

Hastings & Rother U3A

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held at 10.30 on Thursday 8th August 2019 at St Peter's Community Centre, Bexhill

Present

Robert Hadland (Chair)	George Webster (Vice Chair)	Gail Oswald (Treasurer)
Jenny Meteyard (Minutes)	Sue Deeks (Initial Enquiries)	Lynda Wood (Groups)
Chris Legg (Membership)	Carol Crossley (Venues)	Josephine Noyce (Assistant Treasurer)

Lesley Almond

NB Database Administrator, Website Administrator and SUN Representative are not committee members but may send reports and/or attend meetings at times if appropriate.

1. Welcome to new Committee

Robert welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the structure and conduct of committee meetings. This includes a preference for short written reports to be circulated if possible before the meeting, in electronic form, so that committee members can read and consider beforehand. This also makes the work of the Minutes Secretary easier! If committee members need documents printed they should advise the Minutes Secretary so that extra copies can be brought to the meeting. The upper limit for length of meetings is 2 hours – but a shorter meeting is more than welcome!

2. Apologies for absence

Kenneth Saunders, Barbara Spackman.

Robert also read out an email from Jean Bennett, who has retired as Treasurer. For health reasons Jean had not been able to attend the last committee meeting or AGM.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 4th July 2019 were agreed to be an accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising (not covered in the agenda)

- **AOB** Sue commented that she is no longer going to the National Conference in Nottingham.
- The **Azur contract** for Speaker Meetings was initially finishing after the September meeting, but the White Rock discovered they had made a double booking, so the November meeting will now be at the Azur.
- The **draft minutes from the AGM** held on 22nd July 2019 had been circulated before the meeting so that committee members could check for accuracy. Carol had pointed out that the name of the venue is St Peter's Community Centre, not St Peter's Church Hall, and this has been corrected. Otherwise it was agreed that the minutes were an accurate record of the AGM. A copy will be sent to Brian to be placed on the website for members to read, and will be ratified at the next AGM. It was agreed that the names of those who had sent apologies would not be included on the website, for privacy reasons.

JM BG

5. Membership Secretary's Report

Chris reported that there are currently 716 members. 375 have already enrolled for 2019-2020, with 341 outstanding. A first reminder will be sent in a week's time. At Robert's request Chris also clarified the number of members not on email:

Membership numbers 1-1,200 (i.e. those of longest standing): 19 out of 145

Membership numbers 1,201-1,500: 5 out of 114

Membership numbers 1,501 onward: 37 out of 456

There was some surprise at the number of more recent members who are not on email. Chris pointed out that a few of these may have email but choose not to give their address because of concerns about privacy. It was agreed that members who are not contactable on email are at a significant disadvantage, and it is difficult to see how the U3A can overcome this. For the 30th Anniversary event every member was contacted by post, to ensure that everyone had an equal opportunity to attend, but this is not practical on a regular basis for other events and items that are generally communicated by email. It was agreed that Robert will write something to this effect in the next newsletter. It was suggested that those not on email could be encouraged to find a 'buddy' who can update them on items they would not otherwise receive – this has been suggested before.

RH

6. Treasurer's Report

Gail has taken over from Jean as Treasurer and reported that she has been working hard to complete the annual accounts for the year ending 30th April 2019; Jean had not been able to do so for health reasons. These are now ready to be examined, and can then be presented at a Special General Meeting. It was agreed at the AGM that this would be held at the start/before one of the monthly Speaker Meetings. Gail suggested September would be possible but this would depend on there being enough notice given to members (it is necessary to give 21 days' notice, and at the last meeting it was proposed that this notice would be in the autumn newsletter). If September is not practicable then the next possible date would be November, as the Dr Mucci meeting in October is not appropriate. Gail will liaise with Ken over this.

GO

GO, KS

Gail is now working on getting this year's accounts up to date. She has gained access to online banking and she reported on the amounts in the various bank accounts. She has altered the titles of the different categories of income and expenditure to make things more streamlined and to keep Business transactions clearly separated from non-profit making Social events. She is also trying to set up the accounts so that there is a rolling balance with a draft 'balance' sheet at all times. The format of end of year accounts presented to members may change in the future to more clearly show Income vs Expenditure.

Gail commented that she has a supply of books of stamps; committee members should contact her if they need any. She also mentioned expenses: allowable mileage (i.e. outside the Hastings and Rother area) is claimable at the rate of 40p per mile. Other expenses may also be claimable e.g. paper and printing. It is preferable if bank signatories do not sign cheques payable to themselves for expenses. The bank signatories have been updated. Gail will bring the cheque book to committee meetings and to other events whenever possible, so it will be helpful for invoices and expenses to be brought along to these meetings. If she is away then she will pass the cheque book to Josephine (assistant treasurer) or Robert. It was suggested that Gail might produce a standardised form for expenses claims.

GO?

Robert thanked Gail and Josephine, who because of Jean's illness were plunged into a mass of work. It is reassuring to know that everything is being sorted out.

CC

7. Venues Co-ordinator

Carol reported that she has booked the Azur for the November meeting as previously stated; she will check availability of St Peter's Community Centre for the committee meeting dates suggested by Robert.

8. Chair's Report:

Robert reported as follows:

- **AGM** 126 members attended the AGM. Many thanks to the Minutes Secretary who recorded a long and detailed account accurately and extremely quickly – not to be taken for granted.

The obvious (and understandable) omission was a set of accounts which would normally be the centre piece of the Treasurer's report. Members were obviously sympathetic to Jean Bennett and wished her well.

There was some discussion around the size of the fee paid to Dame Stella Rimington, but that and the new (reduced) member subscription were accepted. There will still be a large reserve but Robert felt this issue should be left for a year and then reviewed. It was agreed at the AGM that the completed accounts for 2018-19 would be presented at a Special General meeting, probably at the start of a future Speaker meeting.

The bakery who produced the 30th Anniversary cake had misunderstood the instructions, so that instead of 3 large square cakes with U, 3, and A as decoration, they produced 3 much smaller cakes shaped U, 3 and A. Carol was congratulated for her skill in nevertheless managing to cut these into 126 reasonably sized pieces!

- **Dame Stella Rimington event update.**

Robert has tried to identify particular tasks, and people to carry them out:

- Barbara Spackman/Robert Hadland to escort Dame Stella and her agent on the day
- Ken Saunders, plus helpers, to deal with car parking.
- Sue Deeks/Robert to liaise with Bexhill College on catering and food service
- Chris Legg and Robert to organise ticketing and seating plans. Numbered tickets will be printed and sent out in the mail, probably within the first 10 days of September.
- A variety of volunteers to check tickets and arrange for stewarding to and from the Izzard Theatre and the Refectory
- First Aid provision (St John Ambulance)? Robert suggested that Lynda might research this, which was agreed.

BS/RH

KS+

CL/RH

Various

LW

The original letter for the event asked for volunteers to help on the day; a number of people responded and Robert and Ken will contact these people.

RH/KS

There are still a few tickets available for the event, which Chris can provide. Some people still need to pay, and Chris will chase this up.

CL

- During the last week, Robert has held a number of **smaller meetings** with committee members on specific topics, e.g. Gail and Chris on membership and finance, with Ken on administration and documentation, and with Carol & Sue on the Dame Stella Rimington meeting. The intention is that some specific detail can be discussed which can then be presented to the full committee, but in a way that reduces the time taken to do so.
- **Groups.** For the year ahead Robert would like the committee to spend some time looking at aspects of Group activities and he plans to work with Lynda and Sue Deeks on this. Robert thanked Lynda for taking over as Groups Coordinator.

There was some discussion around the topic of groups, for instance the question of whether all people coming to groups are actually members. It was agreed that it is completely unacceptable for non-members (including lapsed members) to attend any group: they are basically freeloading by joining an organisation without paying the (small) membership fee, they may block genuine members from joining groups, and they are not covered by the U3A's insurance. Group members should not invite someone to attend a group who is not a U3A member. This issue will be broached in the next newsletter and convenors will be reminded that they must check that all their group members continue to be paid-up members of U3A. This can be done through Beacon. (Convenors should contact Tricia Jobling, who manages Beacon, if unsure how to do this). Members will also be reminded that if the group host/hostess provides refreshments a financial contribution should be made. Another issue raised was people who do not attend a group for months: this was agreed to be unfair if there is a limited group number and there may be people wanting to join the group.

RH

George asked if there is a Group Convenors' handbook or similar which could include all these points and also advice for those thinking of setting up new groups. If not, it would be useful to have one, perhaps obtainable via the website.

GW/LW?

- **Speaker meeting on Wednesday 23rd October** at 6pm in the Sussex Hall of the White Rock Theatre (Dr Elena Mucci). This replaces the usual Monday morning meeting. Parking may be an issue. Sue suggested that tea and coffee should be provided.

SD

9. Initial Enquiries and Groups Coordinator

Sue reported that there had been a number of **initial enquiries** (about 10-12) by phone. None of these had followed up by email; this seems surprising and she wondered if in fact there was a problem with emails getting through. She had also had an enquiry from someone interested in running a 6-week course as part of the groups programme; she has explained to this person that she would need to join U3A, would need to consider what would happen if the group wished to continue as a U3A group, and that a suitable hall would need to be hired.

The issue of **hiring halls** for groups was briefly discussed: at present it appears that for at least some groups the convenor hires the hall, and each member is charged when they attend, in order to cover the costs. This can present problems if varying numbers turn up each week, particularly if there are not enough to cover the hire, and can add complications for convenors. This might discourage some potential convenors. It was suggested that the U3A should take over the hire of a hall or meeting room where this is required. This needs further discussion.

10. Speakers Secretary

Barbara has reported that speakers are now booked through 2020. Carol commented that it has been brought to her attention that the great majority of speakers are men, and this imbalance should be corrected. Sue commented that at present there is no speaker meeting in August, but in fact a number of members have said they would like this. She has also had a request from someone running a local cat sanctuary to speak at a meeting; it was agreed that a brief 10-15 minute talk could be given before the main speaker, which has been done in the past.

SD/BS

11. Website Administrator

Robert explained to new members that Brian does not in general attend meetings but can do so if necessary. Brian had sent the website page visit numbers as usual.

12. SUN Representative

The SUN (Sussex U3A Network) representative was previously a committee member. This role

has been taken over from Shirley Carey by Valerie Greenwood, who is no longer a committee member but again can attend if required. Valerie has sent members a list of the SUN study days.

13. Dates/venues of future meetings

Robert suggested the following dates for future committee meetings:

Thursday 5th September 2019 10.00 a.m.

Thursday 17th October 2019 10.00 a.m.

Thursday 28th November 2019 10.00 a.m.

Thursday 9th January 2020 10.00 a.m.

Meetings will be held in the **Bell Room of St Peter's Community Centre**, subject to availability. If the Bell Room is not available there is usually another room. Carol will check and confirm this.

14. Any Other Business

- Apparently there is a rumour that Hastings and Rother U3A will be splitting, and other members have suggested this should happen because of its size. Robert reminded us that at national meetings he had been strenuously advised not even to consider it, as some U3As have done so (or tried) and deeply regretted it! Apart from issues such as how it would split geographically, how groups could be organised/changed and how finances and assets would be divided etc, there is the major point that each new U3A would need a committee, and it is already difficult enough to recruit enough people for one. It was agreed that it would be helpful to make these points in the newsletter.
- New members in particular raise the issue that many **groups are full**. It was noted that in some groups people have been members for a long time and people rarely leave, and these groups remain unavailable. Unless the time people can attend for is limited, the only solution is for people to start new groups or off-shoots of existing groups. (This relates back to earlier discussions).
- **IT administrator** Richard Collisson (non-committee member) reported:
 - Rosemary is about to proofread the bookmark for 2019-20
 - For the Dr Mucci event at the White Rock we will be using our own wireless mikes which have been tested there, and their in-house projector and wired hand held mike (3 mikes needed). For other events we will use our own mikes, which Brian will bring if Richard is unable to attend, and we will continue to use the in-house projector (additional cost of £25 per meeting).
 - Richard is trying to contact Terry the sound engineer to provide support for the two final events at the Azur 23rd Sept and 25th Nov. The White Rock provides in-house technical support as part of the hire price.
 - There are still some problems with the generic hru3a email, which need to be sorted out.

RH

RC

Signed

Date

Minutes were taken by Jenny Meteyard. The meeting closed at 11.30.