

Cotswold Link u3a network
Minutes of half yearly meeting held on 22 March 2024
at Honeybourne Village Hall near Evesham

Present:

Sue Russell (Chair), Ann Kelly (Treasurer), Marion Collighan (Secretary), Jenny Harrison (committee member), Chris Hucker (committee member), Alan Russell (Beacon), Allan Walmsley (Vice Chair of Third Age Trust).

Gillian Thompson, Margaret Cleverley & Valerie Hayward (Bishops Cleeve), Anthea Whitehead & Mike Byrne (Bromsgrove), David Edwards (Cam & Dursley) Ken Inglis & Janet Ropner (Cheltenham), Paul Grierson & Jane Moore (Churchdown), Kevin Noles, Roger & Carolyn Taylor and Paul Zuest (Cirencester), Roslyn Gowers, Diane Nicholls & Nicky Neill (Evesham & District), Denis Riley & Clive Harper (Gloucester), Kim Brinkworth & Anni Plummer (Hereford), Alasdair Gibson (Ledbury), Sue Dalley (Malvern), Tony Snowdon (Newent), Angela Hope (North Cotswold), Sally Whyte & Jackie Jolley (Pershore), Sue Gee (Redditch), Richard Bedford & Sylvia Pearce (Stroud), Carmel Burton (Tetbury & District), Duncan Fraser (Tewkesbury), Paul McDonald (Winchcombe), Adie Ditchburn (Worcester).

1) Apologies for absence

There were voting delegates representing 20 u3as out of the 27 Cotswold Link members, which is 74%, making the meeting quorate.

Apologies had been received from: Myrtle Moreton-Cox & Debbie Sirett (Cam & Dursley), Deborah Andrews (Evesham & District), Brendan Kelly (Leominster), Jules Everett (Newent), Lorna Marshall (Northleach), Mark Eardley (Ross-on-Wye), Bernadette Bell (Tetbury & District), Ian Barber (Tewkesbury), Roger Steer (Thornbury), Phil Hawthorne (Winchcombe), Jean Jackson (WM Regional Trustee), Susan Parker (SW Regional Trustee).

2) Acceptance of minutes of half yearly meeting held on 11th October 2023

No issues were raised with the minutes from the previous half yearly meeting in October 2023. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Paul Grierson and seconded by Sue Dalley. The minutes were approved with 1 abstention.

3) Matters arising from the minutes

At the last meeting Geoff Stollard asked that Cotswold Link take an action to inform u3as of their responsibilities in respect of disability access. On 12th February 2024 a note was circulated to all Cotswold Link contacts containing the latest information provided by Susan Parker on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

4) News from the committee

a) Special Interest Day 2024

The flyer for the special interest day 2024, "Our Brave New World", was sent out at the end of January and as of 15th March we have 46 registrations. The event will be at the Pavilion in Cheltenham on Tuesday 4th June 2024.

Chris reminded delegates that Cotswold Link members will have priority for places until 1 April, after which members of u3as outside Cotswold Link will be able to register. He expressed concern that some u3as have no members registered yet.

The delegates pointed out that, as members booked directly, they had no way of knowing how many people from their u3a had registered. It was agreed to circulate the numbers registered from each u3a.

A delegate pointed out that the title of the special interest day makes it appear to be very techy. Chris advised that the speakers communicate in an accessible way and that people do not have to be technically inclined to be able to understand.

Delegates from some u3as did not think they had received the information about the Special Interest Day. Marion advised that communication from Cotswold Link normal goes only to the nominated contact for each u3a. Beacon will let her know if the message was not delivered to somebody but it is the responsibility of the contact to pass on info from Cotswold Link to their committee. It is important for u3as to inform her if the contact changes so that the info continues to get through. Many u3as use specific committee emails that can be passed on to the new role holder, which helps with continuity. It is also possible for a u3a to nominate 2 contacts to receive Cotswold Link emails.

Chris mentioned that in future he would like to move the venue for the Special Interest Day around the Cotswold Link area. Sue Dalley suggested that venues that can be reached by train should be considered.

b) Peer support groups

Chris Hucker advise that 3 people attended the Chairs meeting on 18th Jan 2024 and a second meeting has taken place. Those who attended had some good discussions.

Ann Kelly advised that almost all Cotswold Link Treasurers are members of this peer support group. They sometimes have talks and will be having a second talk on Beacon from John Alexander on 22nd April. She often puts Treasurers together who can help one another. She also finds it very useful to be able to send the invoices for the Cotswold Link annual fee directly to Treasurers, rather than having to go through the nominated contact.

Marion explained that she had managed to arrange initial meetings for peer support groups covering Groups Coordinators, Business Secretaries and Website managers.

6 people attended the Groups coordinators meeting on 26th Jan 2024. Various issues and concerns were raised. It was agreed to schedule another meeting

on 26th April, which will discuss agenda items based on the issues raised. Adie Ditchburn commented that it was interesting to see the difference between how u3as managed groups.

4 people attended the Business Secretaries meeting on 9th Feb. Various issues and concerns were raised and discussion included reciprocity arrangements and visitors at monthly meetings. It was agreed to schedule another meeting on 11th April, which will focus on discussion of policies, as most attendees are thinking about updates to these.

Representatives from Worcester and Ledbury attended the Website Managers meeting on 18th Feb. 4 persons had expressed an interest but scheduling a meeting where all could attend proved impossible. It was agreed not to set up a further peer support group meeting, as the number of Website managers interested is too small for it to be viable. However, the attendees will stay in touch, as they are both involved in the migration to the new SiteWorks website.

Marion also has a list of interested persons for peer support groups for Membership Secretaries and Speakers Secretaries. A meeting for the 4 persons who expressed an interest in a Membership Secretaries meeting could not be scheduled due to lack of feedback on potential dates. Only 2 persons have expressed an interest in a Speakers Secretaries meeting, so this is not yet viable.

The information on peer support groups had not reached all delegates. It was suggested that information on peer support groups be added to the Cotswold Link website, so that role holders do not have to rely on the contact to pass on the info. People who are interested in joining any of the peer support groups should contact Marion.

5) Report from the regional trustee for the West Midlands – Jean Jackson

Jean could not attend and her report will be circulated with these minutes.

6) Report from the regional trustee for the South West – Susan Parker

Susan could not attend but sent the following information:

- a) A “Fit for the Future” presentation is scheduled for Monday 25th March and Susan urges u3as to take the opportunity to attend. u3a Chairs and Secretaries in the SW have already been sent the information about this meeting. Susan reminds that this presentation is not just for committee members.
- b) Susan also strongly recommends the “Equality Diversity & Inclusion Presentation - Enabling u3as to enact their legal responsibilities” and the new workshop on “Managing Grievances & Complaints”. Both are important to the smooth running of your u3a.

Susan also sent a copy of the notes from the Board meeting on 20th March, which will be circulated with these minutes.

7) AOB

Allan Walmsley, Vice-chair of the Third Age Trust, attended in place of the 2 regional trustees. He discussed the following subjects:

a) Governance:

The initial “Fit for the Future” pack was sent out to u3as in Jan 2024 and several Zoom presentations have been made by the trustees. A second stage pack has just been sent out to u3as. The Trust consulted the National Council for Voluntary Organisations for help whilst developing their proposal. If a resolution were to be passed at the next Trust AGM, then a possible implementation date is April 2025. The changes proposed would have no impact on subscriptions paid to the Trust.

Allan was asked if the packs should be sent out to members. He advised that it was up to each u3a committee to decide how they were going to make the decision on the proposal. If they felt that the members should be consulted directly then they should pass on the materials and encourage their members to attend a presentation.

b) U3a Festival

Allan explained that the Festival in York is going to be the biggest gathering of u3a members ever held. It will take place at York University and sponsorship has been obtained to help with the costs.

Allan showed the program, which included 100 activities and will soon be available on the Trust website. Many people have already booked accommodation, even before the programme was announced. Tickets for the event will be available soon and the individual events will be bookable about 3 weeks later.

c) Friends Extra

This is an offer scheme, which will be launched in the next electronic Newsletter.

8) Date and time of next meeting

This will be hosted by Worcester u3a on Friday 20th September 2024 at Rushwick Village Hall, Bransford Road, Worcester, WR2 5TA.

Signed..... Date