

Council Update – November 2012
Provided by Borough Councillor Alison Foster

Modernisation Proposals

Residents still have time to comment on the Council's modernisation proposals. The plans amount to additional savings of £8.7m for 2013-16 on top of the £23m for the same timeframe which was agreed by the Council's Executive last year.

Visit www.bedford.gov.uk/budget 2013 to have your say on the proposals. The consultation will close on the 19th November.

Broadband Update

The Bedford Borough Partnership Board has match funded the £440k received from Broadband Development UK (BDUK) to improve broadband access and speeds. The aim is to have 90% of premises receiving above 25 Mbps (superfast) broadband by 2015, with 100% having at least 2 Mbps (basic). The Joint Local Broadband Plan is being carried out alongside MK and Central Bedfordshire Councils.

Formal procurement for the delivery of projects began last month and it is expected that this will be completed in the middle of 2013, with most of the work being carried out in 2014. The Council is keen for as many people as possible to register their interest in having access to superfast broadband as this will help them arrive at a better deal with the prospective supplier if it can be shown that there is a demand. The more residents that register the more chance there is of our villages getting superfast broadband so please, if you haven't done so already register at www.bedford.gov.uk/broadband.

Neighbourhood Plans

All parish councils will have recently received a copy of the Council's guidance on how communities can put together a Neighbourhood Plan. As part of the Localism Act 2011, Neighbourhood Plans can be used to set out the priorities for the use of land and buildings in a particular area. The Plan must be in general conformity with the Council's Local Plan, and can therefore not prevent development that has already been approved in that document. However, Neighbourhood Plans can put forward the case for more development in the area or set out policies for buildings to be designed in a certain way.

The Borough Council would be happy to assist parish and town councils or neighbourhood forums in producing their plan. More information can be found at;
http://www.bedford.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/planning_town_and_country/what_is_planning_policy/national_policy.aspx

Hospital Petition

All political parties on the Council have agreed to an online petition calling for services to be maintained at Bedford Hospital. As part of the Healthier Together review of hospital services in the South East Midlands area, two hospitals of five in Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire face the possibility of seeing some services such as A& E and maternity downgraded in an attempt to specialise services on specific sites to improve quality and secure savings.

I would encourage residents to sign the petition at www.bedford.gov.uk/supportbedfordhospital. More information on the Healthier Together proposals can be found at <http://www.healthiertogethersoutheastmidlands.nhs.uk/>.

New Car Park

Following the closure of the Town Hall building on St Paul's Square, the adjoining car park is to become a public pay and display car park from Monday 5th November.

Alison can be contacted by email on afield_foster@btinternet.com or mobile 07773371190