

EPSOM AND EWELL U3A – 2018 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Committee Review September 2017 – August 2018

2018 has been a busy year for the Executive Committee. Not only has this been our 30th anniversary but the adoption of the General Data Protection Regulation has created a lot of additional work. We are in the process of migrating the membership database to Beacon, a software programme supported by the Third Age Trust. The Committee has spent a considerable amount of time formalising its policies and procedures which has built a solid foundation for the future. I would like to thank the Committee for their hard work in getting to this stage. Life should be a lot easier going forward.

Administration / Governance

The Committee has met six times to conduct routine business and held a special meeting in June 2018 to finalise our policies. Michael Dunk resigned from the Committee in January 2018 because of his caring responsibilities but has continued to send out the invitations to the new member coffee mornings and to co-ordinate the replies for which we thank him. Vinod Sharma was elected as a Committee Member at the 2017 AGM but regrettably resigned in June 2018 but not before making a major contribution to developing our policies on Data Protection and Privacy. These policies are available on the website together with Financial Policies and Controls; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; and Safeguarding Policy. There is more work to do to complete the full range of policies.

In April the Chairman and Group Coordinator attended a nationally organised workshop on Keeping It Legal. This dealt with the General Data Protection Regulation; Safeguarding; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; and Insurance. The discussion on all of these topics provided useful input to the development of our own policies.

Membership

Alan Lenton was responsible for initially computerising our membership database. Our thanks to Alan for his bespoke stand-alone program which has served us well. However, technology moves on. We are doing far more than was ever envisaged when the program was first written. Alan is in agreement that we need to have a system that is future proof and is supported by a technological team. Beacon is accessed through the internet. It is supported by the Third Age Trust and used widely by other U3As across the country. Beacon will enable the Committee to function more effectively in its interactions with members.

To get it up and running will take some time as we do not want a TSB scenario. The changes will mostly be behind the scenes. However, the things you will notice are the design of the membership cards and that emails will come directly to you from Beacon. As is usual when changing systems there will be a few things that the old system did but the new one cannot. In a few cases the membership numbers you have now may change as Beacon automatically generates the numbers and they cannot be altered. On the plus side, technical support is only a phone call away, reports will be easier to compile and in the next couple of years you will be able to pay your membership fee on line.

We have had another successful year in terms of numbers which continue to grow. There are now 1052 members compared to 1025 at this time last year. This includes 287 who have yet to renew before they are removed from the membership database. At Open House in May, 35 new members joined on the day making a total of 175 new members this year. Although there have been some resignations (mainly due to ill health or moving from the area) new members are joining at an average of 3 per week.

When new members join we invite them to a Coffee Morning. This gives them the opportunity to meet the Committee and learn about the U3A and how to participate in its various activities thus enabling them to get the most benefit from their membership.

The monthly meetings on Monday mornings continue to be well attended. The talks cover a wide range of topics from the Histories of Dictionaries and of Cartoons, Victorian London Street Life, Rationing in Britain during and after World War 2 to Doctors and Polar Exploration and Climate Change in Antarctica. We owe thanks to Terry Caddle who liaises with the speakers and Bourne Hall.

Groups

The groups are the life blood of the U3A with about two thirds of the membership taking part in the 136 groups we now have, some in as many as seven groups. During the year 5 groups closed down. This was compensated by 12 groups starting up. The new groups ranged from art, bridge and scrabble, to cinema, Exploring London, guitar, languages – Mandarin and Spanish – photography and Tai Chi. The formation of several other groups is in the pipeline. Most groups meet in members' homes. This places a constraint on the size of the group particularly as our age group is tending to down-size. When a group is full a new group can be set up with the help of the Group Coordinator.

Approximately 75 groups were represented at the Group Leaders' meeting held in April with about 90 people present. Irene Moore, supported by her husband Dennis and helpers Jean Pickering and Elaine Raven, provided a great meal.

Our guest speaker, John Trett, gave a very good presentation highlighting hearing issues and demonstrating ways in which they could be overcome.

As a result of concerns within the U3A nationally regarding potential disability issues stopping people enjoying the full range of opportunities we held a survey in our own U3A with responses from 44 people. The results were as follows:

Hearing: 6 people did join when they had hearing issues. This has increased to 13 who are still members. No one has left as far as is known specifically because of this.

Sight: 1 person with sight issues joined and is still part of a group.

Mobility: 9 people left after joining walking groups as a result of not being as fit as they once were; 4 remain walking with some difficulty. 1 group changed meeting location to the home of a person suffering a mobility issue.

Accessibility: 2 people attend meetings depending on location relevant to bus links. 1 person depends on lifts to get to the meeting location.

As a result we believe we are coping very well and no systematic changes are needed but we need to continue to be aware of issues that may impact our members' use of the U3A.

Communication with Members

Newsletters were sent to all members in November and May. In addition Epsom & Ewell U3A News was emailed regularly highlighting forthcoming events and topical news. The Third Age Trust invites members to subscribe to their national monthly bulletin.

Publicity

These days, pretty well everyone spreads news and gets themselves noticed via social media – including some of us. We have our own website, which we like to think compares favourably with other U3As, and which we keep updated with activities, changes, and new groups. We recently added a section that displays our policies; it's a really convenient way of doing this, especially Data Protection and Privacy which were headline items earlier in the year.

It is important that group leaders notify James (our Publicity Officer) or Dave (Group Coordinator) if any of their group information needs amending, such as a new Group Leader, or new meeting time.

We also use traditional methods to promote ourselves – our Open Days are advertised with posters on council noticeboards, and our leaflets are stocked and displayed in local libraries, day centres, medical centres, Bourne Hall etc.

And best of all there is word of mouth; do take every opportunity to tell your friends and family all about us - and next year we'll have to put out even more chairs for the AGM!

Social activities

At the 2017 AGM Chris Rae was coopted back on to the Committee until the end of the year so that she could lead her remaining outings. Meanwhile Rosie Cooper and Sue Wood offered jointly to take on the role and arranged the social programme from 2018. They continued to arrange trips by coach and have visited varying attractions such as the new Postal Museum in London, the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum and a walking tour of Eton followed by a river cruise. The latter took place the day before the Royal Wedding which added greatly to the atmosphere in Windsor. Walks and Talks have been a new feature introduced by Sue and Rosie. These have been a huge success attracting a different group of members.

At the beginning of 2018 Joan Brown handed over responsibility for the theatre outings by coach to Hazel Bamford. Hazel had a baptism of fire for her first two outings. On her first trip in March to The Yvonne Arnaud Theatre in Guildford it snowed, causing many to cancel. Her second outing to Richmond was cancelled by the theatre at very short notice. It is a credit to Hazel and Joan that they were able to contact everyone and subsequently sent out refunds. Joan has not hung up her hat entirely. Hazel appreciates her support while Joan has continued to offer 'Ticket Only' trips. Our thanks to both ladies for undertaking this important aspect of our activities.

In 2017 120 members enjoyed a Christmas lunch at Reigate Manor Hotel.

Two holidays were arranged. In September 2017 a group of 34 spent five days in the Peak District. Suffolk was the destination for a group of 30 in April 2018. The holidays are arranged through tour operators who specialise in group holidays; the U3A acts as coordinator.

30th Anniversary

The 30th anniversary was celebrated with the publication of a booklet entitled *Reflections* which was sent to all members with an invitation to join the lunch at Epsom Downs Racecourse in September.

Surrey U3A Network

Epsom & Ewell U3A was represented at the meetings of the Surrey U3A Network held in October 2017 and March 2018. These meetings are a useful forum in which to exchange ideas. A Development Day on Keeping Everyone Welcome was held in October 2017. A Google Group has now been set up as a communication channel between network members. This is useful for problem solving, announcements about events, offering spare places for an event, etc. Many of our members attend the Study Days organised by the Network.

In addition to those mentioned earlier I would like to thank Lynda Jennings and those on the Helpers' Register and Veronica Wheeler, our Welfare Officer, who sends out cards to those who have been in hospital or suffered a bereavement.

The Future

Several of us are completing our terms in 2019 and we would welcome some shadows this year so that others can take over and maintain the continuity next year. Despite our best endeavours we have not been able to recruit officers to succeed us. Many U3As are facing similar challenges. Epsom & Ewell U3A is 30 years old and it would be a pity if the 30th Anniversary lunch marked our demise!

LET ME EMPHASISE: NO COMMITTEE, NO U3A