

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 working days have passed and the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

1. Description of decision

That the acceptance of the grant award £86,130 via Bedfordshire Police/Home Office and as outlined within the covering report, to enable delivery of the Town Centre Warden initiative in Bedford Town Centre across the remainder of 2025/2026, be approved.

2. Date of decision

25 September 2025

3. Reasons for decision

Under the Home Office initiative Operation Salus, a number of Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the Borough have been identified as hotspots for anti-social behaviour, knife crime and serious violence. These five LSOAs cover the main town centre including the area of Bedford Town Centre designated with the new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). The Local Authority has been successfully awarded a grant from the Hotspot Response Fund to the value of £86,130 to deliver a Town Centre Warden initiative.

The proposed Town Centre Warden initiative will provide a consistent visible reassurance to those persons that live, work, visit or study in the town centre. The proposal is to deliver on foot patrols in areas that regularly report Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), or by providing pop up engagement events that provide advice and signposting for those that regularly visit the town centre.

This uplift in Council resource will coincide with the launch of the new Bedford Town Centre PSPO allowing targeted enforcement and interventions to take place. As such, the new Wardens will be authorised by the Council to utilise ASB powers to work alongside the Police and other partners to address persistent patterns of ASB in the Town Centre and providing an additional visual presence within the areas.

Wardens will also be expected to identify and record other environmental issues in the areas that may need the attention of other Council services. They will ensure that any concerns around vulnerable persons are referred to the correct services for swift and appropriate support.

4. Alternatives considered and rejected

Not accepting the grant will mean the service will not be able to deliver the initiative and associated activities outlined above.

5. How decision is to be funded

All financial implications related to the initiative have been costed to reflect the service on offer and will be fully met by the grant award (£86,130) and, as such there will be no additional strain on the Council's financial position. The additional staffing resource will be provided on a temporary basis, via an existing supplier, which will only cover the period that the grant funding is available until 31 March 2026.

6. Conflicts of interest

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision:

Not Applicable

Signed:



Date: **25 September 2025**

Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Tom Wootton**

This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer responsible for Legal and Democratic Services as soon as it is completed.

Date decision published:25September2025.....

Date decision can be implemented if not called in:6October2025.....

(Decision to be made exempt from call in.....NO.....)

Bedford Borough Council – Report to Mayor of Bedford

Date of Report: 25 September 2025

Report by: Service Director Regulation, Housing & Customer Contact

Subject: GRANT ACCEPTANCE FOR TOWN CENTRE WARDEN INITIATIVE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the proposal to accept grant funding from Bedfordshire Police relating to Home Office designated hotspots within Bedford Town Centre to deliver a Town Centre Warden initiative in those areas.
- 1.2 The grant funding requires the delivery of uniformed on foot patrols which will be funded for the remainder of the 2025/2026 financial year until the 31 March 2026, focussing on the geographical areas identified as a hotspot under the Home Office 'Operation Salus' initiative.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Mayor is asked to consider and, if satisfied, to approve the acceptance of the grant award £86,130 via Bedfordshire Police/Home Office outlined within this report to enable delivery of the Town Centre Warden initiative in Bedford Town Centre across the remainder of 2025/2026.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 Under the Home Office initiative Operation Salus, a number of Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the Borough have been identified as hotspots for anti-social behaviour, knife crime and serious violence. These five LSOAs cover the main town centre including the area of Bedford Town Centre designated with the new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO). The Local Authority has been successfully awarded a grant from the Hotspot Response Fund to the value of £86,130 to deliver a Town Centre Warden initiative.

- 3.2 The proposed Town Centre Warden initiative will provide a consistent visible reassurance to those persons that live, work, visit or study in the town centre. The proposal is to deliver on foot patrols in areas that regularly report ASB, or by providing pop up engagement events that provide advice and signposting for those that regularly visit the town centre.
- 3.3 This uplift in Council resource will coincide with the launch of the new Bedford Town Centre PSPO allowing targeted enforcement and interventions to take place. As such the new Wardens will be authorised by the Council to utilise ASB powers to work alongside the Police and other partners to address persistent patterns of ASB in the Town Centre and providing an additional visual presence within the areas.
- 3.4 Wardens will also be expected to identify and record other environmental issues in the areas that may need the attention of other Council services. They will ensure that any concerns around vulnerable persons are referred to the correct services for swift and appropriate support.

4. THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Following consultation with residents, communities and stakeholders during 2024/2025 an Executive Decision (No. 1814) was taken on 29 July 2025 for a new Town Centre PSPO to be implemented to tackle a number of anti-social behaviours including consuming alcohol in public, begging, dangerous cycling, urinating, defecating, littering etc. The new PSPO will be launched in early October 2025 and, therefore, this additional grant funding is timely and will strengthen the Council's response to tackling anti-social behaviour in Bedford Town Centre.
- 4.2 Delivery of the Safer Streets Summer Policing Plan 2025 suggests an improving picture of crime and ASB according to recorded Police data for the period, however there is a need consider how this work can be sustained beyond the summer initiative.
- 4.3 Perception surveys completed over the Summer identify some key locations in the town centre where increased visibility could be effective in both addressing issues and providing reassurance.

7. KEY IMPLICATIONS

Legal Issues

- 7.1 The proposed officer resource will be delivered by an existing provider with those delivering the role of Town Centre Warden authorised to utilise relevant powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime & Policing Act 2014 and associated guidance.

Policy Issues

- 7.2 The Bedford Borough Corporate Plan 2024/2025 to 2027/2028 focuses on four strategic priorities of:

- Supporting Individuals and Families
- Protecting the Environment
- Stimulating Economic Growth in Bedford Borough
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing

The Town Centre Warden initiative is relevant to all priorities, but particularly 'Protecting the Environment' to deliver cleaner, greener and safer places and 'Stimulating Economic Growth in Bedford Borough' to create a town centre that all persons are proud to live in and excited to visit.

Resource Issues

- 7.3 All financial implications related to the initiative have been costed to reflect the service on offer and will be fully met by the grant award (£86,130), as such there will be no additional strain on the Council's financial position. The additional staffing resource will be provided on a temporary basis, via an existing supplier, which will only cover the period that the grant funding is available until 31 March 2026.

Risks

- 7.4 There is a risk that some anti-social behaviour may be displaced to areas outside the Operation Salus designated areas. If the grant award is approved the Council will monitor levels of anti-social behaviour in and around the designated areas and provide evidence of any displacement back to the Police to consider if any variation to the hotspots are appropriate.

- 7.5 Accepting the grant funding to provide additional officer resource associated to the Town Centre Warden roles and will provide additional visual presence etc. which should have a positive impact for residents, communities and town centre users and the overall perception of risk in then town centre

Environmental Implications

- 7.6 There are no negative environmental impacts associated with recommendations in this report. Actions to reduce environmental ASB will have a positive impact on the environment within the Town Centre.

Equalities Impact

- 7.7 A full Equalities Impact Assessment was recently completed as part of the application for the new Town Centre PSPO. If approved the activities delivered with this grant would complement the new PSPO with a strong focus on providing education and advice whilst engaging with those persons that regularly visit the town centre.

Impact on Families

- 7.8 Taking measures to reduce anti-social behaviour will contribute to ensuring that children, young people and families are able to enjoy public spaces and the benefits that brings in terms of wellbeing and reducing isolation.

Community Safety and Resilience

- 7.9 The proposed activities look to address key areas of concern that has been identified in both the current and previous Community Safety Partnership strategic plans. Recognising the negative impacts of antisocial behaviour on both quality of life of those that live, work and visit Bedford Town Centre, and the perception of safety in public spaces.

Impact on Health and Wellbeing

- 7.10 Through regular consultation and perception surveys we know that higher levels of ASB can have a negative impact on the health and well-being of those that live/work and visit the Town Centre. We also recognise that some persons that persistently cause ASB issue can have complex needs and vulnerabilities. The new Town Centre Wardens would be expected to provide signposting and advice to support services and complete safeguarding referral for any persons that may require additional support to address their negative behaviours.

8. SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS AND OUTCOME

8.1 The following Councillors, Council units, Officers and/or other organisations have been consulted in preparing this report:

Portfolio Holder for Housing & Regulatory Services
Portfolio Holder for Town Centres & Planning
Craig Austin, Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director for Environment
Bedfordshire Police

9. WARD COUNCILLOR VIEWS

9.1 Not applicable as the grant funding is predicated on the specific 5 LSOAs in section 5 of the report (pp.3) which cover in part the following Wards – Greyfriars, Castle & Newnham, Harpur, Kingsbrook and Cauldwell.

10. CONTACTS AND REFERENCES

Report Contact Officer:	John Molyneux, Service Director Regulation, Housing & Customer Contact john.molyneux@bedford.gov.uk Sarah Stevens, Manager for Community Safety, Resilience & Flood Risk sarah.stevens@bedofrd.gov.uk
Declarations of Interest by the Report Author:	N/A
File Reference:	Bedford_Town_Centre_Wardens_Grant_Exec_2025_SDRH&CC
Previous Relevant Minutes:	Executive Decision No. 1814
Background Papers:	N/A
Appendices:	N/A