

Minutes of the Group Leaders (GLs) Meeting 5th February 14:00 at The Friary Hall

Committee members attending: Jim McGough (Chair), Alan Rew (Vice-Chair), Margaret Lloyd (Secretary), Graham Friday (Treasurer), Sue Parker (Communications Coordinator), and Janet Newson (Groups Coordinator).

Group Leaders attending: Ana Achucarro & Karen Darling (Painting & Drawing), Wendy Adams (Theatre), Jean Austin (French Experience, Weekenders), Peter Beckley (Quiz 2, Live Music, O&A 6), Maggie Berrill (Gardening 1 & 2, O&A 4), Janet Copeland (Topical Discussion 1), Graham Crozier (Exploring Local History), Julie Darlington (Storytelling 2), David Devere (Beginners Italian), Joelle Dumetz (French Experience), Trevor Duffy (Table Tennis), Craig & Linda Edwards (Air Rifles), Pat Gedge (Art Appreciation 3), Jean Manuel (O&A 1, Theatre), Jo Slack (Storytelling 1), Monique Tovey-Mansfield (Smart-Phone Photography), Sue Mearns (RUGS), Carolyn Wadley (Art Appreciation 2), Maureen Wicks (History, Quiz 1), Christine Watson (Family History), Mary Watts (O&A 6), Bob Weddell (Folk Dancing), Gill Wilson (Topical Discussion 1), Max Woodward (Short Mat Bowls), Heather Woodward (Short Mat Bowls, Singing for Fun, Folk Music) and John Wynter (Bridge for Fun 1 & 2)

These minutes should be read alongside the papers accompanying the agenda for this meeting sent out on 29th Jan

Agenda Item 1: Welcome

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.

a) Apologies for absence

Isabel Baker (Theatre, RUGs), Maureen Bufton (O&A4, Gardening 1 & 2), Andy Bridge (Book Group 1, Cycling), Gill Cooban (Film Circle), Jane Guest (Mah-jong), Kathy Jameson (Bamboo Pipes), Phil Light (Amblers, O&A 7), Yvonne Light (Crafting), Jacqui Mercer (Rummikub/Canasta & Members Coordinator), Jan Morris (Walkers Extra), Dave Rawlings (Topical Discussion 1, O&A 7, Table Tennis), Kathy Rawlings (Table Tennis), Elena Thorne (Rummikub/Canasta), Liz Tennant (Speaker and Seasonal Outings Organiser), Ken Toll (Family History), and Steve Welch (Walkers Extra).

b) Introduction of new Committee Members

The Chair introduced the following Committee Members who were voted into office at the AGM in November 2023:

- Alan Rew, the Vice-Chair
- Janet Newson, now Groups Coordinator but who was previously served on the Committee as the Access Coordinator

c) Introduction of New Group Leaders & Groups

The Chair announced the following:

New Group Leaders & their New Groups:

- Graham Crozier is GL for the new Exploring Local History group
- Craig & Linda Edwards are the GLs for the new Air Rifles group (they are hoping to recruit sufficient members for a 2nd group, to run in the afternoon on the same day as the existing morning group i.e. the 2nd Wednesday of each month).

New Groups (with persons already known managing the Groups)

- Strollers whose Contact is Sue Parker
- Live Music whose Contact is Peter Beckley

The above two groups are to be run on a similar basis as the Weekenders group, i.e. without a formal Group Leader and meetings arranged in an ad-hoc manner.

- Afternoon Exercise with Graham Friday as GL
- Out & About 8 with Graham Friday as GL

Changes in Group Leaders

- Maureen Dawkins (Topical Discussion 1) & Sally Sansom (Walkers 1) have both stepped down from their roles as GLs.
- Topical Discussion 1 is now managed by a team of 3: Gill Wilson, Janet Copeland, & Dave Rawlings. They are going to try out the new arrangement for the Spring Term. Gill is the lead, but does not wish to have the title 'Group Leader'. Instead, she prefers to be known as the Contact.
- Walkers 1 – Phil Light & Alan Pay took over the running of this group a few months ago and already have arranged a number of walks.
- Tennis/Pickleball - Graham Friday is stepping down as Group Leader with effect from the end of April, and Christine Berger will take on the role.

Agenda Item 2: Update from the Treasurer

a) Activity Group Financial Report: Sept 2023 – Dec 2023 (report included in the papers sent out with the agenda)

The Treasurer stated that GLs should check the end December 2023 balance for their group, listed by Classification (Annex 1 shows the classification under which each group falls).

Any surplus balances remaining at the end of 2023/24 will automatically be carried forward into 2024/25, and can be used to keep fees at a low or zero level, as was the case for 2023/24. Indeed, groups are encouraged to use surplus balances in this way in order to reduce the total level of Crawley u3a's restricted reserves.

b) Restricted Reserves Criteria & Application (included in the papers sent out with the agenda)

The Treasurer recommended GLs to read this paper carefully so that they are aware of the circumstances under which they may make an application for a distribution of funds from the unallocated fund.

On the £100 start-up grants, the Treasurer confirmed that they would be backdated to new groups setting up since 1/09/21, provided the group satisfied the necessary conditions. Craig Edwards (Air Rifles) asked whether a Grant could be used to start up a Group before the target number of members necessary to cover costs have been achieved? The Treasurer responded that this was one example of how the start-up grant could be used and he would discuss this with him.

c) 2024/25 Fee Setting Arrangements

The Treasurer explained that some groups, depending upon their classification, were being given more freedom to set their own fee levels from this year 2023/24 onwards. For 2024/25 the process would work as follows:

- For Room Based Groups not based at St Pauls and the Outings, Physical Activity and Special Interest Groups he would start discussions with GLs once he had disseminated the Term 2 Activity Groups Financial Reports in mid-May.
- For Room Based St Paul's groups the level of the fee will be dependent upon his guesstimate of the increase in hire charges for 2024/25 as the new charges for that year are not set until August. A fee setting meeting will be held for all those Group Leaders sometime in July.
- No fees will be charged for Home based and Ad hoc groups, as for 2023/24.

Agenda Item 3: Update from the Groups Coordinator

a) Group Leaders Handbook/Reference Guide (see relevant section of the papers sent out with the agenda)

The Groups Coordinator explained that she was compiling this by taking relevant material from already existing documents and guidance.

b) Definition of Group Leader

The Groups Coordinator reiterated the information given in relevant section of the papers sent out with the agenda.

c) Visits to Groups & Group Leaders

The Groups Coordinator repeated the information sent out with the agenda for this meeting.

d) St Pauls: Keyholders/Room Access/Door Security & Safeguarding Forms/Leaving a Room “as found”

The Groups Coordinator explained that there had been a number of incidents taking place at St Pauls over the last few weeks which have led to the St Paul’s Room Bookings Manager contacting the Assistant Groups Coordinator with complaints. Any GL whose Group meets at St Paul’s, even if only once a year for a planning meeting, needs to be aware of the correct procedures around keys, access to rooms, front door security and leaving a room as it was found. These are laid out clearly in the papers attached to the Agenda.

In response to specific questions and comments she confirmed that:

- Although it is acknowledged that it is difficult, when opening the St Paul’s front door to let in members of your group, to prevent other people waiting outside from simultaneously entering the building, you must do so. You should not let them enter, even if you know them, or they are members of other u3a group meeting at the same time St Pauls. The most courteous way to deal with other people trying to get inside is to say that they may not enter until their leader is able to let them in, but that you will go and check whether that leader has arrived yet.
- During term times the Loaves and Fishes café is open (10:30 – 13:30 Tuesday to Thursdays) the main door is left unlocked so there is no need for GLs to adhere to the door security procedure.
- It is generally not the GLs themselves who fail to observe the correct procedure in respect of the front door security, but other members of the groups. As GL you need to ensure that all your group members are aware of, and operate, the door procedures.
- It is acknowledged that if the GL is busy setting up a room for the meeting (in the 5 minutes allowed for this) then it is difficult for them to also respond to the door buzzer and go and check that only members of their group are allowed in once the door catch has been released. In such cases it is perfectly permissible for a GL to nominate one of their Group (who knows the other Group members) to be responsible for door security for that meeting.
- The setting up time for groups is now only 5 minutes. One Group Leader mentioned that it used to be 15 minutes.

Action: Groups Coordinator to talk to St Paul’s

- If a Group needs longer to set up, they need to extend their booking period (this extra time will be charged for). Some groups already operate “setting up times”. If any GL wants to implement an extension, then they should contact the Assistant Groups Coordinator, Peter Beckley.
- GLs should not pass their St Pauls key to other members of their group or anyone else (and all those holding keys confirm they will not do so when signing the key holder’s agreement). If

they cannot attend a meeting then they should contact the Room Bookings Manager (Nicola) e-mail crawleymethodistchurch@gmail.com) who will arrange for someone to be available to let members in.

Agenda Item 4: Topics Requested by Group Leaders

a) Removal of members from a Group on Beacon by anyone other than the GL

It is realised that the process by which GLs are informed that members of their Groups have lapsed, resigned, or died, needs to be tightened up.

Action: Groups Coordinator to advise GLs once the process has been agreed.

Agenda Item 5: Update from Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator spoke on the contents of the papers sent out with the agenda.

It was confirmed that advertising a new group through the Crawley u3a Facebook page seemed to be more effective than other methods, judging by the recent experience with the Exploring Local History group.

The Chair stated that there was a great deal of useful information on the Crawley u3a website and recommended that GLs go through it carefully. It was also useful to look at other u3a websites, particularly their Group pages, for ideas for new group activities and other ways of running existing groups.

Agenda Item 6: Equipment Store

The Treasurer drew attention to the equipment items he had laid out at the back of the hall and which were available for groups to borrow. He suggested that GLs examine them during the imminent refreshment break.

A break was taken whilst refreshments were served.

Agenda Items 7 and 8 were then transposed

Agenda Item 7: Update from Secretary

a) Website & Migration to new u3a Site Works system (see relevant section of the papers sent out with the agenda)

The Secretary urged anybody interested in assisting with the planned website migration, expected later this year, to contact her.

She stated that the Third Age Trust had confirmed it would continue to support the current Site Builder web system until all u3as had migrated.

b) Update on Risk Assessments

The Secretary explained that she tried to retain copies of past risk assessments for future reference. If anybody needs to produce a risk assessment for an activity type not covered by one of the Risk Assessment Forms on the website page (accessed via the GroupLeaders page) then they should contact her if they feel they need assistance in designing a new risk assessment.

Agenda Item 8: Update from the Chair

a) EDI/Accessibility Policy

The Chair explained the purpose of this policy. A discussion then ensued around attracting more Crawley residents from ethnic minorities to join the u3a. Maureen Wicks explained that when she was Chair the Committee had commissioned the University of Chichester to undertake a study of how we might do this and had followed up some of their recommendations, such as talking to members of some of the relevant community groups but to no avail – the impression was their interests were already adequately catered for by their own communities.

The Secretary explained that many u3as across the country had also tried to extend their reach into other ethnic groups but with a similar lack of success, except in some of the larger London based u3as, and London tends to be an exception for many aspects of multi-culturalism.

Action: Chair to contact the Citizens Advice Bureau and/or to seek advice on how we might best go about attracting more members from groups currently underrepresented in our membership (i.e. not just members from ethnic minorities but younger people, people with disabilities etc).

Agenda Item 9: Any Other Business

The Chair spoke briefly about the Third Age Trust's ongoing "Fit for the Future" project and its proposed new organisational structure. For more information see:

www.u3a.org.uk/members-area/trust-and-board-updates/fit-for-the-future

He confirmed he would shortly send an e-mail to all Crawley u3a members summarising the proposals and offering all u3a members the opportunity to register for a Zoom meeting explaining them in more detail, to take place on Monday 12th February at 10:00 am.

Agenda Item 10: Next GLs Meeting

The Groups Coordinator explained she and the Treasurer had yet to agree on a suitable date for the next GL meeting, but that it would not be taking place on a Monday afternoon as the Treasurer would from now on be running his Afternoon Exercise group at this time.

It was agreed that the roving microphone should be used both more often and more competently.

The Chair closed the meeting at 15:50

Margaret Lloyd, Secretary Crawley u3a, 21st February 2024.