

Committee Meeting Minutes

Venue: John Storer House

Date & Time: Wednesday 13th November 2024 10.00am

Present: Pam Upton (PU) - CHAIR, Debra Hardwick (DH), Pam Towers (PT) Geetha Bala (GB), Bev Gillman (BG), Garry Rigby (GR), Sue Ronald (SR), Helen Reid (HR), Jennie Lock (JL), Sam Hardwick (SH), Stephen Morris (SM), Martyn Speight (MS)

Apologies for absence: Margaret Kelvey

Pam U welcomed Jennie Lock and Sam Hardwick to the meeting. The Committee members voted unanimously to co-opt both to the Committee, with ratification to follow at the 2025 AGM.

Pam U also welcomed Stephen Morris and Martyn Speight to the meeting. In light of the resignation of Phil Bass, Committee members voted unanimously for Stephen and Martyn to be appointed, as non-Committee members, to the roles of System Administrator and Web Manager respectively.

1. Minutes of last meeting to be ratified and signed

- a. Page 2: Matters Arising: Change to: *Bev has been receiving emails purportedly from Pam.*
- b. Within the Treasurer's report, *Year End Accounts*, one groups income should read £2.5k not £25k.

Corrections to be made, then Minutes signed and sent to Martyn to be uploaded onto the website.

Action: PU

2. Matters Arising and Actions (items not included in agenda)

- Coffee & Chat: One meeting has happened. The next is Wednesday 20th November. Garry has volunteered to attend and Pam T offered to attend as well. It has proved difficult to put together a rota. As the original idea came from the EDI meeting group, Pam will ask for volunteers from those who generated the idea.
- The discussion regarding Riviera Travel last time sparked further discussion about Friends Extra. This is on the u3a website and offers savings from various outlets, once you've set up an account. It was suggested that further information be added to News & Views directing members to the u3a website.

Action: PU/HR

- TAT AGM – Although as a Committee we decided not to approve the changes to the Articles of Association, they were approved by 905 out of a total of 1073. Therefore the new structure of a smaller board and a regional council will be introduced. The new structure is expected to be operational by April 2025, with updates in the coming months.
- Stephen confirmed that we have now moved to the free Amethyst plan, but needs confirmation that the domain name is included.

Action: SM

3. Reports

a. Secretary (DH)

Nothing to add to the revised report sent the day before the meeting. In response to a question, Debra confirmed that The Code of Conduct that both new Committee members will have to sign clearly states the responsibilities of a Trustee. Sam noted that new Trustees can go onto the Charity Commission website and familiarise themselves with the Trustee Guidance (which has recently been updated). It was agreed that Martyn and Stephen should have flexibility in their attendance of meetings and that if there were particular issues to be discussed in relation to web management, they should have advance notice and therefore be prepared at the meeting.

b. Groups Coordinator (BG)

Having been notified that the two group leaders organising the Theatre Group were standing down, Bev was somewhat surprised to get an email from them wondering why there was no notice in the News & Views to see if anyone wished to take over. They have been asked to write a piece and potentially speak to any volunteers who come forward, but as yet no response.

The Parliamo Italiano group has only 4 members and hasn't run for about 3 years. So this group is definitely closed and can be removed from the website.

The Singing for Pleasure group will be singing at a Dementia event at Gorse Covert in December. Pam U will confirm the date and there can then be a mention in the December News & Views. **Action: PU/HR**

At the Group Leaders Meeting Pauline May suggested that it may be useful for the Committee to periodically review the risk assessments completed by groups, to ensure best practice is shared. Pam U suggested this happen on an annual basis, with a selection of groups asked for their completed assessments. It was suggested that those groups with more demanding activities should be included i.e. trips out, using third party venues etc. In light of his previous experience in conducting risk assessments, Sam offered to review the documents after the AGM.

c. Membership Secretary (GR)

Garry amended some of the figures in his last report, which should have recorded last month's membership at 1007. As stated, we did gain 15 new members but only lost 8 since the last report. Currently there are 1114 members, with 92 members yet to renew.

Year on year, 25% of new members do not renew for the second year. This has been the case for some years. The reasons for this are not always known, although it was felt that some may initially join because of a specific group only to find it's full. This is not helped by out of date information on group pages.

Pam U would be willing to speak to these individuals to find out why and whether there something we could have done. **Action: GR/PU**

d. Treasurer (PT)

Pam T briefly presented the main figures. Gift aid has still not been claimed as despite accepting all the forms, HMRC still have Bob as the business correspondent. An activation code should be received this week and then Pam T will be able to upload the files.

Pam T presented her Financial Reserves proposals. Our policy says that we should have 9 months reserves in place, but no reserves are identified in our accounts. The proposal is to put £7500 into a savings account as a contingency. This would cover 6 months of ongoing central costs. Having looked at other u3as' accounts, 6 months seems to be the common reserve period and is also what TAT recommend. This amount would also cover being able to engage a bookkeeper, if required. Last year the Cu3a came very close to not having a Treasurer, so this would give a safety net and additional time to bring someone to the post. The savings account would be with Unity Bank, which gives interest at 2.5% with instant access. This proposal was agreed by the Committee. Pam T will amend the Financial Policy to reflect this. It was decided that the Constitution didn't need changing and therefore this did not need to be put to members at the AGM, but would form part of the Treasurer's AGM Report.

Pam T will soon be approaching group leaders for details of their annual report. There are currently about 45 groups which do not hold funds. Pam T wants to concentrate on the other groups that do need to do financial returns and therefore requested help in contacting the other groups to confirm they do not need to do a financial report. Bev volunteered to contact those groups. **Action: PT/BG**

Next month Pam T will start to discuss next year's budget.

We're now calling Paypal 'Online Payments'. Paypal was confusing as it suggested that members would need to have a Paypal account, when in fact we're just using their system to make online payments by debit or credit card.

Going forward the proposal is to use two groups as a pilot, to see how it works. Pickleball will trial subscriptions coming in by different methods and the History

group have an event coming up next year that will enable an 'event' trial. The trial was approved by the Committee.

There is a charge for using the Paypal system which is transaction based. Therefore for groups who collect subscriptions on a weekly basis this is not viable as the charge is percentage based, but if it's 3 months subs in advance then financially it's worth doing. The current payment options will still be available to members.

It has been determined that using this payment method for annual membership subscriptions is not viable. If half the membership switched to payment by bank card it would increase our bank charges of £60 for cheque payments to over £200.

Action: PT/MS

e. Web Manager/System Administrator (MS/SM)

Martyn reported that he is working through various suggested changes to the website, mostly from the sub-committee, but also invited suggestions anyone may have.

There are system changes coming through from Simple Management that will take us closer to the system we want. The first batch is due later this month with a second release early in 2025.

We still need to encourage members to update their profiles on Simple Management to include their emergency contacts. There are some members who do not want to complete this section and Martyn suggested, as it is a free text box, that members state that they do not wish to fill in or offer alternative action such as an instruction to call 999. It should be noted that more than one contact can be named, as often next of kin may not be local.

There's a lot of work going on in the background and Pam U asked when it might be right to send an update to members/group leaders. Martyn suggested waiting until there is something significant to say, i.e. like the financial trials, and add reminders and additional functions to that message.

4. Web Management – Role Descriptions

It was agreed at the last meeting that there would be two separate roles – System Administrator and Web Manager. Therefore, with two role holders Pam suggested there should be two separate documents. This was agreed.

It was agreed that assigning appropriate permissions should also include role holders. Based on that change, the role descriptions were approved. Pam U asked Debra to make the amendment and prepare the documents to be uploaded onto the website.

5. Committee Members

Already covered.

6. Members Handbook

This has been on the agenda for some time and at the last Committee meeting everyone was asked to review the document. Debra has created a document for discussion, adding photos/images to break up some of the text.

Helen offered an amendment to the text relating to the logging on process and also to the section on Periodicals. Helen also suggested that the main list of documents that can be printed be in alphabetical order and the website locations be consistent. Pam U queried the sentence under Group and Activities stating that 'missing three consecutive meetings without notice may result in the loss of your place in the group'. It was agreed to delete this. Debra will make the changes and send to Martyn to check any links are correct and then circulate to the Committee for discussion at the next meeting.

Action: DH

7. Revised Group Management Guide

Debra confirmed that the only amendments made so far were those agreed at the last committee meeting. Pam T requested more time to review the Financial section as she feels there are further amendments required. Martyn suggested the need for some text about group leaders taking ownership of their group pages. Pam U asked Martyn to create this text and forward to Debra. Martyn also suggested having a positive, friendly message to group leaders for taking on the responsibility. It was agreed to re-order the opening paragraph of the Introduction. The financial procedure for deposits will be covered by Pam T. Bev asked for a change to taster sessions: "non-members may attend one taster session in up to 3 different groups". Bev also highlighted a typo on page 8 and suggested that snooker be removed as an activity and bowls be added. Helen questioned the first sentence of the final

paragraph 'As outlined in the Group Leaders Handbook'. It was agreed this should be removed as it's not relevant. It was suggested that because groups have folded due to lack of funds, we should do more to encourage new or potential groups to apply for a startup loan. Pam T will amend the wording to change the tone of the Short Terms Loans section. Debra to make changes, send to Martyn to check links and we can seek approval at the next meeting.

Action: DH/PT/MS

8. Charnwood u3a leaflet

Initially this was discussed at an EDI meeting in relation to welcoming new members. It was felt that something more colourful and interesting was needed. The TAT template is very limited in its approach so Pam accessed a designer, free of charge, to include copyright free images from the U3a Brand Centre. It was agreed to amend the wording of 'southern edge' to 'outskirts', to include 'Borough' in 'Charnwood Council', to apply the correct Charity Commission registration 1076107 and to state that we have 'about' 100 groups. Helen will seek a quote for printing from the University based on paper weight of 100 gms. It was agreed that Pam U arrange for a bottle of whisky to be given to the designer by way of thanks for his work.

Action: PU/HR

9. AOB

Pam and Debra received an email from the former Chair of the Network Group, asking local u3as in Leicestershire whether we would be interested in reviving the Network. The proposal is that it be revived in a less formal way without the need for officers. It was a useful platform for sharing information both nationally and locally. The committee agreed we should support the proposal.

Action: PU

Committee confirmed that Garry would organise mince pies for the December monthly meeting. The duration of the December monthly meeting at Emmanuel is now resolved.

Garry has been informed that a 4-way extension cable is faulty and he was given approval to replace.

Action: GR

Pam U, on behalf of the Committee, offered a vote of thanks to Phil Bass for all his work, both with Beacon and more recently in the launching of the integrated web management system.

Meeting closed at: 12.07 pm

Date & Time of next meeting: Wednesday 11th December 2024, 10.00 am

Accepted as a true record. Pam Upton-Chair.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Upton', written in a cursive style.

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