

**Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on
Wednesday 5 February 2024 at 2.00pm
at the Methodist Church Hall**

Present: Peter Halse, Richard Spoerry, Peter Searl, Kay Edge, Stuart Jones, Martin Long, Val Frood, Val Crawshaw-Gander, Jackie Moran

Minutes: Kay Edge

24/016 Chairman's Introduction

Peter Halse welcomed everyone to the meeting.

24/017 Apologies for Absence

Peter Williams sent his apologies.

24/018 Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 3 January 2024

Approved.

24/019 Matters Arising

23/189 Interest Groups Survey: update

Richard Spoerry reported that the Survey was launched last week and there had been a fairly good immediate response, with some people making very helpful and positive suggestions which provided a lot of insight. Peter Halse will say how valuable members' responses are at the next Beehive meeting (and hopefully that will result in more feedback) and paper copies of the survey will be available that day (Peter Searl has printed 40 copies) and will be offered to members on arrival.

24/004 AGM Arrangements/Committee Roles

Kay Edge had circulated a document to go out to the membership about the need for new committee members, which she had drafted with Peter S. This will now need amending as Jackie Moran has indicated she is willing to take over as Groups Co-ordinator, and she and Val C-G will share the 'Events' role on the committee. Thus only a new 'Communications Secretary' is still being sought, as well as someone to take over responsibility for the loop display at our Beehive meetings. Peter H has spoken to Sean (the Beehive manager) about our requirements in that respect, and Stuart Jones pointed out how helpful Tom has been on the technical front, although obviously someone needs to co-ordinate and load the information being displayed. Peter S felt this could probably be sorted once the new committee was up and running after the AGM.

All paperwork relating to the AGM must go out by 28 February, with proposers and seconders sorted out by 21 February for those committee members who are standing for re-election (email Kay their names via the usual Honiton u3a email address).

Kay will ask the Beehive to provide tea and coffee for 70 at the AGM, as usual, and she will supply some

biscuits; the room will be set out 'café style' and we need 60 people for the meeting to be quorate. Richard apologised for not being able to attend the AGM due to family commitments.

24/014(2) Beacon Zoom meeting: update

Four committee members took part in a recent Zoom meeting about Beacon (Jackie, Peter S, Stuart and Val F), and Jackie explained that there are four 'strands' available, concerning membership, groups, communications and finance, with only the first three of these likely to be useful to us (any participating u3a can decide for themselves which strand(s) are appropriate for them). It is possible to use a Demo Practice site for as long as you need to, with no obligation to sign up, and you are assigned a trainer to assist you. (The cost if we do sign up is £1 per member.) Ultimately we would need our own administrator/trainer to run Beacon.

There was a long discussion on how useful and appropriate Beacon would be for our u3a. Jackie felt it could have real benefits in time and workload, especially as it would then be possible to email members directly from the system; Stuart expressed fears that we would quickly be in a mess if the system crashed (he has been in unsatisfactory communication with the Beacon team leader, and also cited recent problems with the website administration and the collapse of the TAM distribution system); Peter H felt we coped well on our own at the moment but some parts are hard work (e.g. the Membership Secretary's job, which he is willing to take over, at the start of our 'year' in April!), and we should keep up to date with technology. Peter S felt there could be benefits (though not, he felt, for the Treasurer's job) and suggested there would be no harm in having a *look* at the Demo Practice site, once the new committee is in operation, and then taking a view.

24/020 Treasurer's Report

Peter Searl circulated the following figures:

1. Reconciliation on 31 January 2024

| | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Bank | £2,665.36 |
| Books | |
| BF 01.01.24 | £2,332.18 |
| Receipts | 389.00 |
| <u>Payments</u> | <u>89.00</u> |
| <u>Balance</u> | <u>£2,632.18</u> |
| Unpresented cheque: 804 | £33.18 |
| Petty cash | £60 |

- 2. Receipts since last meeting:** Subs (£15); Bellringers (£14); Visitors (£12); History group (£325); Games afternoon (£23).
- 3. Payments since last meeting:** Speaker (£84); rejected cheque (£5) (a member had died and the a/c lapsed).
4. Alison Tucker, as Independent Examiner, has examined (*not* audited) the accounts for 2023. PS circulated these at the meeting, along with her report, and asked if Peter H would write and thank her. She had, as ever, done a meticulous job and we are grateful for her help.
5. The committee approved these accounts, which will be circulated to the membership before the AGM and displayed onscreen on the day.
6. Peter had also included a copy of his draft budget, this information to help the committee recommend membership fees for 2024/25, which must be approved at the AGM.

A long discussion followed about membership fees, which will have to increase considerably, given all our own increases in expenses for the Beehive hire, cost of speakers and their travelling expenses, fees to the Third Age to cover TAM (including increased postal charges) and public liability insurance, etc. Our reserves are therefore well down and we can no longer afford to subsidise membership fees, which we had begun doing during the pandemic. We would hope to achieve a number of 250 plus members for 2024/25.

Kay had received reassurance that the Beehive had no plans to increase their fees again this year. Ways of raising money, such as increasing the charge to visitors to the Beehive were rejected (visitors often become members).

Figures of £19 for a single member, £35 for two people at the same address, £15 for associate members and £15 for renewals after 31 October were agreed, based on Peter's draft budget projections. Peter H will write a letter of explanation to the members, and the issue of fees will, of course, be on the AGM agenda.

24/021 Secretary's Report

Caroline Retter at the Beehive had messaged Kay this morning that they are planning another Open Day, on Saturday 6 April, 10am-2pm, and asked if we were willing to take part. We had found the previous Open Day to be useful as both members and interested parties had stopped by to chat to us about u3a, and it was a chance to 'display our wares'. Kay will reply that we are happy to take part, and will be responsible for the coordination of our participation. |

The Beehive had also asked if we were interested in a pre-ordered fixed-price lunch for members on our 'Beehive day' – the Arts Society apparently has a similar arrangement. Substantial main courses would be £6.50, hearty soup and crusty bread and butter £4.50, but meals would need to be ordered by the Friday before our Wednesday meetings. Val C-G offered to co-ordinate numbers, if there is member interest. We will put something in the next Bulletin, and Peter H will mention the scheme at the February meeting.

24/022 Membership Secretary's Report

Stuart reported that we now have 297 members (with some others waiting for the new year before joining but doing a taster session). There were 71 at the last Beehive meeting (64 members and 7 visitors).

24/023 Group Coordinator's Report

Peter Williams was unavoidably absent but had messaged that he was really pleased with how much group information had appeared in the recent Newsletter. Thanks go to Howard Lyne for all his efforts in producing a wonderful edition.

24/024 Webmaster's Report

Val F had nothing to report.

24/025 Programme Secretary's Report

Val C-G said everything was on track.

24/026 Publicity Report

Martin Long also commended Howard's work on the Newsletter. The next Bulletin will go out early in March and he asked for any submissions to be sent to him so he can start mapping it out. We were particularly heartened by the news that Jenny Roberts (of the Nature group) has a photo appearing in the Third Age Trust's national showcase, 'u3a Eye', for January with the theme of 'Space', and by a letter from new member Johnny Jonas praising all that our u3a does. There was talk of having positive 'tag lines' with every message we send out to members.

24/027 Events Group Report

Val C-G reported that 24 people had attended the last Games Afternoon, and £1 per head had been charged to cover the cost of the Mountbatten Hall hire (£20). Two more sessions have been booked. Peter S queried whether this was likely to mutate into an actual group and it appears not, though some players, e.g. Scrabble and Crib aficionados, might be keen to form their own groups, perhaps meeting in the Beehive cafe. Peter made the point that if the Mountbatten Hall is to be hired regularly it should be a more formal arrangement (as with the History group) and he would need the details of the chap in charge there and the cost for his records; he was only interested in premises, not refreshments or equipment. Jackie and Val agreed to talk this over after this meeting, as Jackie said they were keen to do things 'properly'.

24/028 Network Coordinator's Report

Richard Spoerry had just attended a south-west regional Zoom meeting, of about 40 people, about the Third Age Trust being 'Fit for the Future'. A 'consultation process' will take place between now and April, and it is concerned with restructuring the council to make its activities more understandable and accessible, with a 75% positive vote needed to change anything. Some participants were keen on the process, others less so. Richard will circulate fuller details to the committee after the meeting.

24/029 Any Other Notified Business

None.

24/030 Date of Next Meeting

Monday 4 March 2024 at 2.00 pm, in the Methodist Hall.

Peter Halse thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 3.50 pm.
