

Cotswold Link u3a network
Minutes of half yearly meeting held via Zoom
on 24 March 2021

Present:

Jeremy Furtado (chair), Dennis Chamberlain (treasurer), Jane Mason (secretary), David Barrett (webmaster), Susan Russell (committee member), Clive Harper (committee member), Jennifer Harrison (committee member), Laurence Wale (co-host), Marion Collighan (minutes).

Eileen Richmond (Bromyard), Mike Philpott (Ledbury), Jim Christie (Ross-on-Wye), Theresa Howard & Mike Byrne (Bromsgrove), Gay Enoch (Droitwich), Chris Wolstencroft, Alison Williams, John Boon & David Keeling (Evesham), Sally White (Persore), Richard Phillips (Malvern), Sally Ferrers (Bishops Cleeve), Susan Dodd (Bourton), Susan Duncan Gibson & Alan Keith (Cam & Dursley), Janet Ropner and Chris Wardle (Cheltenham), Louise Keeling (Churchdown), Ian Harvey, Tony Natt & Anne Vardy (Cirencester), Michael Vann (Fairford), Marian Carroll (Gloucester), Clive Edgington & Joan Toon (Stroud), Lawrence Moss & Anita Stride (Tetbury), Phil Hawthorn (Winchcombe), Ian Smith (Unknown u3a).

Ian McCannah (National chair) Allan Walmsley (Regional Trustee West Midlands), Susan Parker (Regional Trustee South West), Adam Walton (Beacon team), Ken Wheatley (Beacon team), Paul Martinez (National Office).

Apologies:

Marilyn Reynolds (Ross-on-Wye), Margaret Bainbridge (Bourton) before the meeting. Ian Barber & Duncan Fraser (Tewkesbury) during the meeting.

Jeremy Furtado, as chairman, welcomed everyone to this half yearly meeting. He asked the participants if there were any who objected to the meeting being recorded to make the secretary's job easier. The recording would be deleted within the next fortnight. There were no objections.

1. Minutes of half yearly meeting 28 October 2020. These were not discussed but no objections were made during the meeting.

2. Matters Arising – No matters arising.

3. Ian McCannah National Chair:

The recent survey of the impact of the pandemic undertaken by the Trust indicates that there has been approximately a 20% reduction in membership over the last year, which is in line with what is being experienced by Cotswold link members. This will have an impact on the Trust's finances. Over the last 10 years the average age of the membership has increased from 72 to 74, with a reduction in the number of people joining in their 60s. These younger members usually form the bulk of the committees.

He recommends that as u3a restart they address membership as if they were setting up a new u3a. Social media is likely to be more successful in attracting younger members who have just retired, than the traditional channels we have used, so he recommends that to be used as well. There is a lot of material on the

National website to support u3a with relaunching.

Membership fees

It is a requirement of membership of the Trust to pay the capitation fee as this funds the services provided by National Office, which has fixed costs for staff and premises. However, the Trust is very aware of the impact of the pandemic on the finances of u3a. It is hoped that the decision to levy the capitation fee on the number of members at the end of March, rather than the maximum membership over the year, will help u3a who have been losing members.

Clive Edgington explained that they had decided to reduce membership fees to nil for the current year, which had led to an unexpected increase in membership. Some other u3a have also reduced membership fees. Stroud are hoping for some help from the Trust in relation to the increased burden of the membership increase, perhaps with a reduction in the capitation fee.

Ian replied that if a u3a decides to give a free year then this needs to be funded out of reserves. The capitation fee cannot be waived, as it is agreed at the National AGM. However, an increase in membership is to be commended and the basis on which the capitation fee is levied can be discussed. He advised any u3a who has cash flow issues or who is adversely affected by the decision to charge the capitation fee on 31 March membership numbers to contact the Trust. They can get in touch with the Finance manager, contact himself on ian.mccannah@u3a.org.uk or contact their regional trustee.

u3a Day

Some of the attendees raised the issue of the timing of u3a Day, which they feel is going to be too early, given the current state of the pandemic. Michael Vann expressed disagreement with the Trusts decision to go ahead on 2nd June and thought the Trust should be more flexible. Clive Edgington pointed out that it will be quite difficult to organise an event to advertise to and recruit new members under the restrictions on meeting that will be in place 2nd June.

Ian acknowledged the concerns of the attendees. He started his reply with some background. 2022 will be the anniversary of the u3a movement and the Trust started thinking about this event well in advance. The original idea was that u3a Day 2020 and 2021 would be precursors to this event and allow us to figure out what worked. As the u3a Day 2020 could not take place at all the Trust did not want to cancel the 2021 event.

The date of the u3a Day of 2nd June 2021 was agreed in December 2020. If the date was changed now, then it is not clear what alternative would work. Therefore, the Trust will continue with u3a Day on 2nd June and the national publicity will be for this date. Hopefully, activities can take place out of doors as well as virtually on this date.

However, each individual u3a can make its own decision about whether/when to hold u3a Day events. Some might decide to hold events later in the year, in which case the publicity for 2nd June event should provide some groundwork. The materials on the National website are not limited to a specific date and will remain available after 2nd June.

Liability Insurance

Susan Dodd asked if the centrally arranged liability insurance policy will cover u3a for meetings from 29th March. Ian advised that National office will be issuing guidance on meetings under the changing regulations.

4. South West Regional Trustee – Susan Parker:

A regional survey was instigated in November and Susan has now contacted most u3a in the South West. She has discovered that some u3a who say they are hibernating are still contacting their members. She plans to ask those u3a who are very active to buddy up with those who are less confident.

She holds a monthly meeting of network representatives so that ideas and concerns can be shared informally.

The south west has a PR and media adviser who can help u3a in this area. She suggests that those u3a who will run a u3a Day event after 2nd June might still want to advertise it on 2nd June.

5. West Midlands Regional Trustee – Allan Walmsley:

Allan's talk covered 3 levels of activity, the West Midlands region, Networks and National.

West Midlands Region

He is trying to build up enthusiasm and energy within the region and get more people involved.

- A virtual regional conference was held in early March which was very well attended. There was a mixture of fun and serious sessions. Mike Byrne commented that this was very enjoyable.
- A regional virtual Newsletter is being produced containing small pieces of information with links to more detailed information.
- The regional website has been redesigned and will become a repository for information on the West Midlands region.
- Some members from the regions u3a took part in an ITV Tonight programme on healthy aging, which created enthusiasm amongst those involved.
- u3a are encouraged to arrange discussions on retention and recruitment.

Networks

A Retention and recruitment session for Networks was held at the start of March. The Netfest event will take place in June. This is a week devoted to Networks; what they are, how they operate and what the benefits are.

National

- Third Age Trust Trading is starting the merchandising process. They are arranging for retail outlets who will provide discount on products through "Click and Save". u3as and their members will also be able to donate to charity. More details will be available in April.
- The Diversity and Inclusion committee is offering presentations to Networks.
- The future of Trust u3a post pandemic is being discussed. Laurence Wale was interested in whether membership of Trust u3a might be available for whole u3a in rather than just individual members. Allan replied that I u3a already has this sort of membership. Joan Toon commented that virtual courses have been a lifeline for those who cannot get out and that facilities are going to continue to be important in the future. Ian and Allan confirmed that Trust u3a will be continuing in some form.

6. Beacon: – Ken Wheatly and Adam Walton:

A presentation was made covering what Beacon does, what help and support services are available and what to expect from Beacon 2. The presentation can be circulated with the minutes.

Beacon is an online management system for membership, groups and finance, that also has a member's portal. About two thirds of Cotswold link member u3a are using Beacon. It is supported by a team of about 70 volunteers across the UK. Beacon 2 will update the software of the Beacon offering. u3a are encouraged to move to Beacon already if they are interested and not to wait for Beacon 2.

Marian Carroll asked how to join the Beacon user forum. She was advised to use the link on the Beacon website to register. Credentials are checked before people can join fully to make sure they are not spambots.

Somebody asked when Beacon 2 will be available, what the process of transfer will be like and where to get information on the changes. The date for Beacon 2 is not yet agreed but it will be tested by a pilot group of u3a before being rolled out more widely. The main rollout will take place over a period of time, it will not happen for every u3a on the same day. Information is available on the Beacon website at "Beacon.u3a.org.uk" and Adam recommends that people sign up for Beacon News.

Mike Philpott asked if API access will be added to Beacon 2 and if it will allow user defined reports. API access will be added, so that the database can be interrogated using products like "Excel" and "Access", although not at the start.

User defined reports will be available; and these might be there at the start.

Jeremy asked if there will be a charge for Networks to use Beacon. It has not yet been decided if a charge will be made to Networks, however, if there is a charge it is likely to be small.

7. Paul Martinez – Recruitment working group:

The recruitment working group is looking at issues around retention and recruitment of members. A recruitment and retention toolkit has been developed, consisting of a variety of documents, and is available on the National website. It is not easy to find, however, many elements can be accessed by clicking on “Learn” in the main menu, followed by “Sources online” then “Recruitment”. Paul thinks it is never too soon to start thinking about recruitment and retention. People who are becoming retired now will look online to find activities.

Jeremy pointed out that u3a have some members who are not online at all. Paul described how Chepstow had developed a telephone communication network. The committee initially contacted some members and then recruited them to phone others until everybody was covered.

Paul will send an introductory guide to the toolkit that can be circulated with the minutes.

8. Date of Next Half Yearly Meeting – Next half-yearly meeting will be due in October 2021. North Cotswolds u3a are thinking about how they can help with the organisation of this.

Signed..... Date