

EAST RENFREWSHIRE U3A ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

19 AUGUST 2020 VIA ZOOM

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND ANNUAL REPORT

Douglas Yates welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting.

Firstly, Douglas reminded the meeting that it was very important that the U3A sticks to its guiding principles which are still as relevant today as when the movement was launched. Membership of the U3A is open to all who are in their third age – defined as when full-time employment has ceased. At the same time, he emphasised the need to develop and embrace modern technology. The fact that most committees and many interest groups are now happy using Zoom is a very positive sign for the future. Whilst he hoped that monthly meetings will be held as we did previously, this may not be possible for some time if we are to stay safe from a virus which poses such a threat, especially to our own age group. In the meantime, he encouraged members to see the challenge of living with coronavirus as an opportunity to continue developing and building our U3A in new and exciting ways.

Douglas stressed that the social aspect of face to face meetings is invaluable and the importance of continuing to support and engage with those of our members who never will, or are unable to use on-line technology. At the same time, members should think of the advantages of mixing in virtual meetings and groups. Interest groups could be set up for members from all over Scotland, or the UK for that matter, where the subject is of interest to only a few specialists. These platforms are developing all the time, and ERU3A will not be the only ones demanding more and more capability from them. Many U3As are happy as they are, but others might prefer a more integrated approach and there is plenty of room for both.

He reported that our interest groups continued to grow in number until lockdown, but even during lockdown a Nature Watch group was established. The interest groups cover a wide range of topics and activities as desired by our membership and all are formed by members for members. He reminded those new to the U3A that no qualifications are sought or offered as learning is for its own sake and enjoyment being the prime motive.

Douglas explained that each U3A is self-funded with membership subscriptions kept as low as possible. Regrettably, having held our annual subscription at just £15 since we were formed in 2008, the Committee decided to raise the subscription to £24 annually from this year in the face of running at a loss for the previous two years and the increases in costs, especially hall and accommodation rentals. There is a mutual aid principle so no payments are made to individual members for services rendered.

Douglas reported at last year's AGM that the membership had risen to 483. Throughout the remaining months of 2019 and into February membership continued to rise to over 550 which was excellent, but increased the pressure on space and resources. However, since lockdown in March, membership, not surprisingly, has not grown. For various reasons, the pattern over several years now has seen about 10% of the membership failing to renew their subscriptions. This decrease is generally compensated for within four months by the number of new members joining. However, these are unprecedented times with members able to delay renewing their subscription until the end of August. There are about 50 in this

category and therefore membership numbers are around the same level as they were at last year's AGM.

Douglas extended his thanks to all members of East Renfrewshire U3A Committee for managing to overcome all the challenges faced during this last year. He gave special thanks to Vice Chair, Marbe McNeill, Groups Coordinator Rosalind Holmes, Membership Secretary Brenda Mason, Treasurer Graham Greenhalgh and Secretary June Weston. He added that all the Committee members have been superb and have made a good contribution to the smooth running of our U3A. He also extended his thanks, on behalf of the Committee, to all the Group Facilitators, catering team at monthly meetings and to Jim Hamilton, Chit-Chat Editor, for doing a terrific job in producing the monthly e-newsletter. He drew members attention to all the work carried out behind the scenes and thanked everyone who helped to ensure everything ran smoothly. He also extended a personal thank you for the great contribution of the four Committee members who are standing down: Bridie Stevenson, Anne Sykes, Catriona Matheson and Denis Mason.

Finally, he congratulated members as they had enriched the U3A by bringing their own skills and experience, friendship and support. We must ensure that the pandemic does not destroy which has been built up over the last twelve years. He concluded his report by asking members to talk to their retired friends, relatives and neighbours who do not know about the U3A and invite them to join so we can introduce them to the joys of our U3A where we can learn, laugh and live our lives fuller together.

2. MINUTES FROM AGM HELD ON 19 JUNE 2019

The minutes of the 2019 AGM had been available on the website since the last AGM and were accepted as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising

4. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2019/20

The Treasurer, Graham Greenhalgh, referred to the audited accounts for 2019/20. It was noted that these have been published on the website and have been available for any member to scrutinise. He drew the meeting's attention to the following points.

The subscription rates have been held at £15 since we began in 2008. Primarily as a result of increased accommodation costs, a loss of circa £2,000 has been made on the General Fund. Therefore, the Committee proposed an increase in subscription costs from this year to £24. The General Fund closing balance as at 31 March 2020 was £7,030.

Trustees are required to hold up to six months expenditure as a cash reserve when income is at its lowest and operating costs at their highest. Around £4,000 is required before membership subscription receipts begin again at the beginning of July.

The Activities Account expenditure has increased due to more groups using this facility, but balances itself out with the payments received from members.

In response to questions about the accounts the Treasurer clarified the following points.

The cost of magazine delivery related to postage for delivery of the Third Age Matters magazine and that the cost of the magazine is £2.90 per member per year.

The Holiday Affinity Scheme relates to a U3A National Agreement with Riviera Travel where the company will make a charitable donation to U3A of 10% of the total basic cost of the holiday. The amount of £210 relates to two members booking a holiday this year with Riviera and requesting a donation be made to ERU3A under the scheme.

Following a question regarding the advantages of using the Beacon System, the Group Coordinator advised that it was invaluable to the Committee and Group Facilitators. It made it much easier to send emails to members and check if they had been delivered and opened. The Membership Secretary also used the system to keep a track of subscriptions and it assisted the Treasurer with Gift Aid claims. It was noted that the cost of subscribing to the Beacon system was £1 per member.

The accounts for 2019/20 were approved by members present at the meeting,

5. TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF DAVID MILLER CA AS INDEPENDENT EXAMINER FOR THE ACCOUNTS FOR 2020/21

The appointment of David Miller CA as independent examiner for the accounts of 2020/21 was approved.

6. ELECTION OF THE COMMITTEE TRUSTEES FOR 2020/21

The meeting unanimously approved the following appointments.

- Rosalind Holmes and Graham Greenhalgh to serve on the Committee for a second term.
- Brenda Mason and Allen Walker, currently co-opted members, to serve as full members of the Committee.
- Liz Carmichael and Isabel Monks to serve on the Committee

7. FORMAL CLOSURE OF THE AGM.

There being no other business, the Chairman brought the meeting to a close.

The next Annual General Meeting will be held on 16 June 2021