

Present:

Elliott Stephenson	Grand Union Housing Group
Amanda Higham	Beds RCC
Michaela Martindale	FACES
Sam Conder	Macmillan Welfare Rights Service – Central Bedfordshire Council
Simon Kelly	Citizens Advice Bedford
Heidi Schuricht	Sight Concern Bedfordshire
Clare Anderson	Sight Concern Bedfordshire
Karen Sharp	Beds RCC
Jemma McLean	Beds RCC
Andrea MacAdam	Beds RCC
Len Simkins	Advice Bedfordshire
Debra Brewster	Mind BLMK
Sarah Hughes	Central Bedfordshire Council
Martin Trinder	CVS Beds (minutes)
Brian Cunningham	BRASS
Alex Wrack	Bedford Borough Council - Place Team

Apologies:

Georgia Bowers	Bedford Libraries - Bedford Borough Council
Fran Marritt	Citizens Advice Bedford
Chiara Mac Call	QPCO
Sarah Broughton	Bedford Foodbank
Gill Eden	Salvation Army Debt Advice Service
Nichola Thompson	Hightown Housing Association
Pat Bonnett	Central Bedfordshire Council
Steven Kunes	Hightown Housing Association

In Fran's absence, Elliott chaired the meeting.

3. Minutes of last Forum meeting (26-06-24) and matters arising

The minutes of the last Forum meeting were agreed.

4 Presentation from Alex Wrack on the work of the Integrated Care Board at 'Place'

Alex gave a presentation, (slides at the end of the minutes), including:

- Integrated Neighbourhood Working
- The Learning & Action Network, focusing on Black African & Black Caribbean residents, in the Urban South (Cauldwell, Kingsbrook, Kempston).

Various questions and comments were made to Alex. There were opportunities for good collaboration between the ICB and BAF, especially on the links between health and poverty, and the need for good advice.

Elliott thanked Alex for attending the meeting.

5. Pensioner poverty – Update on Winter Fuel Payment and Pension Credit underclaiming - and ideas for BAF action

Elliott gave a presentation (slides at the end of the minutes). A number of partners shared details of actions they were undertaking, including checking with existing clients, and promotion at various outreach sessions.

6. Proposal regarding an Anti-Poverty Network

Len gave a presentation setting out proposals for an anti-poverty network. (slides at the end of the minutes). The Forum agreed to move forward with the network. Members will be asked to volunteer someone from their organisation to join the planning group, which will meet in January.

7. Information Exchange

Karen and Andrea - Beds RCC

<https://bedsrcc.org.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/>

A range of services, including social prescribing, village agents and community agents.

Sam - Macmillan

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/18/health_and_social_care/324/macmillan_welfare_rights_service_central_bedfordshire

Small grants (£200) can be applied for on behalf of clients.

Michaela - FACES

<https://www.facesbedford.org/>

Xmas appeal has been launched. The service is at capacity.

Brian - BRASS

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

All services are busy. Ongoing support to 3 asylum hotels in the local area. Xmas party coming up.

Heidi - Sight Concern

<https://www.sightconcern.org.uk/services/specialist-advice/>

The service is able to make home visits, to discuss benefits, etc

Elliott - Grand Union Housing Group

<https://www.guhg.co.uk/advice-and-support/benefit-and-money-advice/>

Grand Union Housing Group and Longhurst Group have agreed to come together and merge into a single entity.

8. Mutual Assistance

All members were reminded that if they have any requests for, or offers of, assistance or resources, they should be free to share them with other members at any time, including at BAF meetings.

9. Update on BAF activities, including BAF training.

Len provided a written update (see attached). Training courses are being planned for early 2025. Publicity for the courses will be circulated shortly.

10. Any other business

None

Date of next meeting - 10.30am - Thursday 27th February 2025 - virtual