

Borough Councillor Update – January 2020

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Firstly may I wish you all a very Happy New Year.

Local Plan

The Inspectors' Report relating to the examination of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 was received on 20 December 2019. With 'main modifications' the Inspectors conclude that the Plan passes the soundness tests. The report and the Inspectors' recommendations will be considered by Executive on 8th January followed by Full Council on 15th January 2020. The Inspector's report can be found at:

<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy-its-purpose/local-plan/>

The draft local plan will have full weight after the Full Council meeting on 15th January following which the Council will a five year land supply. The extent to which a five year supply can be maintained depends on the delivery of the allocated and committed sites. As paragraph 123 of the Inspectors' Report explains, the continuing existence of a five year supply of housing in coming years will rely on completion of dwellings as forecast (including challenging urban allocations) as well as the 'making' of neighbourhood plans and delivery of development sites within them. If the Plan fails to deliver houses the Borough Council will once again fail to have a 5 year land supply, and only those areas with a neighbourhood plan will be protected from speculative development (providing the Council's supply doesn't dip below 3 years). Planning permissions granted after the housing supply position was calculated for the emerging Local Plan 2030 (at 31st March 2019) will be treated as meeting part of the local plan requirement.

Large development on Odell Road in Harrold

The Planning Inspector's report into the planning application for 90 houses on Odell Road, Harold is expected by mid January.

Council Consultations

The consultation is now live for the 2020-2021 budget. To have your say visit: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/have-your-say/consultations/budget-2020-consultation> The Council is proposing £13m extra for Adult Services to meet demand, to further digitise services, to review its current operations and procurement, look into service change ideas and to increase its commercial activities. Consultation closes 17th January 2020.

The Council is also consulting on its Capital Programme <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/have-your-say/consultations/capital-schemes-consultation/> This is looking at where the Council is going to invest in schemes and projects to improve the Borough. More details on the proposed schemes can be found here: <https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Your%20Council/Consultations/Capital%20Schemes.pdf>

Also residents of the villages can consider joining the Citizens Panel if they would like to be more involved to create a strong rural voice: <https://forms.bedford.gov.uk/cprecruitment/>

Inclusion in Schools

The Council and its partners have launched their 'Behaviour, Learning and Inclusions Support Strategy' (BLISS) to promote inclusion and to help vulnerable children to stay in school and reduce exclusions. Schools will be offered enhanced workforce development to assist children who are struggling with behaviour in the classroom. Three documents to assist schools are available online: Behaviour, Learning and Inclusions Support Strategy (BLISS) www.bedford.gov.uk/BLISS , The Little Book of BLISS www.bedford.gov.uk/LBOB and The Early Help and Intervention Graduated Response www.bedford.gov.uk/EHIGR

Corn Exchange Website

The Council has launched a new website for the Corn Exchange which is now responsive and will automatically resize to fit the screen of your device. To visit the website please go to: <https://www.bedfordcornexchange.co.uk>

Rough Sleepers

There has been a reduction in the number of known rough sleepers in Bedford over the last 24 months. The Council has also committed to providing additional emergency beds for rough sleepers every night until 31st March, not just when it is freezing, and the Council is providing wrap around support to try to encourage take up of support and accommodation. Anyone who is sleeping rough to visit the Prebend Day Centre, speak to any of our outreach workers, or contact the Council's Housing Options Team at any time on 01234 267422