

WADHURST U3A

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday, 19th October 2023 in Wadhurst Commemoration Hall at 2:15 pm

Committee Members Present: Philip Cheung (PCH) Chair, John O'Dwyer (JD), Mike King (MK), Sheila King (SK), Sheila Jemmett (SJ) Marianne Whittingdale (MW).

1. Apologies for absence: Jane and David Austin, Sonia & Stuart Hobbs, Liz Kirk-Duncan, Thai Goulton, Philip Hart, Iris Glover, Angela Hobday, Penny Douglas.

2. Minutes of the AGM 2022 (published on the website):

Proposer: Ian Macdonald Seconder: Eileen Ramm

Accepted as a true and accurate record by a poll of attendees.

3(a) Trustees Annual Report

Chairman Remarks

Just four points on:

1. Membership
2. Participation, and Interest Groups in particular
3. Cost saving
4. New members

Membership

	Membership	New Members (since prev year)
Oct 2021*	256	0
Oct 2022	219	35
Oct 2023	212	34

* Lockdown lifted in December 2021

We lost effectively about 70 members during the epidemic.

The good news is that we have recruited over 30 new members each of the past two years. This is about the same rate before the epidemic.

Participation

	2019	2022	2023
Monthly meetings	60 – 90	30 - 50	40 - 60
Quiz Nights	102	54	35
Birthday Party	100	70	50
Coach Trips	10	5	2
Interest Groups	33	28	26

The initial drop in participation is due to COVID. When the lockdown was lifted in December 2021, there was a surge in enthusiasm during most of 2022, which unfortunately did not carry over to the following year. For example, there were about 55 participants at the Quiz in March and 70 at the Birthday Party in September 2022. In 2023 attendance at these two events have fallen to below 40 and below 60. Was it the re-emergent Omicron strain or was it the rise in the cost of living?

The rise in the cost of living, especially in the cost of coach hire, is undoubtedly a factor in the reduction in the number of coach trips. The Gardening and Historic Buildings groups managed about 5 coach trips in 2022 but another 5 were planned for and then cancelled for lack of partakers. The number dwindled to 2 by 2023. On the other hand, coach trips have been replaced by outings involving smaller groups, travelling by train or by car sharing. The week-long summer trip with Gardening group, by coach, continued nevertheless as usual, in 2022 and 2023.

Some of the 28 groups of 2022 have in fact suspended their activities that year, and 5 eventually folded for various reasons. The 26 groups of 2023, including two new formed groups, *Croquet* and *'Sunday Lunch for Singles'*, are running with enthusiasm.

We owe our thanks to Jane and David Austin for Croquet and Mary Brewer and Iris Glover for SLS. New groups are even now being proposed: Poetry (a revival) by Val Smith, a Third Book Group and Quiz Group by Jane Austin. Do look at the group display.

Interest groups make up a most important part of the u3a. In small groups sharing a common interest, you make friends, exercise your brain or body and have fun in general. I urge you all to give an interest group, or interest groups, a try. To be sure, you will need some energy. On the other hand, if you find an enjoyable interest group, you may also find the energy that you do not think you have!

Cost Savings

Our subscription of £25 a year has been unchanged since 2013. It used to be above average as u3a's and justified on the following grounds:

- free admission to the monthly talks, to a free cup of tea and a biscuit, and some free social events such as the birthday and Christmas parties,

- four issues of NEWS each year that is more a magazine than a bulletin. NEWS provides a platform for members to share the stories and thoughts of other members, and enjoy their creative fruits in paintings, photography, poetry and prose. The members who contribute to NEWS may enjoy seeing their work in print.

Nevertheless, rising costs, in speakers' fees, hire of the hall, the printing and mailing of NEWS...etc., mean we must think of making savings, which, in the opinion of the committee of trustees, is preferable to increasing the annual subscription. The committee have therefore decided to:

- 1) Reduce the issues of NEWS per year from four to three, starting from 2024 in the months of April, August and December.
- 2) Distribute NEWS by a team of volunteers in the centres of Wadhurst and Ticehurst.

Outlying addresses, about 15% of the total, will continue to receive their copies by post. Please consider signing up when a distribution plan is finalised in November.

New Members

New members who joined during COVID and in the post COVID years have not received a welcome that they deserve and expect. We shall try to remedy this in the coming months.

The last two points have occupied the thinking of the committee for some months and is reinforced by the results of the survey that was made in June, of which there were 22 replies.

Summary

To conclude, we are still in a recovery phase. There are encouraging signs in the improving attendance at monthly meetings and in the enthusiastic way most interest groups are now functioning. We are in a sound financial position but have taken steps to build up reserves which will come in useful when we expand. We look forward to a challenging but rewarding year ahead.

3(b) Treasurer's Report

We ended the financial year with a small deficit of £534. As we were only able to hold one fund raising event in the year it meant we had to subsidise the Birthday and Christmas parties.

This year we had the additional cost of £552 for the two first aid courses which were due for renewal.

Due to the cost-of-living crisis it was decided to maintain the subscription at the existing rate of £25.

Despite the small loss I am pleased to report we ended the year in a healthy financial position with reserves standing at nearly £5000.

4. Receive and Approve the Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts for 2023

Proposer: Jan Whiteley

Seconder: Barbara Godsalve

Accepted unanimously as a true and accurate record

5. Election of Officers

The following members were elected to the positions indicated by the unanimous decision carried out by a poll of the attendees:

- Chair Philip Cheung
- Vice Chair John O'Dwyer
- Business Secretary Marianne Whittingdale
- Treasurer Sheila King
- Committee of Trustees Sheila Jemmett
Mike King
Jan Whiteley
Sara Irwin

Proposer: Sheila Minet Second: Sue Tower

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner:

Mr Nicholas Warran-Smith was duly appointed the Charity's Independent Examiner.

Proposer: Gina Evans Second: John O'Dwyer

7. AOB

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 2.45 pm

Marianne Whittingdale
Business Secretary Wadhurst U3A