Hampshire South Central Network

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARIES MEETING NOTES

Tuesday 28th February 2017 - Wickham Community Centre commencing at 2.00 p.m.

Attendees:

Name	U3A
Sally Ingledew	SCN Manager/ Gosport
Graham Woodbridge	SCN Secretary/ Waterlooville
Hilvary Robinson	U3A SE Region Trustee
Avril Palmer	Gosport
Annie Bradrick	Portsmouth
Hilary Nicklin	Portsmouth
Sue Gibson	Warsash
Tony Jackson	Warsash
Nick Hammond	Warsash
Jim Busby	Meon Valley
Bryan Bowen	Hayling Island
Betty Hiscock	Meon Valley
Pat Mitchell	Waterlooville
Jill Cook	Chichester
Wendy Andrews	Chichester
Judith Foster	Gosport
Julie Bloomfield	Portsdown
Tony Young	Horndean & District
Julia Field	Meon Valley
Jane England	Meon Valley
Mike Cresswell	Solent
Jenny Mallet	Meon Valley
Geoff Southgate	Horndean
Ray Gardner	Locks Heath
Sheila Simpson	Stubbington
Yvonne Apperley	Stubbington
Sheila Mcnerney	Meon Valley
Jan Ernest	Meon Valley
Alison While	Havant

Apologies were received from the following U3As:
Isle of Wight, Ems Valley and Emsworth & District.

1. INTRODUCTION
The meeting attendees were welcomed by Jim Busby, Chairman of Meon Valley U3A who had kindly agreed to host the event and provide refreshments. Sally Ingledew, Manager of the Hampshire South Central Network (HSCN) of U3As, then chaired the meeting and thanked Meon Valley U3A for their hospitality. She introduced Hilvary Robinson as the U3A SE Region Trustee (SERT). As she is standing down in August Sally thanked her for all her hard work and support over the last 3 years. She also thanked all

those who had attended the meeting commenting that it was very encouraging that nearly all the HSCN U3As were represented.

2.   MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY ROLE & ROUTINES
As part of the normal initial round table introductions membership secretaries compared their responsibilities against other U3As. This has always been found useful for recently formed groups and new secretaries.

SERT informed the meeting that "Helpful Hints cards", similar that produced for Chairmen, were currently being developed for all key committee posts, including membership secretaries.

Waterlooville U3A Membership Secretary Job Description is attached as an example which covers most of the responsibilities mentioned at the meeting. Job descriptions for committee member positions are encouraged as they can be useful when looking for members to join committees as they help to explore whether the tasks match an individual's skill level or if adjustments could be made. It is always a good idea to ask other U3As for a copy of specific job descriptions they hold to help with drafting their own. Each U3A is of course unique in the way it operates so not all U3A JDs will be the same

Chichester U3A, which has some 950 members, eases the Memb. Sec workload by job sharing the role, each doing 2 months on and 2 months off. Other U3As have non-committee assistants supporting the Memb. Sec., especially over the renewal period.

Some Memb. Secs also covered the Almoner role to send out sympathy/get well cards as the have direct access to the members database.

It was noted that at each membership renewal most of the larger U3As lost between 10 – 15% of their members for various reasons. This was about the national average.

3.   MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL ROUTINES
All U3As stated they had a set renewal date although there are U3As in other areas that spread renewals across the year. Most U3As allowed a one or two month grace after the renewal deadline before assuming they had formally lapsed. Contacting those who have not renewed is done either by email or telephone towards the end of the period of grace.

4.   IDENTIFYING MEMBERS AT MONTHLY GENERAL MEETINGS
 A number of methods were identified:
*   Beacon can now produce membership card formats suitable for printing which include a barcode. Several U3As have purchased a bar code reader system which can individually identify members as they arrive at the entrance hall. They do get into the routine of bringing their cards.
*   Some U3As print differently coloured cards for each year which can be checked on entry to identify whether they have renewed.
*   Others just print off an alphabetical list and to reduce queues and have several entry desks (e.g. A to L & M to Z) to check names. This means that members do not have to remember to bring their cards but relies on the Memb. Sec. printing a list for each general meeting.

5. GIFT AID
There was some confusion amongst attendees over the rules and regulations and it was suggested that National Office be encouraged to produce U3A specific guidelines. However, in the 'Finance' section of the CRF (Committee Reference File) there are 3 pages on Gift Aid but it is not very detailed. The response from National Office about the lack of detail is that each U3A has to get permission from HMRC and much depends on how you collect your subscriptions and what these cover. Every individual U3A has to go through the process and may be asked to provide further details before they can claim Gift Aid. One size does not fit all.

Under normal circumstances U3As who have completed the relevant on line form will receive a letter from HMRC with a reference number which they need to quote when making a claim.

If a U3A is not registered with the Charity Commission because your income is under £5000, you have to get yourselves recognised by HMRC. To do this you need to register your details on line at https://www.gov.uk/report-changes-charity so that you are recognised as a charity for tax purposes. Completing the HMRC form does not give you registered status with the CC, it simply proves that you are recognised by HMRC for tax purposes.

Gift aid forms should be retained for 6 years plus the current year.

You can backdate declarations for up to 4 years.

Be careful about spouses, and people living at the same address making a joint declaration, in effect making two or more Gift Aid declarations on the same form. It cannot be assumed that they both pay enough income tax. Every U3A should ensure that each member completes a separate declaration stating they are happy and eligible to Gift Aid their donation to allow their U3A to claim back 25%. If an individual's income is below the current income tax personal allowance threshold (currently £11,000) then the U3A can no longer claim Gift Aid on their donation.

Here is an <u>example</u> of a declaration (there are many variations) that could be placed on your membership application form:

"GIFT AID DECLARATION
If you are a UK taxpayer, then making a Gift Aid declaration is an easy way to allow us to reclaim the tax you have already paid. Your subscription is worth 25% more when you gift aid it.
Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.
In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:

☐   I am not a UK taxpayer so cannot Gift Aid

☐   I want to Gift Aid my donation of £............ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to: ……………………… U3A – Reg. Charity No: ……………….

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.
My Details:

Title…………. First name or initial(s)………………………………. Surname…………………………….

Full Home Address………………………………………………………………………………………………………..

……………………………………………………………………………. Postcode……………………… Date………………
Please notify us if you:
 a) Want to cancel this declaration
 b) Change your name or home address
 c) No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and /or capital gains"

6. DATA PROTECTION
The Data Protection Act 1998 is underpinned by eight important principles which WU3A follow. These say that personal data must:
1) Be processed fairly and lawfully
2) Be collected and used only for specific and lawful purposes
3) Be adequate, relevant and not excessive
4) Be accurate and up to date
5) Not be held any longer than necessary

6) Processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects

7) Be protected from unauthorised access, accidental loss or damage

8) Not be transferred to a country outside the European Economic Area, unless that country has equivalent levels of protection for personal data

With this in mind round table discussions highlighted the following:

- Databases must be encrypted to keep them secure. This includes a backup which should ideally be kept at a separate location e.g. in the Cloud.
- Ideally only two U3As members should have access to the entire database (Chairman & Membership Secretary?). Where necessary and with the approval of the Trustees, <u>extracts</u> may be made available to other nominated persons in connection with specified tasks related to your U3A.
- It was noted that U3A's Beacon database is held in a secure environment so is protected.
- A Data Controller should be nominated (normally the Membership Secretary)
- It is recommended that a privacy statement be included in, for example membership/Information flyers, membership application forms etc. Here is an <u>example</u>:

   "***Privacy Statement.*** Your personal details will be held on a secure database and comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. They will be used solely for the purposes of administration and communication of U3A matters. They will never be supplied to an outside agency or 3rd party other than for you to receive 'Third Age Matters' directly mailed from the Third Age Trust and to HMRC to claim for Gift Aid."

- Information circulated to members by email should not allow sight of other recipients. Group contact by e-mail should be made using the BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) in your mail address box.

7. SUPPORTING NEW MEMBERS

This was explored again but most ideas were covered at last years' Memb. Sec. meeting. Suggestions are repeated here for ease of reference:

   Ideas to make your U3A more welcoming:

a. Work up a new member information packs. Normally in the form of a flier or booklet with some U3As posting a copy on their website. Waterlooville U3A enclosed a credit card size "In Case of Emergency" (I.C.E.) card with an information sheet in the pack which have been popular.

b. Hold frequent new member coffee mornings and send them an individual invite within their new joiners pack. Ensure some committee members (especially groups' liaison) and existing members also attend the coffee morning to help answer questions.

c. Identify new members at monthly meeting with a badge and encourage existing members to talk to them.

d. Nominate meeter/greeters and/or mentors to make them feel welcome at monthly meetings

e. Have a new joiner's team to contact new members one month after joining to assist with any issues/enquiries.

f. Run group activity waiting lists centrally within an expanded group liaison team to form a "wish list" of potential new groups or start up additional existing activity groups to ensure new members are not waiting too long to join a group.

g. Publish a monthly list of groups with vacancies and communicate within a monthly news bulletin and display at monthly meetings.

8. MEMBERSHIP FEE PAYMENTS

As this is really a treasurer issue only a short discussion took place on this subject.

An increasing number of U3As are now accepting on-line bank payments. The majority achieve this via "bank to bank" payments rather than Standing Orders or Direct Debits. Central Office encourage the former.

Identifying payers is sometimes difficult – various methods were used from asking for surname and initial to using membership numbers as a payment reference. Beacon resolves the issue by automatically issuing a membership number which can be cross-referenced when bank to bank payments are made.

Direct Debit arrangements are not encouraged as Third Party issues can make it an expensive option. Chichester U3A accept standing orders but have found it a little time consuming with issues such as members not cancelling their SOs when they are no longer a members, adjusting when changes to fees are made etc.

9. MEMBERSHIP DATABASE IT SYSTEMS

Although there were several discussions about the U3A "Beacon" system during the meeting it should be noted that there are a number of other options available. It was noted that a few of the HSCN U3As are still developing and with a smaller membership are currently happy to use Excel to satisfy their requirements.

There are 4 x HSCN U3As operating "Beacon": Emsworth District, Portsdown, Warsash & Waterlooville (please let HSCN Sec. know if there are others) and a few others currently moving across.

For U3As thinking of investigating databases to manage their membership, activity group and financial requirements there are a couple of useful sites worth exploring:
 https://u3asystems.wordpress.com
https://demo.u3abeacon.org.uk (you have to register to gain access)

The 'Beacon Story' and latest Beacon newsletter are also attached to these notes which are worth a read.

For those who are interested HSCN Manager has invited the National Beacon Team to run a local Beacon workshop for us and our other local U3A Networks. She is awaiting a response,

10. OTHER BUSINESS

SERT informed the meeting that her 3 year term finishes in August this year and a volunteer is being sought. Contact Hilvary if interested: hilvary.robinson@u3a.org.uk

SERT reminded U3As that the Committee Reference File (the "Blue File") should be held by your Chairs and everyone should have access. It is also available in the National Website members' area.

The South East Region is organising a conference/workshop to help U3As get started on doing Research. Location: The imposing Royal Holloway University, Egham, TW20 0EX. Date: Wed Jul 5th. Time: 10 a.m. to 4.30pm

There will be 2 Speakers and 6 Presentations from U3As who have already done some Research together with Posters from lots of other U3As to show what can be done and how to go about it. Diarise now - further details shortly but the aim of the Conference is to show U3As how easy it is to do some Research. It does not have to be a long or profound project and indeed any Group within a U3A could do some. [One example was Marlow U3A who did some work on 'Crumpets' - amusing but valid research for all that. We have a shining example of superb research in our Region from Portsdown on the Battle of Jutland and Hayling Island on the First World War.

Research is the latest idea that U3As are taking up throughout the country - not as guinea pigs but as research partners. [An example of this is the 'Citizens 800 Project' where U3As are asked to team up with Museums to research a person or movement in their vicinity that has added to personal freedoms since Magna Carta. www.citizens800.org/u3a/]

We now have Research Ambassadors throughout the Country - I think our nearest one is Joy Lyon joylyon@outlook.com - she lives in Totton, Southampton.

An email from the U3A Site Builder Support Team is attached concerning important changes to web addresses.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

SCN Manager will canvas membership secretaries in about 10 months and if requested propose another meeting as required.

The meeting closed at 4 p.m.

The Beacon Story January 2017

Introduction. As more people become involved with the Beacon Project there will be some who are not aware of its origins. The aim of this note is to record the history of the project over its first two years from its beginning in January 2015 to now, January 2017.

The Beginnings. In 2014, the NEC's IT committee realised the potential for an online Membership Management System to help U3A committees manage their U3As and communicate with members. Some U3As were already using commercial online systems such as Wild Apricot. The IT committee's then Chair, Antony Hughes, invited members interested in the subject to a meeting in London in January 2015. Some of the attendees had already created online systems for use by their own U3As. They agreed to come together to create a system that any U3A could use. This they did during early 2015.

The System goes Live. After extensive testing during the summer, in autumn 2015 a few guinea-pig U3As started using the system 'live'. It proved to be a big hit and soon there were dozens of U3As lining up to use it. The system was given the name 'Beacon'.

The National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Third Age. Trust From the start, the NEC welcomed the initiative and work of the volunteers in creating a system that could be shared across the whole movement. However, by early 2016 they were concerned about the long-term sustainability of the project given that it was fast becoming a critical resource for a growing number of U3As. Two meetings were held with the Beacon Project Team in Spring 2016. It was decided: 1) that the NEC would hire an IT specialist to review the system. (After interviews with three companies Siftware was chosen to undertake the system review.) 2) That a charge should be made for the use of Beacon to pay for outside IT resources should they be needed. It was felt that these potential costs should not come out of general funds because it would be unfair to U3As not using the system. 3) That every effort would be made to involve more U3A members who have the necessary skills in order to provide greater resilience to the project. 4) That a Beacon Support System be set up, based on the twelve 'U3A Regions'.

Results of the System Review. Siftware recommended a project to change Beacon's hosting platform and to bring the php libraries up to date. This re-configuration would also make it easier for volunteers to work on the system and to control different versions of the software. Siftware are now working on this project. Live users should not notice any difference other than a possible short break in service during changeover which is expected in early April 2017. Siftware have also been asked to write a migration module to make it easier to upload data to Beacon.

Charging. The charge will be 50p per member per year starting on 1st April 2017. The Third Age Trust will facilitate the invoicing of the charge and collect the payments from U3As. This fund will be ring fenced for use only by the Beacon project.

The Beacon Team. As the project has grown in numbers and scope the Team has expanded to include more helpers. In addition to the Regional Support Teams (RSTs) there are also volunteers working in groups of 3 or 4 in various areas. These include Change Management, Migration, Documentation & Training and PHP Development. We are introducing more formality in some areas particularly Change Management where work requests to Siftware and acceptance of changes to the code need to be signed off by other members of the team.

Support. A Support System has been set up and there is now a coordinator and support team in all U3A regions. These volunteers are available to help and advise U3As during their move to Beacon. All Beacon U3As are able to communicate with fellow U3As in their region through the use of online groups.

A growing system. Currently there are almost 100 U3As using the system with a further 30-40 U3As applying to use the system. A 100 U3As will represent a total of over 50,000 members. In January 2017 we sent more than 100,000 emails for the first time.

Other Associated Resources

The User Group. We are holding our first Beacon conference in Birmingham on April 20th 2017. A major aim of this meeting is to set up a User Group through which users can influence the future direction of Beacon including the priority for adding new features. This will, of course, include assessing the enhancements that have already been requested on the User Forum.

The User Forum and Demo System. These will continue although the 'refreshment' of the Demo System data may be delayed.

Communications. The Team's ability to communicate with user U3As and others has been very limited. We only have one email address per U3A. To communicate with chairs and secretaries we have had to ask the National Office to send out emails.   To address this important issue we are planning a Beacon website which will be a Beacon 'one-stop-shop'. Users will have access to information, documentation, FAQs, etc. and a chance to sign up to receive the Beacon newsletters.

Beacon Team 5th February 2017

Beacon Newsletter No.4 November 2016

Introduction. We use these newsletters to tell you how the project has been progressing. In this edition you will begin to appreciate the large number of volunteers involved in the project. And there are others involved undertaking some key roles whom we plan to recognise in future issues. If you would like to contribute to this newsletter please email support@U3ABeacon.org.uk but please don't go beyond a paragraph or two. We will welcome contributions but it is an experiment. We may not have room for all of them and they may end up on our new website (see below) Beacon Numbers There are 87 U3As using the system and a further 44 on the application list.   Note "application" list and not waiting list because many of these U3As do not want to start using the system right away but in several months time. Regional Support Teams These are now operational in all 12 U3A Regions/Countries. Thanks to the supporters in these teams (who are experienced in using Beacon) they can offer help and advice at any point along a U3A's journey from initial questions through migration of data to queries once they start using the system. Each region has a regional support co-ordinator who acts as a focal point for the team. A list of their contact details is included at the end of this newsletter. Built on a communication network of Google Groups (and embracing the User Forum), the support system also enables inter-U3A discussion and self-help both locally and nationally.   Beacon Team For people who wonder who the Beacon Team are we are listed at the end of this newsletter below the regional support co-ordinators. Note that the description of the role is an approximate abbreviation and leaves out many of the tasks that team members undertake. Migration Approximately 8 U3As have been added in the last 4 weeks. An 'easy-data-conversion' guide is about to be launched which should reassure U3As without 'super-IT-experts' that preparing their data for migration to the Beacon system will be relatively straight forward. This guide will be obtainable from support@U3ABeacon.org.uk

User Forum. This is the primary method for contacting the Beacon Team. We now have a team of Reviewers whose aim is to see that all posts on the main two sub-forums ('Priority for Live Sites' and 'Bugs') are responded to within a week. The response may be from other Forum users or the Beacon Team. We also aim to mark each Thread on these two sub-forums as:- • OPEN - for more discussion • RESOLVED - the issue has been resolved • NOTED - the Beacon Team is aware and further action will be taken • CLOSED - discussion is complete

 Emails sent through Beacon Initially the system did not recognise which emails would get rejected by receiving email software. Now Beacon is much improved and has seen dramatic improvement in rate of accepted emails since the end of July. Thank you to all users for keeping to the Beacon guidelines for avoiding your bulk emails being treated as junk/spam. You send about 50,000 emails a month through Beacon.

Software Changes. Most of you and your colleagues who use Beacon don't come across any significant bugs or related issues. But some of you do and frankly we've not been good enough at resolving these although in many cases they are requests for extensions/new features etc. In most cases the Beacon Team has offered a work-around which deals with the issue for the short-term, but we simply haven't had enough software developer resources to fully resolve the issue. We have now committed to boosting this effort probably by contracting a software company to do some of the work. There are some changes to the way the software is run and modified which need to be made to facilitate this. This is underway, but doesn't affect how you use the system. This will increase the rate at which we can resolve software issues, and we'll report on that in the next newsletter. We'd be more than happy for any U3A members who have been experienced PHP developers to volunteer to help in this area, as part of a team. (Contact support@u3abeacon.org.uk in the first instance.)

NEC Involvement. As reported in the last newsletter the NEC commissioned an IT Consultant (actually a company called Siftware) to review the system. The NEC Beacon working group and IT sub-committee met with the MD of Siftware in October.   They concluded that "Overall the Beacon system is in reasonable shape…" . They identified a number of "risks" with the higher priority ones mainly due to the way the hosting environment is configured. They proposed a project to create a "Portable Development System"

which would address these issues and make the environment more suitable for other volunteers and/or paid for support to work in. The IT committee recommended that we go ahead with the project costing about £2,700 and the NEC agreed. The project is now under way. U3As will see no difference when they are using the system. As referred to in the paragraph above we are considering Siftware as the company to provide topup developer resource to fix bugs and extend the system. Communication Can we remind you to always say which U3A you are in when you contact the team so that we can easily identify you. And please let us know if your contact person or email changes. Send the details to support@U3ABeacon.org.uk

 We will occasionally have need to contact chairs and secretaries of participating U3As with, for example, details of the charging arrangements or changes to terms and conditions should they arise. At the moment we only retain one contact email for each U3A and we will have to ask the National Office to send out chair and secretary emails.

 We plan to make it easier for U3As to find out about Beacon and to access reference documents by introducing a website in the New Year. We will continue to publish quarterly newsletters like this one.

 Charging Arrangements. There will be a charge of 50p per member per year as from April 2017. We plan to let you know the detail of these arrangements in December. This will include how U3As joining during the year will be charged. User Group We a planning a Beacon conference in March 2017 out of which a User Group will be formed. We haven't thought through any detail yet not least where it might take place. Perhaps there should be two - one in Birmingham and one in London. To help us with the planning it would be helpful if you could indicate if someone from your U3A might attend and what your view is regarding venue. Please send an email to support@U3ABeacon.org.uk

Attention: Sally Ingledew of Hampshire South Central U3A Network

You may have noticed when using Site Builder as an editor or as a visitor that a small padlock appears at the top of the browser window, alongside the web address of the page that you are accessing. The padlock may be green or may be a grey outline, depending upon which browser you use. This is because we are gradually introducing a more secure method of accessing Site Builder, in line with the increasing security standards that are being introduced across the World Wide Web. In practice this means that instead of using full formal web addresses (or URLs) starting http e.g. http://u3asites.org.uk for all Site Builder access, we are switching across in stages to using addresses starting with https, e.g. https://u3asites.org.uk that allows secure access to websites.

The reasons for doing this are three fold:

Using HTTPS provides a reasonable guarantee to your website editors and visitors that they are communicating with your actual U3A website and not some other site that is pretending to be a U3A Site Builder website.
Using HTTPS ensures that the contents of communications between the user and site cannot be read or forged by any third party, which is particularly important when one is using usernames/passwords or login names.
Using HTTPS will avoid browsers issuing warnings that the page you are viewing is insecure. (At the moment this is limited to just Chrome version 56 and onwards when you access a page that require a username/password or login name. In future these warnings will extend to other ordinary web pages and to other makes of browser.)
We would encourage you to use this new form of address when next you give out your formal web site address (e.g. for other sites to link to your U3A pages) or issue printed material. So for example instead of using http://u3asites.org.uk/youru3aname you show https://u3asites.org.uk/youru3aname. We have already changed our own page of permanent URLs (accessed via the "Find out more" link from our home page) to show all addresses in the new style. By the way to avoid any confusion never use the www prefix (https://www.u3asites.org.uk/youru3aname) since it is not necessary and may not work.

If you use web forwarding from your own custom domain (e.g. youru3aname.org.uk) then you will need to change the linked address to https://u3asites.org.uk/youru3aname. Similarly we shall ask the Third Age Trust to change all the links to Site Builder websites on their website pages to the new style.

Note that the old style addresses (beginning http://u3asites.org.uk) will continue to work for the foreseeable future but increasingly will be converted automatically to the new style within Site Builder itself.

Finally, please remember in future when editing your site to go to the new address https://u3asites.org.uk and take the login in link from there.

Regards,

Richard Andrews
U3A Site Builder Support