

## **Minutes of the Braintree Area U3A AGM at 2pm on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at Bocking Arts Centre (now Braintree Institute)**

**1. Meeting opened by Elaine Orpe (Chair)**

Elaine welcomed everyone to the 2023 AGM.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

None

**3. Minutes of last year's AGM 20<sup>th</sup> April 2022.**

Agreed as correct. Proposer - Pauline McAllister, Seconder – Linda Johnson.

**4. Matters arising from Minutes**

None

**5. Chair's Report**

Another successful year has passed and Braintree Area u3a has continued to provide its members with opportunities to make new friends, discover new interests, go on trips, and take part in activities with other members. Braintree Area u3a is still recovering from the effects of the pandemic, with membership numbers remaining similar to last year, albeit a lower number than before the pandemic.

With reduced numbers of members concerns had been raised about the state of Braintree Area u3a's finances and the cost of holding our meetings at the Bocking Arts Centre. In response to this, last Autumn the membership was asked to vote on the prospect of moving to a cheaper alternative, such as Rayne Village Hall, or paying increased membership fees for this year. The majority of members who voted preferred to stay at the Bocking Arts Centre and pay an increase in membership fees. These were raised to £20 for single members and £35 for joint membership. This will be monitored. To make the takings of membership easier the BACS payment method was set up for membership fees as well as the use of a portable card reader for card payments.

Proposals by the Third Age Trust, to whom we are affiliated, to increase our subscription fees to them at its AGM last October were not carried, as members from many u3a branches voted against them. This is now currently under review.

Activity and interest groups form a major part of how the u3a is run and provide a great way of meeting like-minded people with shared interests. Groups are run by the members for the members. At present we have 26 groups running including Petanque, Ukulele Group, French Conversation, Walking Groups, and Luncheon Groups to name but a few. These are well established and working well. Some groups were not able to continue due to lack of a group contact but hopefully they will return in the future. Thank you to the group contacts for all they have done during the past year. The Outings Group has also been busy with a variety of trips organised and these were well supported. Trips included

visits to Kew Gardens, Eltham Palace, The Royal Albert Hall, Cliffs Pavilion Theatre, Riverboat trip and more recently Romford Dogs. Thank you to the Outings Team, Sheila Mead, Rebecca Fuller and Anne Britton, for all they have done over the last year. A programme has been planned for the rest of the year and will be publicised in due course.

At Christmas time a very successful Christmas meeting was held which included a quiz, magician and music provided by the Ukulele Group and the Jazz and Jamming Group, as well as the usual sing along by members. Thanks go to Pauline McAllister for putting all of this together. My thanks also go to Alan and Carol James for organising the teas and coffees.

None of this would have been possible without the continued commitment of our dedicated committee throughout the past year. I would like to thank Sheila Vince, our Secretary, who recently stood down due to health reasons. As we move forward there will be a lot of committee changes. Our constitution, recommended by Third Age Trust, which we adopted last year, states that committee members should not serve more than three years without a break or change of role and that they should serve a maximum of nine years. This means that Rebecca Fuller, our long-standing Membership Secretary, has now reached her nine years of service as committee member and is now stepping down. Rebecca took on the role of Membership Secretary at the conception of Braintree Area u3a in 2013. I would like to thank her for her many years of service to the Committee and Braintree Area u3a and the huge contribution she has made.

In October 2022 we welcomed Brian Armstrong to the Committee, who has offered to take over from Rebecca as Membership Secretary. I would like to thank Pauline McAllister for her work as Speaker Co-ordinator, Linda Hellewell, Group Co-ordinator and Kathryn Varley for all her help at the general meetings. Pauline McAllister will reach her maximum number of years on the Committee next year and Alan James will reach the maximum of three years as Treasurer. We will be looking for members to fulfil these roles next year.

I have already mentioned our committee members, but there are other members who have kept the wheels of our u3a turning and deserve our grateful thanks for the time and work they put into it. Geoff and Sheila Mead, Mary and Terry Chapman, Andy Beatty and Dan Collis. Also, the many tea and coffee volunteers who help each month.

None of this would have been possible without the continued commitment of our dedicated committee. I would like to thank them for the time and effort they have put in to keeping Braintree Area u3a running smoothly and efficiently throughout the year. I will be stepping down from the committee due to personal reasons. I would like to thank you all for your help and support during the six years I have been a member of the committee. I wish the new committee every success for the future.

## **6. Financial Report for year ended 31 December 2022**

The 2022 accounts have been externally examined as detailed in the bundle of documents sent to you with the notification of this AGM. At the end of 2022, Braintree Area u3a had a total of £6,566.24 at its disposal; £4,601.93 in a Reserve Account, £1,929.31 (£2,247.31 less £318.00 in outstanding cheques) due in the Current Account and £35.00 Petty Cash. As detailed at last year's AGM, advance Membership Subscriptions for 2023 will be included in the 2023 accounts and hopefully in future the Balance Sheet presented at the AGM will be more representative of that year's financial activity.

The Balance Sheet shows a loss of £3,111.28 but as £1,975.00 of 2022 advance Membership Subscriptions were included in the 2021 Accounts, the real loss for the year was £1,136.28. Hire of the Bocking Arts Theatre for monthly meetings continues to be our major cost but the increase in Membership Subscriptions for this year should reverse the loss of 2022 and bring us to a break-even point for 2023.

Membership at the time of writing stands at 301 compared to 313 at this time last year and there continues to be a good number of New Members. Currently I see no reason for any further increase in Membership Subscriptions for 2024.

As detailed in last year's Treasurer's Report, your committee have approved that Membership Subscriptions can be accepted via Debit Card, Credit Card or BACS payments direct into our Bank Account. Whilst BACS payments have been a success, Debit Card & Credit Card payments via Square have had a chequered introduction. Not many people seemed interested in using either Debit or Credit Card and the Square Unit worked intermittently at this hall.

The way Gift Aid is recorded by our Beacon Administrative system has changed, which has contributed to the delay in instigating a claim with HMRC. You will all shortly be receiving Gift Aid forms which I hope you will sign and return so that as a Registered Charity, we are able to claim an additional 20% of your Membership Subscriptions or Donations from the Inland Revenue.

Finally, 2023 will be my last year as Treasurer for Braintree Area u3a. I am giving notice now so that there is plenty of time for a smooth hand over to my successor. If there is anybody interested in becoming Treasurer, please contact me or one of the Committee.

### **Adoption of Accounts**

The accounts were adopted. Proposer – Helen Schriber, Seconder – Pauline McAllister.

### **Appointment of Independent External Examiner**

Proposer – Janis Collis, Seconder – Ann Hunt.

## 7. Committee Members' Reports

### Membership Secretary

Rebecca Fuller is now standing down from this role having completed the maximum 9 years of service on the Committee. Brian Armstrong has been working with Rebecca to take over this function.

### Web Editor

Website problems last Autumn led to the website being suspended whilst a new provider to host the SiteBuilder websites, used by u3as to publish and publicise their activities, was found. Many links for documents and photos were lost. Some photos and documents have now been reinstated and the site is now operating normally. A future development from the Third Age Trust is that the SiteBuilder system will be replaced by a new system based on Wordpress. The new system is to be called u3aSiteWorks. The migration of the system is expected to take until the end of 2024.

## 8. Election of Officers

- **Chair** Debbie Winchester
- **Vice Chair** Christine Deal & Linda Hellewell
- **Treasurer** Alan James
- **Secretary** June Thompson

All nominations for the above positions, having been proposed and seconded by members, were duly elected.

## 9. Election of Committee Members

- **Membership Secretary** Brian Armstrong
- **Group Co-ordinator** Linda Hellewell
- **Committee Member** Anne Britton
- **Committee Member** Kathryn Varley
- **Committee Member** Andrew Ings
- **Committee Member** Ann Hunt

## 10. Election of Honorary President – Geoff Mead

Proposer – Andy Beattie, Secunder – Pauline McAllister.

## 11. AOB

None.

## 12. Date of Next AGM: Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2025. t.b.c.