

# Hastings and Rother U3A

## Annual General Meeting

2.00 p.m. 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2019

St. Peter's Community Centre, Bexhill

1. The Chair, Robert Hadland, welcomed members to the AGM. There were 126 members in attendance. Robert introduced the current committee members and those standing for election.

2. **Apologies for Absence** were received from a number of members.

3. **Minutes of the previous AGM**

The minutes of the AGM held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018 were presented as a true record of the meeting. The motion to accept was proposed by Maggie Broughton, and seconded by Brian Gould. The motion was carried unanimously by a show of hands.

4. **Matters Arising.**

Robert commented on the question posed by a member during the 2018 AGM, as to whether the U3A needs such a large sum of money on deposit. As promised at the meeting, the committee has looked at this matter, and one measure taken was to reduce the annual subscription to £12. Robert stated that the Treasurer's report (to be presented later) would further illustrate how the committee had looked at ways to spend some of this money in the members' best interests.

5. **Chair's report:** a comprehensive review of the past year's activities was presented by Robert Hadland as follows:

This is the year when we celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> year of Hastings & Rother U3A. We have more than 700 members and some 90 interest groups as well as regular Speaker meetings on a variety of topics, culminating in the coup of having attracted a former Director General of MI5 to speak to us in September.

It has been a busy time for committee members and volunteers alike; and we have attempted to make some progressive changes and improvements. It is only right that I should draw your attention to these, some of which you may not be aware of. To begin with, very few U3As have been in existence for as long as Hastings and Rother - 30 years – and this in itself is a considerable achievement.

Personally, I have been able to benefit from the work of my two immediate predecessors: Sarah Loynes and Lorna Couldrick. In 2014, with Sarah as Chair, we celebrated 25 years of H&R U3A. Lorna combines care and concern for others with an effective way of making sure that we follow the necessary rules and regulations. During Lorna's time in office, Tricia Jobling, Ken Saunders and Rosemary Bartholomew combined to set up the change in our mailing arrangements which took place at the end of last year. Our Newsletter, membership renewal and other documents are now handled by a commercial printer and mailed direct to members, relieving members of the boring work of filling and sealing envelopes several times a year.

I am glad to report that Tricia Jobling has agreed to continue managing our database, using the Beacon software, although she no longer wishes to remain a committee member. In combination with Jean Poole, she spent a great deal of time ensuring that our new Membership Secretary Chris Legg had a thorough grounding and induction when he took up his post last July. Nearly 700 subscriptions were received and recorded efficiently and it seems that Chris's work will be even greater this year. Rosemary Bartholomew's calm and competent approach has meant that our Newsletters have been produced on time and to a high standard – even

though her patience must have been tested by late amendments from your Chairman. Brian Gould has worked carefully in the background to ensure that our website is suitably updated.

Ken Saunders regularly ensures that the necessary documentation for the Third Age Trust and for meetings such as this are processed properly, and Jenny Meteyard produces accurate minutes of committee meetings which are swiftly delivered to committee members. She has largely instilled a habit of "One person only to speak at one time, please!" For this: much thanks from the Chair.

Barbara Spackman has continued to enlist interesting Speakers on a variety of topics and we are all looking forward to hearing Dame Stella Rimington in September – it is a real coup to secure such a prestigious figure. Carol Crossley has organised our monthly Coffee mornings at the Royal Victoria Hotel and formed an effective liaison with our various venues. After some thought, the committee decided to move our regular Hastings Speaker meetings to the Sussex Hall in the White Rock Theatre from January, following the research carried out by Carol and Sue Deeks. The meeting on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, at which Dr Elena Mucci will be speaking on 'Avoiding Frailty', will also be held in the Sussex Hall.

It is with regret that I tell you that Shirley Carey, a long-serving committee member, has decided to relinquish the task of SUN (Sussex U3A Network) representative, after 8 years in the task. Nevertheless, Shirley will continue supporting our U3A as convenor of the popular Musical Appreciation group. I am happy to say that Valerie Greenwood will take over Shirley's SUN role, after passing her role as Groups Coordinator to new committee member Lynda Wood.

I want to make a small aside on the subject of groups. They are numerous, and cover a wide range of topics and interests. The one common factor is that ALL group members MUST be fully paid-up members of H&R U3A, or an affiliated branch. NO EXCEPTIONS. With the increase in the number of groups (about 90 in total) I also want to give a reminder of common guidelines. Some of them revolve around individual responsibilities and consideration for others: making sure that we attend regularly and signal any necessary absences, offering a suitable contribution to the cost of refreshments provided in somebody else's house and so on. I must add, too, that as our financial position is quite sound, the committee will be able to consider requests for the hire of a venue under certain circumstances, but I shall review all these topics more fully in the next newsletter.

As the new Groups Coordinator, Lynda will work closely with Sue Deeks in the handling of Initial Enquiries from potential new members. I have been the beneficiary of Sue's counsel and sensible advice on many occasions during the year; and I know that members will all join me in thanking Sue in her absence with her family. You will notice that the only committee member whom I have not mentioned is our Treasurer, Jean Bennett. After 6 years in post, Jean decided to retire at this AGM. It is a matter of deep regret that we are not able to thank her for her work in person today. As many members will know, Jean sustained a nasty fall on the way to our last meeting. After treatment in A&E, she returned home and is recovering as well as can be expected. I shall be speaking about Jean's contribution in more detail later today.

We welcome a number of new members to the committee today: George Webster will be our new Vice Chair, Gail Oswald will take on the role of Treasurer, with Josephine Noyce as Assistant Treasurer, and Lesley Almond will join as another committee member.

In addition to the committee, there are many tasks carried out by Volunteer Members. Chief among these must be Richard Collisson: he guards our passwords, updates our computer equipment and has wrestled manfully with the various audio systems at Speaker meetings. His work is conscientious, his frequent gusts of laughter infectious and his contribution invaluable. Gill Maden attracts a regular quorum at the Bexhill coffee mornings, Sylvia Butler offers free hearing-aid maintenance, Sue Dyke is a regular Cinderella in St Peter's kitchen, whilst Shirley McDonald and Anne Nevrides decorate the Hall. Barbara Christmas provides real photographs (not snapshots), Steve Hall comes up with an original and topical Newsletter cartoon every time, Marilyn Wright runs the bookstall and Tony Hardiment welcomes new members to meetings. Ernie Grice tends to our equipment, Deborah and David Slim organise interesting trips and Days-Out, and Carole Storey-

Tennant provides new worlds for the Strollers to conquer on a weekly basis. If you are a volunteer who has not been mentioned this time, I still offer you the thanks of all concerned.

As you have heard from me on numerous occasions, it is only through the work of volunteers that a U3A exists. During this year it has been a struggle to maintain a core committee to do what needs to be done. As I start my final year of office, I urge you to think about that and to make sure that Hastings & Rother U3A continues to prosper.

There were no questions or comments.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

This was presented by the Chair, in the absence of the Treasurer Jean Bennett, as follows:

In Jean Bennett's absence I have prepared some information for the meeting.

As a result of ill-health, followed by a heavy fall, Jean has been unable to finalise the year-end accounts for 2018-19. The new Treasurer Elect, Gail Oswald, is currently working to prepare these. Once completed and examined, the committee intends to call a Special General Meeting at which they will be presented to members. This meeting will likely be scheduled for the day of a regular Speaker meeting.

In the course of the year the committee debated the case for a reduction in members' annual subscriptions. This was based on the fact that Hastings & Rother U3A had excessive funds at bank with little or no need for such an amount and very restricted legitimate ways to spend it.

Members will wish to know how such large reserves were accrued.

- It was the result of a large increase in member numbers (from 300 to 683 in 4 years), and of a small, but regular increase in subscriptions, deemed to be a matter of prudence at the time - when Jean took over as Treasurer 6 years ago there had been a small loss in the previous year.
- The increase in expenditure has been relatively small.
- The net result was a substantial increase in a surplus which was accrued to reserves
- These reserves far exceeded the amount recommended by the Third Age Trust (4 to 6 months reserves to meet current expenditure)

Because of its charitable status, the ways in which U3A money can be spent are very tightly regulated by HMRC and the Charity Commissioner. For example: money may not be given to another charity. When I attended the U3A National conference in August 2018, I joined two workshop presentations: one by the Third Age Trust Finance Director, the other by the U3A National Treasurer (a member elected to the post). Both individuals stated that the major way in which U3A branches could reduce excessive reserves was by a reduction in member subscriptions. During both presentations, I quizzed the individuals to confirm that this was so and obtained copies of the presentations. Another way was to increase expenditure on speakers, and to hire a more expensive speaker to mark our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In April 2019, your committee debated the matter with copies of the projection below. This table shows patterns of expenditure and income and shows the effects of different levels of membership subscriptions. The projections were conservative when assessing predicted income, but tended to exaggerate increases in predicted expenditure. It should be noted that the expenditure of £6,000 (which includes VAT) on Dame Stella Rimington as speaker is a one-off for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. After full discussions over two committee meetings it was agreed that for this year, member subscriptions should be reduced to £12 annually per person. The situation will be monitored in the months ahead and a full review will take place in 12 months' time.

## Hastings & Rother U3A Patterns of expenditure and income

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19		2019-20	2019-20	2019-20	2019-20
Subscription	£18.50	£18.50	£18.50	<b>Subscription</b>	<b>£18</b>	<b>£15</b>	<b>£12</b>	<b>£10</b>
<b>Income</b>								
Subscriptions	9713	12740	12302		12150	10125	8100	6750
Fund-raising	1103	1144	-		-	-	-	-
Books/jigsaws etc	347	141	141		150	150	150	150
Gift Aid	-	2504	2000		2000	1666	1333	1000
<b>Total</b>	<b>11163</b>	<b>16259</b>	<b>14443</b>		<b>14300</b>	<b>11941</b>	<b>9583</b>	<b>7900</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>								
Venues	881	1766	1900		2100	2100	2100	2100
Speakers	655	962	1000		1500	1500	1500	1500
Dame Stella			6000					
Printing/stationery	562	148	150		200	200	200	200
Newsletter	1820	1600	2000		2200	2200	2200	2200
Direct mail	1002	840	1000		1000	1000	1000	1000
Beacon	-	283	650		900	900	900	900
Capitation	1845	2037	2300		2500	2500	2500	2500
Capital expenditure	-	515	500		1000	1000	1000	1000
AGM	95	106	120		140	140	140	140
Xmas/convenors' tea	208	401	580		620	620	620	620
<b>Total</b>	<b>7068</b>	<b>8658</b>	<b>16200</b>		<b>12160</b>	<b>12160</b>	<b>12160</b>	<b>12160</b>
<b>Surplus/deficit</b>	<b>4095</b>	<b>7601</b>	<b>1757</b>		<b>2140</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>2577</b>	<b>4260</b>

NB. Figures in the red columns are estimated and are based on a membership of 675

### Questions

1. There was a query regarding the large expenditure of £6000 on Dame Stella Rimington as speaker: given that there was a limit of 200 places available, it does not benefit the whole membership.

Robert commented that the same applied to any of the speaker meetings, but that for this meeting the committee had made every attempt to give members an equal opportunity to attend, with information being sent by post so as not to disadvantage those who are not on email. In fact the event has not completely sold out – a few tickets are still available (from the Chair). Robert also commented that Dame Stella is a speaker of international repute and the Speakers Secretary Barbara Spackman had not only made quite a coup in securing her for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary event, but had also negotiated a very favourable rate (the usual rate being £12,000)!

2. There was a query regarding when members would know if they had been successful in applying for tickets.

Robert clarified that all those who had applied had been told that they were successful and had been asked to send the £10 fee (to cover the cost of the tea to follow the speaker). Tickets will be sent out in the first week of September (the event is on 29<sup>th</sup> September).

3. There was a suggestion that the event could be recorded for the benefit of members unable to attend.

Robert explained that this is not allowed.

Robert also reminded members that there will be a Special General Meeting in the autumn to present the accounts, when further questions can be asked.

### **7. Appointment of Examiner of Accounts for the next financial year:**

The U3A's level of income means that the accounts are independently examined, rather than audited. This will be done when the accounts are completed (see above). The accounts will then be presented to members at a Special General Meeting, at which time the examiner for the next financial year will be appointed.

### **8. Election of officers and committee members:**

Ken Saunders (Business Secretary) explained that there can be up to 12 committee members. Four of these are Officers, who are elected to specific roles: Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, and (Business) Secretary. The other committee members may swap roles or take on additional roles, and some of the work involved in running the U3A is taken on by non-committee members. Two additional members may be co-opted during the year, who must then be elected at the next AGM if they are continuing. All committee members are usually elected for 3 years.

#### **Existing Committee Members continuing – no election**

Robert Hadland	Chair (Officer)
Ken Saunders	Business Secretary (Officer)
Jenny Meteyard	Minutes Secretary
Chris Legg	Membership
Sue Deeks	Initial Enquiries

#### **Non-Committee Roles (no election needed)**

Patricia Jobling	Database (resigned from committee)
Valerie Greenwood	SUN Representative (resigned from committee; changed from Groups Coordinator to SUN Representative).
Brian Gould	Website (continuing)
Rosemary Bartholomew	Newsletter Team (continuing)

#### **New & renewing nominations – to be elected**

Carol Crossley	Venues - re-election after 3 years
Barbara Spackman	Speakers Secretary - previously co-opted
George Webster	Vice Chair (Officer) - new
Gail Oswald	Treasurer (Officer) - new`
Lynda Wood	Committee member (Groups Coordinator) - new
Josephine Noyce	Committee member (Assistant Treasurer) - new
Lesley Almond	Committee member (general) - new

All those nominated were elected unanimously by a show of hands.

Presentations were made to two long-standing committee members who have resigned from the committee, Shirley Carey and Tricia Jobling, with the following remarks made by the Chair:

“Two committee members are retiring after many years of service to Hastings & Rother U3A. For the last 8 years Shirley Carey has been our SUN representative – that’s the Sussex U3A Network, which extends across East & West Sussex, supporting educational programmes and the Summer School. Shirley has been successful in moving the axis of the group eastwards and in setting up study groups in Battle and Sedlescombe. In her quiet way she has done a wonderful job. Although no longer a committee member, Shirley will continue as a very active U3A member – especially as coordinator of the ever-popular Music Appreciation Group. Shirley: with our sincere thanks please accept this token of appreciation and regard from all our members.

“There are some jobs which take place largely behind the scenes: essential tasks which ensure that the whole operation runs smoothly and legally. For longer than the 7 years which I have been a member, Tricia has been carrying out that sort of task: as Groups Coordinator, but also as the person who has installed our Database Beacon system. You have installed it, updated it and run it with efficiency and good humour. You will be missed from our committee meetings, but we are all thankful that you will continue to work on Beacon behind the scenes. I know that your husband Jim will be glad to have your continued support in running the Bird-watching group. With best wishes from us all, please accept this token of thanks for all that you have done”.

## **9. Any Other Business**

The tombola prize which was won at the Christmas social – dinner for two at Sussex College Hastings - has been returned, as the winner was unable to use it. Each member attending the AGM was given a free ticket on entry, and the new winner will be drawn after the close of the AGM. The ticket must be used by October.

No other matters were raised.

## **11. Date of the next Annual General Meeting**

The next AGM will take place in St Peter’s Community Centre, Bexhill-on-Sea at 2pm on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

The meeting closed at 2.46 p.m.

*Signed*

*Date*

*Minutes were taken by Jenny Meteyard.*