

ABERDEEN U3A

Minutes of the adjourned Annual General Meeting held on Thursday, 1st September 2022 at the Boys Brigade HQ, Crimon Place, Aberdeen

1. Welcome

The chair, Fiona Watson, welcomed all present to this the adjourned AGM of Aberdeen U3A. Fiona reminded members that the AGM had been called for Thursday, 9 June 2022 but as there were then insufficient members present to form a quorum, the meeting had been adjourned to today. The formal notices had been re-sent and other meeting papers had been available on the website since May.

As 69 members were now present, the meeting was quorate. There were apologies from a further seventeen members.

2. Adoption of minutes of the AGM on 3rd June 2021.

The adoption of the minutes was proposed by Jennifer Leighton and seconded by Jennifer Logan. The minutes were adopted by the members with no dissent.

3. Matters arising if any

There were no matters arising.

4. Chair's Report

(This report is that which would have been given in June.)

During the past year we have made gradual progress to something closer to normal. We have moved from Zoom meetings and talks, to gathering in person, at first socially-distanced and wearing masks, but now we have ditched the masks and we can see each other properly. While there is still some uncertainty about the possible resurgence of Covid in the winter, at least one of the benefits of having reached our age in life is that we are generally first in line for the next vaccine booster.

We resumed our monthly meetings here in the BB Hall in September and we have had a series of real live speakers – a novelty for us and for some speakers too, as we were their first non-Zoom audience in quite a while. We were also able to handseal our new sound system, bought just before the 2020 lockdown and which sat unused for 18 months. At first there were some issues with the facilities here but eventually the heating was repaired and the kitchen became available. So thank you to all the brave souls who sat here in their coats, scarves and masks, and in this way supported our efforts to hold monthly meetings again. From March onwards we've provided tea and coffee, an important social aspect of our meetings. We are grateful to all those who to help serve these refreshments, and also to Joe, who greets you at the door each month.

Speaker meetings are the most visible part of our activities, but, as you know, a lot more happens in Aberdeen u3a. I refer, of course, to the interest groups. Our groups co-ordinator Jennifer will say more about these but I want to pay tribute to all the group leaders and group members who have worked together in ways that best suited them, in order to pursue their various interests in challenging times. Our Zoom Pro account continued to be available to interest groups, allowing them to have uninterrupted discussions and learning opportunities. Thanks go to Teresa and to Joyce for setting up and starting the various Zoom meetings.

Sadly, in the past year, we have seen the deaths of two group leaders: Florence Cal-Anglia, a long-time member of Aberdeen u3a, and most recently co-ordinator of the Write Your Own Story group, and also Edith Wemyss, joint leader of the Local Studies group.

There will be further changes to groups, as several long-serving leaders have decided it is time to step down: Helen Oram is giving up the two Scottish Heritage groups, Freda Middleton has resigned as a leader of the International Lunches group, and Pat McConnachie will no longer lead the Beginners German group. We are grateful to each of them for their long and valued service to Aberdeen u3a and hope they will continue to support our activities in other ways.

This year our usual range of social events was again curtailed, but we did manage a very modified Christmas event, and we also had a Christmas pantomime, provided via Zoom by our own u3atrical group.

We have worked hard to keep in touch with all members. Throughout the pandemic, members have received regular emails or letters, and in the past year, these have been monthly, keeping everyone up-to-date, as circumstances and regulations changed. Last summer we again provided our annual newsletter in hard copy – thank you to all those who contributed articles and to Tina for bringing it all together. That is my cue to remind you once again about sending in contributions for the 2022 newsletter. Our website is perhaps our most public form of communication – it receives several hundred hits every month and has been a steady source of new members joining us. Thanks go to Enid for her work in keeping it attractive and up to date and to all those who edit their own group pages.

Moving on now to the committee, at the last AGM only six of a possible ten places were filled. A seventh member was co-opted, but unfortunately had to stand down part-way through the year. So our committee has been small (but perfectly-formed). As every member has taken on a new role this year, to some extent we have also been finding our feet. However, I think I can say that our meetings have been productive, and I personally am very grateful to the committee for all the work they put in. Obviously having more committee members would help spread the workload, particularly as we would like to expand activities in the coming year. Despite appearances to the contrary, you do not have to be a “Wifie fae Westhill” to serve on the committee. [For the uninitiated, four of the six currently are !]

It is sad that our nearest u3a neighbour - Turriff and District - recently voted to dissolve as they were unable to get members to take on the necessary roles. However, it is encouraging to learn that there are now moves to start a new u3a in Banchory.

Looking ahead to the coming year for Aberdeen u3a: I hope we can continue our path back to normal meetings and that groups who have not been able to meet regularly or at all in the past year or two find a way of re-starting. It would be good if we could also resume our traditional social events, such as the New Year Lunch and summer outing – providing, of course, that you the members wish these.

We will be using some reserves to absorb the increase in venue hire costs and in the capitation fees we pay to our national office, the Third Age Trust. Annual membership fees will therefore remain at £10, and fees for groups meeting in the Northern Arts Club will also be held at the pre-pandemic level, at least for the September to January session.

I would like to highlight what it is that makes u3a different from other organisations. It is not “by the few, for the many”. It should be “by the members, for the members” and everyone is encouraged to participate, to share their interests and skills, and help out where they can. That doesn't mean everyone needs to take a turn on the committee or set up or lead an interest group – though it would be wonderful if more did. There are things that anyone can do – attend meetings, suggest speakers, give a vote of thanks, be active in your interest groups, submit items for the newsletter. Everything you do helps ensure the continuance of Aberdeen u3a, and that includes attending our AGMs and giving us the necessary quorum to proceed with these meetings, so thank you for your support today.

5. Annual Report and Financial Statements

Helen Smith, treasurer, gave a brief presentation, outlining the income and expenditure over the past year and making a comparison with the previous financial year. As the finances are in a relatively healthy state, there will be no increase in the membership fee or the monthly meeting fee in the year 2022-23, and fees for interest groups meeting in the NAC will remain at the current level for at least the first five-month session.

Fiona asked that the Annual Report and Financial Statements be adopted by the membership. This was proposed by Moira Forrest and seconded by Monica Gray. The members approved with no dissent.

6. Appointment of examiner.

Helen Smith explained that our usual examiner is now unable to act for us within the required time frame, so this year she had asked Scott Langlands to examine the account. She then proposed that Scott Langlands be appointed as external examiner. The motion was proposed by Joyce McAdie seconded by Heather Bills and approved with no dissent.

7. Group Coordinator's report

(This report, by Jennifer Leighton, is also that which would have been given in June.)

It is with sadness that I must begin my report with a tribute to Florence Cal Anglia whose death was announced in April. Florence served on the Committee and indeed was my predecessor as Groups Coordinator. However, after stepping down from the Committee due to ill health, Florence then took on the leadership of the small Write Your Own Story group. Florence was the epitome of the u3a ethos in her determination and enthusiasm to learn espousing that, "it is never too late, I did it and obtained my degree." Most of all Florence was a good friend to many with her gentle and sensitive candour and will be missed. The many gifts Florence gave us will live on and enhance all who met her.

Congratulations and thanks to all our Group Leaders, their deputies and responsible persons who, in addition to their usual responsibilities, have come through a difficult year negotiating several stages leading to opening up. The committee requested adherence to Scottish Government, u3a and Northern Arts Club restrictions or guidelines and there was a great deal of documentation to get to grips with. We were all concerned to do the right thing. Leaders of each group took on the additional task of discussing and finding the best way forward for their members to meet whilst complying with Covid restrictions.

Before the pandemic we held face to face meetings in various locations which involved travel and a certain level of fitness. During the time of Covid restrictions we learnt, adapted and evolved to continue achieving the aims of our organisation. We survived and stepped forward. Group meetings are now held in person and also virtually which enables those who are unable to make the journey, for whatever reason, to continue to participate. It is hoped that groups who have not met regularly will soon be able to resume their activities. Through the trials of the pandemic we have worked through and improved our offering to members.

There have been a number of changes in leadership of groups taking place throughout the year and all have been smoothly arranged. We lost our leader, Ian Williamson, of the Philosophy Group and are actively seeking a new leader. Members interested in attending a Spanish Group are encouraged to come forward. In November a small group, lead by Michelle McMillan, enjoyed a Bird Watching walk followed by a light lunch. Mah Jong and Scrabble, Current Affairs, Local Studies and Scottish Heritage have returned to hold their meetings at Northern Arts Club. Current Affairs combine their monthly meeting at the NAC with weekly virtual meetings for the remainder of the month. Aberdeen u3a tricals are in the process of constructing their fourth pantomime and are making plans for a live performance at the end of the year. Our special thanks go to the dedicated group leaders who are stepping down from their leadership roles in the near future and who have served so well.

All our leaders and members, wherever they meet, have contributed their talent and expertise, warmth and good fellowship, to learn, laugh and value the company of each other. Long may we continue.

8. Adoption of new constitution

Fiona reminded members that we have always adopted the form of constitution recommended by our national body, the Third Age Trust. The new version sets out specific arrangements for wholly online and also hybrid meetings, a measure also recommended by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. There are revised criteria for members serving on the committee as office-bearers and in other roles, and it also sets a new and smaller quorum for general meetings. Our draft had been approved by the Third Age Trust and by OSCR.

Adoption of the new constitution was proposed by Jennifer Leighton, seconded by Moira Forrest and approved with no dissent.

9. Election of the office-bearers and committee members 2022-2023

Under the 2018 constitution, proposals for the committee should be made in advance, and at the deadline, seven nominations had been received. There being no other nominations for the posts, the following were elected unopposed:

Chair – Fiona Watson	Proposed by Pat McConnachie and seconded by Helen Riach
Vice-Chair – Joyce McAdie	Proposed by Doris Strachan and seconded by Norma L Marioni
Secretary – Letitia Miller	Proposed by Lynne Houston and seconded by Joe McAdie
Treasurer – Helen Smith	Proposed by Jane Catto and seconded by Kathleen Cordiner
Committee Members	

Irene Freebury
Jennifer Leighton
Jennifer Logan

Proposed by Joe McAdie and seconded by Lynne Houston
Proposed by John Wood and seconded by Lizann Carwood
Proposed by Anne Craig and seconded by Maureen Ewen

Fiona noted that there were still several vacancies on the committee. As the new constitution had been adopted, it was now up to the committee to fill these vacancies or to co-opt additional members. She asked that anyone interested in serving on the committee or wishing to learn more by attending a committee meeting speak to her or to any committee member.

Fiona reminded members that the website manager and newsletter editor are not part of the committee and so are not elected at the AGM. Enid Knutton is willing to continue as website manager and Tina Stockman as editor of the Newsletter, so both will be confirmed in post by the new committee.

10. AOB

As no-one had given notice of any other business, Fiona concluded the meeting at 1.45pm and invited members to enjoy the presentation by the day's speaker.

Minutes approved: _____ Date _____