

Minutes of the Extra Committee Meeting held 24th January 2023 at 4pm

Tavern on the Green, Pound Hill

Background It quickly became apparent at the 11th January 2023 Committee Meeting that, given the number of questions it raised, the Agenda Item 8 “Policy on the Determination and Collection of Indoor Group Fees” would be better considered at a separate meeting devoted entirely to this topic.

This meeting was arranged to discuss Agenda Item 8 from 11th January, but it also included a couple of other items as covered below.

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

1. 11th Jan meeting Agenda Item 6: Financial arrangements for opening out Crawley u3a groups to other u3as

On 22nd January the Treasurer had sent around to Committee Members a reworded definition for the new membership class of “Guest” and some associated wording to go alongside it in the Group Leader (GL) Procedure and Reference guide. There was some discussion on whether GLs should be obliged to open out their groups to guest members, but it was agreed that this should not be the case, as if we are to retain them GLs need to feel in control of their Groups.

The decision to open out to guest members should be made by the GL, although in cases where the group membership was low and not covering its costs the Treasurer would suggest this as a possible mechanism to improve matters, particularly in cases where neighbouring u3as do not operate groups for the activity.

Decision: Meeting agreed to the introduction of the new Guest Membership category.

Actions: (i) Treasurer to discuss with GL for Short Mat Bowls whether he would like to trial this.

(ii) Treasurer to circulate definition and associated guidance to GLs, and offer opportunity for GLs to raise any issues or concerns at the forthcoming GL meeting.

2. Temporary Arrangements suggested by Isabel Baker to cover for lack of an Events Coordinator

Isabel Baker has suggested a temporary working party of four members from RUGS (herself, Jean Elmer, Wendy Adams, and Carol Allen) and a Committee member for liaison purposes (the Communications Coordinator has volunteered for this role) to oversee the events for all members other than those covered by Liz Tennant. A decision on whether this group can go ahead is needed quickly, so they can start planning for the 21st February coffee morning.

Committee Members broadly welcomed this, but doubts were expressed that Jean and Isabel were already involved in the time-consuming role of leading the Theatre Group, and that Jean Elmer had only recently stepped down from the RUGs leader role because she wished to spend her time in other ways. The Communications Coordinator was also very busy with the Newsletter and other tasks.

In response to these concerns the point was made that this group was intended to be temporary and that it would be dealing with just the Coffee Mornings, Celebration Event and the Christmas Party, and Isabel had already stated they would bring in other people to help with the Celebration event. The Communications Coordinator explained that she would have needed to liaise with the group in any case to plan the publicity for these events.

Action: The Communications Coordinator to inform Isabel Baker that she can go ahead with forming this group, to be known as the Events sub-committee, and to include a short item in the February newsletter about it.

3. 11th Jan meeting Agenda Item 8: Policy on the Determination and Collection of Indoor Group Fees

The Treasurer handed around a schedule (see [Annex 1](#)) with a table showing attendance (from each of Beacon, GL form 01s where submitted, and fees received divided by the number of meetings) and fees received for each indoor group for the first term, September to end December 2022 inclusive.

The individual questions posed by the paper covering Agenda Item 8 for the 11th January meeting are in **green**.

Committee Issue 1: Do we continue with the current guidance or change it?

Committee issue 3: Is “attendance” the best method to use in calculating a standard aggregated fee?

These were considered together, as being so interconnected, in (a) and (b) below.

(a) Payment and Collection of Indoor Activity Group Fees (for 2022/23 £2.00 per meeting)

The current system is as follows:

Weekly Groups	Fees collected weekly/fortnightly or monthly as the GL wishes, on an attendance basis, but paid over on a monthly in arrears basis
Monthly Groups	Fees collected at or near the start of term, for all meetings scheduled for that term, and paid over once collected.
Fortnightly Groups	The GL may elect to follow the procedure for either the Weekly Groups or the Monthly Groups.

For convenience the term weekly groups and monthly groups will be taken to include those fortnightly groups following the same process.

Members of groups paying for all the term’s meetings in advance (i.e. on a monthly group basis) are allowed to defer into the next term the fees for meetings missed for specific reasons (covered in **(b) Deferral of Fees** below). Refunds are not permitted (unless the group ceases to operate or a member overpays in error).

Members of groups operating on a weekly fee basis are hence advantaged over those operating on a monthly group basis, as they are not required to pay for meetings they miss, whatever the reason (though some still do choose to pay).

A brief discussion took place on whether all groups should be asked to follow the current monthly group basis, to ensure equity of treatment. The conclusion was that groups paying on the weekly basis should be allowed to continue with the current system because:

- (i) Collecting for as many as 13 meetings in advance, and arranging for multiple deferrals, would make the GLs’ roles too complicated (though there does exist an excel version of Accounts Form 1 to assist GLs to calculate deferrals) and we do not want to add to their burden;
- (ii) Some members of weekly groups may not be able to afford to pay over the whole sum in advance for a term.
- (iii) The nature of the weekly based groups tends to be rather different from the monthly based ones, in that they are mostly physically or game playing based, whereas the monthly groups tend to be more learning and developmental focused hence lack of continual attendance has more implications for other members.

The concept of differential charging (whereby members of all groups have a choice between paying weekly on attendance and paying for a whole term in advance at a discounted rate) was also discussed, and rejected on the grounds of complexity.

It was agreed to continue with the current system, but to consider broadening the guidance around deferrals of monthly fees in the interests of improving equity with the weekly fees process.

(b) Deferral of Fees paid in advance if members miss meetings.

This applies only to monthly groups, and fortnightly groups which follow the monthly group procedure for fee collection (for convenience the term monthly groups will be used here to cover both of these).

The rules are currently as follows:

Deferral of attendance fees paid termly will be allowed under the following circumstances:

- Illness or Hospitalisation
- Bereavement
- Caring for close family member due to illness or bereavement.

The amount of money that can be deferred, until the following term, is proportional to the number of sessions missed.

Deferral should only be considered following a direct request from the Member involved.

Deferral will only be applied after the missing of two consecutive sessions.

To adhere with Crawley u3a's recently introduced EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) policy it was felt additional circumstances under which deferral is allowed might include:

- A member being unable to physically access a meeting, due to them not owning a car and their usual means of travelling to a meeting (such as depending upon somebody else giving them a lift, or public transport) not being available for a meeting or the weather being such that their normal method of travel (walking, or using a mobility scooter) places them at undue risk.
- Ill health, especially of an infectious nature (e.g. Covid) lasting just one week.

There are undoubtedly other circumstances which it is difficult to think of until they happen and so it might be preferable to allow GLs of monthly groups to exercise their own discretion on when deferrals are permitted. It could be argued that this might lead to inequality of treatment across different groups, but then we already have inequality of treatment between weekly and monthly groups.

Another source of potential inequality could arise if not all GLs make it clear to members that they do have the option to defer their fees into the next term, should they so choose (of course, many members who are aware of this option may choose not to exercise it). GL's will be encouraged to ensure that members of their group are aware of the rules and allow them to be applied.

Committee Issue 2 Is the aggregate method of determining the fee level the most equitable approach?

The Committee quickly agreed this was the best approach, the method of separate fees being calculated for each group being too complex and time consuming to administer. Therefore, no change.

Actions: (i) Treasurer to redraft Deferment Rules for adoption at next Committee
(ii) Item to be discussed with GLs at forthcoming meeting.

The meeting ended at 17:45