

## **Minutes of the Volunteers' Meeting Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022**

**The Friary, 14:00 – 16:00**

**Committee members & support roles attending:** George Redgrave (Chair), Jim McGough (Vice-Chair), Margaret Lloyd (Secretary and minute taker), Graham Friday (Treasurer), Peter Beckley (Groups' Co-ordinator), Sue Parker (Communications Co-ordinator), Ann Sole (Membership Co-ordinator),

**Volunteers attending:** Jean Austin, Isabel Baker, Maggie Berrill, Maureen Bufton, Isabella Chatterjee, Gill Cooban, Karen Darling, Maureen Dawkins, Sue Doughty, Trevor Duffy, Joelle Dumetz, Pat Gedge, Dot and Stuart LeHuray, Phil Light, Jean Manuel, Janet Newson, Sally Sansom, Carolyn Wadley, Mary Watts, Maureen Wicks, Heather & Max Woodward, John Wynter

**Volunteers sending apologies:** Wendy Adams\*, Andy Bridge, Margaret Daniels, Julie Darlington, Patsy Greenland\*, Carol Heard\*, John Hilder, Kathy Jameson, Marion Lang, Audrey Lee, Sue Mearns\*, Jaqui Mercer, Pat Miller\*, Jan Morris, John Peters, Pat Roberts\*, Jo Slack, Liz Tennant, Anne Thorn, Bob Weddell

\*Invited as a RUG, invitations not sent out until the 12<sup>th</sup> September

### **Agenda Item 1: Introduction and Apologies**

George Redgrave opened the meeting at 14:00, stating that the committee members would talk through their presentations fairly speedily, leaving questions to be asked later whilst volunteers were drinking their tea.

The number of apologies was because early September was a popular time of year for older people to take holidays, prices falling sharply after the end of the school holidays. This would be noted when arranging future meetings.

### **Agenda Item 2: Review of the 9<sup>th</sup> September Open Afternoon**

Jim said that the open day had been very successful, in that there were many attendees and we seemed to have recruited a good number of new members. Unfortunately, the Friary had not laid out the tables in accordance with Peter's plan, so that the two main passageways from the back of the room to the front were unduly narrow and became very crowded during the peak attendance period.

Sue Parker had produced a summary of which aspects seemed to go well, and which could be improved upon for future occasions. This would be made available to all once discussed by the Committee next week.

The Committee were keen to grow the Crawley u3a organisation, so it is essential to recruit new members.

Jim thanked Peter, the Group Leaders, and all others who were responsible for the success of the open day.

Slides referred to are included within "Slide Presentation – 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2022", to be found under Group Leader / Volunteer Meetings on <https://u3asites.org.uk/crawley/page/93854>

### **Agenda Item 3: Finance**

#### **(i) Fees for 2022/23**

Graham explained the reasons why the fees for 2022/23 had to be increased, reminding the meeting that the individual annual membership fee for 2019/20, set before Covid struck, was £15.00, so a level of £20.00 three years later did not seem unreasonable. It was expected that, despite the fee increase, a small portion of the reserves would need to be utilised. The use of reserves might well need to continue for a few further years, until membership expansion generates long-term financial sustainability.

#### **(ii) Management Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022** (see copy of handout on <https://u3asites.org.uk/crawley/page/93854>)

Graham pointed out that the outdoor activity groups had not spent all their funds during the year, and that this had offset much of the overall loss generated by the room-based groups. This loss was the result of their members never quite reverting back to the levels experienced before the Covid pandemic; the room-based fee for 2021/22 had been calculated on the basis that the pre-Covid numbers would be achieved.

### **Agenda Item 4: Insurance** (see slides)

Margaret explained that she had developed two draft risk assessment checklists, one for walks and the other for occasions when members run u3a activities in their own homes. She would send them to the relevant group leaders for their feedback before finalising them.

### **Agenda Item 5: Communications** (see slides)

#### **(i) Newsletters**

Sue explained that she was keen to include features on various activity groups in future newsletters, and asked group leaders to let her know if they wished their group to be included and she will visit one of their sessions. Her intention is to take photos (including only those individuals who are willing to appear in them), ask them about what they are doing, and to compose an article.

She would also like to receive suggestions as to any other features members might wish to see included in the newsletters.

#### **(ii) Updating group webpages**

Sue described how these had included many errors concerning meeting details, and she hoped that they had all been corrected but that group leaders should contact her should any errors still exist.

She also said that some group pages were lacking in descriptions of what the group activities comprise, which could be a deterrent to potential new members, who might fear that by joining they would be committing themselves to, for example, giving lengthy presentations.

#### **(iii) Communications Strategy**

Sue said she would be uploading her final version of this strategy onto the website in the near future and urged attendees to feedback to her any thoughts and ideas they have on it.

**Agenda Item 6: Proposed new organisation** (see slides and the document attached to the agenda\*)

Graham explained the reasons behind why the Committee believed a new organisational structure was necessary to ensure Crawley u3a was able to deliver the optimal member experience. He hoped members would come forward to participate in the four planned sub-committees.

**Agenda Item 7: Member Support** (see slides)

Ann explained that this presentation was an updated version of one she developed back in June 2020, after the initial three months of the covid pandemic.

**Questions**

1	Q	Why are we now being termed Volunteers and not Group Leaders (GLs)? There was a discussion some meetings back on which how we should be described. The term Team Leaders was suggested, but we decided on Group Leaders. (Phil Light)
	A	I wanted to include members who undertake committee support roles and who run non-group activities, such as the monthly Friday afternoon meetings, to attend as some of the content, for example on insurance matters, is relevant to them also. They may be able to respond to questions (for example, on Beacon) that we cannot. I was trying to be inclusive, and did not know that the appropriate term for the invitees had already been discussed (Margaret Lloyd)
2	Q	How will the outdoor Group GLs know whether their members have paid their annual group fees?
	A	I will be sending out invoices by e-mail at the end of this month to those members who have registered or renewed by 20 <sup>th</sup> September, and I will let GLs know when I have done this. Let me know of any members who would prefer to receive the invoice by post before then. I will then let GLs know of any members who have not paid by, say, the middle of October. (Graham Friday)
3	Q	Two of my group members say that they have not received their membership renewal request, though I don't know whether they were expecting it by e-mail or post (Jean Manuel)
	A	it is possible, if they are e-mails, that they have gone into those members' scam folders. If any members have not received either an e-mail or a letter by 20 <sup>th</sup> September then let the membership secretary know (Ann Sole)
4	Q	If a member belongs to more than one outdoor group, then can they pay their annual fee for these groups with one transfer payment? (Maureen Wicks)
	A	Yes, as long as they quote the correct reference the system will be able to identify the relevant member and groups. (Graham Friday)
5	Q	How will the proposed sub-committee lead co-ordinators be appointed and how long do they serve?
	A	The lead co-ordinators will be appointed on an annual basis by the main committee. If they and the sub-committee are performing well, then the main committee will be happy to

		extend their appointment in subsequent years, as long of course as the lead is willing to continue. (Graham Friday)
6	Q	It is not always practical for out and about and walking groups pay for transport tickets and entrance fee payments via the u3a bank account (Sally Sansom)
	A	In order for any activity to be covered by the u3a insurance it needs to be “bona fide” u3a activity (rather than, for example, an outing made by a group of friends who just happen to be all u3a members). The easiest way of demonstrating this is for the payments to go through a u3a bank account, but if that is viewed as not being practical (for example, if some members were entitled to discounts for train travel because they had senior railcards) then care must be taken to ensure that the outing is seen to be a bona vide u3a trip by, for example, including notification of or reports on it in the u3a newsletters or web. (Margaret Lloyd)
7	Q	Although many members will be counting the pennies during these tough financial times, it is just possible that others may be happy to make additional voluntary donations on top of their annual membership fee. (Phil Light)
	A	Yes, that is a good point and next year we can adapt the membership renewal form to enable this (Ann Sole)
8	Q	Are the risk assessment forms generic (i.e. covering all walks taken by a group in a year) or do we need to complete one for each walk?
	A	A new one should be completed for each group as circumstances, plus the weather, may be differ. (Margaret Lloyd) As a Scout master I am aware that the Scout movement has almost bankrupted itself as a result of being sued for negligence. Many of the incidents giving rise to such claims could have been avoided had risk assessment forms been completed. (Max Woodward)
9	Q	Is it still the case that children are forbidden to attend any u3a group activity? (Maureen Wicks)
	A	Yes, very much so; their inclusion would add enormously to insurance cover costs so the u3a Trust is very firm on this. (Margaret Lloyd)
10	Q	Can members bring dogs to u3a outdoor activities? (Isabel Baker)
	A	Only if all members of the group agree to this, the dog is kept under control throughout, and the walk route does not go through fields with sheep. (Margaret Lloyd)
11	Q	If a member attends a group with a carer, is the carer charged the relevant group fee?
	A	No. (Ann Sole)
12	Q	Looking at the annual membership charge per person for Joint members compared to Individual members, it seems that the former is lower per person than the latter, even after taking into account the fact that their TAM costs per person are only 50% of those for an Individual. Is this fair? (Phil Light)
	A	We had no information from 21/22 as to how the Joint fee was derived from the Individual fee, as this was not stated in the minutes, so we just applied the same discount factor to the

		<p>22/23 Individual fee per person as appeared to have been used in 21/22 when deriving the Joint fee per person from the Individual fee. We will look at this more thoroughly next year (Graham Friday)</p> <p>It is also the case that where members are not on e-mail we incur less postage cost per person for Joint members than for Individual members. (Margaret Lloyd)</p>
13	Q	<p>The following items in the Budget appear to be rather excessive:</p> <p>(a) £1,300 for an annual celebration event</p> <p>(b) £4,000 for advertising and publicity</p> <p>If these costs had been lower you could have kept the annual membership fee at its 21/22 level (assuming the same level reserve draw-down). (Phil Light)</p> <p><i>The Committee is also aware that the IT licence and beacon costs, totalling £1,160, were double counted. But had we picked this up then we would have shown a lower level of reserves used, rather than reducing the membership fee below £20.30.</i></p>
	A	<p>(a) The annual celebration event would be one open to the general public, intended to improve our profile and so increase member recruitment and our financial sustainability over the long-term.</p> <p>(b) A lot of the advertising and publicity costs comprises postage. We also need to undertake more advertising than has been the case over the last couple of years.</p> <p>Looking at the fees in the round, they look reasonable in the light of what members receive in exchange, and if we are to grow and to thrive we need to invest; we have not been sufficiently pro-active in aiming for growth. An organisation that does not aim to grow tends to shrink over time. Crawley's population is increasing, the number of people in the u3a age group will be expanding, and there is potential for Crawley u3a to grow. (Jim McGough)</p>

The meeting closed at 15:45. George thanked everybody for coming and said he thought it had been very useful.

We intend to hold the next Volunteers' meeting in January 2023, date to be communicated as soon as it has been confirmed.

Margaret Lloyd

27<sup>th</sup> September 2022