

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6th March 2024 at The Ridgewood Community Centre room 8/9, 244 Station Road, Yate, BS37 4AF.

1. **Present:** Patrick Mills (Chair), Tony Sarafian (Secretary), Lutie van der Park (Assistant secretary), Barry Miller (Events Coordinator), Marian Longley (Assistant Membership Secretary), Brian Day, Wendy Morrison-Jones, Ali Bacon (Facebook Coordinator), John Wilkinson, Paula Young (guest).
2. **Two guests were welcomed to the meeting:** Paula Young who is a prospective member of the committee and Ali Bacon who has been coopted as the Facebook Administrator.
3. **Apologies:** Sue Yallop, Binny Fraser (Groups Coordinator), Jenny Collett (Co-Groups Coordinator), Linda Broad (Membership Secretary), Pauline Mullholland (Newsletter Editor), Marion Phillips, Robert Cole (Website Administrator) Janet Stuart (Beacon Administrator).
4. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th February 2024 were approved.**
5. **Matters for Discussion.**
 - i. **All.** To approve John Wilkinson as Acting Treasurer
Proposed by Patrick. Seconded by Marian. **Approved unanimously.**
 - ii. **All. Action Points. (Red = ongoing. Black = closed)**

AP231003. Janet. Will try to sort out the problems of transferring the PayPal account to a new Treasurer.

AP231204. All. To look at the procedures documents that affect their posts and either agree to accept the TAT version or to continue to use our own.

AP240101. Lutie will draw up a list of the documents that need to be compared.

AP240104. Janet will tell Anne-Marie Cook at Ridgewood that we are between Treasurers at the moment and would she continue for the time being, to send invoices in the same way by letter to the Treasurer, placed in the room before our committee meetings. **Closed** but Tony to ask Anne-Marie to send invoices to the Treasurer. **Action: Tony AP240301.**

AP240110. Binny will organise a lunch to take place before the meeting on 3rd April. (See AP240202 below)

AP240201. Patrick/Linda. The information contained in the Action Plan document to be added to the New Members' Information leaflet.
This is now changed to Marian/Linda under AP240201 in the April Action Point list.

AP240202. Patrick. Binny is going to be away; Patrick will ask her if she needs assistance in organising the lunch on 3rd April. **Closed** (but see AP240110 above).

AP240203. Patrick will provide the Treasurer's report for the AGM.
In progress.

AP240204. Tony. The committee needs to approve the new Constitution before it comes up at the AGM. To be put on the agenda for the March committee meeting. Done. **Closed**

AP240205. Lutie will provide a package about the AGM for the March meeting. **All ready.**

- Paula is to be confirmed as a committee member.
- We need to find an independent person to approve the u3a accounts. **Action: Tony AP240302.**

AP240206. Tony will write to Age UK explaining that we are unable to help in the “Welcome Home” scheme. Done (by both Binny and Tony) **Closed**

AP240207. Jenny will tell the Refreshment group that for the time being they will not be needed at the monthly Friday talks. **Closed.**

AP240208. Patrick will ask Robert Cole to come to the Group Leaders’ Forum on 6th June to talk of his experience in dealing with a member with a medical health issue. Closed but **Jenny to invite Robert to the Forum. Action: Jenny AP240303**

AP240209. Jenny will ask Janet Stuart to come to the Group Leaders’ Forum on 6th June to talk about the Members’ Portal.

AP240210. Patrick will ask Wendy Morrison-Jones if she will head up a subcommittee to organise the Open Day on Friday October 11th. **Closed.**

- iii. **All.** To agree to adopt the upgraded u3a Constitution. Proposed by Barry. Seconded by Tony. **Approved by all.**
- iv. **Patrick.** To obtain approval of the artwork and expenditure on new u3a A5 flyers (see also Item 6 in Chair’s report below). There were two images (front and back). This was discussed at some length. It was pointed out that there is a problem in obtaining permission from some members to allow their photos to be published on advertisements or in the Newsletter (see Item ii in AOB). It was suggested that blanket permission could be obtained when new members enrol or existing members renew their membership. **Action: Tony will tell Linda (Membership) and Janet (Beacon) of this suggestion. AP240304** Finally, it was suggested that we retain the old flyers but with the addition of the QR code on the front of the flyer. Seconded by Tony. **Approved unanimously. Robert to be informed of the decision. Action: Patrick AP240305.**
The cost for 500 A5 flyers is £90. The expenditure was seconded by Tony. **Approved unanimously.**
- v. **Brian.** To obtain approval for the expenditure of £40 for 20 chair signs to be used at Speaker meetings. This expenditure was seconded by Tony. **Approved unanimously.**

6. Meetings and Event Planning (Barry Miller)

There was a near capacity audience (approximately 200) for the speaker on Friday 1st March. Barry, having been in post for three years, then handed over his role to Brian.

7. Chair’s report (Patrick Mills).

- **Summary**

Committee activities continue smoothly. The AGM is coming up on 19th April – are we ready to support it? Jenny is preparing for the Group Leaders Forum on 10th June – we should

assemble teams to support the Open Day on 11th October and the Christmas Concert on 11th December.

- **Succession planning**

We need to ensure all roles are covered and under-studies are in place for changes in May. I am pleased welcome John Wilkinson and Paula Young to the March Exec meeting - please encourage other u3a members to join the committee.

- **Financial Administration**

Significant progress is now being made with the help of John Wilkinson and Marilyn Heffer. However, the situation is not fully resolved yet: we are not yet ready to close the books for 2023/2024 to present to the AGM on 19th April and there are some outstanding payments to be made. We need to warn group leaders to verify their own group accounts for the year ending 31st March. We should check the 2024 updates for the Financial Policy document.

- **Changes to governance of Third Age Trust**

I have been asked to attend another seminar on governance changes to the Third Age Trust/u3a which are to be voted on at the October 2024 AGM under the name "Fit for the Future". It is proposed that the main board will be only address matters of legality and compliance. Operational matters will be handled by new "u3a Council". I will ask for your input for our u3a to vote and approve this. Details are posted on the Yate & Sodbury u3a webpage "Executive".

- **SiteWorks Project**

As you will know, the Third Age Trust is adopting a volunteer-led project called SiteWorks to migrate current u3a websites to a more modern structure. Committee members are encouraged to watch the introductory video. Robert recommends convening a working party to decide how we want the new site to look and what it should do for our u3a. The working group should contain at least one group coordinator and hopefully someone with design experience. It would be nice to use the opportunity to recruit a future web master as well! I have prepared a note detailing actions for the transition.

- **Flyers**

We have about 100 A5 flyers left, so it is time to print another batch. Robert Cole has proposed an image for approval by the committee. **See the discussion in 5 iv (above)**

- **Priorities**

Please take note and play your part to enable the committee fulfil its role. As before, our priorities are:

- a. Undertake existing Executive Committee activities efficiently.
- b. Create new groups, run by members for the members.
- c. Promote u3a benefits.

Patrick suggested that next year's committee should include a Publicity Officer.

8. Secretary's Report (Tony Sarafian)

Nil to report.

9. Acting Treasurer's Report.

Patrick reported that some progress had been made in the meetings with John and Marilyn Heffer but he was not ready to close the books for 19th April (AGM). Group Leaders must be reminded by Binny and Jenny (using the same phrasing as in last year's email) to get their accounts verified before 19th April. To copy their emails to John and Patrick. Tony to ask Binny and Jenny to do this. **Action: Tony AP240306**

10. Co-Group Coordinators' Report.

A to J (Binny Fraser by email)

- **Book Club 3.** I tried to get this group started but did not get enough people available for the first meeting. I will try and get this sorted again on my return. I've had a few more people express an interest.
- **Dining Group.** Again, failure on setting up another dining group. I can try again on my return.
- **AI Group.** We've had success with this group and David McAll has received a lot of interest. It will start in mid-March.
- **Clay Pigeon Shooting Group.** Patrick kindly organised a meeting and hopefully the group will now go ahead.

K to Z (Jenny Collett by email)

- **Social Motorcycling Group.**
The first meeting has taken place and about 12 people attended, a couple of whom are new members who will join the U3A in April. One of these will become Deputy Leader. They will meet again in a couple of weeks to work out some group runs. Graham Bishop has received his Beacon package & is working through it.
- **The Travel Group has a new leader – Ruth Boulton.**
- **Group Leaders' Forum/Social.**
After much to-ing & fro-ing to find a date suitable for everyone, including our new Refreshments Group, we have now booked the Town Hall (Thankyou to Barry) for the morning of Monday 10th June for above event. I have asked Lloyd Pellow if he would do a table quiz for us. Janet felt that it would be a bit late to talk to Leaders about renewals as it would have all be done by then, but is happy to cover anything else requested. When I return from my holiday I will contact Group Leaders to see if there are any requests.

11. Membership Secretary's Report (Linda Broad)

No report

12. Newsletter Editor's Report (Pauline Mullholland).

No report

13. Webmaster Report. (Robert Cole by email)

Website transition update.

I have been invited to begin training for the transition to the new website hosting platform; which is based on WordPress. Luckily I already manage another website using WordPress. I hope to complete this training before the end of March; I am waiting for suitable dates to book the first session.

The transition training is also available to an assistant web manager. If we can find someone amongst our community who would be interested in this role then I would appreciate the support. This also represents an opportunity to identify a potential replacement web manager, thinking ahead. **Lutie will place a request for a volunteer for the role on the Noticeboard. Action: Lutie AP240307.**

I would like to set up a small transition group to ensure the new website meets the needs of our community by providing input and consideration of any design decisions that need to be made during the transition. Members would not be expected to contribute to any transition work but would need to learn how to use the new website as page editors. Separate training and support materials will be available for page editors. The group would be testing the help materials and deciding if additional help is needed. The group can also help seeking media material to populate the new website and the design of top-level pages. I will know more about the potential roles of a transition group after the initial training.

I would appreciate the help of the executive committee in finding people for the above roles.

Current website.

A temporary page for the AGM and the materials for the meeting has been created. A number of groups are sending in a regular supply of photographs, which is appreciated. The new website will need a lot more such photos. I would like every group to have at least one. The Group Coordinators could help when the talk to group leaders. This could also be put to the Group Leaders meeting.

Marketing.

A happy coincidence of the need for a new flyer and a member being interested in sports photography resulted in a very good action image for a new flyer. I suggest we might want a more sedate image for use on a future flyer. Could people think about what such an image might be and how we will get one?

14. Beacon Database. (Janet Stuart by email)

- **Members Portal** - I sent a reminder on Sunday to all members who hadn't yet registered to try and get more members to register an account before renewals next month. Quite a few members have since registered and we now have 639 with a portal password and 970 without an account. **It was suggested that Janet should email all members again with clarification of the process and its purpose. Action: Janet AP240308.**
- **New members** - as agreed at the last committee meeting we will give new members 13 months membership if they join in April. I asked Robert to put a message on the website to tell potential new members to join after 1st April. I will change the system message for the new membership year before 1st April.
- **Renewals** - members will be able to renew online from 3rd April. I will update the appropriate system messages before then.

15. Any Other Business.

- i. **Marian Longley.** Update on Member Awarded Funding (MAF) grant situation and the Buddy Scheme.
 - **MAF AWARD**

Marian gave a detailed description of the problems that she had encountered in obtaining the MAF Grant. On 6th November 2023 she first submitted an application for £1,000. She was told that only £200 had been granted but in December she was told that it had been increased to £250. However, the money did not appear in our accounts. Finally on 12th February 2024, after she had repeatedly emailed the department for information as to the whereabouts of the money, the Grants Office of South Glos Council asked her to send them a copy of her original application which she did. Following several more emails on her part, Marian was able on 28th February, to send an email of thanks to the Grants Office for the £500 which had been awarded to us.

Marian was congratulated on her tenacity in obtaining this happy outcome.

Post-meeting note: the £500 has now been deposited in the u3a account.
 - **BUDDY SCHEME**

This was to provide those of our members who do not have access to email a means of keeping informed of the activities of our u3a. Marian's proposals had been accepted by the committee at the February meeting. She had created a "Letter to all Group Leaders" in order that they should make such disadvantaged members aware of the Scheme. The contents of the letter had been approved by the Group Coordinators.

Marian had asked Robert if he would place the letter on the u3a website for the attention of Group Leaders.

- ii. **Ali Bacon.** Privacy Policy (or “Use of Images Policy”). This was raised because members sometimes object to having their photos published, for instance in the Newsletter. It was suggested that this should be drawn to the attention of the Group Coordinators and dealt with at the next committee meeting. **See also Item 5 iv (above).**
Action: Tony AP240309
- iii. **Tony.** The speaker on Friday 1st March had not yet been paid due to the absence of a Treasurer at that time. As in normal circumstances the speaker would have been paid on the day, Tony offered to pay the £90 fee, to be reimbursed later. Seconded by Barry.
Approved unanimously.
- iv. **Lutie.** Reimbursement of £10.98 which he had paid for a cable to repair a u3a laptop which had crashed. Seconded by Tony. **Approved unanimously.**
- v. **Wendy.** Had read an article in the TAM magazine which suggested that smaller was better when it came to the size of u3as and that above 1,400 members (we are over 1,600) it became difficult to organise. To be placed on next month’s agenda. **Action: Tony AP240310.**

The meeting finished at 3.55 pm.

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 3rd April 2024 between 2 and 4pm at The Ridgewood Community Centre room 8/9, 244 Station Road, Yate, BS37 4AF.