

Hastings & Rother U3A

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held at 10.00 a.m. Tuesday 28th February 2023 in the Bell Room, St Peter's Community Centre

Present

Committee Members:

Richard Collisson (Acting Chair)

Josephine Noyce (Treasurer)

Matilda Jarvis (Membership)

Lynda Wood (Groups)

Jenny Meteyard (Minutes)

Gail Oswald (Assistant Treasurer)

John Goodwin (Newsletter)

Non-committee: Brian Gould (Website); Tricia Jobling (Database); Sue Shilstone (Initial)
Christine Evans (potential committee member).

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

Ginny Edwards (Business Secretary); Pandora Bastian; April Yasamee

3. Minutes of last committee meeting

The minutes of the last committee meeting held on 12th January 2023 were unanimously approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters arising (not covered in the agenda)

None.

5. General reports/areas for discussion

a) Chair

AGM

Richard noted that since the resignation of Bruce Henderson we currently have no Vice Chair. This is required by the constitution, although not by Charity Commission rules which state that any charity must have a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Traditionally in the u3a a Vice Chair has taken on the role with a view to then standing as Chair, although of course this does not always happen. It would be possible to co-opt someone as Vice Chair as a temporary measure until the AGM, but it would be better to find someone who is prepared to take on the post more long-term.

Richard is currently Acting Chair but is not prepared to stand as Chair at the AGM, and other members of the committee are prepared to continue in their current roles but not to stand as Vice Chair or Chair. Richard has appealed at the last two speaker meetings and in the Newsletter for volunteers for the committee/key roles and people have come forward for roles such as Speakers, Groups and Venues, but not for the roles of Vice Chair or Chair.

It was agreed that this needs to be tackled urgently and cannot be left until the AGM on 24th July. If there is no Chair, the u3a would have to be dissolved. The process would need to start before membership renewals are taken, and with sufficient time to allow a resolution to dissolve the u3a to be put to the AGM. (The constitution states that members must be notified at least 28 clear days ahead of elections to the committee, which are generally held at the AGM, so this is the timeline). In order to do this Richard suggested that if no-one has stepped forward, then a Special General Meeting should be held, possibly in May, to begin the process of dissolution. Members therefore need to be told clearly and urgently that if

there is no Chair, then the u3a will be dissolved, which would include all groups as well as Speaker Meetings and other activities.

It was agreed that Richard will write a letter to be sent to all members as soon as possible, outlining the above. The letter should also give some idea of what is involved in the roles of Chair and Vice Chair, and reassure any potential volunteers that there is support available and that responsibilities can be shared: for instance someone who is not comfortable speaking in public to welcome members to meetings etc could ask someone else to do this. Interested people could also attend committee meetings, and if someone is found to stand as Chair, they could shadow the Acting Chair over the next few months. This letter will be sent by post (direct mail from the printers) and email, and could also be placed on the website. It was suggested that a brief reminder could also be put as a footnote to all communications, such as reminders of speaker meetings, coffee mornings etc. Richard will draft a letter in the next couple of days and suggested that in the absence of the Business Secretary he will run this past Jenny (Minutes Secretary), and then send the final version to John to be sent to the printers for direct mailing.

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JG

Venues

April Yasamee (Venues) has created a risk assessment which has been sent to all group convenors and placed on the website. Copies of risk assessments are being kept by April. Any queries, problems or suggestions will be logged by April and inform the review of the policy in a year's time. April now has the email address venues.hru3a@gmail.com.

(AY)

It was confirmed that St Peter's CC can hold 200 audience style if there are no tables at the back. Tricia has all the details re numbers and measurements at St P's CC if needed.

Speakers Secretary

Pandora Bastian is in the process of liaising with Babs Spackman to take over this role, although Babs has not yet formally resigned and they have not yet managed to talk in any detail. Pandora is however making enquiries about potential speakers and has lists from other local u3a groups and suggestions from other members. Pandora now has a u3a email address speakers.hru3a@gmail.com.

PB

Committee and other roles list and contacts: TAT website contact

The list on the website needs updating. A list was circulated for checking. It was noted that only u3a email addresses should be published on the website, not personal ones. The list also needs to clearly show which people are committee members, and therefore trustees, and which are performing specific roles but are not on the committee.

Bruce's personal phone number was previously on the national website for initial contact from potential new members. This has been removed. Sue Shilstone stated that she is happy for her personal phone number to be placed there, along with the initial enquiries email address.

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b) Treasurer

Josephine reported that H&R u3a's finances are still in a healthy state. As agreed at the last meeting, venue funding for groups will finish at the end of March and groups will need to self-fund. She queried whether the groups currently funded by u3a are aware of this, and it was agreed that Lynda will send a copy of the new policy to all group convenors and ensure that the two groups most likely to be affected (film and history) are aware. Brian stated that it is already on the website.

LW

Josephine noted that there has been no bill from the White Rock since the end of last year and she will chase this up. The trip to Dover is well on the way to being organised.

JN

c) Business Secretary

Ginny is away.

d) Membership Secretary

- Matilda reported that she is still having problems with email forwarding - some emails sent to the Membership address do not appear to be getting through. Richard will look into this.
- She noted that some new members have used an out of date membership form. This may be because they took a membership form some time ago and 'sat on it', before finally deciding to join, but Matilda asked people to be sure they are giving out the most up to date form to any potential members, for instance at coffee mornings or speaker meetings. A reminder of this could go in the newsletter and on the website. Brian will also check that the form available to download from the website is the current one.
- Matilda suggested that we request that new members do not pay in cash. Apparently people sometimes send cash in the post, and if they pay cash to join at a coffee morning, this creates problems for the recipient, who has had to funnel it through her own bank account. It was agreed that this was unsatisfactory and in future rather than paying at the coffee morning, people could complete a form but then pay by cheque or bank transfer. Those joining at other times or renewing should also be asked to pay by cheque or bank transfer rather than cash. This will need to be stated on the membership form, and Matilda will liaise with the Business Secretary about this. The coffee morning hosts also need to be aware.

RC MJ

BG

MJ VE

e) Groups

The latest groups list has been sent to members. At the moment we have nearly 600 members but only 60 groups. In response to a query Lynda confirmed that she does provide support for anyone thinking of starting a group and there are also support documents on the website.

f) Venues

Already discussed under Chair.

g) Speakers

Already discussed under Chair. It was also noted that Pandora will not be able to attend Speaker Meetings as Babs currently does, and tasks such as reserving a parking space for the speaker and generally looking after them will need to be carried out by someone else. Several committee members including Matilda and John said they would be happy to share this role.

MJ JG

h) Database

Tricia had earlier sent details of TAT training courses on the use of the Beacon database. She also offered to help anyone who is struggling with it. John suggested that it might be helpful to hold a meeting for those who need to use it, to go through what they need to know.

Tricia had received some comments from a member who felt that the committee "makes decisions without reference to members" and cited what they felt were examples:

- Cancellation of Zoom: the member felt that the Zoom talks were being cancelled only on the basis that the last one had not been well-attended, and commented that stopping them

might cut out the members who cannot attend meetings at the White Rock or St Peter's CC. The member also expressed concern for small groups still using Zoom.

The cost of Zoom speakers includes payment to the speakers and the annual Zoom subscription. There is a lot of work involved in finding speakers, setting up meetings, and hosting, and Gail is not prepared to continue with this. Gail commented that in fact none of the winter Zoom talks, on a range of topics, had had more than 20 attending, and some had fewer. In an organisation of over 500 people this is a very small minority and there is clearly very little demand – and in fact some members have apparently objected to the continuing use of Zoom.

No interest groups are now using Zoom, because Zoom have tightened up their system and it is not possible for anyone except the registered account-holder (currently Gail) to host meetings. Groups are therefore using other platforms and although a few groups advertised in the newsletter/groups list as 'Zoom', in fact this simply meant that they meet via video-conferencing rather than in-person.

Third Age Trust are still providing online talks and the links are in their email newsletter (members have to sign up for this via the TAT website). It was agreed that John will put an article in the Newsletter about this and provide the necessary links.

- *Appeal for committee members: "no information, at all about what you should expected (sic), where and when the meets are held and how often". The member felt more information should be given to potential volunteers.*

The committee considered this when discussing the letter to be written and it will be a consideration for any future appeals. Potential volunteers can also ask for more information.

- *The decision to use the White Rock basement as "parking is so very difficult in the area...I am sure it must exclude some who have mobility problems and need to park close".*

The White Rock was decided on after the Azur had let us down badly over technical equipment and other aspects. It was difficult to find a suitable alternative, and the Venues Coordinator visited and checked a number of possible venues. The White Rock is large enough, it does in fact have parking nearby although a short walk is necessary, and is also on a bus route – venues with ample parking tended not to be on bus routes and vice versa. They provide an onsite technician, First Aid facilities and drinks, at a reasonable rate.

- *"The Open Day was cancelled due to lack of help on the day. Was there an appeal for help from general members".*

The main reason for cancellation was the resignation of the Groups Co-ordinator who had been organising the day. It is proposed that the Open Day will be held in the autumn instead. There will definitely be an appeal for help whenever it is held!

i) Website

Brian reported that there were some anomalies in the page visit statistics: it appeared that the front page had had 9000 visits, but as there are usually around 600-700 this seemed unlikely. 12 people were logged as visiting the Gallery – but this page had been removed after earlier issues with the website meant the loss of all photos!

Brian noted that 10 group convenors are still using their personal email addresses on the site, which is a data security risk. Brian will remove these and replace them with a link in the corner

BG

of the page; a message will be sent to members to advise them of this. A few new photos are being sent and Brian will add any more that he receives.

JG

j) **Newsletter**

The deadline for content for the next newsletter is 16th March, and it will be posted out on 1st April. The letter asking for volunteers will be sent before then, but the newsletter will also include this. John would like more content from groups, and Lynda will send a request to convenors for this.

LW

John had composed an article for local newspapers to recruit more members, but it was agreed that in the current situation, where we already have a large number of members and not enough groups (not to mention the possibility of having to dissolve the u3a!), this will not be used at the moment but could be useful in future.

John did suggest however that we should have more of a social media presence; and will look into the possibilities.

JG

6. **AGM 24 July 2023**

Already discussed under Chair.

7. **Open Day**

It was agreed that this should be held in the autumn, but the date could be decided after the Business Secretary has returned. It would be better to avoid the school half-term which is usually the last week in October.

8. **Suggestion by member (at 2022 AGM) for quarterly Quiz/Social evening**

John had organised a dinner dance with demonstration of modern Jive, as previously suggested, at the Manor Barn in Bexhill, but the Manor Barn has now gone into liquidation! Other suitable venues in Hastings, St Leonards or Bexhill may be available, and it was agreed that rather than discussing this at the meeting, suggestions should be sent to John for him to investigate. It was agreed not to book a date or venue until after the AGM, given the current situation of uncertainty. If a venue does not have a bar, a licence is needed in order to sell drinks or to include them in the entry ticket price. Alternatively, people can be asked to bring their own drinks.

JG

9. **Recruitment of committee members/other roles**

Already discussed under Chair.

10. **Any other business**

- **New committee member:** Christine Evans had attended the meeting as a potential committee member and expressed her willingness to join the committee. At the moment she will not have a specific role but will be 'without portfolio' and is happy to help out as needed. It was therefore unanimously agreed that Christine should be co-opted as a committee member/trustee. The paperwork for this will be done after the return of the Business Secretary.
- **Additional newsletters:** New members are sent the most recent edition as an attachment but the Membership Secretary does need to have some printed copies for any new members not on email. They could also be sent by post by the Initial Enquiries secretary as part of the application pack. John will ensure both have some spare printed copies.

(VE)

JG

11. **Date of next committee meetings**

Tuesday 28th March 10.00 a.m. in the Bell Room, St Peter's Community Centre

Signed

Date

Minutes were taken by Jenny Meteyard.