

**Borough Councillor's Report**  
**Alison Foster, Borough Councillor**

May I start by wishing you all a very happy New Year.

**Flooding**

The heavy rainfall in November and December caused misery for many of you when access roads were cut off and residents worried their homes would flood. If you are concerned and have not already done so I recommend you register with the Environment Agency's Floodline Warnings Direct either via the website at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) or by telephone on 0845 988 1188.

Following the flooding in November I met the Environment Agency's Area Flood Risk Manager for the Anglian Region at her offices, where I was very impressed with the efficiency of their monitoring of the situation and of their flood warning system. The Environment Agency is also happy to advise on flood protection measures for your homes.

Bedford Borough Council has emergency plans in place and a dedicated emergency planning team who will respond to an emergency such as flooding. This normally takes the form of assisting the emergency services (Police, Fire and Ambulance) and co-ordinating recovery and support work after the emergency. The Bedfordshire and Luton Local Resilience Forum (BLRF), a group of specialists from the emergency services, the NHS, the Environment Agency and the local authorities, will co-ordinate the safety and support of people and property affected by such an emergency. This worked extremely well in November when the flood risk was at its height, and an emergency centre was established at the Harrold Institute for residents to take refuge from the floods in the event that their homes were inundated.

**Flooding at entrance to the Country Park**

A number of residents have raised their concerns with me about the flooding outside the entrance to the Country Park which has been particularly bad this year. I have discussed this with the Borough's Highways Department and a CCTV survey of the pipework outside the park has been arranged to take place shortly. Investigations will also be conducted on the pipework under the road at the Odell turn where there appears to be a problem, which is possibly a contributory factor to the flooding outside the park. I hope it will not be too long before a solution is found and will update you in due course.

Nina, Clerk to the Harrold Parish Council has been very proactive in reporting flooding and other problems to the Borough and keeping me updated.

**Local Broadband Plan**

Bedford Borough, Milton Keynes and Central Bedfordshire Councils have confirmed their partnership to deliver faster broadband by signing a collaboration agreement. The Joint Local Broadband Plan aims to provide superfast broadband (24 Megabits per second (Mbps)) for at least 90% of the Plan area, while the remaining premises will receive a minimum of 2 Mbps.

The Plan is now ready to proceed towards the procurement stage and it is envisaged that an Invitation to Tender will be made in May, and a contract awarded in August. The Council's website allows residents to register their interest in receiving faster broadband, which may in turn attract broadband developers to the area. Residents can sign up at [www.bedford.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/broadband). The Council's latest broadband update can be found at the following link;  
[http://www.bedford.gov.uk/business/business\\_support\\_and\\_advice/broadband.aspx](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/business/business_support_and_advice/broadband.aspx)

## **Wind Farms**

### **Nun Wood**

The Planning Inspector's decision to allow the appeal and grant planning permission for the Nun Wood Wind Farm has been quashed by the High Court. The development will be re-determined by another Planning Inspector after a new Public Inquiry. The Public Inquiry will be held in the Council Chamber, Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford commencing at 10.00 on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and is estimated to sit for eight days. Any interested parties may attend and, at the Inspector's discretion, give their views.

### **Podington**

The Borough filed an application in the High Court in September challenging the Planning Inspector's decision to grant permission for 3 wind turbines at Airfield Road, Podington. It is currently taking between 9 – 12 months for hearing dates to be allocated by the High Court in planning matters and so we don't expect to hear anything until June at the earliest. I will keep you updated.

## **Bedford Hospital Petition**

Councillors from all political parties visited Bedford town centre on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December to publicise the Council's Support Bedford Hospital petition. As part of the Healthier Together review of hospital services in the South East Midlands area, two of five hospitals in Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire could have services such as A & E and maternity reduced in an attempt to specialise services on specific sites to improve quality and secure efficiencies. There is a chance that Bedford Hospital could be one of the two hospitals concerned.

The petition closed on the 19<sup>th</sup> December. Public consultation on the proposals is expected to take place in the summer. More information on Healthier Together can be found at; <http://www.healthiertogethersoutheastmidlands.nhs.uk/>

## **Weather Updates**

Following the recent wet weather, the Council is continuing to provide frequent weather updates for services such as transport for the public, schools and recipients of adult services. Gritting updates, a gritter route map and a gritter vehicle tracker can also be found at the following link; <http://www.bedford.gov.uk/winterupdates>

If you have any issues or concerns you would like to raise with me directly I can be contacted on my mobile 07773371190 or by email on [afield\\_foster@btinternet.com](mailto:afield_foster@btinternet.com)