

Buckie Area Forum

Minutes of the BAF Ordinary Meeting held via Zoom on Wednesday 21st September 2022

Present: Christine Allan (CA), Dawn Brodie (DB), Colin Burch (CB), Susan Chalmers (SC), Ian Collacott (IC), Christine Fairbairn (CF), Fiona Herd (FH), Cara Kennie (CK), Neil Johnson (NJ – joined 7.45), Ernest Kopp (EK), Emma Marandola (EM – left 7.30pm), James Murray (JM – joined 7.45), Gordon McDonald (GM, chair), Kevin McKay (KM), Cllr Marc Macrae (MM), Morag Stewart (MS), Cllr Sonya Warren (SW)

Apologies: Leah Rossvoll, Cllr Neil McLennan, Cllr Ben Williams

The meeting was opened at 7.12 pm by GM immediately following the end of the EGM.

Minutes of the last meeting: The minutes of the last meeting, held on 30/6/2022 via Zoom, were accepted as an accurate record of proceedings (proposed by EM, seconded by CA).

Matters arising: None

Reports:

Chairperson: no items to report.

Treasurer: not present. BAF balance reported to be approximately £8k.

Secretary: noted the attendance of FH at NJ's invitation.

Proposed community winter hub:

GM led discussion on the proposed community hub. BAF is an umbrella community planning organisation, and will provide money as appropriate for this initiative, and involve other community groups and volunteers to successfully deliver the service. In broad outline, the hub is intended to provide a warm place with advice available on benefits, food and baby banks, fuel efficiency etc. There will be IT/internet access, distribution of blankets, hats, gloves etc, and provision of soup/hot drinks is also proposed. Care must be taken to avoid unnecessary duplication of existing facilities.

GM proposed that the hub should be run by a committee, accountable as trustees, which would have the power to make decisions on expenditure (using the BAF account), and meet as required. It would initially be made up of the existing BAF executive (GM, EM, Iain Grieve), and also Susan Chalmers, Christine Fairbairn and Cara Kennie. The committee would be able to co-opt members as required. All attendees agreed to this plan.

CB asked about the availability of the service to Cullen residents. There was a general discussion on the coverage area (BAF boundary, from Portgordon to Deskford), and the potential problems which people might encounter in travelling to Buckie (cost, practicality). There was also discussion of publicity. CB suggested a leaflet drop, possibly using Royal Mail (not all residents can or do access the

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internet). DB gave an approximate cost of £625 (inc VAT) to deliver over 8000 leaflets. This can be targeted at specific postcode areas. BAF's website will be used for publicity. GM confirmed that the aim is to serve residents of the entire area, working with any community or volunteer group which wishes to become involved. The former Stew & Drew's Ice Cream Parlour on East Church St in Buckie has been visited, and identified as the planned site – discussions are ongoing with the owner. Furniture, telephone/internet and other services are required, and there is a need to move quickly to ensure that the service is ready to run as soon as possible (initial planned lease 6 months, October to March). Information will be freely shared with other interested groups.

Opening hours must be decided – likely to include evenings and weekend times to ensure that those in full-time employment, many of whom may require help, can access the service. There was a general discussion of what might be offered, how volunteers can be recruited, and how the hub should be staffed (a minimum of two staff at all times for safety and security). Some physical alterations are required, and public liability insurance is essential. Tables and chairs are needed (some available from BAF stock). The exact form of the service is flexible, and should be refined as needs are assessed and hub resources are developed. Donations will be sought, but there is likely to be a requirement to buy some items. Acquiring ex-airline blankets may be possible. FH can source catering equipment (soup urns).

FH informed the group that a sum of £60k (Participatory Budget money from Moray Council core funding) is available for spending in Buckie to benefit young people. This cannot be used for staffing, but FH and DB clarified that services such as internet and rental of space would be appropriate use of this money. A survey of school students will be undertaken to establish priorities (e.g. youth café). The proposed hub space is unsuitable for this purpose, and simultaneously shared space is in theory undesirable. There may be areas of mutual interest, however. There was a general discussion on how priorities for the hub can be/have been assessed. CA stated that the recent LOIP survey listed the cost of living crisis as a major concern. SC suggested that Universal Credit claim statistics would also support the need for a hub. Daily news headlines also support the need for such initiatives.

KM asked if it might be possible to access council furniture or equipment stored in the Buckie Drifter building. This will be investigated.

In summary, the proposed hub must be driven and shaped by community needs, and the ability of volunteers to satisfy these needs, as well as adequate funding. Whatever is done must be within our abilities to support. This is likely to change as time goes on, and resources become clear. There is a willingness from council to support with advice as needed. IC reported that he had discussed business rates with James Taylor, head of taxation services at Moray Council, and it seems highly

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likely that 100% exemption can be obtained using the Small Business Bonus Scheme.

AOCB: None raised.

GM thanked attendees for their input, and closed the meeting at 8.20pm.

Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 23rd November at 7pm. An earlier meeting of the hub committee will be arranged. An earlier BAF meeting will also take place if necessary.