

All articles are colour-coded as follows:

For Committee/Specific Roles

For Members

Diary Dates

Special Events/Features

## THIS IS IMPORTANT AND NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT & ACTION

To many of us in individual u3as around the UK, it has been clear for some time that the current way that the u3a is run at national, regional and, to a lesser extent, at local levels needs to change to meet the changed requirements of today and tomorrow. This was highlighted at the 2022 Third Age Trust AGM when several proposals were heavily defeated, with the claim that the board was out-of-touch with what the membership wanted.

Fortunately, this acted as a wake-up-call for those "in charge", and change has already started to be formulated. But this is in the early stages and needs both the input and support of all u3as throughout the UK. **And that means YOU AND YOUR u3a MEMBERS, not just your committee and group leaders, but any members who may be interested.**

This is a topic that could be discussed at committee and member meetings and ideas and suggestions put forward to help make u3a an organisation fit-for-purpose for today and tomorrow.

We are all aware that our world has changed considerably in the last few years, and that the rate of change is only likely to accelerate. u3a has largely not kept up with this pace of change but must now do so in order to thrive and attract new members.

A provisional u3a Council has been formed consisting of Regional Trustees and a few other key individuals to consider what changes are needed and to make recommendations to the Third Age Trust board. Here's a brief note of what's happened so far and what's planned:

- \* The main board should be considerably smaller and consist of members with the appropriate skills and experience to effectively manage an organisation of the size of u3a.
- \* Regional Trustees should be members of the Council and not automatically the main board as at present.
- \* The Council would be the voice for how the members want their u3a nationally and regionally to meet their requirements for today and tomorrow.

- \* The Council has already met twice and recognised that change is needed in many areas and has already started to make recommendations to the main board. It has, however, recognised that whilst some changes can be made quite quickly, other more fundamental changes may take some time to implement because of the legal, structural and operational changes that maybe put forward. Making changes when organisations like HMRC and the Charities Commission are involved take time.
- \* The current pressure on Regional Trustees is unrealistic and structural and operational changes are urgently needed. This has been highlighted by the difficulty in appointing new Regional Trustees in some areas.

A copy of the notes from the recent meeting of the provisional Council are attached, together with a copy of the presentation at the start of the meeting.

**Please share these widely either in written or verbal form.**

Your responses should be sent by email to: [council@u3a.org.uk](mailto:council@u3a.org.uk)

The Third Age Trust has developed workshops in partnership with u3a members to provide support, information and advice for all u3a members. The workshops are delivered online using Zoom, by Trust volunteers who bring their experience as Trustees, u3a Chairs and Committee members. The workshops are informal and informative and provide a great opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with u3a members, share best practice and experiences and learn with others from across the UK.

**RUNNING YOUR u3a – INFORMATION FOR TRUSTEES**

Friday 27th October 10:00–12:15

Thursday 9th November 10:00–12:15

**KEEPING IT LEGAL**

Monday 30th October 10:00–12:30

Tuesday 28th November 10:00–12:30

Friday 15th December 10:00–12:30

**GROWTH MATTERS**

Tuesday 14th November 10:00–12:15

**RECRUITING AND VALUING VOLUNTEERS**

Tuesday 31st October 10:00–12:15

Monday 4th December 10:00–12:15

**CONTINGENCY PLANNING**

Tuesday 7th November 10:00–11:30

**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

Wednesday 8th November 10:00–12:30

**RECRUITING COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Friday 10th November 10:00–11:30

**INTEREST GROUPS MATTER**

Wednesday 22nd November 10:00–12:15

Thursday 7th December 10:00–12:15

**RUNNING DISCUSSION GROUPS AND GETTING FEEDBACK**

Tuesday 5th December 10:00–11:00

For more information about each workshop and how to book [CLICK HERE](#)

The next *Network News* will (hopefully) be in late November  
Any items for inclusion should be submitted by 24th November please

Document attached to this *Network News* is:

Pilot Council Meeting 20th September 2023

Pilot Council Presentation 20th September 2023

## **NOTES OF THE PILOT COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 20 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 11:00 A.M.**

### **Welcome and Introduction**

Susie Berry welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised to those attendees who have not attended before, that as it is a Pilot Council, meeting notes will be available. Any proposals agreed, will be taken forward to the Trust Board.

### **Agenda Item One: Update on Pilot Council Progress**

John Bent provided a power point presentation on the following:

- a) Why Change is Needed
  - ☐ Complex legislation, (HMRC requirements)
  - ☐ More tasks for the staff/trustees
  - ☐ Board appointments do not serve the skills required for trustees.
  - ☐ Regional Trustees have onerous tasks, particularly financial wellbeing for their regions.
- b) Proposed Key Changes
  - ☐ Pilot Council, conduit between members to the Trust Board
  - ☐ Listen to members
  - ☐ Appoint board members re skills required
  - ☐ Working arrangements between Council and Board. A Steering Group has been established to take this forward.
- c) Summary of the Aims
  - ☐ Creation of the Council
  - ☐ Creation of a smaller Board
  - ☐ Representative Council – hear from u3as (i.e. proposals)
- d) Progress
  - ☐ Steering Group set up
  - ☐ Pilot Council – 2 meetings taken place
  - ☐ Communication – improved. (A summary of the content of the Pilot Council meetings provided.)
  - ☐ Mailings to u3as.
  - ☐ Evaluation sent to attendees.

Susie Berry also provided an update on other progress:

- a) Communication: Trustees will be undertaking social media training soon and communications from regional trustee, will have their name and their picture.
- b) Model Constitution: Thanks to u3as for their input and it is hoped that this will be presented at this year's AGM.
- c) Committee Reports: A report from the Development Committee, will accompany the notes of today's meeting and the EDI Committee will show an on-line presentation on 2<sup>nd</sup> October at 10:00 a.m.

(Action)

- d) Meeting dates for 23/24: a) 13 December 2023 (on-line); 28 February 2024 (in-person); 22 May 2024 (on-line); 18 September 2024 (in-person) and 11 December 2024 (on-line).
- e) PC meeting notes: will be available for onwards distribution and a summary of the Trust Board to be available to PC members.
- f) Submitting agenda item for PC meeting: Regional and national trustees to encourage their members to do this, via email address: [council@u3a.org.uk](mailto:council@u3a.org.uk).
- g) Channels to feedback to the movement after PC meetings: Trustees/PC members to distribute the meeting notes to their regions/individual members.

Questions from attendees:

- a) Skills for Directors – details can be found on the Charity Commission website.
- b) Communication a priority, why has CEAC been disbanded? Three committees are reforming (Learning, CEAC and Development) as the governance structure is being revised. The aim is that these three Committees will report to the Council (if established) and the emphasis of the committees will be on a ‘task and finish groups’.
- c) Clarity needs to be given to where the Council will fit in, bearing in mind that there is the Trust Board, TATTL and Office. Purpose of the Council is that it will hear from u3as and not a governance emphasis. There are two papers available, one outlining the timeline and another relating to the progress of ‘Fit for the Future’ project, the latter available on the Trust website, later in the week.
- d) Communication with Pilot Council members between meetings – it was agreed that this will be discussed at the next Steering Group meeting, (as there are GDPR implications, and the Council has not been formalised). A recommendation will be made and brought back to a future PC meeting. It was noted that there is a Facebook page (FFTF) where members can sign-up to, as it is a discussion forum.

(Action)

### **Agenda Item Two: Council Representation. (Group Discussion/Feedback)**

Group One:

- Not all u3as pass on messages to committees/members, via Regional Trustees.
- Member Recruitment: blueprint, start with what might be improved. Large majority on the Council to be elected – discuss this and u3as have a say.

Group Two:

- Getting u3as a voice.
- Making it worthwhile.
- Local u3as don’t feel part of the bigger picture, more local a little island.
- Individual members don’t have idea of committee structure.
- Local newsletter, encompass national news.
- Not all u3as contribute to TAM matters.

- Represent: election is a long process, better idea of the Pilot Council.
- Trustees doing a good job to 'spread the word', representative – supporting a volunteer.
- 'Pilot' is a confusing name – another name.

#### Group Three:

- Opinions: step before that, don't acknowledge a link to the Trust.
- Acknowledge a link to another u3a, not part of the National body.
- Apathy.
- Important to listen, regional focus groups, not able to engage everyone.
- Broadcasting – all one-way, not a conversation, 2-way communication.
- Surveys: establish the relevance of the topic, why the information is wanted.
- Recruitment: clear roles and training.
- Representative views: will be hugely valuable.
- Regional election, how do they represent. Is it regional or urban size, background or just regional?
- Aware: distance to travel.
- 2 Reps per region – elected somehow.

#### Group Four:

- FTF Facebook – useful 2-way conversation.
- Message: existing communication channel, newsletter, push that, every member can join.
- TAM – bigger communication channel, signpost is a 2-way communication.
- Face-to-face communication, telling people what is happening (hymn sheet), consistent i.e. presentation agreed to send to u3a, via Trustee (a reference.)
- Recruitment: Council members, flow from first point – awareness. Look at the role, less onerous and more attractive.
- Balance: board member/regional representation. Regional representative: elected to speak on behalf of the region. Turn u3a voice for the region.

#### Group Five:

- Communication: problem, multiple channels. Prioritise the discussion points, how do we know what they are.
- Need to communicate what our members are thinking. Advice Line might help. Summary from website, click on, help with this.
- Need to understand our members. Input from multiple sources – help to concentrate on.
- Sending to individuals. Networks: commitment to it, support/advocate networks.
- Noticeboard – monthly meetings.
- Recruitment: role has to be clear. Regional Trustees' role is quite un-popular. Communicate: role to be more exciting. Not Regional Trustee to be PC

representative. Elected. Council role/board role clear. Council role to be attractive and clear.

- Personalities: What has the Council got.
- Website: submit ideas via this, not easy to see information about the Council – a channel to do this.

#### **Agenda Item Four: Advertising and Promoting the Movement Nationally**

Why:

- Purpose, increase name recognition
- Diversity
- Increase membership
- Attract a younger age group
- Distinct – attractive u3a
- Image, not have a distinct and attractive image, i.e. appear stuffy, old fashion.
- Promotion poster, done via ClipArt.

What:

- Brand Centre: new brand, attractive. Need to register before accessing the Brand Centre.
- Brand not sold to u3as.
- New brand – colourful.
- Need to reinforce the value of the umbrella organisation.
- Social Media: attractive/active.
- Partnership – dynamic
- Charles/Camilla/Idris Elba – patron/ambassador
- Recognition: participate in the aging debate.
- Image: now and in the future.

#### **Agenda Item Five: Research the demographics of our current membership and what encourages/prevents membership.**

- CEAC undertakes research on a 10-year cycle. This was five years' ago need to commission another one, as the world has change. Results – ageing membership, image – grey hair (prevents membership).
- Stock photos – reinforces image.
- Research between 60-70, saying wrong for them, average age: 74.
- Change promotion/image
- How to promote differently, i.e., French conversation, walking groups.

#### **Agenda Item Six: Attracting a more Diverse Membership**

- Define what is diversity; education, age, gender?
- Reach out to publize u3a, using various channels, different ways to reach people.
- Find examples of u3a who have been successful and how they did it.

- U3a Haringey, did a survey, results from it. u3a belong to another minority and why they joined.
- Use other organisations, have meetings with them and learn from them.
- Let people know we are there – make a loud noise.
- Explain what u3a stands for.
- Avoid making impression u3a for older people.
- Funds might be available, where venue may not cater for access needs etc – can promote this.
- Website – positive image, different approach for local areas.
- Provide publicity in other languages
- Haringey/London u3a leaflet – include in the notes of the meeting. (Action)

(NB: It was noted that the research, mentioned above, the results are on the Trust's website.)

### **Agenda Item 7: Paid Tutors**

- This financial advice is on the website.
- Strongly against it.
- Learning organisation.
- Not employing someone.
- Advice: physical activity – employ from gym and has own insurance.
- At the beginning had paid tutors.
- Independent charities and followed the advice and recommendations, I.e. national insurance/tax.
- Insurance, UK tax paying and tax reference. Public liability insurance on an annual basis.
- Independent committee to decide.
- Growth – looking for this, groups like this is an opportunity, gyms don't do 'age friendly'.

### **Discussion points from the feedback:**

- The discussions taking place re next generation, may involve 'paid tutors'.
- Turning u3a into a different way.
- Legitimate payment – where do you stop doing this.
- Future list of discussion: paid tutors, to be included at a later date.
- Boundaries already exist on this subject.

### **Agenda Item 8: National Awareness Campaigns.**

- People ask what u3a is.
- In order to explain u3a, ten minutes to explain, too long.
- Get u3a to 'trip off the tongue'.
- National awareness – boom radio.



- National awareness – in fragmentation of audience. National activities need to be persistent.
- Ambassadors – good way to promote u3a, their profile.
- Focus – local basis I.e. focus groups I.e. bridge, could it be a national activity I.e. pickle boarding (?) – good way to increase membership.
- Community resilience – contributing to the debate and contribution national/local level.
- Community venues becoming expensive or lost venues. u3a participating with their councils and national level. Got to be more meaningful u3as, key integrative approach. National promotion plan and timing, what we can do now, next year and year after. Consistency/persistency.

In summary:

- Clear and concise profile – one sentence; more detail; more detail.
- Concise: different audience; campaigns; plans.

### **Agenda Item 9: Festival Presentation**

Margaret Fiddes provided an overview of the festival planned for July 2024, at York University.

The following emerged from the discussion:

- A communication plan has been agreed to promote the event to the u3as.
- WhatsApp group will be set up to help with the planning of the event.
- Looking at a name for the event, to attract the national press. PC members were encouraged to put forward suggestions. (Action)
- The Quilters' Guild is based in York, and it was suggested that they could be approached to participate in the craft programme.

### **Agenda Item Ten: National Strategy**

Sam Mauger gave an overview of the background and progress made regarding the national strategy, under the following headings:

- Background
- Challenges
- Four strands of the strategy
- Membership inclusion
- Four cornerstone elements
- Emerging and;
- Next Steps.

### **Agenda Item 11: u3a Courses Paper**

Members considered the paper prepared by Richard Peoples and in principle, they supported the content of the document. It was agreed that a recommendation is made by the PC to the Trust Board to promote this concept to u3as.

(Action)

#### **Agenda Item 12: Developing a National Speaker List**

Members felt that developing and managing a list, was not doable and they saw the problems involved. Therefore, they did not endorse this concept.

#### **Agenda Item 13: Visits by senior people in the Trust to local u3as.**

It was noted that some Trust staff have attended meetings/event locally and that Liz Thackray has visited most of the regions. The response from the PC to this proposal was to encourage them to invite their Regional Trustee to events.

#### **Item 14: Social Prescribing.**

There was discussion around this subject, and it was noted that the Trust Board has set up a Working Group on this.

There was also an additional discussion regarding dementia, as some u3as are experiencing issues from members who have dementia and are impacting on the group. The following action points were agreed:

- SB to set up a working group, consisting of PC members to consider this matter and make recommendations.
- To have this as an agenda item at a future meeting.

(Action)

#### **Agenda Item 15: Feedback on format for the day**

- Cabaret style layout was preferred,
- All meeting notes to be distributed to attendees, along with copies of presentations
- In-person meeting, preferred to on-line.
- Positive meeting, good agenda and contributions from members.
- Good discussions and decision making.
- All papers to be circulated in advance of meetings.
- Venue: may need to consider a different one.

# Why is Change Needed?

- Social standards and members' expectations of organisations like u3a have changed significantly
- u3a numbers have increased rapidly but the structure has remained largely unchanged
- The role of the voluntary and charitable sector in the UK has undergone considerable change - governance and management are more complex. TAT is also subject to company law.
- Members expect compliance, financial and governance issues to be managed in a professional and structured manner where dedicated resources are needed
- Need for clarity on roles and responsibilities
- Current Board appointment process does not satisfy skill requirements
- RTs have wide range of responsibilities balancing governance, pseudo-operational and representational roles
- Lack of clarity on the Board between governance and u3a issues
- **Need for a body focused on u3a matters – to represent u3a interests and provide innovation.**

# PROPOSED KEY CHANGES EXPLORED IN THIS PERIOD

- **Potential new u3a Council - Principal focal point for the voice of the membership, impact assessment, and endorsement of u3a-related matters** - comprising regional/national elected representatives – number per region or nation to be decided
- **u3a Board – Focused on compliance and governance**
- **Council election process** –to ensure u3as can continue to elect those who they wish to represent them in their region or nation
- **Board appointment process** - to ensure elections/appointments in core skill requirements.
- **Protocols and Working arrangements** - to ensure clarity of roles and accountability between the u3a Board and the u3a Council

## SUMMARY OF AIM

- The creation of a u3a Council will ensure that the development of u3a-related matters receive constant consideration and will ensure that all decisions will have been subject to a u3a impact assessment
- The creation of a small u3a Board with specialist input, will assure members that compliance requirements are being met
- A representative u3a Council will introduce clarity, and allow space for a u3a focus, and will act as a communication conduit between u3a members, council members, TAT staff and u3a board.

## PROGRESS

- A Pilot Council steering group has been set up to report on progress to the Board
- This recommended that different formats of Pilot Council be tried and tested with u3as
  - A smaller Council meeting of 12 regional trustees and the Chair of Network Link initially took place
  - Two larger Council meetings of 2 reps per region /nation and the Chair of Network Link along with 2 further reps from Network Link will have taken place as of today
- Communications were initially sent through the current regional/ national trustees only
- For this meeting a mailing was also sent to u3as – which generated the agenda for today
- An evaluation is being sent to those attending the Council after each meeting
- Updates from the Pilot Council meetings will be sent to ALL u3as
- A dedicated email address [council@u3a.org.uk](mailto:council@u3a.org.uk) has been used successfully with u3a engagement.

## NEXT STEPS

- There are several questions in the first session today we would like you to consider about the potential Council and how members views could be gathered and represented.
- We would like your views at the end of today as to how you feel this new format worked.
- We will build in your thoughts and view into the next Pilot Council meeting.

