

U3A Canterbury & District
Minutes of the 36th Annual General Meeting, 12 April 2023
Held at 2 p.m. in St Mary Bredin Church, Canterbury

Welcome. Robin Terry as Chair welcomed members to the 36th AGM.

Apologies had been received in advance from 34 members: Mary Barnes, Ann Barnwell, Barbara Brown, David Clarke, Su Cumber, Julia & George Georgiou, Sally Gridneff, Andrew Heatlie, Len Hinksman, Allan and Brenda Kelsall, Shelah Lester, Isabel Lucas, Kinn McIntosh, Mary May, John & Ruth Paterson, Margaret Pau, Robert & Janet Potter, Dorothea Pragnell, Jan Pritchard, Gillian Ratcliff, Madeleine Richardson, Barbara Rogers, Pam Scott, Wendy Scott, Pauline Terry, Jocelyn Thomson, Kathy Trim, Barbara & John Vosper and Monica Walling.

The Minutes of the 2022 AGM had been made available to all online. There were no comments and they were proposed as a correct record by Stuart Hutchinson, seconded by Angela Tippett and accepted unanimously by the meeting.

Matters Arising from the Minutes. There were none.

Presentation of Annual Accounts 2021. With a PowerPoint presentation Keith Watson (Treasurer) said that 2022 followed a similar pattern to 2021 in that our u3a faced similar challenges, namely inflation, fewer members, an aging membership and finding volunteers. His role today would be to guide the AGM to make appropriate decisions to ensure the future viability of our u3a and establish a future financial strategy for 2023/4. He would also present the annual accounts 2022 for approval (they had been placed on the web site on 19th March 2023) and explain why the committee proposed to raise course fees for the Main Programme commencing in September 2023.

Turning to 2022, we had found it impossible to predict HMG Covid legislation and Third Age Trust (TAT) guidance, and therefore had to learn to live with uncertainty and try to maintain flexibility in our decision making. We had started some face-to-face meetings early on in the year and further increased their number in the Main Programme in September. Our financial position during the year enabled a budget of no increase in Subs and no fees for courses. The results were reflected in the Consolidated Balance Sheet and Financial Statement 2022. However fewer members renewed in the first two months of 2023, and this had forced us to review our financial strategy for 2023/4.

Our 2022 revenue was some £1,800 less than budget, mainly due to fewer members joining than predicted. Gift Aid at £2,829 was important and it was pleasing to note that 52.9% of our members had signed up for this. Commission of £665 received from Riviera travel was also welcome, but Amazon has now ended its Smile Amazon charity donation scheme.

2022 expenditure was £35,302, some £3,800 below budget, but we had spent some £12,000 more on hall hire than in 2021. This was a deliberate policy to enable more face-to-face meetings to take place. Our course programme is a key element of what our u3a exists for and your Treasurer wants to ensure that we can support this key element through finance. We were also able to negotiate a no increase in the rental for use of the Orange St. office for 2023.

Looking forward to 2023/4, COVID now seemed to be over, but the trend of fewer members renewing, some 10% increase in hall rental costs and further rises in TAT affiliation fees and Beacon charges meant that we would have to change our financial strategy. The 2023/4 Main Programme was not yet fully developed so we could not be certain what hall hires will be required, nor what would be the likely revenue if course fees were raised. However, the Treasurer had examined the current Main Programme and as a first order assumption assessed the number of hall sessions needed for courses bigger than 10 attendees per session. Considering that not all such courses were fully booked, he found that there were 14,920 sessions in the Programme. Courses in Members' homes accounted for 24% of these, Zoom 22% and halls 54%. He had assumed that the same course fee would be raised irrespective of the venue a course took place in. This promulgated a policy that

the u3a had adopted in earlier years. One of the reasons was that this would maintain fairness. People who attended a hall course often had to pay for car parking as well as a course fee, whereas attending a home host's course was unlikely to incur such a cost. If fees were based on £1.50 per session the likely course revenue to be raised in the Main Programme would be £22,380. This was in the same area of magnitude as in previous years (2019 £26,805; 2018 £29,815; 2017 £28,648) which gave him some confidence that it was a reasonable target to aim at.

He had also looked at the likely level in the bank account at the end of our financial year (31st December). Experience told him that we should aim for about £30,000 to be sure that we could pay for rents and ancillary costs that would arise in the first two months of the following year before money from subscriptions was received in late February/March. If no fees were raised for the Main Programme in September 2023, then the likely bank account on 31st December 2023 would be £23,000 and zero on 31st December 2024. The latter would be financially reckless and higher subs and fees would have to be raised in 2024 together with a curtailed Course Programme. This would be very detrimental to growing our u3a and maintenance of our attractiveness to the membership.

On the other hand, if fees were charged at £1.50 per session, then the total 2023 revenue would be of the order of £28,800 with the likely bank account level at year end of £28,000. The comparable figures for 2024 would be total revenue £50,000 and bank account level £33,000. Therefore, he would propose that a course fee of £1.50 per session should be charged for each session in the Main Course Programme which commenced in September 2023. He then opened the session to questions.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR ON THE ACCOUNTS:

- Did we have an estimate of how many members the raising of fees might lose?
 - We did not feel it would make much difference. Some u3as charge; others do not. There is a risk either way, but we do have a good choice of courses on offer.
- Should we perhaps raise annual subscriptions rather than course fees?
 - This would not be fair on the proportion of members (about 17%) who do not attend courses, as they would be subsidising others. Also, by Inland Revenue rules, Gift Aid can be claimed only if the subscription is not seen as payment for other activities.
- Would we lose more members by raising the annual subscription?
 - That is of course possible. We are privileged to have not paid course fees for the last three years, and we are sure members will understand the need to charge them now to maintain our financial viability.
- Are course fees not a great administrative burden?
 - Yes, but we managed to charge them manually in previous years using a small team of volunteers. We are also investigating whether we could get a computer programme to make things easier.
- What is the cost of using Zoom?
 - About £150 per year, including VAT. We have six subscriptions, but this is a small cost compared to renting halls.
- Are courses in homes not subsidising those in halls? Should we not add the rent to the course fees?
 - We strive to be fair to all. Attending a course in a hall often requires parking charges, which is seldom the case at members' homes. It is also the policy that we used in previous years.
- Could we not have more hosts for groups and reduce the use of halls?
 - We always ask for new hosts when people join our u3a, and halls are a last option. However for some courses, such as dancing, halls have to be used.

Acceptance of The Independent Examiner's Report: Janet Linington proposed that this be accepted. This was seconded by Chris Plant and carried unanimously.

Approval of Accounts. John Shirland proposed that the accounts be accepted. This was seconded by Stuart Hutchinson and carried unanimously.

Resolution to approve the proposal to raise a course fee of £1.50 per session for all courses booked in the Main Programme 2023/24. This was proposed by Doreen Rosman, seconded by Julia Butterworth and carried unanimously.

Reappointment of Jonathan Butchers as the Independent Financial Examiner for 2023–2024. This was proposed by Stuart Hutchinson and seconded by Trevor Peel, and carried unanimously.

Robin expressed his thanks for the skilful leadership and advice given since 2014 by Keith Watson as Treasurer, and presented him with a gift as a token of gratitude. The meeting expressed its appreciation in the normal way.

Chair's Report. Robin spoke of the nature of u3a: a learning cooperative relying on its members to run courses and activities. Our learning activities were done purely for pleasure rather than for qualifications. Our activities all required a willingness to lead, and there were lots of jobs to do. All who contributed in the many tasks, great or small, were much valued, including the venues organiser, the hospitality team, the bulletin team and the holidays organisation.

We were still looking for new members, and Robin urged everyone to encourage others to join. Joining Days had been revived in 2022, and the Open Days, with the next in May. All members would have an Information Card with the dates of the monthly talks, which had been excellent, and all received the monthly Bulletin. Robin encouraged members to submit articles and photographs for this.

The Courses and Activities programme had grown since the pandemic eased, and new activities were always needed. There was also a link with the University of Kent with research activities. Committee meetings were held monthly and here also volunteers to help would be welcome.

The Chair's report was endorsed by the meeting unanimously.

Election of Committee Members *en bloc*. The following Committee members or Trustees were willing to be re-elected: Robin Terry, Ursula Steiger, Mary Laslett, Ian Ward, Angela Tippet, and Keith Watson. These were proposed by Patricia Papa, seconded by Doreen Rosman, and the motion passed unanimously.

Election of new Committee members. Christine Hughes, Lizzie Arrow and John Wetherell were proposed as new committee members by Ursula Steiger and seconded by Mary Laslett, and the motion passed unanimously.

Committee Members standing down. Jane Dennett, part of the courses team, and Robert Mathews as Business Secretary had stood down from the Committee, and Claire Alfrey had stood down during the year. Robin presented them with a token of thanks for their work.

Reappointment of Ursula Steiger as President. Ursula was proposed by Dorothy Hutchinson, and seconded by Patricia Papa, and the motion was passed unanimously with loud applause.

Open Day: 18 May 2023. Mary Laslett, the Membership Secretary, encouraged all members to attend the Open Day with its various demonstrations, musical performances and displays, and appealed for volunteers to display posters and distribute flyers.

The meeting was closed at 3.16 p.m.