

Borough Councillor's Update – June 2017

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Overview and Scrutiny Committees

The Borough Council has 4 overview & scrutiny committees which are tasked with reviewing Council services, as well as those provided by external organisations such as the NHS.

The committees are comprised of councillors from all political groups in proportion to their overall number on the Council. Members of the Mayor's Executive are prohibited from membership of any of the overview & scrutiny committees, given that the remit of the committees is to scrutinise the services for which each Executive member is responsible within their respective 'portfolio'.

Each committee has now determined or is finalising their respective work programme for the year ahead by choosing the issues they wish to explore. They have the opportunity to request and receive reports on services and subsequently to question Council officers at committee meetings.

The Children's Services Committee is responsible primarily for reviewing services provided in relation to Looked After Children (LAC) (including fostering and adoption services) and education. In the coming year it will undertake a review of services offered to LAC, assess education performance and receive regular updates on the conversion of the Borough's education system from 3 tier to 2 tier.

The Corporate Services Committee is responsible for scrutinising the Council's role in fostering economic development in the Borough, as well as the Council's finances, corporate operations and procedures (e.g. customer services and procurement). Included in its 2017/18 work programme are regular updates on the Council's 'Bedford Borough 2020' project to overhaul its processes and staffing structure, the River Festival and empty shops in the town centre.

The Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee will review (amongst many other items) traffic in the town centre, the implementation of fortnightly bin collections, progress on the Council's Housing Strategy and the performance of Fusion Lifestyle (the organisation responsible for managing the Council's leisure services).

The Adult Services and Health Committee is responsible for holding health service providers and commissioners to account, including the NHS and the Council's own adult social care function. This year it will continue to receive performance reports on specific health services (such as GP provision and stroke services), homelessness issues and support for carers. It is likely that a separate committee will be formed with neighbouring local authorities to review the local Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) which will determine the future of health and social care services in Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes.

More information on the respective committees, their meeting dates and agendas can be found under the 'Council and Democracy' section of www.bedford.gov.uk

Dog Control Orders

The Council is consulting on implementing a number of Dog Control Orders across the Borough, namely 'Dog Exclusion Orders' (preventing dogs from entering certain areas) and 'Dogs on Leads Orders'.

More information on the relevant areas proposed to be subject to either of the Orders can be seen under the 'Council and Democracy' and then 'Consultations' section on www.bedford.gov.uk.

‘Mindful Sport’

During Mental Health Awareness Week in May, the Council sought to promote its ‘Mindful Sport’ initiative.

Mindful Sport is sponsored by the Council, NHS and mental health charity MIND amongst others. It provides sports classes designed to improve attendees’ wellbeing through social engagement and being active, as well as giving them the opportunity to discuss issues such as anxiety disorders, eating disorders, panic attacks and stress should they wish to do so.

The scheme began in 2016 with yoga but now also includes swimming, table tennis and walking. Each session costs £2.

For more information see www.bedford.gov.uk/sport, email robert.lindsay@bedford.gov.uk or call 01234718829.

The schedule is as follows:

Yoga: Bedford Central Library, 1pm - 2pm, Wednesdays

Wellbeing Walk: Bedford Central Library 11am Fridays

Table Tennis: Bedford Central Library Third Floor, 2.15pm – 3pm, Wednesdays

Swimming: Robinson Pool, 3pm – 4pm, Mondays