

Hastings & Rother U3A

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held at 10 a.m. on Thursday 12th January 2023 in the Bell Room, St Peter's Community Centre

Present

Committee Members:

Richard Collisson (Acting Chair)

Ginny Edwards (Business Secretary)

Josephine Noyce (Treasurer)

Jenny Meteyard (Minutes)

John Goodwin (Newsletter)

Gail Oswald (Assistant Treasurer)

Non-committee: Brian Gould (Website); Sue Shilstone (Initial Enquiries); Pandora Bastian (Assistant Speakers).

NB non-committee members in certain roles may attend meetings, and are sent the paperwork, but do not have voting rights.

1. Chair

Richard welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Lynda Wood

3. Minutes of last committee meeting

The minutes of the last committee meeting held on 23rd November 2022 were unanimously approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters arising (not covered in the agenda)

None raised.

5. Co-option/appointment of new committee members

Lynda Wood was appointed to the committee as Groups Coordinator to replace Bruce Henderson. Lynda was unable to attend the meeting so the necessary paperwork will be completed at a later date.

VE/LW

It was noted that Pandora Bastian is preparing to take over as Speakers Secretary but will not be on the committee. April Yasamee is willing to take over as Venues Co-ordinator and may join the committee.

6. General reports/areas for discussion

a) Chair

Christmas Party

Richard reported that 112 members had paid, but only 75 were ticked off on the list. Some members bypassed the list and entered the main hall directly, but there were a number of empty places where people did not turn up despite having paid, and this included people who had requested a special diet such as gluten-free. It was agreed that in future people should be asked to inform the organisers if they need to cancel, rather than simply not turning up. Total food costs were £227.05, to which hall hire costs need to be added; Josephine reported that costs were covered, with a small profit. The event was enjoyed by those who attended, and Lorna and her team did a great job in organising the food, tables etc.

Petitions

Richard had been asked to circulate a petition about packaging to members, and requested that the committee decide generally on circulation of petitions. It was unanimously agreed that it is not appropriate to circulate a petition unless it is directly related to the u3a/TAT objects,

which is possible although unlikely, and would need authorisation by the committee. Circulation of other petitions could be seen as a breach of data protection rules by the u3a, since members have not agreed to their data being used for this purpose, and some petitions may then request data such as contact information which could be used for illegitimate purposes.

If a member is particularly concerned about an issue such as excess use of plastic packaging, they could if approved by the committee set up a table at a meeting with a paper petition, (including an appropriate data protection statement), or even set up a group.

Insurance cover provided by the TAT

Richard reported the following:

Public & Products Liability Insurer: Aviva Insurance Limited Policy Number: 100663285CCI

Period of Insurance: 1st January 2023 to 31st December 2023

It was noted that the draft Venues Policy (see below) includes a brief statement on what the policy covers and what it does not, which is important for group convenors.

b) Treasurer

Josephine reported that H&R u3a still has healthy **reserves**. Richard had downloaded a spreadsheet from Beacon and projected that expenditure over the next year could be around £15,600 while income would be around £14,700. This means some erosion of reserves, but the treasurers felt that as TAT had previously stated that these are too high, this should not be a matter for concern at the moment.

During the pandemic it was agreed that the u3a would pay the cost for groups to meet in hired venues. Fewer groups are now doing this, decreasing expenditure, and if the draft Venues Policy is agreed then groups which continue to need hired venues will be expected to be self-funding. The Pelham, for instance, currently costs £84 per month for two groups, while the Clifton Centre's last invoice in November, for 6 months, was £40 (film group). It was reported that the DLWP now charges only £3 an hour, and one group has already moved there.

The subscription for Third Age Matters magazine is rising from £3.36 to £3.60 per member (annual fee), and other costs such as venue hire (e.g. for speaker meetings) may well rise considerably over the coming year because of high energy costs, and increases in inflation and the cost of living generally. Membership numbers have however decreased since before the pandemic, which reduces the u3a's income. It will therefore be necessary to keep finances under review and consider increasing the membership fee if this becomes necessary.

The Theatre Group has encountered a few issues with accounting but is in credit, and there are ongoing discussions on how to manage any discrepancies caused by changes in ticket prices.

It was reported that the expenditure on speakers last year was only £1,300. This is below the budget of £2000 agreed by the committee in August 2018. Josephine reported that most speakers charged around £75-£85, with a few above £100. It was agreed to retain the budget of £2000 for the moment, but if this is found to be insufficient over the coming year, this could be increased.

c) Business Secretary

Ginny had circulated a report prior to the meeting, and she also explained that SUN (Southeastern u3a Network) has now been dissolved, partly because it covered too wide an area to function effectively and was not felt to meet the needs of those in the eastern areas. A

small local cluster has been formed, including H&R, Heathfield, Mayfield, Battle, and they are currently reaching out to Rye.

1. East Sussex East Cluster group meeting 5/1/23 Heathfield, Ginny & Richard attending Introductions

Meetings – Structure – Modus Operandi

Action: A flexible approach will be adopted in the initial stage of this network. Meetings will be rotated although the venue in Heathfield is favoured. Network U3As will take turns in paying the venue hire fee which at the Heathfield venue is £30.00.

Action: Funding from the dissolution of SUN (£170.00 was received by each participating u3a) will be earmarked by some network members present to finance these meetings. March meeting will be hosted by Heathfield, May meeting will be hosted by H&R at St Peter's CC (25 May, Bell Room booked)

(VE)

Associate Membership

Action: Following discussion and the likelihood of favouring the removal of the 'capitation fee' from the main membership fee for Associate Members, it was agreed that this will be further considered by each U3A and brought back to the next ESE meeting for discussion and agreement. It was clarified at the meeting that TAT insurance is a national scheme, so a u3a member who attends a group meeting at a neighbouring u3a is covered by insurance.

Publicity

Action: The Heathfield leaflet will be forwarded to network members for Ideas and draft texts, and suggestions will be forwarded to three volunteers who will liaise and feedback progress at the next ESE meeting. The intention is to produce a joint article/blurb for the local press and other communication channels.

Action: As above it was agreed that a section in future newsletters will contain a 'latest news' etc. from the ESE network. It remains to be agreed whether each network U3A will produce their own version or whether volunteers will produce a draft.

Study Day

Action: U3A members will be canvassed to ascertain levels of interest in a joint event and whether a more practical or study focus would be favoured. Ways of doing this include at the next monthly meeting, through interest group coordinators, via email and other forms of communication. Circulation of a sheet at a monthly meeting was considered. This will be an agenda item at the next ESE meeting. Alan Cooke who coordinated recent Zoom meetings for SUN members will be copied in to this as he has offered to support and could advise on the above.

Older Age Network – 'Active Rother' Ginny Edwards reported to ESE that this is a key priority for Rother. A day is being organised by Hasting & Rother Voluntary Association, date TBA.

Action: Ginny will forward notes from meetings, at which future attendance could be rotated as appropriate.

Discussion Ginny commented to the H&R committee that some of the other u3as, perhaps because they have a smaller membership, seemed to favour events such as pottery or craft workshops, whereas Ginny suggested study days on topics of wider interest and importance

such as 'dealing with emergencies', or Power of Attorney (the Zoom speaker on the latter having been very popular with H&R). There was general agreement about this, and cyber security was also suggested as a useful topic.

With regard to a newsletter article, Heathfield apparently has a strong PR person and it was agreed that John could contact get in touch to discuss this.

JG

2. November speaker meeting 'Pantomime Dames' had 76 attendees, which is more than the previous meeting.

3. Third Age Matters magazine There has been a message from TAT regarding an increase in the cost of Third Age Matters magazine: "a small increase in the annual TAM charge for 2023; from £3.35 to £3.60, representing an increase of 5p per copy, or about 7%; to take effect from April 2023."

d) Membership

Ginny commented that Battle u3a intends to cap membership at 300, whereas H&R has over 500 and has reached around 700 in the past. It was agreed that we need to be aware of the burden a larger membership places on the committee, particularly the Membership Secretary and Treasurer.

In the absence of the Membership Secretary, Richard reported that there are 546 members on the database, with 95% having email addresses. There seems to be a slight disparity within Beacon between payments received and members listed; this might be explained by members who have paid online but have not sent in a form, as mentioned by the former Membership Secretary. One person who has definitely paid is recorded as 'lapsed'. Josephine reported that there also seems to be a slight discrepancy between income recorded in Beacon and income recorded in the Lloyds account. These discrepancies will be further investigated and the Treasurer will liaise with the Membership Secretary to see if they can be straightened out and also to discuss how it could be avoided in future years. Suggestions at the meeting included a stronger statement at the time of renewal that a form must be submitted, and enabling members to download and print their own form, particularly as some members reported that they had not received the renewal form in 2023. This was concerning as the form is sent by direct mailing from the printers in June, along with the AGM papers and a print version of the newsletter, and should reach all members.

JN MJ

Ginny noted that the Annual Return is sent at the end of April stating the number of members and those registered for Gift Aid, so the numbers need to be confirmed by then.

VE

e) Groups

Lynda Wood has taken over the post of Membership Secretary from Bruce Henderson. Lynda has held this post before and is returning. She was unable to attend the meeting but had circulated a report prior to the meeting.

Lynda reported that as the last Groups List was sent to members in July, she felt that a new groups list should be compiled and sent as soon as possible. She has contacted all the convenors with a copy of the list, asking them to update their group details, particularly the vacancy status. At the time of writing she had heard back from about a third of convenors, and will wait for a week then send out the updated list.

LW

A few groups have disbanded, and the two Grumpy Old Women groups have merged into one; this would reduce the number of groups to 64. On the plus side, April Yasamee has about 34 people interested in her proposed Qigong group, and is now looking for a larger centre because the Clifton Centre may not be large enough.

There is also the possibility of a new group, 'Upholstery, Soft Furnishings and Cane Seating' which has been advertised and attracted some interest. Carol Crossley is helping and advising the potential convenor.

f) Venues

Coordinator April Yasamee was unable to attend the meeting but Richard reported that she has agreed to take over the role of Venues Coordinator and is in touch with the Groups Coordinator. As she has considerable experience of hiring venues for classes such as Qigong, she is aware of the need for risk assessments, insurance etc.

Draft Venues Policy

Richard had circulated a proposed Venues Policy to start from April 2023, for approval by the committee. He commented that April as the new Venues Coordinator had seen and approved this, and that it would be reviewed and could be amended as necessary if any problems arise once it is in use. The proposed policy was unanimously agreed, with one amendment in paragraph c), replacing 'Business Secretary' with either Groups Coordinator or Venues Coordinator (Richard has since ascertained that this will be Venues Coordinator). A copy of the policy will be sent to all convenors and is attached as an appendix to the Minutes.

RC

g) Initial Enquiries

Sue reported that there have been around 6 enquiries since Christmas.

h) Speakers

Item 7 Replacement for Open Day was discussed here.

The idea for an Open Day was mainly to recruit more members, but it was queried whether with a membership of over 500, difficulty recruiting convenors and committee members, and having heard that Battle are planning to cap at 300, whether we actually need to recruit more members at this time. It was agreed that we should not have a cap on members (there were around 700 before the pandemic), but perhaps should try to focus recruitment on more recent/younger retirees, who might be more interested in taking up roles within u3a, or starting/taking over groups. An Open Day can also encourage existing members to join or start groups.

All

It was agreed that an Open Day should therefore still be considered, perhaps for the autumn, and will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

The Murphys are already booked as speakers for 3rd April and it was agreed that members will be advised that the Open Day advertised on the bookmark for 24th April has been replaced by a special speaker meeting on 3rd April (this date is not on the bookmark but was advertised in the Newsletter). A message will be sent by email, by post to those not on email, and announced at the next speaker meeting.

RC?

Note: it was stated at the meeting that St Peter's CC hall can only hold 140 auditorium style, but in fact 200 is the number given on their website.

PB

Speakers Secretary

Pandora Bastian will be taking over Speakers and will be in touch with Babs Spackman. She is unable to attend speaker meetings because of a prior commitment on Mondays. We will therefore need a designated person to welcome and generally look after the speaker, including ensuring arrangements for payment are in place. This varies, with some preferring to be paid

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by cash or cheque at the meeting, while others send invoices. Speakers occasionally ask for their fee to be donated to a charity of their choice. As a charity, the u3a is not allowed to donate to other charities, so a speaker will need to fill in a form stating that the donation is coming from them.

Zoom speakers

The Zoom speaker meeting on Monday only attracted 25 members. Although one attender did express the hope that they would continue, attendance has been low and Gail suggested that the March Zoom speaker meeting should be the last. She also clarified that although Paul Burns has advertised two Zoom groups in the newsletter, he is not in fact using Zoom but an alternative. Zoom has tightened up on hosting and accounts so it is now difficult or impossible for convenors to use a single u3a account for meetings. It was therefore agreed that the u3a's Zoom account be cancelled in June. Members will need to be informed of this via email, newsletter and the Speaker Meetings, and any references to Zoom as part of the 'package' on joining (e.g. on the website) will need to be removed.

GO

BG

i) Database

Tricia had circulated information about changes to Gift Aid procedure in Beacon, and courses for specific roles.

Ginny commented that at one time messages sent via Beacon included the recipient's membership number, which was useful as a reminder for people, given that we do not issue membership cards. It would be helpful to reinstate this and Richard will speak to Tricia.

RC PJ

j) Website

The website was down for some time as a result of a server issue which affected all u3a Sitebuilder sites. The website has been reinstated with a new service provider, but in the process files and photos were lost. Galleries is disabled as it currently has no photos. Brian suggested that convenors could reload photos themselves or send them to him; Richard will talk to Lynda (Groups) about this as well. Brian has replaced as many files as he can. This includes job descriptions and he asked committee members to review and if necessary revise their own job description, as some seem out of date.

BG

RC

Brian also commented that some convenors are still putting their personal email addresses on the website, although advised not to do so. It was suggested that there should be a hyperlink, perhaps in the form of a graphic, so that convenors can be contacted without their email appearing; Brian could do this. Convenors will be offered this option but will be reminded that they must ensure that only those who are u3a members join groups (e.g. ask for membership number and check) and if they have a waiting list ensure new or potential members do not jump the queue – people sometimes want to contact the convenor about a group before joining u3a.

BG

LW

Brian had copies of the page visit list and commented that there was a large increase in the number of people going to the front page but not to any others. This seemed slightly odd unless people were checking whether the website was up and running.

k) Newsletter

The most recent newsletter came out this month. John stated that the next one would be delivered for 1st April, and needs to go to the printers by the 3rd week in March. The following edition needs to go out in time to include the AGM papers – all members receive a printed copy of the newsletter, the AGM papers and the renewal form. This would be in June. It was

JG

reported that last year some members did not receive the newsletter and other papers and this is a cause for concern. It was agreed that planning for the AGM will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

7. Replacement of Open Day Monday 24th April

Discussed under Speakers above.

8. Suggestion by member (at AGM) for quarterly Quiz/Social evening

John offered to organise a Quiz and it was agreed to hold one and see how it goes. He will possibly investigate venues and the topic will be further discussed at the next meeting.

Richard had previously mentioned that the 35th anniversary of the founding of H&R u3a is in the 2023-24 season and it was suggested that a Quiz with food might be a suitable event, although other suggestions could also be considered.

9. Any other business

Richard reminded the committee that he is only Acting Chair and we do not have a Vice Chair. We need to appeal for members to consider this and should also keep an eye out in groups. It was commented that the word 'committee' can daunt some people who worry about the level of commitment required, and it was suggested that potential committee members could attend a meeting to see how it works. As well as official roles there are smaller jobs people could fill such as managing email and IT.

10. Date of next committee meeting

10.00 a.m. **Tuesday 28th February 2023** in the Cotton Room, St Peter's Community Centre, Bexhill .

Signed

Date

Minutes were taken by Jenny Meteyard.

Appendix:

JG

All!

Overview

The Trustees are obliged to ensure that due diligence has taken place before the use of any hired premises for Hastings and Rother u3a (H&R) activities.

The Third Age Trust (TAT) has public insurance in place for all u3as that are fully paid up.

In general, public liability insurance is intended to indemnify the insured against compensation, which they become legally liable to pay, following injury or property damage sustained to others as a result of an activity. Legal liability to another person can arise in a number of ways but by far the most common is negligence. Public liability does not cover pure accidents where no legal liability has been established.

Specifics of the venues policy:

- a. As from 1st April 2023 each special interest group is expected to be self-financing. The principle of self-funding is in place so as to ensure that there is an equitable playing field between groups.
- b. During the COVID pandemic temporary support was in place to fund the use of premises due to the understandable reluctance of members to gather in their own homes. This temporary support will be withdrawn from 1st April 2023.
- c. Should the withdrawal of support become an issue for a group the convenor is to contact the venues coordinator with details. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. However, the principle as set out in **a.** is considered to be paramount.
- d. When a group uses commercial premises irrespective of if there is a charge this hire must be done with the approval of the Trustees. Convenors are to contact the venues coordinator. Any hire is to be done in the name of H&R u3a and **NOT** the individual interest group. This is to ensure that there is insurance in place.
- e. Wherever possible groups are asked to make use of premises for which there is no charge. Sometimes conditional on buying drinks etc.
- f. It is acceptable to use premises where H&R members are required to pay a membership fee to the host organisation such as the Angling Club.
- g. Where there is a charge for the use of premises the Convenor, or their appointed representative, is responsible to collect contributions from participants to cover any costs.
- h. The cost of the venue should be divided amongst the members and the venue paid directly preferably in cash and a receipt obtained
- i. Whenever an outside venue is used a risk assessment **MUST** be done of the premises and activity. (downloadable proforma available from the H&R website) and a copy passed to the Business Secretary.