

Minutes of Forum Meeting

28th June 2018

Bunyan Meeting Rooms, Bedford

Present:

Elliott Stephenson
Sarah Broughton
Karen Lister
Sapphira Timperio
Paulette Rennie
David Verney
Len Simkins
Helen Turney
Martin Trinder
Brian Cunningham

Grand Union Housing Group
Bedford Foodbank
Salvation Army Debt Advice
Mind BLMK
Bedford Community Self-Help Group
Advice Bedfordshire
Autism Bedfordshire
Beds Citizens Housing Association
CVS Beds
BRASS

Apologies

Samantha Conder
Georgia Bowers
Trevor Moisey
Jenny Hedges
Sylvia MacDowell
Carol Madden
Noor D Agostino

Macmillan Welfare Rights – Central Bedfordshire Council
Bedford Borough Libraries
Three Rivers Church, Bedford
Citizen Advice Mid Bedfordshire
Money Advice at St Andrews
Money Advice at St Andrews
Aldwyck Housing Association

Action

Elliott Stephenson chaired the meeting on behalf of BAF's Steering Group.

2 Minutes of last Forum meeting (6/7/17) and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last Forum meeting were agreed.

There were no matters arising that were not on the agenda.

Len has prepared a short '20 year history' document for BAF, which was circulated at the meeting. A copy will be made available on the BAF website.

3 Information Exchange

Elliott – Grand Union – The Aragon branding has now been succeeded by the Grand Union Housing Group.

https://www.aragon-housing.co.uk/help-advice/benefit_and_money_advice-services/

Sarah - Bedford Foodbank – Demand for the service has continued to rise. The summer period is normally a lower donation time, but with the increased demand the stock level is particularly low. <https://bedford.foodbank.org.uk/>

A pop-up shop for school uniform will be opening on 20th August. Donations of school uniform are welcome - <https://bit.ly/2KsdaGi>

Karen Lister - Salvation Army debt advice – The service is receiving lots of referrals, with many connected to Universal Credit. Ann is coming back as a volunteer advisor to assist the service.

<http://www.bedfordsalvationarmy.org.uk/debt-advice.html>

Sapphira – Mind BLMK – Sapphira provided an overview of the Peer Support Service, ‘where people with a similar lived experience come together to provide emotional, social or practical help to each other.’ Evening sessions are being planned.

<https://www.mind-blmk.org.uk/peer-support-service>

Helen - Bedford Citizens Housing Association - BCHA has some spare capacity for new residents who need some form of additional care/support.

Pauline – Bedford Community Self Help Group. Lunch clubs are still running.

Brian - BRASS – Record number of cases over the past year, and the Benefits Advisor is now working Mondays to meet the demand. An event is being held on 18th August at the Quarry theatre to celebrate 20 years since the BBQ event that sparked the formation of BRASS.

<https://www.brassbedford.org.uk/>

David Verney – Advice Bedfordshire – David thanked everyone for their support over the past 12 months.

Len - Autism Bedfordshire - The charity covers Bedfordshire and Luton, providing services for children, young people and adults. The charity is looking into opening a charity shop in Bedford.

<https://www.autismbedfordshire.net/>

Martin - CVS – The annual Unconference is on Thursday 5th July, which is a great networking and debating opportunity. <https://www.bedfordboroughpartnership.org.uk/form/bc66f4cc-ac92-48ed-9f2e-d5bb97ab0f2e>

CVS have also been investigating contactless donation machines and is happy to share some of the findings on request.

4 Update on current BAF activities

Len circulated a written report (attached)

Dates for three training courses will be circulated soon.

5 Any other business

None

8 Dates of future Forum meetings (all 2pm)

- 1st November 2018
- 7th February 2019

Documents discussed at this meeting can be found at www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk

BAF PROJECTS - UPDATE REPORT

(for BAF meeting on 28/6/18)

BAF training

BAF will be organising a training programme in the autumn.

- **Introduction to Benefits** – Full day – September
- **Disability benefits** – Full day - October
- **Universal Credit** – 2 x half-days – October / November

Publicity for the courses will be circulated soon.

Bedfordshire Benefits Network

These meetings continue to be well received and well attended. BAF's Steering Group is recommending organising another 2 BBN meetings in 2018/19

The next meeting was scheduled for 12/9/18 in Bedford, but this will need to be changed to a different date.

If anybody would like to take on the facilitation of the network, please contact Len Simkins.

Advice Strategy – Central Bedfordshire

This project work is funded by **Central Bedfordshire Council**, and funding has been renewed for 2018/19

BAF is responsible for facilitating the **Advice Strategy Management Group** which oversees the Advice Strategy. The next meeting is on 2/7/18.

Funding for **AdviceCentral**, which plays a fundamental part in the Strategy's Delivery Plan, has been agreed for 2018/19.

BAF's particular aims in the **Delivery Plan** are to: continue to arrange Forum meetings, Benefit Network meetings and training courses for members; update members on GDPR; make sure that the entries (for agencies working in Central Bedfordshire) are up-to-date on BAF's online Advice Directory; and to encourage BAF members to generally promote the Advice Strategy

You can see copies of the Advice Strategy and the Delivery Plan at:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/council/stronger-communities/advice.aspx>

Building Better Opportunities Project (Financial Inclusion)

BAF is supporting this project managed by **Voluntaryworks Ltd**. The project is helping build confidence in people to help them move into work or training. Further details are available from Len Simkins.

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