

## Minutes of Forum Meeting

4th July 2019

### Bunyan Meeting - Bedford

#### Present:

Elliott Stephenson  
Len Simkins  
Helen Turney  
Martin Trinder  
Sylvia MacDowell  
Ashfaq Shamin  
Alex Franciszkow  
Brian Cunningham

Grand Union Housing Group  
Autism Bedfordshire  
Beds Citizens Housing Association  
CVS Beds  
Money Advice at St Andrews  
Disability Resource Centre  
PBIC  
BRASS

#### Apologies

Paulette Rennie  
Jo Rising  
Chera Gilbert  
Trevor Moisey  
Jenny Hedges  
Carol Madden  
Noor D'Agostino  
Sarah Broughton  
Sapphira Timperio  
Samantha Condor  
David Verney

Bedford Community Support Project  
Age UK Bedfordshire  
Disability Resource Centre  
Three Rivers Church, Bedford  
Citizen Advice Mid Bedfordshire  
Money Advice at St Andrews  
Aldwyck Housing Association  
Bedford Foodbank  
Mind BLMK  
Macmillan Welfare Rights  
Advice Bedfordshire

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#### Action

Len Simkins chaired the meeting on behalf of BAF's Steering Group.

1 **Apologies for absence** were noted (listed above).

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#### 2 **Minutes of last Forum meeting (7 February 2019) and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the last Forum meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising – Item 4 - It was noted that PBIC and Noah are on the list of organisations able to provide 'support to vulnerable and at-risk EU citizens applying to the EU Settlement Scheme.'

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

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#### 3 **Information Exchange**

**Sylvia - Money Advice at St Andrew's** - The service continues to support a small number of people, but with a highly personalised service.

**Elliott - Grand Union Housing Group** – the group are proposing to centralise their offices into Milton Keynes, with the closure of the Amptill Office. This impact of this should be minimal as most work with clients is undertaken as outreach.

**Alex – PBIC** – Alex provided an overview of the services. The service is now based in Lurke Street, Bedford

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**Asfaq – Disability Resource Centre** – Ashfaq gave a quick overview of the Disability Advice Service.

**Brian – BRASS** - Refugee week was very busy with an event at the Higgins and culminated with the football tournament. The BRASS AGM is on 19<sup>th</sup> July at St Peters Church.

**Martin – CVS** – Martin has been approached by the Regional Officer for LawWorks about the potential for setting up pro-bono clinics. Martin will try to organise a meeting before the next BAF meeting.

Martin also discussed an approach from Five Lamps, who are looking at setting up a website for Bedfordshire residents similar to one in Hull ([www.hullmoney.com](http://www.hullmoney.com)) which is a broker website “offering alternatives to; high cost loans; savings accounts; bank accounts and weekly payment stores.” The site would also signpost to local sources of support and advice. More information was requested.

**Helen – BCHA** – Helen provided an update on the work of BCHA.

**Len - Autism Bedfordshire** - A range of support services for children and adults with autism are available. AB is now a registered NOCN assessment centre and is able to offer qualifications to clients.

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#### 4 Update on BAF activities

- BAF’s Steering Group has proposed to close down the **online BAF Advice Directory**. If it is to continue, it requires significant investment as the software used to run the site is now outdated and unsupported. It was felt that between the directory of members on the BAF site, and the Advice Central website, sufficient information was now online for local people to find services.
- A series of **training courses** for the autumn will be planned. Members will be emailed to suggest topics.
- **Bedfordshire Benefits Network** meetings will continue to be organised by BAF in 2019/20. The next meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September in Bedford.
- The **Building Better Opportunities Project**, which was being managed on behalf of BAF for Voluntaryworks Ltd, ended successfully at the end of March. 224 participants had been supported during the project.
- The AGM for **Advice Bedfordshire**, BAF’s trading company will be held immediately after the BAF meeting. Copies of the Company’s Annual Report and accounts were made available.

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#### 6 Any other business

None

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Future meeting dates – 2pm start:

- 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019 – in Bedford
- 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020 – in Central Bedfordshire

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Documents discussed at this meeting can be found at [www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk](http://www.bedsadviceforum.org.uk)