

Hastings & Rother U3A

Minutes of Committee Meeting

held at 10.30 on Thursday 17th October 2019 at St Peter's Community Centre, Bexhill

Present

Robert Hadland (Chair)	George Webster (Vice Chair)
Ken Saunders (Business Secretary)	Jenny Meteyard (Minutes)
Josephine Noyce (Assistant Treasurer)	Lynda Wood (Groups)
Lesley Almond (general)	

Bruce Henderson (visitor – first part only)

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. Apologies for absence

Gail Oswald (Treasurer), Chris Legg (Membership), Carol Crossley (Venues), Sue Deeks (Initial Enquiries).

2. Bruce Henderson – proposal for support group for U3A members with no internet access

Bruce was invited to the meeting to speak about his proposals regarding the issue of U3A members who do not have internet/email. He circulated a document in which he commented that U3A, like most organisations, relies heavily on email and the internet for communications and information. A recent survey however showed that 20% of the UK population do not have access to the internet. Those who do not have/use email or the internet may miss out on social connections.

Bruce commented that it had been assumed that older people did not have internet or email because it was a new technology, and that the numbers would decline as later generations who were more familiar with it, perhaps from a work setting, retired. This appears not to be the case. It was suggested that there may be a 'fear factor' for some people, who might feel confident using it at work within a network and with the support of IT technicians, but lacked confidence once on their own, particularly with media coverage of scams, frauds and data leaks. Some people may use it in some situations but feel wary of handing their email address to an organisation such as U3A, possibly not trusting the organisation to keep their data safe.

It was agreed that this is a concern, because those not using email may miss out on opportunities to join new groups or fill vacancies in existing ones, take up places on trips, and connect socially with other members.

It appears that about 60 people have not given the U3A an email address, but there may be others who give an address and say they use email but may not check frequently or regularly, or may not actually read and/or respond to messages. Some members say they use texting rather than emails, which is not secure or practical for an organisation to use to communicate with members. Social media alternatives such as WhatsApp or Facebook were suggested but it was felt that these would have equal or greater problems with take-up. Phone calls may also be unwelcome to some. In the past it has been suggested that members not on email could have a 'buddy' who perhaps lives very close by and is able promptly to pass on any information that comes via email, but this has never taken off.

Bruce suggested in his initial document that a small group of volunteers could form a support group and set about fixing the issue. He suggested that one of the group's initial objectives would be to identify the 'unwired' and try to find out how they currently use U3A, what they are looking for from the organisation, and how they could be helped to find it. Possibly a limited number could be contacted by post to start with. Another suggestion was that for all new groups formed, one place could be reserved for those not on email.

The suggestion of a small support group was agreed. It was felt that the Membership Secretary Chris Legg, IT administrator Richard Collisson and Beacon/Database administrator Tricia Jobling might be particularly appropriate, and these 3 will be contacted with the proposal to meet as a group to discuss setting up a pilot scheme, and to report back at a future meeting.

BH, CL,
RC, PJ

Bruce then left the meeting.

3. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 5th September 2019 were agreed to be an accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising (not covered in the agenda)

A Special General Meeting had been held on 23rd September 2019 to approve the annual accounts. The draft minutes from this meeting were finalised and approved by the committee.

5. General Reports

Report from the Chair

This had been circulated before the meeting.

- The long-awaited celebration of our 30th anniversary took place on 29th September. Dame Stella Rimington proved to be an interesting speaker and the catering at the subsequent tea seemed to be appreciated by those present.
- Robert has read the reports of the National Conference and AGM held in Nottingham in August 2019. The Chair emphasised the need to grow membership numbers and increase diversity of membership. He mentioned that between 20% and 40% of U3As appeared to be struggling. He did not have any specific suggestions on how to deal with the management of increasing member numbers.
- Dr Elena Mucci. The plans for the meeting at the White Rock Theatre on 23rd October appear to be well-advanced. Members from Battle and Rye U3A have been offered an opportunity to attend.
- A number of members have mentioned the rapid sale of tickets for the Christmas party on December 9th, and the fact that this left them without a ticket.

Christmas Party December 9th – Vice Chair

The arrangements for this were discussed. Tricia has a large amount of supplies. Arrangements for supplying mulled wine are needed; Robert will ascertain what is required. Sue Dyke will help in the kitchen and there will be a crew of helpers organised by Robert as before. There will be a tombola. A few tickets remained which were set aside for helpers, who should arrive at 12.45. Names were not taken for all those buying tickets, so there will not be a list on the door.

RH

Treasurer's Report

Gail was not able to attend the meeting but had sent a report as follows, which was circulated prior to the meeting:

She has checked with NatWest bank about operating an online payment system, but it appears that NatWest do not have a free account which allows dual authorisation. It is not advisable to have only one person operating online payments, so it will be necessary to continue to use cheques for payments.

In her role as Assistant Treasurer, Josephine is handling the cash and payments for the Christmas Party and, at the time of writing, £321 had been paid into the bank for this. All costs have now been paid for the Stella Rimington event.

An up to date balance sheet was attached, from which it was apparent that we are running at a deficit for the year to date of approximately £5,000. The bulk of our income (apart from Gift Aid) for 2019-20 has now been received and, as far as she is aware, there are no other unusual costs to be paid out.

Gail is liaising with Richard Collisson re the Gift Aid Claim and will get this sorted upon her return from holiday.

Comments: Robert commented that the deficit had been planned, as the U3A has reserves that are considered to be too large. It was also suggested that an online account allowing dual authorisation could perhaps be set up, at least for day to day transactions, with another provider.

GO

Membership Secretary's report

Chris was not able to attend the meeting but had sent a report:

The renewal season is over with 55 members from last year yet to renew. I would expect that figure to fall slightly over the next few weeks to around 50. This is about the same level of non-renewals as 2018-19. I asked members to let me know if they were not going to renew. So far I have had 33 resignations. Overall, it looks as though we have lost around 80 members from the peak 2017-18 total of 714.

However, we continue to attract new members, 42 joining since 1 July this year with 28 since September 1. Current membership stands at 671. If new members join at the same rate as 2018-19, it seems likely that we will again exceed the 700 level during the course of the year.

Other headline figures:

- 30% of members hold Joint membership
- 93% of membership have an email address
- The number of Associate Members remains very low (13 individuals)
- Membership is three-quarters women to one quarter men (unchanged)
- Three quarters of non-renewals do not belong to any groups

KS

There are signs that the way members pay their subscriptions is changing, with 130 opting to pay by bank transfer so far this year.

Comments: It was agreed that it would be interesting to know the reasons people do not renew, apart from illness, moving etc., and important to know if any members are continuing to attend groups without renewing. Robert has reminded people in the newsletter that they must be members to attend, and Lynda has requested information from Group Convenors, which is probably all we can realistically do.

Website Co-ordinator's report

Brian had sent figures of page visits for the website.

Business Secretary's report

Newsletter. Whilst the content of the Quarterly Newsletter is of a consistently high standard, Rosemary Bartholomew has had to raise production quality issues with the printers. These include: lack of page numbers, poor colour reproduction in pictures, and use of inferior paper (which probably causes the issue with pictures). Rosemary is communicating with the printers and is currently reviewing samples of different paper stock. She and Ken will liaise over this.

RB, KS

National Newsletter Robert had asked Brian to provide this on the website but Ken pointed out that all members can log on to the national website and obtain it via the members' portal. Our website could perhaps provide a link, rather than reproducing the newsletter.

BG

HVA Community Space Ken had had an email stating that there are rooms available for meetings – they are creating a Community Hub with facilities (H & R U3A is a member). Ken will send Carol as Venues Co-ordinator a copy of the email so that she can explore this.

KS, CC

Trips Ken has had an email from a company who arrange trips; he will forward this to Tricia and to David Slim in case this is of any interest to them, although Robert felt from previous experience that this is not likely to be useful.

KS

Induction of new Trustees Ken distributed papers for new trustees (committee members) and explained that he has put together an Induction Pack for new trustees consisting of 3 main papers: 1) Principles of the U3A; 2) Summary of Trustee duties and responsibilities; 3) Trustee code of conduct. Ken asked all trustees to read (2) so they are aware of their duties and responsibilities – the paper is available on the main U3A website. Group leaders are given a separate induction pack, and Ken has also created one for the use of any future new Secretary.

All

Ken also asked if everyone had a copy of their job description. His own has changed, so he will re-write this, and others should also check theirs. These are available on our website.

All

Groups Co-ordinator's Report

There was nothing new to report. Lynda commented that she had asked all group convenors to let her know who is in their group and to check that all group members are also members of the U3A, but has not heard from everyone – Robert commented that this has always been the case, and suggested that perhaps Lynda can pick a handful of groups at random every now and then to check.

It was noted that 'Theatre Group' now appears on the groups list although it is not a group as such – it does not have a set membership – but this shows that theatre trips are an option.

Newsletter and Publicity

As reported above, Ken and Rosemary (editor) will liaise and if necessary meet with the printers to resolve the quality issues.

SUN/Regional information

There was no report.

6. Any Other Business

- **Potential new committee member** Robert spoke about Mike Wilson, who has indicated he would be interested in joining the committee. He apparently has relevant experience, and given the difficulty of recruitment, Robert felt that rather than wait until the next AGM he should be co-opted now and invited to the next meeting. This was agreed and Robert will

write to him.

RH

- **IT issues** Richard had phoned about an email that was sent regarding IT issues. A number of members had received emails purporting to come from U3A members, which in fact contained malware. Richard had therefore at the last speaker meeting given out some advice regarding email security. The writer of the email felt this should have been sent as a message from Beacon to all the membership, and worried that simply opening the emails (without clicking on any links) might have damaged his computer. He also expressed concern about the fact that despite advice, many convenors and members do not use the Bcc (blind copies) option when sending group emails. This means that all recipients receive everyone's email address, which is a data security concern.

It had already been agreed that the email security advice given at the meeting should appear in the next newsletter, but the committee agreed that it should also be sent out via Beacon before this. With regard to data security, convenors are already asked to use Beacon to communicate with group members or if not, to use the Bcc option. It was agreed however that not all members may be aware of what the Bcc option is, why it is important, or how to find it on different email – it is often not very obvious – and perhaps some kind of further advice or training should be made available.

RC PJ

13. Dates/venues of future meetings

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**

Signed

Date

Minutes were taken by Jenny Meteyard The meeting closed at 11.40.