



## **HAMPSHIRE SOUTH CENTRAL NETWORK (SCN) SECRETARIES MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday 6th July 2016 - The Crofton Guiding Centre, Stubbington commencing at 1.30 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Sally Ingledew (SI) - SCN Manager; Graham Woodbridge (GW) - SCN Secretary; Margaret White - Locks Heath U3A; Keith Randall - Solent U3A; Carol Powell - Portsmouth U3A; Val Ottewell - Ems Valley U3A; John Worley - Havant U3A; Kevin Stock & Linda Guy - Waterlooville U3A; Bill Dawes - Emsworth U3A; Maura Chapman & Paul Chapman - Hayling Island U3A; Jackie Watson & Sue Young - Stubbington U3A; Nikki Sales - Warsash U3A; Jan Almond - Gosport U3A.

**APOLOGIES:** Received from the following U3As – Portsdown; Rowlands Castle; Horndean & District

### **1. WELCOME**

Jackie Watson as Chair of Stubbington U3A welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

### **2. INTRODUCTION.**

- a) Sally Ingledew (SI) chaired the meeting as SCN manager and added her welcome to all present. She also thanked Stubbington U3A for kindly hosting the event.
- b) Although not on the agenda SI updated attendees on the latest situation on the U3A Beacon Management System as follows:

The Beacon team has been in talks with the NEC, and the result is that regional support teams have been set up to speed up the migration process. There will be information sent out soon concerning this. The idea is to connect a U3A with an experienced user to help prepare their records for migration, and to support the U3A for a month or so afterwards. If a problem arises that cannot be resolved, the next level is the Regional Support, and then the Beacon forum, and if there is still a problem then the Beacon team can be involved.

With reference to the 50p per member charge, this was required by the NEC to protect U3As should professional help be needed. It is likely that this will be waived when the fund is sufficient.

The alternatives are the Steyning system (free), Simple Membership about twice the price, and Wild Apricot more expensive still. This link <https://u3asystems.wordpress.com/> gives more information.

- c) SI then introduced the secretaries meeting agenda.

### **3. U3A SECRETARY EMPLOYMENT & BEST PRACTICES.**

- a) Each U3A representative around the table compared their secretary modus operandi against the guidance provided by the Third Age Trust (TAT) within their "Committee Reference File" issued to all U3A chairmen and posted on the national Website.
- b) Most U3As stated that in general they followed the guidelines although as each U3A was independent there were inevitably some differences in the way they operated.
- c) The following points were made:
  - Not all U3As used the term "business" within their secretary title. Where it was used it was only to differentiate between other secretary titles such as "membership", "speakers" etc.
  - Some U3As appointed separate "minute secretaries" who were not necessarily committee members.

- Most secretaries did not get involved with booking venues for group activities as this is normally covered either by the group leaders/convenors themselves or by a group liaison officer or similar. Secretaries do normally ensure that venues are booked for committee meetings, AGMs and general monthly meetings.
- d) The following issues were also discussed as part of this agenda item:
- Havant U3A advised careful management of archiving important documents and other material for historical record. If the business secretary does not always control this area then a careful track of who holds it and where it is stored should be overseen by either the chairman or Secretary otherwise some of it may be lost. Some U3As scan their documents and store in the “Cloud” to relieve storage issues.
  - The advantage of forming a “Really Useful Group” (or similar title) was highlighted. This was made up of enthusiastic non-committee members who could help with time consuming tasks to assist committee members (e.g. scanning documents for archiving)
  - It was apparent that not all SCN U3A chairs had received a hard copy of the TAT “Committee Reference File” SI contacted the SE Regional Trustee by email, and the reply was that a file was sent to each U3A, and no more will be sent out, and there is no financial help.
  - Not all U3As saw the need for a vice chair while some have two vice chairs. Advantages were highlighted as:
    - Always having a member nominated to take over if the chair was temporarily indisposed,
    - Someone to share the chair work load,
    - Someone to understudy the chair role for continuity in the role.
    - Two vice chairs can also take on special projects to keep a U3A moving forward.
- It was noted that it was not always possible to attract a volunteer but all U3As should ensure another committee member is nominated to cover the chair position at short notice as and when required.

#### 4. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS OF YOUR U3A

- a) A discussion took place on the best methods for communicating with all members of a U3A and the following methods were tabled:
- **Website.** Actively encourage members to regularly visit the national and their own U3A website as a source of information about activity groups, events and other items of interest. If using U3A site builder Havant U3A suggested restructuring the home page (not just a photograph) to highlight latest news or events - see their site as an example: <http://u3asites.org.uk/havant/home>  
Waterlooville U3A also has a very active home page: <http://www.waterloovilleu3a.org.uk/>
  - **Email.** Most U3As now email their news bulletins/ newsletters to members but a few still post them out. Waterlooville U3A with almost 700 members have found that posting them became too expensive. They no longer produce quarterly newsletters but email out (and post on their website) a comprehensive monthly news bulletin which allows information to be distributed on a more regular basis. Short notice events are occasionally emailed out with a “Stop Press” heading. Hard copies are sent out on request to those without web access and are also made available at monthly meetings. Finally, Group Leaders/ Coordinators are also asked to print off a copy and pass round at their group meeting. An annual members’ survey also helps to determine how many actually read them. Website hits are recorded and reported and analysed at monthly committee meeting.
  - **Information Noticeboards.** These are generally on display at monthly general meetings and coffee mornings and members encouraged to read the notices etc.
  - **PowerPoint presentation.** Most U3As display a power point presentation of hall health & safety notices, latest news and activity group vacancies before their general monthly meeting starts.

- **Information folder in local library.** Some, but not all libraries allow U3As to place their own information folder in their community area for both existing and prospective members to read.

## 5. INSURANCE & LICENCES.

- a) There was general satisfaction on the insurance cover and licences provided by TAT. Most of the problems experienced centred on interpreting the wording in the documents and clarifying specific issues. SCN Secretary reminded attendees that TAT had produced an extensive “frequently asked questions” document available on their website (also attached to these minutes) and suggested that if in doubt they should contact TAT for advice.
- b) It was recommended (but not compulsory) that Next of Kin” information be obtained from those on coach trips and for those undertaking more strenuous activities. A list of those attending coach trips etc. should be held by a member not attending the event. Some U3As issued In Case of Emergency (I.C.E.) cards free of charge to members but again, these are not compulsory.
- c) The use of Tutors was aired under this agenda item. TAT’s view was re-iterated that their use was contrary to the self-help ethos of the U3A movement and should be avoided.

## 6. TRUSTEE CODE OF PRACTICE AND INDUCTION.

All U3A’s were reminded of the importance of making sure all new trustees (committee members) were formerly inducted and reminded of their responsibilities every 12 months. Guidance on inductions and a list of documents they should be given is on the National website in the Members Area > Documents Download > Committee Reference File > Trusteeship area.

## 7. CHARITY COMMISSION ANNUAL RETURNS

- a) All U3As must be registered as a charity with the Charity Commission once annual income exceeds £5,000. One benefit of registering is that you can claim Gift Aid if your members sign a form to say that they are eligible to claim (i.e. they pay income tax). The other being that you may be able to get a discount on purchases when quoting your Charity Commission registration number. (N.B. No U3A should ever use Third Age Trust’s Charity Number) You can register below the £5,000 threshold but each would need to balance the interests of their own U3A. There is no blanket solution - it is for each individual U3A to decide.
- b) You must submit an annual return if your income is over £10,000. If your income is under £10,000, you must still keep your registered details up to date, e.g. income, expenditure, trustees and contact details. However, once your U3A’s income goes over £10,000 you are obliged to submit an annual return, even if your income subsequently falls below the £10,000 threshold.
- c) When income goes over £25,000 extra information is required including digital copies of
  - charity’s accounts, agreed by the trustees
  - independent examiner or auditor’s report
  - trustees’ annual report

## 8. Keeping TAT informed.

SCN Secretary highlighted the need to keep TAT informed of changes of chair, business secretary, membership enquiry contact and direct mail contact details. This can easily be done via the national web site: Members Area > National Office Mailings > update committee details

## 9. GRANTS AVAILABLE TO U3As

SCN Secretary briefed attendees on possible grants available to U3As. These were just examples and the list is by no means exhaustive:

- **Big Lottery Fund – “Awards for All”** provide small grants between £300 and £10,000. [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)
- **Heritage Lottery Fund.** For example Portsdown U3A obtained a grant for their project on the impact of the Battle of Jutland on the people of Portsmouth. Hayling Island received a grant for their research project on "The Life and Times of Hayling Island" during and immediately following the First World War. They produced an excellent book which sold 1,000 copies.

[www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

- **Sport England** may provide grants for e.g. short mat bowls equipment, table tennis equipment etc.

[www.sportengland.org/funding/our-different-funds/small-grants](http://www.sportengland.org/funding/our-different-funds/small-grants)

- Hampshire community grants. More info available at:  
[www.hantscf.org.uk/grants](http://www.hantscf.org.uk/grants)
- **Third Age Trust.** Will award a maximum of £200 to help towards the cost of organising an open event to increase awareness of what U3A membership offers to third agers in their local community. The event must be free to members of the public.

If you know of any other possible funding opportunity please inform SCN Secretary.

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- a) Several U3As advertised some of their forthcoming events open to network members which will be advertised on the SCN website. All SCN U3As are encouraged to pass on any other events to the SCN Secretary.

b) **SCN Events Programme.**

tbn Oct Chairpersons meeting

Wed Oct 12th Speaker secretaries forum hosted by Ems Valley

Thu Nov 17th Study day based on the subject of "Free Will". There will be lectures, concerning criminology and chaos theory in relation to free will, together with small group discussions. Venue: The conference centre at Bay House School, Gosport. Time 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Cost £8 for members and £10 for non-members refreshments included

Sat Oct 8th An SCN Quiz night hosted by Waterlooville U3A, 7 p.m. at St Wilfrid's Church Hall, Cowplain

Full details for all these events will be promulgated nearer the dates.

- c) SCN Secretaries are encouraged to visit the SCN website and advertise the SCN to all their members on a regular basis:

<http://u3asites.org.uk/hants-sc-network/home>

## DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

It was agreed that another meeting be held in July 2017. Date, venue and host to be confirmed.

***The meeting closed at 3.35 p.m.***