

Working Group Meeting on Open Afternoon held on 21st September 2023

Present: Isabel Baker
Peter Beckley
Jean Elmer
Sue Parker

Publicity

More advertising led to more people attending. The number of people through the door was not far off 250 over the course of 90 minutes.

The Open Afternoon was advertised in the following places:

- Crawley Pages South
- RH Uncovered – a half page article as well as appearing in the What's On section
- Crawley Observer – online and a paragraph in the paper
- Twelve Facebook Neighbourhood Groups
- Leaflets and flyers left at Bewbush and Broadfield Community Centres (also tried Maidenbower Community Centre which was closed)

Next year I suggest that we invite the Mayor, ensuring that we issue the invitation well in advance. If we can get the Mayor then that should lead to a photo and article in the local paper.

Looking ahead to **2024**:

- the above publicity should be the bottom line for next year. This year's event was more widely advertised than last year's and, as a result, more people attended. If time permits, more places to advertise the Open Afternoon should be added to the list

Layout of hall and tables

This was done more or less according to the plan. However, some tables in the centre of the hall had to be moved further away from the tables in front of the stage. The layout worked much better than last year's, because there were wider walkways between the tables which meant that people were able to move more freely around the hall without any logjams or safety concerns. Even at its busiest, the hall was not overcrowded.

The map showing the table layout was helpful, although a couple of groups were not shown on the map, which led to a little confusion, e.g. Poetry who had said that they would be there, and another group, who had said that they were not coming but turned up on the day (although the group is full and there is a waiting list).

There were two vacant tables in front of the stage which turned out to be useful for the noticeboards (see separate paragraph on noticeboards).

Situating a Mah Jong table in the foyer was very successful. Seventeen people expressed an interest in joining the group.

Looking ahead to **2024**:

- someone should be with Stephen when he sets up the hall
- we should set up a table in the foyer again. Which group uses it can be agreed next year
- more thought needs to be given to how many groups share a table. Bamboo Pipes (who came all the way from North London) brought a lot of equipment with them. They could have done with a table to themselves. Some groups could do with a whole table, e.g. Painting and Drawing, Smartphone Photographic and possibly Bamboo Pipes, others need less room. In future, GLs should be informed that there will be two groups per table
- consider changing the headings under which we place the groups. Should we have a visual section? This means that we could place Painting and Drawing and Smartphone Photographic together in front of the stage
- there should be a list of tasks stipulating what needs to be done on the day and by who, as this will ensure that the equipment items brought by the Treasurer are used and should speed up the setting up of the hall
- the Group Leaders (GLs) had no previous sight of the map showing the table layout (to avoid complaints about their positioning). As the person with the map did not arrive until after most of the Group Leaders this meant that time which could have been spent setting up the equipment was lost. It was suggested that in future they could be informed of their table number, and the numbers or Group labels placed on tables, so that GLs could spot which table was theirs in advance of the map being made public

Arrival time

Although people were asked, both in the newsletter and in the Beacon email sent out 10 days before the event, not to arrive before 2.30pm as they would not be admitted, from about 2.00pm members began arriving. The RUGs kept them outside the hall, but it was a hot and humid day. When I went out at 2.15pm to check on the numbers waiting, one of the RUGs pointed out that we should admit them as it was too hot to leave them outside any longer. I checked with Isabel and Jean whether people could be admitted. Jean used the microphone to ask the GLs whether they were ready and, receiving an answer in the affirmative, I asked the RUGs to let people in, at which point a lot of people streamed in to the Hall. Asking the GLs to be there by 1.45 paid off.

Looking ahead to **2024**:

- the Working Group discussed the possibility of extending the Open Afternoon by half an hour. This would mean a start time of 2.00pm, with Group Leaders needing to arrive by 1.15pm. The finish time would remain the same
- it is essential that we stress that people should not arrive too early. What if it had been raining? People cannot be left outside for half an hour or so if the weather is bad

- one way round this could be to ask the Mayor to open the Open Afternoon. We could put a ribbon across the door which they would cut. This would be a valid reason to ask people to remain outside (unless it rains)
- the clickers to be used again next year

Membership table

There were not enough membership forms. The 40 brought last year proved to be insufficient, the 60 brought this year were also insufficient. At least 100, possibly double that number, should have been brought to the Open Afternoon. Even if we had not used them all, it would not have been a waste of paper as they could have been used on future occasions.

Looking ahead to **2024**:

- 200 copies of the membership forms to be on the membership table
- Additional copies of membership forms to be on the groups tables
- The Treasurer and Members Coordinator would, at future Open Days, operate a system in which new members could be allocated temporary membership numbers and cards, enabling them to join Groups at the event

New Groups table

This was extremely busy, partly because it was sited next to the New Members table.

Looking ahead to **2024**:

- Janet had to field a number of enquiries about the Out & About and Walking Groups as no Group Leaders were there because the groups are full. We need to consider ahead of the 2024 Open Day the impact of groups who choose not to attend.

Noticeboards

These were meant to go in the foyer but, with hindsight, there was not enough room as we also had a small table there with four people playing Mah Jong and only one small table to put a noticeboard on, which could not be opened fully. There was no room for the second noticeboard. I moved the open one from the foyer in to the hall and on to a spare table by the stage. The second went on the floor near the kitchen, which was not a good idea as people had to kneel to read it and not everyone can crouch down easily and get back up again. I therefore moved the second noticeboard on to the other vacant table. I believe the noticeboards should be sited in the hall next year, if possible. They attracted a lot of attention. Knowing that only the fronts would be seen (six of the twelve sides available), I stripped almost everything off the noticeboards and redid them, placing what I thought were the most important items on the front, including one page flyers advertising those groups who need more members.

Looking ahead to **2024**:

- If space permits, both noticeboards to be on tables in the main hall

Miscellaneous

As it was such a hot day, it was an excellent idea to have bottled water on hand, something we should provide again in **2024**.

On tables manned by one person there needs to be a system to ensure that the person can manage a short break. On such a very hot day as we had this year, people need time to top up their water or just have a short breather.

Keep the kitchen door closed next year. The RUGs and others put their bags in there, believing them to be safe.

The Open Day paraphernalia such as lanyards, notices for the tables etc. are in Peter's loft

A new Events Working Group needs to be set up to do the forward planning for 2024. Isabel and Jean would like to step away from the Events Working Group although they both wish to carry on with the RUGs.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding a few minor issues, I believe that the afternoon was a success. The proof will be in the numbers who join.

Finally, I would like to place on record what a pleasure it has been to work with Isabel Baker, Jean Elmer and Peter Beckley in organising the June Midsummer Event and this month's Open Afternoon. I would also like to thank them for all that they have done to ensure that both events were not only a success but also gained us a number of new members.

Sue Parker

Communications Coordinator

17th October 2023