

**Minutes of Committee Meeting held at the
Laura Trott Centre at 1.30pm on Thursday, 18th January 2024**

Steve Sell (SS) Chair	Andy Smith (AS) Committee Member
Stewart Walter (SW2) Vice Chair	Frank Sluter (FS) Group Co-ordinator
Christine Luff (CL) Secretary	Malcolm Luff (ML) Committee member
Christine Folland (CF) Membership Secretary	John Durrant (JD) Events Co-ordinator
Sue Allum (SA) Speaker Secretary	Vanessa Lucas (VL) Committee member
Peter Harris (PH) Website Co-ordinator	Heather Douglas (HD) Committee member
Stewart Wagstaff (SW) Asst. Program Editor	Tony Knight (TK) RUG Coordinator

1. Apologies: Rob Scott, Brian Peel

2. Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 16th November 2023 agreed.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes, not being discussed later:

None.

4. Chair's Report:

Happy new year to everyone and welcome to our first committee meeting of 2024.

The December meeting was well attended and fortunately the weather then was not as cold as back in 2022. We are grateful to Peter for organising the A-Train warm up prior to our entertainer Mike Marandi. Although Mike put his heart and soul into his sets I received numerous complaints about the sound quality because his system was simply not up to the poor acoustics in the Laura Trott Hall. I am uncertain whether it would have been possible to connect him to the BOSE equipment, but we clearly need to rethink things in the future.

Many thanks to everyone who helped at the December meeting. I am sure the raffle vouchers that Sue organised and the hamper donated by Tesco were very welcome Christmas presents. I am sure everyone enjoyed the mince pies contributed to by Tesco and the additional cakes that Tony arranged. The RUGS seemed to have the refreshments well organised, many thanks to Tony.

With a new year upon us it is time to start preparing for membership renewals which last year were carried out at both the February and March meetings. In addition, we organised two dates in March last year for informal renewals and these will need to be booked with the Laura Trott Centre.

Hopefully we will then be able to reduce the number of members renewing at the April meeting when we hold our AGM.

At our last meeting in November Christine advised that Isobel Hospice had expressed interest in the Community table possibly for the January meeting. We have also had an approach from Lowewood Museum in Hoddesdon, and they have been invited to attend next week's meeting. If there is a vacancy for the Community table we could possibly suggest Lowewood occupy it.

Finally, many thanks to Stewart Wagstaff for the analysis of proposals for new groups and the ongoing work he has undertaken moving forward with the more popular suggestions. I see that we have an AOB agenda item for an update on the New Groups initiative.

Note during the meeting: After Steve presented his report, Peter offered the A-Train for the main entertainment spot at next years Christmas event. There was much discussion about how the event should be structured: should we move the raffle to avoid many people leaving early, could the singing for fun group be accommodated in some way, should we use a CD for Christmas music during the arrival period? All these issues can be discussed nearer the time but it was agreed that the A-Train should perform and so Sue should not try to engage an outside entertainment act. Whilst the A-Train would not need paying they would appreciate a donation towards purchase of new equipment.

Action: SA not required to engage an external entertainer(s) for Christmas 2024.

5. Vice Chair's Report:

Our last meeting was the Christmas event and once again was well attended. Peter and the A-Train did an excellent job providing entertainment as the warm up to get everyone in the mood for a great afternoon. There was an ample supply of mince pies and stollen but unfortunately the extra demand put a strain on hot water for teas and coffees. Thanks go to the LT staff for sourcing kettles to rapidly boil extra water and special mention to Tony and the team for managing the difficult situation so well. Learnings for next year (and future meetings) is that the urns need to be switched on in plenty of time before meetings.

Our main entertainer Mike Marandi was very enthusiastic and I thought engaged with the audience in a very positive way. Unfortunately, his sound system was not good enough to overcome the poor acoustics of the sports hall. That said, the second half of his set especially was enjoyed by all those who remained and moved closer to his stage and mostly joined in with the dancing. We need to try to use our sound system in the future.

Note during the meeting: it was suggested that the late switching on of the urns might be related to the closure of the LT café and needs to be monitored in future. It was also noted that Tony bringing bottles of water to top up the urns was critical to a successful outcome and will be repeated in future.

6. Business Secretary's Report:

u3a mailings and web contacts circulated.

Web contacts included the Dogs Trust Rehoming Centre in Essex, Hertfordshire Mind Network, Isabel Hospice and the new Community Engagement Officer at Lowewood Museum.

Insurance Certificate for 2024 has not yet been received so I have emailed u3a office and my request is 'being dealt with'.

7. Treasurer's report:

<u>Monetary Assets as at 16th January 2024</u>	
Main Account	£3,951.76
Groups Account (Restricted)	<u>£14,104.65</u>
	£18,056.41
Cash Floats:-	
Membership Secretary	£50.00
Books	£5.00
Cash in hand held by Groups	
	<u>£2,520.46</u>
	<u><u>£20,631.87</u></u>

Since our last Committee Meeting we have received into the main account:

£146.00 in membership fees (less £0.60 for the Square charges), £26 for puzzles, £45.55 for T&C and £127.05 from November's raffle. Groups meanwhile have paid in £5438.65.

Our outgoings for the period have been:

November program printing £156, December printing £276. The hire of the bar area and Main Hall for the monthly meetings until March 2024 was £746.92, the November speaker £50 and the December entertainer £250, while the December raffle prizes were £700.

Although not mentioned in the previous minutes, we purchased a new Acer Laptop for use by Vanessa for the website. Finally, there was a payment of £31.50 for prezzies for the LT staff.

Payouts for the Groups totalled £11,668.08

Sue commented that the £700 December raffle prizes was actually £500 for the prizes and £200 was for catering.

NOTE: Brian Peel to be included on invitation list to committee meetings

8. Membership Secretary's Report:

Renewals for the next membership year will be taken from the February meeting (8 weeks ahead of the new membership year). Apart from the monthly meetings there will be 2 dates: 29th February and 6th March 2024 from 13.00 to 16.00 in the bar area at LT when members can renew. **(Note: these dates were confirmed verbally with LT staff during the committee meeting, but need to be formally booked by RS and confirmed in writing).** Tea and coffee and biscuits to be provided during these sessions.

Any new members in January should attend as a visitor and then join for the year in February.

Annual membership fees for 2024 will be increased to £15 and there will be no associate membership offered (as agreed at the 2023 AGM). Members who want a hard copy of "Third Age Matters" magazine will have to pay an additional £4

Members can pay fees by bank transfer, standing order or by credit/debit card.

Action: Members need to be reminded in the monthly program and by email through Beacon that if paying by standing order the amount needs to be adjusted to the new fees.

Christine F will make a final decision on the colour for the membership cards. Suggested options were yellow, light green or orange.

For the coming year we will continue with the printed, laminated annual membership cards (produced by Christine F). During the year the option to move to the permanent "credit card" type as used by Hertford may be investigated.

9. RUG Co-ordinator's Report:

Hilary is in charge of the refreshments this month and Tony will run it in February. RUG's for this month are sorted, although Stewart will check with Barry Wallace that he is still OK to meet and greet.

Tony has a list of about 10 volunteers but commented that when he rings round there are always a number who are not available and he was worried that some others may be getting fed up of being asked on a frequent basis. It was agreed that we have an ongoing need for volunteers and to continue appeals in the program and at monthly meetings.

Action: VL to include wording in monthly program. CL will print about 30 forms for potential volunteers to complete, with name and contact details. These to be kept on the information table and refreshment table at meetings. Chair to call for volunteers from the platform.

Tony also noted that the rubbish bin that had been donated has now disappeared. If it can't be found we need to purchase one.

10. Speaker Secretary's Report:

This month's speaker is Mike Barbakoff whose talk is entitled 'The First Enigma Codebreakers'. Mike has spoken to us before and will use our equipment.

Sue offered to circulate the speaker list for the next few months.

As noted elsewhere, Sue will not book an entertainer for the 2024 Christmas event.

11. Group Co-ordinator's Report:

Frank reported that the new Local History Group to be run by Pat Dixon was taking off and would have their first meeting on 5th February, details included in the program.

Frank also thanked Stewart Wagstaff for all his work on trying to establish new groups. There are 7 potential groups and Stewart has arranged for initial meetings to be held at Tesco's community room on the following 4 Fridays, starting on 19th January with bird watching and gardening groups.

The object is to see how many people actually turn up and the key will be for a person/people to step forward as group leader(s).

One of the proposed groups, Love to Dance, is very popular and is being organised by Jacqui Fry and Jackie Williams. Details are sketchy but these groups are associated with a charity and sponsored to some extent by Saracens Rugby Club. It is unclear whether or not this will be a u3a group.

Peter commented that St. Clements Church Hall will not be available for group meetings until the end of March due to works at the school next door.

12. Website co-ordinator's Report:

For the moment we will continue as we are with the current website.

Action: Peter to remove the reference to an assistant/understudy treasurer required because Brian Peel has taken on this role.

Vanessa has been working on the new site. There are 2 options: use the template designed by u3a and hosted by siteworks or we go independently and use another hosting company. The first option means that we have to abide to any rules and format set by the u3a but we can take advice from a number of other u3a's who are using the same template. The second option would mean that we own the site and can make our own decisions.

Vanessa advised the meeting that she would favour the first option, using the u3a template hosted by siteworks. There are about 20 u3a's that have already migrated to this template and one example she quoted was Exeter u3a. Potters Bar are an example of a u3a which has gone the independent route.

13. Programme Editor's Report:

Most items already covered.

500 copies required this month. Cutoff date for copy for January is 20th January.

14. Events Co-ordinator's Report:

It may be that an extra community table will be required if Isabel Hospice confirm attendance. Christine L to confirm.

New parking permits will be required for the March meeting onwards.

15. Any Other Business:

- New Groups initiative: Already covered under item 11.

16. Main Monthly Meeting: 1.30pm on Thursday 25th January 2024

17. Next Committee Meeting: 1.30pm on Thursday 15th February 2024

The meeting closed at 15.30.