

Parish Council Update – January 2013

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.

Children's Centres

The Council has agreed contracts with two organisations to manage the Borough's children's centres for the next three years. Rather than having contracts for 15 individual centres as has previously been the case, there will be 4 'networks' serving different areas of the Borough which will interlink the existing centres. The Council is of the view that the reorganisation will ensure that resources are directed to the frontline whilst also providing savings.

Leisure Facilities

The Council's Executive has decided to put the management of its leisure facilities out to tender. This decision could see Council facilities such as Robinson Pool and the Athletics Stadium transferred to private management with the aim of maintaining and improving services, and securing savings.

Bedford Hospital Petition

Councillors from all political parties visited Bedford town centre on Saturday 8th 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 19th 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>

