

Cotswold Link u3a network
Minutes of AGM held on 18 March 2023
at Woodmancote Village Hall near Bishops Cleeve

Present:

Sue Russell (chair), Ann Kelly (treasurer), Marion Collighan (secretary), Jenny Harrison (committee member), Susan Gibson (committee member + Cam, Dursley & District). Chris Wardle (Cheltenham), Alan Russell (Worcester), Theresa Howard & Mike Byrne (Bromsgrove), David Keeling & Nicky Neill (Evesham & District), Sally Whyte (Pershore), Paul + Susan Grierson (Churchdown), Duncan Fraser (Tewkesbury), Phil Hawthorn & Paul McDonald (Winchcombe), Roger Steer (Thornbury), Gillian Thompson, Margaret Cleverley & Valerie Hayward (Bishops Cleeve), Denis Riley & Clive Harper (Gloucester), Andy Castro & Mike Townsend (Ledbury), Roy Atkins & Bill Culshaw (Malvern).

Welcome from the Chair of Bishops Cleeve u3a

Valerie Hayward, chair of Bishops Cleeve, welcomed everyone to this AGM and explained the domestic arrangements. Bishops Cleeve has just over 450 members and the committee are all quite new to their roles.

1. Apologies for absence

There were voting delegates representing 14 u3as out of the 26 Cotswold Link members, which is 54%, making the meeting quorate.

Apologies had been received from: Chris Hucker (Hereford), Lesley Brooke and Mike Goodwin (Leominster), Jim Christie (Ross-on-Wye), Richard Phillips (Malvern), Carmel Burton (Tetbury), Richard Bedford & Judith Silverwood (Stroud), Elizabeth Reeves (North Cotswolds), Les Hazelwood (Droitwich), Roger Streatfield (Churchdown), Allan Walmsley (Regional Trustee West Midlands), Susan Parker (Regional Trustee South West).

2. Acceptance of minutes of AGM held on 23rd March 2022

After a brief discussion, there were no objections to the minutes of the previous meeting. Acceptance was proposed by Mike Byrne and seconded by Bill Culshaw. The minutes were approved with 1 abstention.

3. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Report from the Chair

Sue welcomed the delegates to the meeting. She advised that sadly both regional trustees have had to pull out, due to illness and accident respectively, and wished them both well.

Sue's report focused on the events and developments within Cotswold Link and its committee over the past year. She advised that member u3as have provided reassuring reports of steady recovery in 2022/3. Activities have included Open Days, with a pleasing increase in member numbers as a result. In contrast to this

trend, it appears that recruiting to committees remains a problem for some u3as and for the Cotswold Link.

A feature of the Link calendar is the Special Interest Day, which is structured around an agreed theme and features experts who speak on associated topics. Sue reminded that we were able to hold a Special Interest Day with in-person attendance in July 2022. The theme was around climate change and despite a shaky start to bookings, it was a success. This year, we are moving away from Science and Technology to the Arts. Our theme this summer will be "Art and Patronage" and will be held once again at the Pavilion in Cheltenham.

The half-yearly meeting held in Leominster in October was our first face to face after the pandemic and was a great success. Sue expressed her thanks to all who were involved with arrangements. At this meeting, the theme was Contingency Planning.

Mike Philpot, Webmaster for Cotswold Link, had to cope with the total collapse of SiteBuilder in November 2022. He has been rebuilding our website but some features are still missing. Sue asked that if anybody notices anything they feel should be there and is no longer to please let us know, although there are some items that cannot be recovered.

Beacon for Networks is now fully operational for Cotswold Link.

Peer support groups for Treasurers have been taking place over the last year and it is hoped to start groups for other officer roles in the coming year.

Over the last year Marion and Sue have attended Network Link meetings over Zoom. These meetings are open to all u3as, not just network representatives. They cover several key topics in two-hour sessions. Marion and Sue have also attended Zoom meetings organised by Susan Parker, South West Regional Trustee and Sue has attended the Regional Support Team meetings in the West Midlands. There is currently an election taking place for a Regional Trustee for the West Midlands and the result is due to be announced next week. Chris Hucker of Hereford u3a is standing for election.

Gloucester u3a held the National u3a Robot Challenge in October. Susan Parker attended and reported that she had a fabulous day!

The Cotswold Link team is sadly depleted. Susan Gibson joined for the last year but has had to step down. The committee urgently needs new members if it is to continue. Sue advised that the work is not onerous as we only have three events in the year to plan for but it is great fun! She asked attendees that if they felt they could give up a few hours a few times a year, to please contact any member of the team. Most of our committee meetings are held via zoom, and if you wish to sit in and see what we do you are welcome to join us.

Finally, Sue expressed her personal thanks to the committee for all their hard work and support, with a big thank you to Susan for joining us for the last year.

There were no questions.

5. Report from the Treasurer

The accounts had been circulated before the meeting showing a balance at the end of December 2022 of £1,388.42, compared to £1,277,50 at the end of 2021. Ann gave a brief overview of the different items. There were no objections to the accounts for 2022, which were approved unanimously.

6. Update on officers and executive committee members

The committee members Sue Russell (Worcester) as Chair, Ann Kelly (Worcester) as Treasurer, Marion Collighan (Cheltenham) as Secretary and Jenny Harrison (Ledbury) as member confirmed their willingness continue in their roles for a further year. All were elected unanimously for a 1-year term.

7. AOB

Sue and Alan explained about the issues with SiteBuilder. SiteBuilder is used by about 700 u3as. Basically, the company that hosted SiteBuilder closed down the server on which it was running. Another company was found willing to host it and some data could be recovered. However, all photos and attachments were lost.

The replacement for SiteBuilder will be called u3a Siteworks and will be coded in WordPress. It will look quite like SiteBuilder (by design) and will be rolled out over the next couple of years. A migration programme has been written and currently about a dozen u3a have been migrated and are trialling it. In the meantime about 130 u3as have developed their own independent sites using WordPress.

The biggest challenge with the move will be training u3a members who need to manage the new sites.

Eventually it will be easier to access Beacon though the new site but that is in the future. A plug-in should also be available for u3as with their own WordPress sites to access Beacon.

Information can be found on “siteworks.u3a.org.uk”. Alan advises u3as to focus on making sure the data in their current SiteBuilder website is cleaned up so that it represents what they want to migrate. He doesn't feel it is worth the effort to try and understand SiteBuilder at this stage in the process.

8. Date of Next Meeting – The next AGM should take place in March 2024 and is scheduled to be hosted by Evesham & District u3a, subject to their agreement.

Signed..... Date