

Hastings & Rother U3A

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held at 10.00 on Wednesday 13th January 2021 via Zoom video-conferencing

Present

Committee Members:

George Webster (Chair)	Mike Wilson (Vice Chair) <i>from 11.05</i>
Raquel Berdichevsky (Business Secretary)	Jenny Meteyard (Minutes)
Gail Oswald (Treasurer)	Josephine Noyce (Assistant Treasurer) <i>to 11.50</i>
Carol Crossley (Venues)	Lynda Wood (Groups)
Bruce Henderson (Membership)	Ginny Edwards (general)

Non-Committee Members:

Patricia Jobling (Initial Enquiries/Database) *until 11.33*

NB Database, Website and IT Administrators, Newsletter Editor and SUN Representative are not committee members but may send reports and/or attend meetings at times if appropriate, and receive the relevant paperwork.

Note: This meeting was held using Zoom video-conferencing during the Covid-19 pandemic (lockdown) when in-person meetings were not possible under Government laws.

1. Chairman

George welcomed everyone to the meeting. He requested that during the meeting people raise their hands when wishing to speak, and he would then call upon the person.

2. Apologies for absence

Barbara Spackman (Speakers)

3. Minutes of last committee meeting and AGM (approval)

The minutes of the last committee meeting held on 18th November 2020 were unanimously approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters arising (not covered in the agenda)

George reported that he had voted as instructed at the TAT EGM.

5. General Reports

Report from Chair George had nothing to report apart from a few items which would be covered later in the meeting.

Report from Vice Chair Mike Wilson reported (via phone) that he had not progressed the formation of a sub-group to organise an outdoor gathering for 3rd June, because of the current situation with the pandemic.

Report from Treasurer Gail had circulated a report and 2 versions of the Statement of Accounts, one from her Excel spreadsheets and the other from Beacon. She has been working on getting the accounts set up on the Beacon system and will run them in tandem until the end of this financial year, after which we shall switch exclusively to Beacon.

The accounts are showing a similar income to last year due to the increase in the membership subscription. Naturally, outgoings are far lower than last year but we still have to pay TAT capitation, which will swing us from a small profit into a deficit, as last year's payment was £5,000. Bruce suggested that in future it might be better to describe this as 'Third Age Trust subscription' or similar, as 'capitation' may not mean much to members.

Gail reported that we need to consider the appointment of an additional signatory to the bank accounts as there are just three at present. Josephine and Raquel both volunteered and it was unanimously agreed that they should both become signatories to the Lloyds accounts. Gail is looking to close the NatWest accounts, so they will not become signatories for these, although as Lloyds are not currently offering a switching service because of the pandemic, the accounts cannot yet be closed.

JN RB
GO

Gail will liaise with Tricia about the Theatre Account (used for members of the theatre group to pay for tickets, which are purchased using a debit card). It may be better to open a new Lloyds account for this. Opening a new account may be difficult at the moment, but on the other hand theatre trips are unlikely in the near future. It was suggested that a PayPal account might be better than using an account with a debit card, but there are charges for this. Gail also felt that it is better to have all accounts in the same place.

GO PJ

Gail was pleased to report that the Annual Return to the Charity Commission for 2020 has been submitted.

Report from Business Secretary Raquel had nothing to report.

Report from Membership Secretary Bruce reported that there are now 609 members.

Report from Groups Co-ordinator Lynda reported the recent deaths of 2 members who were also Group Convenors. These groups (Scrabble and French, and woodwork) are not currently meeting, but it does mean they are now without a convenor. The Zoom TED talks (Paul Burns) are no longer happening because of lack of interest from members. There continues to be very little interest from convenors in running groups on Zoom, so most groups are not currently meeting.

Lynda suggested that the pdf listing groups on the website is not necessary, as website visitors can already access the list in 2 formats (listed alphabetically and listed according to days of the week). It was agreed that George will delete the pdf.

Report from Venues Co-ordinator Nothing to report.

GW

Report from Initial Enquiries and Database Co-ordinator Tricia reported that one person has inquired about joining. The Beacon database is scheduled to be upgraded this year but this is still in progress; Tricia will liaise as necessary when things change.

There was a query about listing of members. If someone's membership lapses their name is removed from the list of members, but still appears (in red) in the group lists. Tricia explained that this makes it clear when there are group members who have not renewed and should therefore no longer be attending the group, so this can be followed up. The group lists are only accessible to group convenors using Beacon, and any committee members who have access. At the moment most groups are not meeting, but Ginny suggested that when groups start meeting again, all convenors should contact those members and point out that they must either renew membership or leave. This was unanimously agreed. It was also reiterated that groups must have a convenor and all including the convenor must be paid-up members of the U3A.

(PJ)

Report from Speaker Secretary Barbara has booked speakers for the next 6 months, with Gail liaising to schedule these on Zoom. Norman Berdichevsky has expressed interest in giving a Zoom talk about Esperanto, possibly in addition to the usual monthly speaker; he is flexible about timings and there is no rush. It was suggested that at the moment an additional speaker meeting might be welcomed and this could be scheduled for a different day/time. Norman will liaise with Gail to set this up.

NB GO

Newsletter & Publicity George reported that he had contacted other U3A groups via Facebook to find out their arrangements for newsletters, and had received a large number of responses. No other groups who responded were sending paper copies as a matter of course, but there were various different arrangements. Some were monthly and some quarterly, and they were sent as a pdf attachment to an email, often with an online version as well via a website link (as ours is at present). Most were using Beacon or Mailchimp (which the Third Age Trust also uses for emails to members who sign up to receive them). George felt that using Beacon would be preferable. A limited number of print editions were produced for those not on email and were either just handed out at coffee mornings etc when these were still possible, or were posted, or delivered by members. In some cases there was an extra charge for this. There had inevitably been some complaints when systems changed but in general members had settled down with new systems.

George noted that at the moment there are 32 members of H&R U3A who do not use email. Each printed copy costs £1.62 per member, so the annual cost of sending printed copies to these members would be around £200, whereas the cost of direct mailing to all members is budgeted as around £4,500. George considered that direct mailing of printed copies to all members should continue for the rest of the year until renewal, since members had joined or renewed in the expectation of receiving a quarterly printed newsletter, but suggested that in the next membership year those not on email should continue to receive a printed copy automatically as part of their subscription, but everyone else should receive a pdf version. Other members could be given the option to receive a printed copy, but George suggested there should be a charge for this: the renewal form could include a box to tick to continue to receive printed copies, with an additional fee.

There was some dissent on this. It was felt by some committee members that those opting to receive a paper edition should not be charged, particularly after a year in which members had received very little benefit from membership, and that savings would still be made if enough people received a pdf rather than print version. Members may enquire why there is suddenly a need to save money, when a short while ago the U3A was considered to have too much in reserve. Adding an extra option and charge for people wanting to receive printed copies also makes membership renewal more complicated. There is still the issue of how to send forms (e.g. renewal, AGM) since not everyone has a printer, and also how to send the groups contact list without breaching data protection regulations. A decision would also be needed on whether those in the same household would each receive a newsletter, as is currently the case.

After some discussion there was a majority agreement that:

- As agreed at the previous meeting, the Spring newsletter should be sent out in printed form to all members as usual but also sent as a pdf to those on email. This would enable members to try out both formats. The spring issue does not usually contain any additional items.
- The newsletter will contain a message from the Chair laying out the different suggested options for the future and asking for members' views. It was agreed that this message should be run past the committee before going to print.
- The Summer newsletter will also go out in both printed form and pdf, and could contain the feedback received from members; this could perhaps be debated at the AGM, in whatever format this is held.
- A clear written report will be compiled summarising the proposals and rationales, to clarify the different options and the decisions that need to be made by the committee.

RB

GW

There was a suggestion that 'newsletter' is not an appropriate title given that it is more like a magazine. It was agreed that this could be discussed in future.

GW

Newsletter Heading Rosemary had circulated several alternatives for a new newsletter heading, using the new U3A logo. Option 3 was chosen by a majority vote.

SUN/Regional George reported that he had attended a SE regional meeting, where the main topics discussed were recruitment and lapsed memberships. Some ideas put forward about promoting U3A might be useful later.

Lapsed member/convenor It was agreed that the Chair should write to the former member in question, reiterating the situation for lapsed members (as described in the minutes of the last meeting), and making it clear that the apparently very unpleasant tone and content of messages sent to the Groups Secretary were not acceptable. It should be sent by recorded delivery, to ensure the letter is received.

GW

6. Hastings & Rother U3A leaflet

A draft of the new leaflet created by a subgroup was circulated for comments and approval. The text and layout were approved and it was considered to look very attractive. The trigger for creating a new leaflet had been the death of a member who featured prominently in a photo on the front of the previous one. After some scrutiny it was thought that all those in the new photos were still with us, but also that no-one featured as prominently in any case. Rosemary will be informed that the leaflet is approved and that it can go to print.

GW RB

7. Car Parking

George commented on the new car park charges and payment system in the Manor Gardens car park in Bexhill. At the moment the only way to pay for parking is via the RingGo phone app. This means that only those who own a mobile phone, and are prepared to register with RingGo, can use the car park. This has serious implications for meetings and activities in St Peter's Community Centre, since this is the only accessible car park. The council are aware of the issue, and it will be reviewed at some point, but it appears the council are reluctant to install a cash payment machine because of the cost.

8. Webmaster

George is currently filling this role and reported that he has updated some items. He would like more photos of the local area for the front page, as this is changed regularly. Carol reported that as agreed a £25 book token had been sent to Brian Gould in thanks for his work in the role of webmaster, and he had acknowledged this with thanks.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date of next committee meeting

Dates for future meetings were agreed. Unless there is a change in government regulations or advice, these will be held via Zoom:

Thursday 25th February at 10.00 a.m.;

Thursday 8th April at 10.00 a.m.

Signed

Date

Minutes were taken by Jenny Meteyard.