new system for responding to calls. See <https://www.eeastamb.nhs.uk/news/new-ambulance-response-standards-go-live/1913> for more information.

Policing

- A scheme tackling rural crime has been deemed a success since its inception earlier in the year. In March, the Bedfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Kathryn Holloway, announced the establishment of Operation Sentinel Rural. This has seen a team of an Inspector, Sergeant, 4 Police Constables and 4 Police Community Support Officers focus on rural policing issues. In

September it was reported that the since initiative was launched, the rural crime team has been involved in a range of operations including 900 speed checks, the seizing of 39 vehicles and carrying out 9 arrests. The rural crime team can be contacted via opsentinel.rural@Bedfordshire.pnn.police.uk

Ward Fund

This year I was very pleased to make contributions from my ward fund to the following schemes...