

MINUTES OF U3A COMMITTEE MEETING 22 NOVEMBER 2023

1. Present

Mike Best (MB)	Chair
Terry Parker (TP)	Membership Sec, Beacon Admin and Asset Man't
Anna Fletcher (AF)	Executive Secretary
Derek Jones (DJ)	Assistant Treasurer
Pat Jones (PJ)	Outings Coordinator
Rosemary Jensen (RJ)	Groups Coordinator
Peter Watson (PW)	Committee Information Administrator
Maureen Best (MaB)	Welfare Coordinator
Heather Quiney (HQ)	Newsletter Editor
Hilary Jinno (HJ)	Events Manager
Philip Garrison (PG)	taking Minutes
Trauti Hard (TH)	Speaker Finder

Apologies for absence were received from Ian Marshall (IM).

MB welcomed Trauti Hard to the meeting. She recently took over the role of procuring speakers for the monthly meetings, including the ten-minute speaker slots. MB thanked her for the work she'd done so far in this role.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting (18th October) were accepted with the following amendments:

Item 4: Delete the short paragraph that commences "Following the East of England ..." as it duplicates the content of Item 3/4a.

3. Matters arising from previous minutes:

Item 4: MB informed the committee that all participants in next year's walking holiday had now paid their deposits.

Item 11: MaB reported that Sandra Walker is recovering well.

4. Chair's Report (MB)

HQ attended a cluster group meeting in Thorley on 30th October, where five local u3a groups were represented. "Sharing agreements" were discussed, whereby underpopulated interest groups in one u3a might be supplemented by members of an adjacent u3a without anyone having to join a second u3a. However, this does not permit the amalgamation of two similar interest groups from different u3as. Outings and day trips can be done as a one-off. HQ pointed out that the committee can decide whether we want to do a sharing agreement – which would be formally documented – as and when the situation arises.

Speakers at monthly meetings were discussed. Some past speakers were judged to be far better than others. HJ asked if speakers are rated by previous audiences. It was commented that the quality of individual speakers is partly a matter of personal taste. HQ offered to make a speaker list available to TH, who said that speakers can be expensive – a fee of £100 plus travel expenses is regarded as normal. TH informed the committee that speakers have been booked up to July 2024. Ten-minute talks arranged for the coming months include MB talking about a dementia charity in January, John Versey about a second home in Spain in February, and Jody Huizar (town crier) on the subject of the Flitch Trials in May. January 2024's main talk will be Barbara Meyer talking about Big Cats.

5. Christmas Concert (MB)

MB tabled a floor plan of Foakes Hall annotated with the proposed use of the various spaces for the concert. 150 people are coming, plus 70 members of the Rock Choir. Entry to the building would be through the main doors leading directly into the main hall. This is to keep people away from food preparation areas, and also away from the Downs Room and its surroundings, which have been booked by another organization on the same day. Two copies of the name check list were requested so that names could be checked on entry. Two stewards would have the job of seeing people to seats, which would need to be filled from the front as all seats will be occupied.

PW said the stage would be used by the choir for milling around, not performing; the choir don't expect to have chairs.

After the concert the right-hand seating block in the hall would be shepherded out to collect food (followed by the LHS then the choir), to which people would help themselves from one of two identical serveries. The food for special dietary requirements (up to eight people) would be on a table near the bar, and people without special dietary requirements would be discouraged from going anywhere near it. People would get drinks last before returning to the main hall to consume their meals. Four volunteers will direct people around the food area.

There will be no raffle, but there will be a retiring collection, as agreed at the last meeting, and MB will say a few words at the end of the afternoon.

6. Committee lunch (HJ)

This is scheduled for Wednesday 24 January at the Angel & Harp at 12:45pm. HJ took a head count to establish numbers attending from the committee and their partners, who will pre-order from the Festive Celebration menu.

There was some uncertainty as to whether scheduled works closing the Angel & Harp in early January would be completed by then, the Butchers Arms at Ford End was suggested as a possible alternative.

7. Treasurer's Report (IM)

In IM's absence the committee perused his written report, which raised no concerns.

8. Group Update (RJ)

Pat Kelly is the leader of the new cribbage group. RJ has contacted her concerning the use of Beacon and the website.

The pickleball group is going well, with 19 members now on the register.

The new Sequence group's first meeting, scheduled for yesterday (21st November) had to be cancelled, but it was proposed that the group will meet fortnightly at the Angel & Harp on Tuesday afternoons from 6th February 2024. Kathy Rastarick will act as host during January, and Jenny Versey is setting this up as a formal group.

The Wool and Waffle Group will meet on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month from 9:30am – 11:30am at the Rowena Davey Day Centre, starting on 9th January 2024. There will be no charge, but members will be expected to purchase coffee and biscuits there. The group will cover knitting, crocheting and wool related crafts.

Comments on the Membership Application Forms received from new members contained a number of suggestions for new interest groups. In no particular order these were: fitness, sports, games, Spanish, German, conservation, tennis, fishing, rifle shooting, guitar playing, archery, astronomy and history.

9. Membership Secretary's update (TP)

Du3a is on the verge of welcoming its 600th member! TP reported that we currently have 599 members, comprised of 503 renewals and 96 new members. TP plans to produce a new simplified version of the Membership Renewal Form.

10. Outings and trips (PJ)

The Ely Cathedral Christmas Gift and Food Fair trip (Friday 17th November) went well, despite ten people dropping out at the last minute.

The "Drop The Dead Donkey" theatre trip to Cambridge is full, with a waiting list.

No more outings have yet been booked, though possibilities for the future include the Wallace Collection (January 2024), Gainsborough's House (Sudbury), Sargent and Fashion exhibition at the Tate Britain, and The Moonwalkers (an exhibition presented by Tom Hanks at the Lightroom near King's Cross in London). PW suggested Backstage Billy, a West End theatre show about the Queen Mother.

(DJ left the meeting at 11:35am)

11. Welfare (MaB)

Redbourne Lodge, a Dunmow care home, are investigating community travel as a means of getting their residents out more. MaB has spoken to a social worker about a particular resident, aged 90, who may be a prospective member of Du3a.

An elderly u3a member who lives in Takeley wants to come to the Christmas Concert but needs transport. PJ offered to give her a lift this time, but MaB will try to arrange the Uttlesford Community Transport bus for January.

Ma
B

HQ pointed out that the cluster group she attended recently (Item 4 above) stated that u3a is not a care service and cannot cope with health issues.

12. Newsletter (HQ)

The deadline for submissions is this evening (Wednesday 22nd November). A small number of paper copies will be sent out, but no newsletters will be available at the Christmas Concert.

On the publicity front, we need to ensure that u3a leaflets are available at the library, the community hub, and dementia organization (TP offered to find out about the latter by emailing a member).

TP

13. Website (HQ)

HQ has spent some time looking at the websites of other u3a groups. She found that, in general, the sites on the Wordpress platform (to which Du3a is moving) are more creative than those on SiteBuilder.

HQ emphasized that the website needs to be maintained, and that we need more people to maintain the website. A direct appeal will be made, by email, for members who have web-building experience. It was suggested that interest group leaders don't have to do everything; others should be asked. HQ then briefed the committee, in some detail, about the various groups to whom a u3a website should be aimed.

(TP left the meeting at 12 noon.)

14. Inclusion of members of other u3as (PW)

This has already been covered under Item 4.

15. Next meeting: Wednesday 24th January at 10am at the Hub.

The agenda for this meeting should include the item recorded in October, a potential social event for Group Leaders (RJ and HJ).

16. Any Other Business (AOB)

PG recounted the story of his son-in-law Andrew's recent cardiac arrest whilst playing golf. Andrew survived and is slowly recovering, thanks to CPR administered by a stranger until the emergency services arrived. PG confessed that he would not have known how to administer CPR, and asked if a u3a event could be organized to give members training in doing this.

The rest of the committee reacted swiftly to this surprise item, and, after some discussion, it was agreed that the monthly meeting in September 2024 would be an all-day event covering welfare issues generally.

The meeting closed at 12:22pm.