

Chepstow U3A Conveners Meeting

Friday 20 April 2018

Chepstow Leisure Centre

NOTE OF THE MEETING

Attendees

42 Conveners

10 Committee members:

3 Other U3A members with non-committee roles:

Terry Summers and Ian Wood (Asst Beacon System Administrator)

Chris Whiteman (Website Administrator)

The meeting was chaired by Kay Mahony (Convener Liaison)

1 Welcome and Introduction (Kay Mahony, Convener Liaison)

Kay welcomed Conveners to the meeting, and asked the Conveners who were new to the role (and, mostly, attending their first Conveners Meeting) to stand up and make themselves known to the others. Kay expressed her appreciation of all Conveners' hard work and dedication that enables all our successful and valuable groups to thrive.

2 Updates

2.1 Membership (Irene Hullah, Membership Secretary)

Irene informed everyone that Chepstow U3A now had 848 members. There were 207 still to pay their membership and Conveners were informed that by checking their groups using Beacon those still to re-join would be indicated in red. Payment by Bank Transfer is the most convenient method of payment.

Chepstow U3A is thriving with numerous new groups having started in the past months and membership increasing.

2.2 Beacon (Terry Summers/Ian Wood, Beacon Administrators)

Terry and Ian gave an update on Beacon:

Beacon - Progress to Date

- Chepstow U3A currently has 62 Groups
- Our Beacon implementation has gone well
- 61 Groups are now logged on to Beacon
- A lot of 1:1 convener support
- Have now formalised backups
- Bouncing emails frustrating
- Unpaid subs – individual's name highlighted in red in Beacon

Backups

- Previously backups had been made on an ad hoc basis
- We are now producing duplicate backups every Monday

Bouncing emails

- This has been an issue!
- Beacon at large: 0.08% emails bounce and 0.02% are treated as spam
- Chepstow up until March: 0.7% undelivered
 - Email typos
 - Members away or not checking emails
 - BT problem
 - AOL/Yahoo/Hotmail issues
- Tesco: tesco.net email service will close down on 27th June 2018.
- We have made significant progress - currently 1 email inaccessible
- Since 26th Feb we have the ability to 'Un-Blacklist' emails locally

The immediate future

- Training and support – who's interested?
- Using our Data – who's not in a group?
- Financial systems – initial discussions

Questions were invited and, briefly, responses were as follows:

- 1 *It is possible to know who has sent an email using Beacon but not to know what is said in these messages.*
- 2 *In response to Data Protection issues Conveners now only have access to name, telephone numbers and email addresses of people in their Group.*
- 3 *Beacon as a system has a good level of security. (Derek stated that Beacon and the U3A web site were completely separate. Each person using their own computer was advised to make sure that they had a good virus guard themselves.)*

Terry thanked conveners for all their support over the last year. Their patience and determination has ensured that the implementation has gone so well.

2.3 Data Protection (Derek Shottin, Chairman)

Derek informed everyone that there will be changes to Data Protection, with the introduction of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) on May 25th 2018. The U3A holds members' personal information. The Chairman, the Beacon team, the Membership Secretary and a nominated committee member (Jill Rundle) will be looking into issues relating to how this data is to be used and developing an appropriate policy.

Conveners were reminded that they also had access to their Group members' data and that it **MUST** only be used for U3A purposes. Any circulated lists must be kept up to date, e.g. checking that no members who have left remain on these lists. Conveners were advised that one of the best aids to ensure against error was to use Beacon as this will be regularly checked by, for example, the Membership Secretary.

The use of photographs and personal data will require each person's permission. In the near future Derek and Jill will be looking into the best way to accomplish this requirement.

3 Financial Procedures (David Phillips, Treasurer)

David told those present that the method they currently use to record any payment can still be used but that he would be requiring some further information from them in order to comply with rules set by the Charity Commission with which the U3A is registered.

There are three main groups for whom he has to account:

- Groups using the Activity Bank Account, e.g. those requiring monthly payment for rooms, etc.
- Groups not using the Activity Bank Account e.g. those using homes to meet and thus not requiring much financial cost for the venue.
- Groups who pay directly to the venue, for speaker, trips or other expenses.

The latter Groups should now keep a financial record of any transactions. If these amounts total about **£200 per year** then David asked that a record of this information be sent to him on a quarterly basis.

The Charity Committee Annual Report is due on December 31st.

At present, there are no definite plans with regard to using the Financial aspect of Beacon, but this option is currently being explored. Possibly, a Gloucester U3A group already using it will be asked to discuss how they have found its implementation.

4 Safe Use of Venues (Kay Mahony)

Kay advised all Conveners to ensure that the venues that they use provide a safe environment and are accessible for their members. Also, to ensure that if an emergency should arise, they would know what action to take. She has developed two checklists ((i) Venues Risk Assessment Checklist and (ii) Venue Checklist – Day of Use) to help Conveners undertake these assessments. They are available on the website (under Information > Groups and Conveners) and Conveners were encouraged to look at this and use them.

5 Chepstow U3A Magazine (Nicky Lee, Marketing)

Nicky stated that the aim of the Magazine is to encourage participation in Group activities and events, to provide a feel good factor about achievements, to generate new members and to raise awareness of the U3A.

The current basic structure will remain as:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| Chairman's letter | Dates for the diary |
| Monthly meetings | Coffee mornings |
| Special events | |
| Group activities open to others in the U3A e.g. trips, speakers | |
| Features: On a Convener; Spotlight on a Group; Report on last Monthly Meeting | |

The deadline for inclusion of items will always be the 15th of the month before publication and those present were reminded that it was important for members to send information in good time for publication.

It was hoped that in the future they could expand the Magazine to include such things as gardening advice, recipes, information on wine, puzzles, etc. but this would need input from members.

Possibly, the web version of the Magazine could have further information not included in the paper additions, e.g. day to day events

6 Group Discussions

The meeting broke up into small discussion groups, each facilitated by a member of the committee, to look at the following topics:

- ***“Closed” Groups***
Kay asked the Conveners to consider solutions to the problem of groups that are “closed” to new members, often for a variety of reasons – e.g. location limits numbers, activity restricted to a certain number, following a specific course etc. They were also asked to discuss the use of “waiting lists” for members wanting to join a full group.
- ***Open Day 2018***
Shelagh outlined the plans for a Chepstow U3A “Open Day” to showcase everything that we offer – to the wider public and to existing members. She asked the Conveners to think about what their group could do to participate to illustrate what they do/achieve/produce, including the use of interactive examples.. They also considered optimum timing and suitable venues for the Open Day.
- ***Other Ideas for Improvement***
Finally, Kay asked Conveners to discuss and feed back on any other general ideas for improvement, for the benefit of Chepstow U3A members.

Each group then gave feedback from their discussions to the rest of the meeting.

A ***summary of the feedback*** has been produced separately (*See Appendix 1*).

SUGGESTIONS WILL BE DISCUSSED BY THE COMMITTEE AND TAKEN FORWARD AS PART OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

7 AOB and Closing Remarks (Derek)

Derek thanked everyone for attending the meeting and Kay for organising it. He asked for general ideas for improvement for Chepstow U3A.

8 Feedback on the Meeting

Kay issued feedback survey forms to Conveners to complete at the end of the meeting.

Much of the feedback was very positive:

- Conveners particularly appreciated the opportunity to meet other Conveners and share ideas, discuss issues etc.
- They found the information-giving aspects of the meeting useful
- They thought that the agenda was varied and relevant, and that there was a good and friendly atmosphere
- They enjoyed the lunch!

On the negative side, a major problem with the acoustics was identified, regarding hearing presenters and hearing comments from the “floor” during feedback from the discussions. Also, hearing issues within the small group discussions themselves, when seated around the tables.

All the feedback on the meeting will be examined in detail by the committee and changes made for future meetings where appropriate. In response to feedback, one major change is likely to be a CHANGE OF VENUE for the next Conveners Meeting.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS – Summary

“CLOSED” GROUPS

- A method is needed to capture those people who were being put off when told the particular group they were interested in was ‘closed’. The word ‘closed’ also gave too final an impression and this should perhaps be listed as ‘currently full’.
- Suggestion of a central register being set up to list the details of people interested in wanting to join the closed group. This would enable contact in the future should numbers warrant the formation of a new group/places becoming available in an original group. It should be an accessible waiting list. Individual web pages need to say if groups are full, giving the reason for this, but also telling those interested that they should register their interest by contacting ...to go on a waiting list, or for help in setting up a new group.
- Any such lists need to be kept updated with relevant information. More use could be made of the Magazine or web site to help with the dealing of this issue. Possibly, a ‘Group vacancy’ and ‘Group wanted’ list in the magazine each month.
- Groups need to be pro-active themselves so that they can assist in solving this problem. Sometimes groups may give the impression that they are a ‘private members group’. It was hoped that Conveners would help to prevent this impression and also assist in the setting up of new groups in their particular areas of interest. Another possibility might be to divide the present group into two separate ones so that there is an element of experience within each new group.
- Building up a suitable participant’s confidence to encourage them to become a Convener needs to be addressed. Those interested in joining ‘closed’ groups might be encouraged to start up a new one if help is offered from the existing group.
- Conveners need to keep group information up to date with, for example, non-attenders being removed from group lists to allow new members to join.
- The idea of hiring bigger premises to allow greater members to join was mentioned but this raised the issue of venues having to be suitable for certain requirements within the group. Also, use of members’ homes requiring smaller numbers suits some of the group activities better than in larger establishments.
- Conveners need to let the Convener Liaison Officer know that there are people wanting to join the closed group so that she can help with the solving of this problem. Reasons for being closed should also be stated.
- There is a need to improve the webpage information about the state of the groups so that both those with few attendees and those who are oversubscribed are recognised e.g. size of venue, course being followed.
- Addressing the question of what do new members want to do when they join was pointed out. Encouragement should be given to facilitate and widen access to those wanting to join ‘closed groups’.
- Is there a need to address the idea of/ impression of the group being a ‘clique’?

OPEN DAY 2018

- Choice of venue for such an event was considered critical. It was felt that The Palmer Centre might limit the type of people who would attend as would holding it, for example, in the High Street. The Palmer Centre was more central but parking could be an issue. The Leisure Centre offers parking but would not attract the 'passer-by'.
- Some felt that members were needed outside the chosen venue (e.g. ukulele display) to encourage people to come inside to see the main content of the Open Day.
- Timing - Most thought that late summer, possibly the latter half of August would be a good time for this event.
- Plenty of advertising should be used to encourage visitors to the venue – newspaper advert, banner, etc.
- There were plenty of ideas as to how each Group could be represented:
 - Displays of walks and the value of walking
 - Reading groups - examples of books read and reviews
 - Theatre trips details
 - Art work and demonstrations
 - Languages – lists of topics covered in Spanish, and could be interactive e.g. learn some basic phrases in Welsh

However, it was also thought important that some of these examples should be **interactive** and not just posters, photographs and lists e.g. wine tasting, participation in dancing, flower arranging demonstrations, etc. It should be lively and entertaining.

- Such an event needs to present a positive view of Chepstow U3A
- Some felt that an Open Day should also offer an incentive to people thinking of joining.

OTHER IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF CHEPSTOW U3A

- Monthly meetings should provide more opportunities for people to socialise.
- Some, coming to the Monthly Meetings, felt isolated. This did not just apply to new members but also to those who only came occasionally. There was a general impression that friendship groups within the Hall were already quite strongly formed.
- The venue for the Meetings (Drill Hall) felt 'dark'.
- Some had experienced difficulty in actually filling in the members Survey about the Monthly Meeting that had been sent out and had therefore not completed it.
- Not having tables all around the room at Monthly Meetings – just a few at the side.
- More social aspects were needed at the Monthly Meetings.