

Borough Monthly

Issue 22

September 2017



**Take 'A Walk in the Woods' this month,
thanks to The Higgins Bedford!...**

► *find out more on page 3*

'A Walk in the Woods' artwork © Alice Pattullo 2017



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

In this issue...

New users sign up to
join Library Plus!

► see page 2

New Mobility Hub for
Bedford shoppers

► see page 3

Crackdown on Tenancy
Fraud in Bedford Borough

► see page 4

Stay free from flu
this winter

► see page 5

New users sign up to join Library Plus!

LibraryPLUS
Your Self-Service Library



Cllr Sarah Jayne Holland signs up at Bedford Central Library

This month, our libraries started working in a whole new way with the start of self-service hours through LibraryPlus at Bedford Central, Bromham and Wootton Libraries. By the end of the first week of the new service, 1,549 people had signed-up for LibraryPlus, and of those, 132 were new library members!

Once signed-up, people are able to use the libraries through a mixture of staffed and self-service hours, when you can use your library card and a PIN to enter the library.

Cllr Sarah Holland, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture said: *"LibraryPlus has been a great success. Where other authorities are closing libraries we have managed to increase opening hours and open on Sunday in the Town Centre."*

Our libraries are a fantastic local service where you can meet with family and friends, browse the stock, borrow books, use a PC or access free Wifi, and these changes have seen library opening times increase by over 40 hours overall, including Bedford Central Library opening on Sundays.

During the extensive consultation it became clear that Kempston and Putnoe Library users felt that LibraryPlus wasn't suitable for those branches at this point in time. As a result, it was agreed that there would be a small reduction in opening hours instead, in order to make the necessary savings.

For more information about your libraries, please visit www.bedford.gov.uk/libraries or sign up to our libraries email bulletin at www.bedford.gov.uk/stayconnected. There is more information about LibraryPlus available at www.bedford.gov.uk/LibraryPlus.

Investing in improvements for Lurke Street Car Park

The coming months are set to see major improvements at Lurke Street multi-storey car park and the surrounding roads, including essential electrical works and upgrades to the car park lighting, lift replacement and consultation on a scheme to tackle congestion during peak times.

The popularity of both Lurke Street car park and a neighbouring supermarket has led to queuing traffic during peak periods. To tackle this, the Council is proposing to create a one-way system round Lurke Street

alongside other works, including the installation of a rising bollard, resurfacing of several streets in the area and the provision of dedicated CCTV to monitor the new route.

The electrical works and lighting upgrade required the car park to close between Sunday 24 September and Tuesday 26 September, reopening to full service on Wednesday 27 September. The lift replacement works have not required any closure as two lifts were being worked on at one time, leaving the other two operational.

Cllr Charles Royden, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport said: *"We were always looking for ways to support and improve our town centre, with free parking deals in place across the council's town centre car parks. The one-way scheme, subject to consultation, will help to relieve a congestion hotspot and free up access to an improved Lurke Street multi-storey car park."*

More details are available at www.bedford.gov.uk/tro.

Council teams up with charity to provide new Mobility Hub for Bedford shoppers

Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity are working together to provide a new Mobility Hub alongside Door to Door's community transport services, for those who are unable to use or access public transport.

A Bedford town centre mobility service will operate from new premises in Bedford Bus station in partnership with Bedford Shopmobility, who previously operated a mobility service from a unit in the Howard Centre. The Mobility Hub will enable customers to hire a range of mobility equipment and access information on community-run transport services across the Borough.

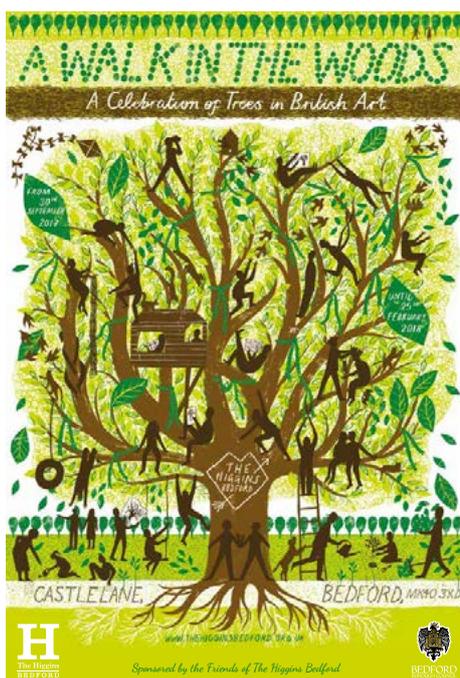
Mayor of Bedford Borough, Dave Hodgson, said: "We're delighted to have opened this new facility in the heart of Bedford town centre. The Mobility Hub will help people to get into and around Bedford town centre, making it easier for them to access its amenities and excellent local businesses."

Jon Boswell, Chief Executive of Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, said: "We're delighted to be working with Bedford Borough Council and Bedford Shopmobility to help people with mobility problems to get around Bedford. We are also keen to hear from anyone who would be interested in volunteering at the Hub."

For more information please visit www.bedsrcc.org.uk/mobilityhub.



Take 'A Walk in the Woods' this month, thanks to The Higgins Bedford!



A brand new exhibition has launched at The Higgins Bedford this month, celebrating the role of trees and woodland in British landscape painting.

This is your chance to see watercolours, drawings and prints from the last two hundred years, drawn from the world-famous Cecil Higgins Collection, completely free of charge.

The exhibition at The Higgins Bedford, in partnership with Bedford Borough Council, The Forest of Marston Vale and Oxford Brookes University, coincides with the 800th anniversary of the Charter of the Forest and will highlight the importance and enduring popularity of trees in art.

As part of the exhibition, The Higgins Bedford has joined forces to organise a series of exciting events. These include lunchtime talks, a study day, tours, The Higgins Tree Trails, and tree identification walks. Please visit www.thehigginsbedford.org.uk to find out more.

'A Walk in the Woods: A Celebration of Trees in British Art' will be at The Higgins Bedford, in the Wixamtree Gallery until 25 February 2018.

Crackdown on Tenancy Fraud in Bedford Borough

Bedford Borough Council and bpha are asking for help to identify tenancy fraud across the Borough

Social housing tenancy fraud is a national problem. Typically, housing tenancy fraud involves Council or housing association homes being illegally sublet or people lying about their circumstances to get a tenancy. The result is that homes are occupied by people who are not entitled to live there and thus increasing demand for Councils to provide temporary accommodation for families desperately in need of affordable homes.

To tackle this problem Bedford Borough Council's Fraud Investigation Service has embarked on a joint working programme with bpha to investigate social housing fraud within the Borough. The initiative started in 2015, since then 40 properties have been recovered as a result of tenancy fraud cases - meaning more properties are available for those in need of social housing. In addition, 6 criminal prosecutions and 10 cautions have been taken against those involved in tenancy fraud.

Bedford Borough Council's Fraud Investigation Service's most recent tenancy/benefit fraud awareness

exercise was carried out in July and August within the borough. Across the 2 day operation, 59 properties were visited to confirm bpha's properties were being occupied by the genuine tenants and that any Council benefits or discounts were being paid correctly.

Cllr Michael Headley, Portfolio Holder for Finance, said: *"People who sublet social housing may be committing tenancy fraud and are denying families in need of a place to call their own. Housing tenancy fraud not only disadvantages the most vulnerable members of our community, but also increases pressure on other services at a time when Bedford Borough Council faces continued cuts in funding. If you know someone who has moved elsewhere, but is keeping their existing bpha tenancy; subletting it to someone else; or someone who lied to get their house, then report it to the Council and help stamp out tenancy fraud."*

By addressing the issue of Tenancy Fraud Bedford Borough Council aims to increase the number of Social Housing tenancies available

across the Borough and take action against those who deliberately and dishonestly abuse the system for their own gain.

In order for the Council to be able to identify potential offences, we are asking for your assistance in being vigilant and aware of the risks of Tenancy Fraud. If you suspect that someone may have lied on their application for housing, has moved elsewhere, but is keeping their existing bpha tenancy, or may be subletting their home please contact the Investigations Team by emailing fraud@bedford.gov.uk and reporting your concerns, all calls/information provided will be handled in the strictest confidence.

You can also confidentially report Tenancy Fraud to the Council:

- By calling Freephone number 0800 917 8491.
- By visiting the Council's Customer Care centre in Horne Lane.
- By filling in a form online at www.bedford.gov.uk.

You can also report any suspicions to bpha in confidence on 0330 100 0272 or email info@bpha.org.uk.

Do you need help with design? Want to get something printed?

Use Bedford Borough Council's ICT Design & Repro Team



- Posters and Flyers
- Business Cards
- Leaflets
- Letterheads/ Compliment Slips
- Brochures
- Duplicate/Triplicate Carbonless Pads
- Envelopes
- Vinyl banners
- Large Posters (up to A0 size)
- Promotional Items
- Pop Up Display Stands

and much more!
...literally anything you want printing, we can do it!



01234 228154



design@bedford.gov.uk



Stay free from flu this winter

Adults aged 65 & over and carers: get your free flu vaccine!

If you are aged 65 and over (i.e. born on or before 31 March 1953) you are eligible for the flu vaccine this year. This age group need the flu vaccine yearly and it should be part of your preparations for staying well over winter. Ideally, you should get your flu vaccine before winter (October- November) to get the maximum protection.

The vaccine is available from multiple convenient locations such as your GP surgery or some community pharmacies (you do not need a referral from your doctor).

The vaccine will be made available for free to eligible persons; don't let them go to waste as they can cost up to £20 privately.

Regardless of your age, if you are a carer for or look after someone, you are also eligible for the free vaccine. You may not be worried about catching the flu yourself, but by getting the flu vaccine you stay well for the ones you love.

Make a commitment in your diary to see the GP or community pharmacy about the free flu jab before winter and get a head start this year.

Visit the NHS choices website for more information on the flu vaccine and to see if you are eligible at www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/flu-influenza-vaccine.aspx.




Don't forget your flu vaccine

You are entitled to request a free flu jab from your GP if you:

- provide unpaid care to family or friends, or
- are in receipt of the Carer's Allowance for looking after vulnerable adults or children

Did you know you can transfer the flu virus to someone you look after. Be safe - get your flu vaccine.

STAY WELL THIS WINTER



nhs.uk/staywell

Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council working together

Melissa Dalton, Nurse

Get musical with our local Music Hub

The Bedford Music Hub, funded by the Department for Education through Arts Council England and supported by Bedford Borough Council, offers a wide range of opportunities for your child to learn music. The hub is led by Music for Bedford Borough (the local music service) working with partners including Bedford Music Co-operative, Bedfordshire Music Trust, Conscia Jazz and the Philharmonia Orchestra.

The National Plan for Music Education says that all children should have the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument, be supported in continuing to play, join a musical group, and have regular opportunities to sing.

The idea behind the Hub is that it supports the work already going on in schools where music is part of the National Curriculum, right up to Key Stage 3 (year 9) and offers extension opportunities for children that wish to further experience the joys of making music or to continue after the statutory age.

The Bedford Music Hub delivers this plan locally with its partners, through regular term-time and holiday options including groups and courses such as 'Sing on!' with children singing as a choir at the Corn Exchange, Bedfordshire Music Trust orchestral courses, and a new music experience called 'First Steps in Music' for children aged 3 and 4 years old.

For more information, visit www.bedford.gov.uk/music.

Bromham Mill's Apple Day

Sunday 15th October 2017

11am - 4pm

at Bromham Mill & Gallery



Bromham Mill,
Bridge End, Bromham MK43 8LP

Tickets: £5 Adults, £3 Concessions

Phone: 01234 718616

Email: events@bedford.gov.uk



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL