

**Minutes of Tynedale u3a Committee Meeting
held on Thursday 14th December 2023 at Hexham Golf Club**

Present: Wendy Dale, Colin Argent, Barrie Mellars, Kate Stephenson, Sally Hewitt, Susan Turnbull, Lesley Parsons, Margaret Earl and Ann Atkinson

No.		Action/ person
1	Welcome and Apologies: Apologies were received from Ally Forster, Tim O’Brien, and John Dark	
2	Minutes of meeting held on 23 rd November 2023 were accepted as a true record.	
3	Matters Arising: Sally informed that she had not heard from Tim in relation to discussing the use of Dropbox as a means of sharing photographs. Wendy informed that mince pies at the December monthly meeting were well received but Owen was unhappy about the mess on the carpet it created.	TB
4	Chair's Report: Wendy informed that Cecilia, u3a regional chair would be attending the February meeting. She also stated that she had received an email about a regional geology online group and asked if anyone else had received it but no one had.	
5	Business Secretary's Report: Ann informed that there had not been much information to pass on and had only sent an update from the Third Age Trust. She informed that Colin had found out that the Archives at Woodhorn would accept digital information. Ann would sort through the information she held to establish what was worth sending to the Archives. The view was that minutes, annual reports and summary accounts should be archived and newsletters too if they could be sent digitally.	AA
6	<p>Treasurer's Report:</p> <p>Finance Strategy - Susan had circulated a report which demonstrated that the balances had increased by approximately £2,500 a year since 2021 prior to the meeting. Membership annual subscription had been £14 for this period. Susan made a case for reducing the subscriptions. Wendy reminded the meeting that three years ago there had been a plan to reduce the savings over a 4-year period and the committee had been unsuccessful. Initially this had been due to Covid even though members were given 6 months free when we changed the renewal date. Last year we had again planned to reduce the reserves and anticipated the Convenors lunch, our 40-year celebrations and 2 coach trips would eat into it. The reasons we have still managed to increase our savings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increase in membership was not anticipated. • Inflation did not have the impact expected. • Attendance at the 40th celebration was less than budgeted for and with us deciding to charge £5 we subsidised to a lesser extent. • The Convenors lunch was below budget as only two thirds attended. 	

- The coach trips didn't require a subsidy and because the trip to Edinburgh proved so popular there was a surplus.

The committee looked at ways of reducing the reserves but not all at once. Barrie suggested we should aim to have £6000 in reserve.

The ideas are:

- Reduce the subscription to £10 or £8. It was also suggested that there be a registration fee for new members.
- Not claim Gift Aid.
- Pay for group rooms for one year.
- Take an office at the community centre for a year.
- Ring-fence a sum of money e.g £5000 that groups could bid for, for trips, events, equipment. Kate informed that whilst this would be okay for equipment it was not appropriate for trips or events, given the remit of the organisation.
- Providing training or workshops to stimulate new groups.
- Invite 1 or 2 high profile speakers and have an event at the Queens Hall and invite other u3as in the region.
- Hold a conference at the Queens Hall, identify a theme and approach university lecturers to speak.

There was no conclusion reached, views differed but there was support for renting an office at the community centre for a year if one came available.

The reasons this had the support of the committee were:

- Some groups particularly the small ones are experiencing problems with a meeting place. The Newcastle Building Society is putting a restriction on the number of times a u3a group can use their room. The Garden Café has closed.
- Some of these groups are meeting in inappropriate places. Café's in upstairs rooms with no lift. The snug at the County with noise, distractions, uncomfortable seating and no door.
- There is a resistance from convenors to engage in paying for a room.
- It is difficult to get new groups started.
- There would be advantages in having a room to store some equipment and also have good video and audio technology.

Wendy suggested it would be helpful to bring a motion to the AGM about renting a room so that we knew we had the support of membership.

There is expenditure that is known for next year.

- There will be a convenors lunch
- The booklet celebrating our 40-year anniversary will be printed. The cost is not known but is likely to be less than £1000. Barrie will contact Tim to see if he can advise on printers.

Discussion was curtailed when Susan had to leave. She informed the meeting that she felt that Kate was in a much better position to carry out the role of Treasurer and had been in

WD

BM

	<p>negotiation with her before the meeting. Kate is willing to take on the role of Treasurer and it would happen forthwith. The meeting was taken by surprise but thanked her for her work on the committee and expressed a wish that she continues.</p> <p>Finance Policy – Kate had found that we were not managing the finances in accordance with the Financial Policy. The policy says, “our accounts should give a true and fair view” which is terminology for a different form of accounting. She was not suggesting that practice is wrong as it is appropriate for the organisation but recommended we changed the words of the policy. The committee agreed the words should change so that, “the accounts reflect the receipts and payments of Tynedale u3a”.</p>	KS
7	<p>Programme Secretary's Report: Barrie informed that the February monthly meeting was by an artist about the Battle of Britain. December’s meeting was very successful with 63 attendees, there had been 56 views of the presentation and 100% likes. There was some discussion about the AGM, whether to have a short presentation by a member, a brief talk about 40 years of membership where the booklet will be launched or present the results of a fun questionnaire to members, to find out more about our membership. It was agreed to go ahead with the questionnaire and for committee members to come up with some fun questions in the next couple of weeks that would inform us better about the membership. Suggested questions to go to Wendy.</p>	All
8	<p>Membership Secretary's Report: In John’s absence, Wendy asked Lesley to take the 24 people who had not renewed membership off Beacon. Wendy did not know if John had rung up these people. There were 25 new members in November and we now have 517 members in total. There is a coffee morning at the Abbey tomorrow for new members, 18 new members plan to attend and two prospective members. Wendy, John, Colin and Barrie will be attending.</p>	LP
9	<p>Publicity Officer's Report: Sally informed that she had followed up a request from the Town Council for more information about u3a and their social media representative had wanted to know more about the monthly meetings for example. This could be driving people to the u3a Facebook page, there are now 191 members.</p>	
10	<p>Newsletter Editor's Report: There was no update from Tim in his absence as he has been unwell.</p>	
11	<p>Group Liaison Secretary's Report: Colin informed that the Convenors meeting was attended by a good number, about thirty. Requests were for guidance on insurance and risk assessments. In terms of requests from convenors about meeting venues about half had replied. There was no interest from bigger groups in relation to negotiating a cheaper rate at the Abbey or Community Centre. Also most of the smaller groups seem to be happy. There appears to be preference for places that provide coffee, tea or a pint. An office at the Community Centre would provide projection, internet and scope to make coffee. Convenors Lunch will take place again next year.</p> <p>Wendy suggested that we work on a relationship with the Community Centre so they see us as friends and make use of their carpet bowls equipment and arrange an afternoon session for members. Wendy asked what the procedure was for groups paying for rooms and it was stated that most pay termly with new members paying what is left of the term.</p>	CA
12	<p>Beacon Administrator and Website Manager's Report: Lesley stated that she was on the training list for the new website. There would be a charge for using the new system of £50 and it was likely to be up and running from April 2025. It is anticipated that the site will be more creative.</p>	
13	<p>Events Secretary's Report: Margaret stated that only the Blenheim coach trip had been organised for next year. The trip to the Tapestry of Scotland through Jewitts had been a long journey as via Blaydon so in future we would need to be aware of the location of</p>	

	pick-ups as in this instance it resulted in a shorter time at the Tapestry. Other suggested events for next year included carpet bowls at the community centre, Egger, Recycling Billingham, behind the scenes at the Baltic, Trinity House, behind the scenes at Wallington, Dumfries House, Auckland Castle and Usher College. Margaret to progress some of these suggestions.	MW
14	Regional and Third Age Trust: Wendy informed that there was a Third Age Trust festival in York in July.	
15	A.O.B.: Wendy to send Barrie comments on the booklet and Barrie to circulate second draft to committee members for comment. Barrie informed that he had booked the Golf club for committee meetings next year. Wendy wished everyone a Merry Christmas.	WD BM
16	Date and time for next meeting: Thursday 25 th January 2024 at 2pm.	

Meeting ended at 15:45

Minutes Approved

Dated: