

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held 12th April 2023 at 4pm

Saint Paul's Northgate

Attending: Chair (Jim McGough), Secretary (Margaret Lloyd); Treasurer (Graham Friday), Communications Coordinator (Sue Parker), Peter Beckley (Groups Coordinator), Members Coordinator (Jacqui Mercer), and Access Coordinator (Janet Newson).

Standing Items

Agenda Item 1: Apologies for absence

None

Agenda Item 2(i): Minutes 8th March meeting

The minutes of this meeting were approved with no amendments.

The Communications Coordinator stated that she had spoken to the Crawley u3a member who is also a member of the Crawley Hospital League of Friends and organises the second-hand book sales on their behalf at the u3a coffee mornings. She confirmed she was happy to organise similar book sales at the monthly Friary meetings but that she would not be available for all the meetings.

It was agreed that no book sales would be made during the period the invited speaker was talking.

Agenda Item 3: Monthly Updates from Committee Members

(i) Chair

The Chair explained that he had found the "What is Beacon?" zoom workshop run by the Third Age Trust (TAT) useful and encouraged other Committee members to attend future sessions, whilst acknowledging it was difficult to obtain a place as they became booked up so quickly.

He had received a couple of e-mails in response to his "Committee Aims for 2023" article in the April Newsletter, both of which expressed unhappiness about the objective to enhance the learning component of activity groups. One of these was from the Group Leader (GL) of French, who was worried that, given the numbers in this group were falling, changes to the learning content might discourage members further. The other responder felt the Committee was being "too controlling" and had forgotten that the learning was supposed to be fun.

The Chair mentioned that a few groups seemed currently to be suffering falls in attendance, and in such circumstances intervention could be helpful in encouraging rejuvenation and preventing a group from closing altogether.

The Communications Coordinator said that, when deciding which activity group to feature in the newsletters, she would prioritise those experiencing declining numbers.

Action: Chair to attend the French group on 17th April to take a photograph and ask the GL about composing a short article for the May newsletter.

Action: Communications Coordinator to include a reminder in the May newsletter that members can attend the first session of any group free of charge.

(ii) Secretary

The Secretary alerted Trustees' attention to the TAT Annual Return for 2023, and how the membership numbers compared to those reported in previous returns.

(iii) Treasurer

The Treasurer drew Trustees' attention to the graphic produced by the TAT showing how they spent the £4.00 fee u3as pay annually on behalf of each full (non-Associate) member.

(iv) Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator handed round printed copies of the new publicity leaflet which Trustees agreed looked very attractive and professional. She and the Chair would shortly be agreeing a date for handing them out, together with flyers advertising the 23rd June Midsummer Eve event, in County Mall.

(v) Groups Coordinator

It was agreed that the costs of the folk group booking extra sessions to prepare for their performance at the Midsummer Eve event would be met from the budget for this event.

Action: Groups Coordinator to send e-mail to GLs reminding them of the Midsummers Eve event and encouraging them (and the members of their groups) to attend

Action: The Chair and Groups Coordinator to meet next week with the potential GLs of the Petanque group.

Non-Standing Items for Discussion

Agenda Item 4: Group Leaders 13th March Meeting Minutes

It was agreed that no changes were required for the minutes and associated annexes and that they could be disseminated to GLs.

Agenda Item 5: 2023/24 Financial Year: Fee and Budget Assumptions

The Committee's responses to each of the proposals were:

1. Agreed that from 22/23 onwards one-off budgets should be costed on an annual basis
2. Agreed that the 23/24 room hire costs should be unchanged from those assumed for the 22/23 budget.
3. Agreed that the membership assumed for 23/24 should be that existing at 31st March 2023 and featuring in the 2023 annual TAT return.
4. Agreed that there should be no difference between the individual fee and the joint fee (on a per person basis) for the annual membership fee (excluding any charge for TAM) for 23/24 onwards. This means there will no longer be any joint membership discount. Some anxiety was expressed that some u3a members may not like this, despite the fact that the existence of such a discount contravened the new EDI policy, and that we would consider this point in more detail when we receive the first draft budget at the May 10th meeting.
5. Agreed that an assumption of £4.00 per TAM subscription for 2023/24 was reasonable.
6. It was agreed that the TAM charge should be separated out from the basic membership fee on equity grounds and providing Members with a personal choice over whether to receive it or not, even though this would mean the loss of a c£120 of gift aid relief.
7. It was agreed that the 1st draft 23/24 budget to be presented to the 10th May meeting should be prepared using a basic fee of £12 per person.

8. It was agreed that the room-based charge would remain at £2.00 per attendance for 2023/24.
9. On outdoor fees it was concluded that:
 - (i) The annual membership fee would be reduced from £3.80 to £2.00 per member, as this was a more realistic assessment of what would be needed to fund the current costs being incurred.
 - (ii) Groups which expect to incur running costs which exceed the amount generated by this fee (for example because they hire external facilities) then the GL and Treasurer would together agree a different charge for that group;
 - (iii) Given the Theatre Group's large membership and its running costs per member being ~~are~~ substantially lower than £2 it was agreed that the Treasurer would agree with the GLs a more appropriate annual fee for that group.

Action: Treasurer to action the above in his draft budget report and also include a table showing how the proposed fees compare with those for the 22/23, for both individual and joint members, and distinguishing between pre and post TAM.

Agenda Item 6: 2023/24 Membership Renewal Process

There was unanimous agreement that the renewal process should incorporate paper, rather than electronic, forms for all members.

Action: Secretary and Communications Coordinator to liaise with Members Coordinator on the further changes to be made to the draft 23/24 forms to reflect recent GDPR actions (from the March 8th meeting Agenda Item 11) and the inclusion of a question on the New Membership form on how the new member had heard about Crawley u3a.

Action: Secretary to review the Gift Aid advice paper

It was agreed that, for 2023/24, no questions would be asked relating to members' accessibility needs.

The forms could obviously not be finalised until after the members Fees Agreement meeting on 30th June, when the final fee levels would be confirmed.

Agenda Item 7: Publicity Campaign and Member Recruitment Drive

This was approved.

Agenda Item 8: Crawley u3a Policies and Documents, and Trustee Ownership

The composition of this list and the trustees assigned to each policy were agreed.

It was pointed out that, compared to many other u3as, our policies and documents, particularly those relating to finance, were quite long and detailed.

It was agreed that the suggested rewrite of the GLs Handbook was a major task.

Action: Members Coordinator and Communications Coordinator to liaise over the future of the Members Handbook, and how the equivalent information might be provided to new members more efficiently.

Agenda Item 9: Updates to Financial Policies

1. Paid Tutors and Speakers

The proposed definitions were agreed. It was also agreed that Activity Groups could engage "Speakers" or "Paid Tutor" as long as they followed the engagement procedure that will be set by the Treasurer and that the additional costs of engaging them are funded directly by the membership of the Group

benefiting from them attending; as it would be unfair to ask other Groups to fund these costs under the collective Attendance fee arrangement.

The Committee would, where a new group is being formed or to rejuvenate a group experiencing a decline in member number, consider using Speakers or Paid Tutor as part of a specific improvement/implementation plan. These costs would be funded from reserves.

2. Charitable Objective & Trips

The Committee approved all the changes to the Financial Policy and Delegated decision schedule.

The additional following wording was also agreed for inclusion in the Decision schedule and next update of the GL handbook:

“ ..the default position is that holidays, being outside the charitable objects, are not u3a activities and should not therefore use any u3a branding, resources or bank account but that if any u3a branding, resources or bank accounts are used then the holiday will be seen as a Crawley u3a activity and the organiser be expected to follow our standard policies and procedures for any overnight activity, including the submission of a budget and risk assessment beforehand.”

Action: Secretary to add a couple of sentences to the website Risk Assessments sub-page on the requirement for all activities to be in accord with the Charitable Objects, and to state what these are.

3. Charging carers

The Committee agreed to the two proposed policy stances being adopted.

Action: Treasurer to update the Financial Policy & the Delegated Decision Schedule to reflect the policy amendments for 1, 2 and 3 above.

Agenda Item 10: Process for the appointment of a new external examiner

The Committee approved the proposed actions.

Action: Secretary to undertake these actions and report the outcomes to the 10th May Committee.

Agenda Item 11: AOB

The Access Coordinator asked why the computer printing expenses allowance was fixed at 8p per page (confirmed to mean per side rather than per page in the case of double-sided printing) irrespective of whether the copies were in monochrome or colour. The Treasurer explained that this was because the rates were fixed at a time when a u3a photocopier existed for all members' use, and the Committee was keen to encourage members to use this facility and discourage members from using their own printers.

The Treasurer agreed that because the u3a photocopier was not currently working this expense policy was unfair.

Action: Trustees who claim printing expenses to suggest to the Treasurer a more reasonable colour printing rate based on the cost of their colour ink cartridges and paper.

Agenda Item 12: Draft Agenda for 10th May Meeting

It was agreed to defer the item on the use of reserves to a meeting later in the year.

The meeting closed at 18:00