



## Minutes of the Group Leaders' Meeting Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**The Friary, 14:00 – 16:00**

**Committee members attending:** Jim McGough (Chair), Margaret Lloyd (Secretary and minute taker), Graham Friday (Treasurer), Sue Parker (Communications Co-ordinator), Peter Beckley (Groups' Co-ordinator), Jacqui Mercer (Members' Co-ordinator), and Janet Newson (Access Co-ordinator).

**Group Leaders attending:** Ana Achucarro (Painting & Drawing), Wendy Adams (RUGS), Jean Austin (French), Isabel Baker (Theatre, RUGS), Maggie Berrill (Gardening, O&A 4), Andy Bridge (Books), Maureen Bufton (Gardening, O&A 4), Margaret Daniels (Art Appreciation 3), Karen Darling (Painting & Drawing), Maureen Dawkins (Topical Discussion), Trevor Duffy (Table Tennis), Jane Guest (Mah-Jong), John Hilder (Allotment, Folk Music), Kathy Jameson (Bamboo Pipes), Bryan Kiely (Ukulele), Marion Lang (Science), Jean Manuel (O&A 1), Elena Thorne (Rummikub/Canasta), Monique Tovey-Mansfield (Smart-Phone Photography), Sue Mearns (RUGS), Sally Sansom (Walkers), Anne Thorn (Walkers Extra), Carolyn Wadley (Art Appreciation 2), Maureen Wicks (History, Quiz 1), Max Woodward (Short Mat Bowls), Christine Watson (Family History), Mary Watts (O&A 6), Bob Weddell (Folk Dancing), John Wynter (Bridge),

**Group Leaders sending apologies:** Gill Cooban (Film Circle), Julie Darlington (Storytelling 2), David Devere (Italian for Beginners), Phil Light (Amblers, O&A 7), Pat Roberts (Needles), Chris Sawyer (Singing for Fun), Jo Slack (Storytelling), and Liz Tennant (Speaker and Seasonal Outings Organiser).

### **Agenda Item 1: Introduction and Apologies (Chair)**

Jim McGough opened the meeting at 14:00, stating that this was the first time the Committee voted in at the November 2023 AGM was meeting with the Group Leaders (GLs).

Each of the Committee Members introduced themselves and then the Group Leaders in attendance introduced themselves in turn. Jim then read out the list of GLs sending their apologies.

### **Agenda Item 2: EDI and Related Policies (Chair)**

Jim explained that the Committee had been spending a lot of time over the last year on its legal obligations. The constitution had been updated and then attention had turned to developing an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy. Jim made the following points:

- 1) Crawley u3a had not previously possessed an EDI policy but nowadays charities, as well as all other organisation types, are expected to operate one, and the Third Age Trust (the national u3a umbrella organisation) urges all u3as to adopt EDI policies.
- 2) Linked to the EDI policy is the Safeguarding Policy, which recognises our duties towards those members whom we recognise as vulnerable. Group Leaders (GLs) are likely to be the first in the organisation to become aware of a situation in which a vulnerable member is experiencing some sort of harm or neglect, whether this arises outside the u3a, or within a u3a group.
- 3) The Committee has also updated its Complaints and Disciplinary Policies, so that members who experience anything within Crawley u3a which they believe contravenes the EDI policy, or the u3a Members Code of Conduct, or with which they are not happy, should speak first

informally with the relevant GL or Event Organiser. Only if this fails to resolve the matter should the formal complaints policy be followed. Anybody wishing to raise a complaint, or to make a suggestion for any type of improvement, should contact the Secretary.

- 4) It is hoped that use of Complaints and Disciplinary procedures will be required only very rarely, and that the likelihood of any infringements of either our policies or the Code of Conduct is very low. However their existence is necessary to ensure that Crawley u3a is an organisation in which members can learn and socialise without experiencing any behaviour which causes them to feel uncomfortable.
- 5) All these policies either already are, or shortly will be, on the website and GLs should familiarise themselves with them, and are urged to contact the Secretary if they have any concerns.

Jim then asked if anybody wished to raise any questions and the following matters were raised:

- i) The Digital Divide. Jean Austin explained that a couple of members of her Weekenders Group did not use smart phones or access e-mail. This was a particular problem for running Weekenders, as by its nature it relies on its individual members letting others know about ad-hoc activities at short notice. If she is unable to contact these members by land line phone then they miss out.

Whilst GLs agreed that members should not be excluded because they feel they are not able to operate e-mail it should also be recognised that this can cause extra burdens for GLs. Outdoor groups, for which events sometimes have to be cancelled at very short notice due to adverse weather, do require that members use WhatsApps.

- ii) Ethnic Mix. The observation was made that Crawley u3a was very far from being as diverse as the town of Crawley in terms of ethnic mix. Maureen Wicks responded by saying that, when she was Chair, the Committee had made a lot of visits to various groups run by the different ethnic communities within Crawley, and had found that these communities tended to operate their own organisations similar to the u3a which they preferred to attend.

The question was asked as to the ethnic diversity of the u3a nationally. Graham Friday responded by saying that the Third Age Trust did not collect ethnicity data, as it was a protected characteristic with GDPR implications, but that many u3as did express difficulty in recruiting from non-white ethnic groups. Margaret Lloyd said that a look at pictures on the websites for u3as operating in cities known for having ethnically diverse populations (such as Birmingham and Bradford) suggested that these places fared no better than Crawley u3a, although some of the London u3as appeared to be more ethnically diverse (though this perhaps reflected the less ethnically segregated character of London).

- iii) Disabilities. Janet Newson stated that she had already contacted the GLs of outdoor groups, and would shortly e-mail indoor group GLs, to ask whether any members of their members currently experienced sight, hearing or mobility issues which impacted upon their experience. She was also asking what additional measures could be taken to assist such members.

### **Agenda Item 3: Term 1 2022/23 Budget Monitoring Report (Treasurer)**

Graham briefly explained the report sent out with the agenda, and made the following points:

- 1) The room-based groups appeared not to have recovered their membership levels back to pre-Covid levels but financially they were doing better than at this point last year, breaking even overall. The increase in group fees was responsible for this.

- 2) The balance sheet was very healthy, with a large level of reserves, £13,000 of which represented the net surplus generated over the years by groups. He was keen that GLs put forward proposals to spend some of these funds, for example by replacing outdated equipment, buying items to enhance health and safety, and improving accessibility. Any spending plans must adhere to the u3a's objects. This £13,000 also meant that no groups would need to be closed on financial grounds.

Carolyn Wadley asked if her Art Appreciation group could obtain DVDs from Amazon, now that the closure of the u3a Resource Centre meant she could no longer borrow them from there. Graham confirmed she could do so.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Update on Financial Policies for Groups (Treasurer)**

This was the standard agenda item looking at financial policy changes since the last GLs meeting.

- (i) Deferral on indoor group fees Graham explained the circumstances, rather wider than the existing ones, under which members of indoor groups meeting monthly (or fortnightly but adhering to the monthly rather than weekly group process of paying in advance), would be permitted to carry over fees already paid to the next term/session.

Max Woodward commented that the rules around deferral of fees meant that members of weekly groups were treated more favourably than those in monthly groups. Graham responded that the Committee had realised this, but thought that the advantages in terms of simplifying the administration for weekly groups outweighed the inequality of treatment. This appeared to be supported by the majority of GLs. Moreover if all groups adopted the "pay as you go" principle the level of group fees would need to be raised to ensure that total rental and other costs across all groups were covered.

The new guidance around fee deferrals would become effective at the start of Term 3, April 2023. Given that the request for deferral still needs to come from members themselves the deferral policy would be explained both in the newsletter and on the web. There would be no need for GLs to inform the Treasurer directly of deferrals, though they should use the attendance forms to keep records for their own purposes.

The question also came up of whether all indoor groups should be subject to the same fee level, despite the variations in their costs and numbers of members. In response, the point was made that all the Crawley u3a groups are interdependent to some extent, and most GLs preferred not to be accountable for achieving a break-even position. If no groups generated a surplus then loss making groups would have to close and the diversity of groups offered across the u3a would be reduced.

- (ii) Guest Members Graham set out the rationale for introducing this new policy, expressing the hope that it would enhance member numbers for those groups with vacancies, especially those operating activities (such as short mat bowls), which were not offered by neighbouring u3as. He also hoped it would encourage neighbouring u3as to offer reciprocal schemes to Crawley members. It would become effective from the start of Term 3, April 2023.

It was agreed that the Treasurer would need to confirm how such members could be dealt with, if at all, on the Beacon system.

- (iii) Group Fee Waivers for Group Leaders All members of a group who assisted in the administrative duties of that group would be entitled to free membership of that group, if they chose, from the start of Term 3 in April 2023. These members must be indicated as such on Beacon.

- (iv) Invoicing of Annual Outdoor Group fees Most of the outdoor group GLs said this had worked well, but Anne Thorn of Walkers Extra stated that she had found it to be more problematic than the previous method merely collecting the fee at their annual planning meeting.
- (v) Activities to meet charitable object Graham reminded the GLs that all u3a activities needed to meet the u3a objects “the advancement of education, and in particular the education of older people and those retired from full time work, by all means including associated activities conducive to learning and personal development in Crawley and the surrounding district”. Hence learning in some form should be embedded in all events.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Out and About Groups Working Group (Chair)**

The Chair introduced this and made the following points:

- (i) The Working Group (WG) was not intended to amend what these Groups do, but to build in more resilience and support to ensure continuity so that we are not faced with groups having to cease because of lack of a Group Leader.
- (ii) It was intended that it would report before the start of the 2023/24 membership year.
- (iii) Graham and Peter would be the Trustee representatives on the group, and it was hoped that three or four other people, with some experience of running outdoor groups, would volunteer.
- (iv) The Working Group would review how members who sign up to O&A groups, pay their fee, but then never attend any outings, would be dealt with.

Points raised from the floor included:

- The Horsham O&A group makes it a requirement of membership of the group that every member organises a visit once every two years.
- The Crawley Walkers Extra Group operates a rotating GL system, whereby there is always a Deputy GL who becomes the GL for the next year.
- The question of what happens to the current O&A 5 members, who have paid their annual £3.80 for the year but have had no opportunity of trips.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Communications Update (Communications Coordinator)**

GLs expressed their high level of satisfaction with the Newsletter, and Sue Parker reminded GLs that she was always in need of photos and brief articles on group activities, for both the newsletter and the website. She was trying to visit each Group herself to take photos but if any GL does not want a photo to be taken of their group please let her know.

She apologised for not progressing faster with the website redesign, but she had been busy recently preparing the updated leaflet, which she held up and invited GLs to take a closer look at during the refreshment break.

Jean Austin volunteered to assist in writing articles on the monthly talks for the newsletter.

#### **Agenda Item 7: Celebration (Communications Coordinator)**

Sue apologised for not being able to confirm the proposed date of Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> June for this event but she was still waiting for Crawley Council to confirm the hire of the bandstand in Memorial gardens.

*Refreshments were served*

### **Agenda Item 8: Date of Next Meeting (Chair)**

The Secretary reminded the meeting that the 2023 AGM would be taking place on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November. In addition, all Crawley u3a members would be invited to the meeting, to be fixed shortly for late June, to approve the proposed fees for 2023/24.

It was agreed that a suitable date for the next GLs meeting would be Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, at the Friary and starting at 14:00.

Jim McGough thanked everybody for attending.

*The meeting closed at 16:00*

Margaret Lloyd, Secretary

## **Relevant developments since the 13<sup>th</sup> March meeting**

### **1. Progress on actions**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
2	Secretary to ensure all approved policies are on the website	Done
4(i)	Treasurer to draft paragraph on new fee deferral policy for inclusion in Newsletter and on web	New fee deferral policy detailed in “Financial Policy- Delegated Decisions” on website. To be covered in April newsletter.
4(ii)	Treasurer to confirm how Guest members will be dealt with on Beacon, or otherwise	Looking at options – will report back pre start of Term 3

### **2. Agenda Item 5: Confirmation of Out & About Groups Working Group Members**

Chair and Secretary:	Graham Friday (Trustee)
Meeting Organiser:	Peter Beckley (Trustee)
Other participants:	Sue Parker (Trustee & O&A participant)
	Isabel Baker (ex O&A Leader)
	Jean Manuel (Leader O&A Group 1)
	Phil Light (Leader O&A Group 7)
	Monique Tovey-Mansfield (Horsham O&A participant)

The first meeting is being arranged for April.

### **3. Agenda Item 7: Mid-summers Eve Celebration event**

Crawley Council has now confirmed that we may hire the Memorial Gardens bandstand on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June. The event is scheduled to take place 11:00 – 14:00.

**4. Agenda Item 8: Next Group Leaders meeting and meeting for members to agree 2023/24 fees**

We can now confirm that the next Group Leaders meeting will take place on **Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October, at the Friary and starting at 14:00.**

The meeting open to all members to agree the 2023/24 membership and group fees has now been arranged to take place on **Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June, at the Friary and starting at 10:30.** This will be communicated to all Crawley u3a members via the newsletter and the website. Pre meeting material will be e-mailed out (and placed on the web) a few days beforehand.

**5. Points for next meeting**

- (i) To obtain an additional microphone for questions from the floor as GLs at one end struggled to hear questions coming from the other end.
- (ii) Collect attendees' names on doors as they arrive.
- (iii) Emphasise more clearly that starting time is 14:00, **not** 14:30

*Please let me know if you have any other comments*