**Minutes of the Avalon Network meeting held at The George Reynolds Centre, Crewkerne on Thursday September 8th 2022**

**1-am – 3pm.**

1. **Present**

Camelot Robert Reeves (Chairman)

Chard & Ilminster Jim Lobely (Treasurer)

Crewkerne & District Bridgette Browne (Chairman)

Martock & District Greg Atkins (Treasurer)

Somerton

Taunton

Yeovil Hilary Sains Chairperson

Paula Christie (Secretary)

Noreen Dixon (Committee)

SW Region Chris Knight (Research & Shared Learning Adviser) Val Warren (Avalon Representative, Trust Volunteer)

1. **Apologies** Susan Parker (SWR Trustee)

Paul Ebdon (Chard)

Diana Davies (Martock)

Steve Davis (Somerton)

Judi Powell (Somerton)

Lauraine Newcombe (Taunton)

Jan Simpson (Yeovil)

1. **SWR Report**

Val thanked members for attending and welcomed new officers. She thanked Bridgette for hosting the meeting. Members introduced themselves.

Val presented a report which included the last SW Region meeting held in Weston-Super-Mare. Copies available on request.

* It was a hybrid meeting and they were joined by Liz Thackeray, Chair of the Third Age Trust, on Zoom.
* Proposed an Avalon Network Study Day – others areas to be invited. Subject ideas were Climate Change and Astronomy to be held in the Guildhall, Chard. Working party of Greg, Jim and Val to be arranged to look into an Astronomy Day April/May 2023. Action GA, JL, VW
* Agreed the Brand Centre is expensive. Locally banners can be purchased much cheaper. E.g. Hampshire Flags who also offer charity discount.
* Next meeting to be hosted by Yeovil in March 2023. Action Hilary.

**6. IT Training. Agreed change of Agenda.**

Stephen Shipley proposed a plan for a workshop/training day to offer designing a website. Individuals could use it to download their own photos. Various members suggested using Dropbox, One Drive Teapot Creative etc. Agreed.

Action SS.

1. **Research & Shared Learning Projects.**

Chris Knight explained her role as Research & Shared Learning Adviser. She said it was all about ‘finding out.’

Chris helps some interest groups with support with their projects. The subjects can be wide and varied such as family research on members’ names on a war memorial to researching local history of high street shops. Shared learning is usually about partnerships, such as with universities, libraries or museums. Exeter University is involved in research on happiness. Kent University Psychology department, combined with the U3A have written a paper. Both projects involved intergenerational study. Chris offered to help with questionnaires to ensure they are analysable. Ideas are available from Facebook – U3A SW Research & Learning and TAT database of ideas. Chris is looking into the ethics around research and is willing to advise us. Contact her via SWR website. Members have used Mail Chimp and Survey Monkey successfully.

**7. U3A websites/facebook**

Agreed TAT website is not easy to use.

Some groups used the U3A website builder, others an independent site.

Some groups had expert advice from an individual and that helped enormously. Yeovil used theirs and included photos from both their photography and their gardening groups.

Agreed more support needed for most groups.

Action – all

**8. Avalon Website**

Members to seek a webmaster – contact Val with offers.

Action – all

**9 Avalon Study Day.**

Covered under Agenda item 3

**10 U3A Facebook Pages**

Covered under item 7.

**11. Workshops.**

Agreed need for Trustee Training/ Workshops

Induction pack available.

Agreed to organise a workshop asap with most groups wanting to participate.

Action - VW

**12 Equipment Sharing**

Crewkerne is listing its equipment and will have some items not needed. They have a gazebo which could be loaned if groups have an event.

**13 Formation of Networked U3As.**

Greg expressed the need for some members to join groups outside of Avalon Network. He felt the need for face to face groups and thought members were willing to travel up to an hour to attend if the subject was attractive enough. Groups could also operate on Zoom or Teams. Val offered to supply contact details throughout the SWR. Problem- how to find out what groups are currently operating. Robert produced a comprehensive list of Avalon Interest Groups. This could be incorporated in the Avalon Network website when it is functioning. More research needed as the idea appealed to most.

Action GA

1. **Speakers List.**

Agreed a useful function which should be incorporated on the Avalon Network website.

Action – new website master.

**15 AOB**

**Publicity Drive – Yeovil Hilary.**

Yeovil is actively encouraging a huge publicity drive. Yeovil is flourishing. Membership is increasing and new groups are being planned. Publicity is sought on local news pages, websites and Council websites. They were congratulated on their success and forward planning.

Greg suggested two Apps that might attract younger members – In Your Area and Next Door.

Action HS

**Committee Minutes Distribution - Hilary**

Discussion took place about where to post the minutes of committee meetings. Some groups put them on their websites, others pinned them up on the U3A noticeboard, some were delivered by hand and others by post. Agreed that members must have access to the minutes if requested. Care must be taken over confidential discussion especially if it concerns an individually named member.

Action – all

**Proposed Increase in payment to TAT. – Jim.**

Jim as concerned that the increase would be raised after the Trust AGM to £4 per member which would necessitate an increase in local U3A membership fees. All U3As are concerned and are certainly questioning what they get for their money. Val explained that it includes the insurance cover and expert advice on constitutional matters, practical advice, committee structure, up to date legislation, Zoom training, general administration, indeed almost anything a committee is likely to require. She said the offices are not plush so money wasn’t wasted on expensive premises. Concern was expressed over the wasted money on the failed Beacon system and the new branding. TAM was discussed and agreed it was best to ask members to sign up for it rather than opt out if they wished to receive it.

U3As would be represented at the AGM and delegates would vote accordingly, thereby making their opinions count. Val explained that their U3A was the member of the Trust, not the individual member therefore there was only one vote.

Action All U3a representatives at the AGM.

**Zoom Licence.**

Is it possible for the TAT Zoom licence to be extended to cover all U3As? This would save each U3A £50 per anum. Not all U3As purchased a Zoom licence for their members although most groups had.

Action – Susan Parker

**Online Subscriptions – Greg.**

Greg asked if online subs could be paid via Pay Pal or a similar system. He was having problems when members insisted on paying by cash. There are way around it but it takes time. Members felt that we had to consider all members’ requirements to ensure inclusivity. Members without electronic baking or even a computer were getting fewer each year.

**Site Builder moving to Word Press. Robert.**

Robert brought this to our attention and members will be alerted.

**TAM statements**

There seems to be some discrepancy between the actual members receiving TAM and the statement sent to U3As. Robert queried this for the Camelot group in July. Mid August he received an automated response. It did not answer his question. In September he rang TAT office and didn’t get a helpful reply. Help needed as to how to move forward.

Action Susan Parker.

**End of Meeting.**

Val thanked members for their contributions. She enjoyed meeting everyone, some for the first time. Approval was given for Val to share emails instead of sending blind copies, this enabled members to contact each other easily. She encouraged members to contact her for advice anytime.

Meeting ended 3pm