



Minutes of the U3A Thames Valley Network Representatives' Meeting held at Benson Parish Hall, OX10 6LZ

on

Friday 27th October 2017

Present:

Committee: Susie Berry, Chairman (Ridgeway); Avis Furness, Vice-Chairman (Reading); Derek Randall, Treasurer (Thame & District); Anne Marie Lord, Secretary (Chinnor & District); Len Smith, website support (Wokingham); Patsy Thornton, Events (Wokingham), Gill Le Du (Henley).

Regional Trustee: Bob Duckmanton.

Representatives: John Orchard, Fay Sinai and Eileen Page (Abingdon), Derek Jackson and Michael Jackson (Bracknell Forest), Ian Wright (Carterton), Geoff Glover and Tony Darbyshire (Chalfonts), James Cadle (Chess Valley) U3A, Peter Metcalf (Chiltern), Rosie Hetherington and Ann Fahey (Chinnor & District), Shirley Rouse (Didcot and District), Peter Foot (Faringdon), Gillian Thomas and Ann Walsh (Goring Gap), Christine Townsend and Rosalind Coates (Greater Thame), Jerry Michell (Haddenham), Ann Partridge (Headington), Penny Gerrard (High Wycombe), Jean Myhill and Ian Ross (Maidenhead), James Wright (Marlow & District), Sandra McWilliam (Newbury), Gillian Wilkinson (Princes Risborough), Mary Butcher (Reading), Pat Fewell, Annette Thompson, June Waterson, Nina Stonham (Ridgeway), Anne Fisher and Carol Bradbrook-Taylor (Thame and District), Neil Kelly and Paul Booker (Thameside, Wallingford), Jill Procter and Mike Morfey (Wallingford), John Smith (Wendover), Kay Whittle (West Oxford), Jane Clarke (Witney), Pamela Hares (Wokingham),

Schoolreaders: Jane Whitbread, Laura Kenyon-Slaney, Caragh Barnes

Susie welcomed all those attending and in particular representatives of Schoolreaders who would be giving a short presentation later to the meeting.

1 Apologies: Agnes Budagowska, TVN Committee (Swindon), Pam Jones (Chair of the Third Age Trust), Banbury U3A, Helen Tonks (Bracknell Forest), Josephine Wright (Carterton), Frances Wells (Chinnor & District), Chipping Norton U3A, Sandra Matthews, Marion Wilkes and Mike Price, (Greater Thame), Oxford U3A, Tring U3A.

2 Minutes of the last meeting (27th July 2017).

Thanks were received from Peter Metcalf (Chiltern) for a comprehensive set of Minutes. The Minutes were approved.

3.0 Matters arising.

12 AOB ii Jean Myhill thanked all 500 people who took part in the Cancer Research survey.

4.0 Chairman's Report.

Susie reported that National Office has now moved and is more accessible being in London and near Borough tube station. There is now an on-line shop with the facility to pay by credit or debit card. The new Third Age Trust website is now up and running, members can continue to use their user name and password but will need to register again.

Members can also register to receive a new monthly newsletter, which is available by e-mail from the National Office. Susie attended the National Conference in Nottingham and found the workshops much improved, as they were more interactive. Electronic versions of the paperwork for these workshops have been sent to all attendees.

She found the running of the AGM rather chaotic. There were no Resolutions or elections but the voting to approve the accounts etc. was muddled.

Overall the Conference was good and worth attending. Susie will put the report on the TVN website.

An EGM is planned for the Spring, as the Articles of Association and the Memorandum are now required to be combined into one document and it then needs to be approved by the Charity Commission, which is currently overloaded with work.

Changes recommended by the working party for the Consultation process are that there will be one Vice Chairman (instead of two), the officers will be elected for their term of office (not re-elected each year), the length of term for a Regional Trustee is to stay at 3 years after which he/she may be re-elected for a further 2 years.

Ian McCannah, Vice-chairman, will set up a “Network Link” which will bring together the chairmen of Networks, groups of U3As and associations of U3As. The first meeting will be held on 21st November to discuss whether this is a good idea and how it might be developed.

Some sub-committees have been enlarged to include ordinary U3A members. Susie has attended a meeting of the Development Sub-committee to discuss workshops that are arranged by the Third Age Trust. Volunteers are to be undergoing training to deliver these workshops.

Applications are currently being received for the TVN Workshop “Speakers and Speaking” on 23rd November. Michaela Moody, Vice Chairman of the Third Age Trust, will be attending.

In response to Susie’s report Reps commented favourably on the on-line screening of the AGM.

Reps were also asked to publicise the “Virtual U3A” which is specifically aimed at those who are housebound. Membership is £12 a year and it can be accessed via a link on the U3A website.

5.0 Treasurer’s Report

Derek gave a verbal report of the TVN finances to 30th Sept. Six Events had taken place realising a surplus of £2,241 The balance to 30th Sept is £11,131.

£2,893 is allocated to future events in October and November, £2,000 is the contingency sum and cash available is £6,238

A full report will be given at the next Reps’ meeting following the end of year for the accounts.

Comments on the report included a suggestion that subscriptions of £12 per year for the Virtual U3A be underwritten by TVN. Derek was thanked for his work in preparing the accounts.

6.0 SE Region Trustee’s Report

Bob Duckmanton told Reps that information about the EGM on 23rd March 2018 in Birmingham will be circulated once the venue has been arranged. Speakers are also being organised for this meeting.

With 1015 U3As and 450,000 members the Third Age Trust is the umbrella organisation offering help when issues arise in U3As and Bob emphasised that the expertise available within the Trust is there to be used.

He also has a sizable budget for the SE Region and encouraged the Network / groups of U3As to ask for help with funding workshops / projects which benefit the U3As educationally.

Changes to the Constitution are necessary in order to make it more acceptable to the Charity Commission and one area that needs to be removed is where reference is made to any form of ‘social’ activity.

The new Third Age Trust website is now available as are national Facebook and Twitter sites. Some Networks use Facebook and reps were advised to look at all that is available. When using Facebook it is possible to receive notifications from all U3As countrywide automatically.

The following points were raised and discussed:

i/ TVN has recently tried to ensure that U3As’ constitutions met the requirements of the Charity Commission but it was pointed out that some U3As have separate social budgets, something not approved of by the Charity Commission.

ii/ there was concern about security on Facebook and Twitter. The U3A Facebook site has a list of names of those who have access. Bob will send out a statement about security on Facebook and Twitter.

Data protection applies to both and access to information on individual users is limited to those who use the accounts and what individuals are willing to put on the site regarding themselves.

Wokingham U3A has a Facebook group. As a social network, Facebook can be restricted to a particular group.

There is a need to be mindful of those who do not understand these forms of communication especially as it is not in the interest of anyone to put people off using technology.

It was suggested that the new Communications Officer be asked to speak at the next TVN reps’ meeting.

iii/ Re the EGM the Third Age Trust is both a limited company and a charity and as such currently has Memorandum and a Constitution which are now being re-written as one document. It is possible that amendments will be made to the recommended constitutions for U3As.

iv/ mention was made that accounts of U3As need to be submitted to the Charity Commission but this only applies to very large U3As.

7 Citizens 800 Project

Most of the research undertaken by U3A members in TVN has been submitted and the conclusion of the TVN involvement in the project is approaching. Patsy recommends that the link to the project website is accessed to read the stories / research that has taken place. Researchers are invited to a reception at Royal Holloway college.

East Sussex is planning a launch meeting and two London groups are continuing their research.

Patsy is the Shared Learning Projects co-ordinator for the S E Region, Reps are asked to contact her if their U3A wants to take on a research / shared learning project.

Wokingham U3A is embarking on a project regarding Berkshire schools and is working with Peter Durrant (archivist). He is happy to talk with U3As.

Patsy paid tribute to Jennifer Anning, Shared Learning Project co-ordinator at National Office, who has just stood down after many years.

8 Generic e-mail address problems

Tony Darbyshire (Chalfonts U3A) gave three major reasons for e-mails “bouncing back”: i/ incorrect address ii/ a delay (soft bounce) iii/ an inactive address (hard bounce).

He recommended <https://betterbounces.net/our-story> for help in understanding the problem but it is still not clear why generic addresses frequently bounce back.

A generic address can be set up and forwarded to a personal e-mail but he recommended that e-mail settings be checked especially on older iPads.

If Reps / U3As have experienced problems and resolved them, do keep Tony up-to-date.

Susie thanked Tony for sharing his expertise. He has put together a document on the subject, which is circulated with these Minutes.

9 Events Team Report

9.1 Report on Events since last meeting: Patsy reported that all events had been very well supported and for the first time very many had been fully subscribed which is the reason for the surplus in the accounts this year. It is planned to use the monies to subsidise future events.

August 10th Kelmscott Manor (3rd visit) once again this was a very successful visit. Thanks to Gill Le Du.

Sept 28th Climate Change at Benson, a very good day.

October 18th Gilbert and Sullivan at Harwell, an excellent day. Feedback has been received re the venue and Patsy reminded Reps that the Events Team are always happy to hear about other venues that could be used.

9.2 Events planned to end of 2017

November 15th Archaeology Day – this is fully booked with a waiting list.

November 23rd TVN Workshop “Speakers and Speaking” this is free to all TVN members and recommended for those who are speaker secretaries or need to speak at meetings as it will include pointers on finding speakers plus the art of speaking. All are welcome.

9.3 Provisional programme for 2018

Work is in progress and Patsy thanked all our organisers, offers of help are always gratefully received.

Reps were reminded to look on the TVN website for up-to-date information regarding the Events programme and individual events. To date the following are planned:

March 1st Photography day at Benson– Mike Price

May 10th Kelmscott – Gill Le Du ... this has become a popular annual event.

Late May / early June History of the Thames at Crowmarsh Gifford village hall- Sally Ballard

September Polar exploration – Margaret Sherrington

October 17th Website building using WordPro

November ? Study day on the link between medicine and art

Several other ideas are to be firmed up.

9.4 Refunds Policy An application for a place on a Study day represents a firm commitment. If a delegate is unable to attend the following will apply: if there is no waiting list, no refund will be made; if there is a waiting list and someone is available to take up the place then a refund will be made minus a £2 administration fee.

Susie thanked Patsy for all that she does as co-ordinator for the Events team.

10.0 Schoolreaders

Jane Whitbread, founder of Schoolreaders charity, gave an overview of the charity and its work. With one in three children leaving primary school below the expected reading level, the charity endeavours to link volunteers with schools. She introduced Laura and Caragh as Ambassadors for Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire who enable these links. The charity was first set up in Bedfordshire 5 years ago and has volunteers in a third of the schools there. Many children do not have regular supported reading time with an adult, the remit of the volunteers is to give an hour or two a week in a local school.

A DBS check will be needed, this is set up on-line and the administrative charge will be picked up by the school.

Volunteers are covered for public liability as far as introduction to schools but once volunteering starts they will be covered by the school's insurance.

Schoolreaders had approached TVN as U3A members are one of the largest groups of volunteers. An information table set up for the meeting had material available for Reps to take back to their members (leaflets, posters and newsletter). Reps were asked to put information on their U3A website and in newsletters.

Jane said that the 1000th volunteer had recently been recruited and that over 3500 children were benefitting.

Schools are not charged but it does cost £15 a year per child to run. 84p per £1 raised in grants, sponsorship and donations is put towards this. The overall turnover for the current year is £193,000.

Susie thanked Jane for her presentation and Reps were encouraged to browse the information table and speak with Jane, Laura and Caragh over lunch.

11.0 Network Information

11.1 Speaker Database and list of interest groups.

Avis thanked all who had sent information and additions, the new list will be sent with the Minutes.

She asked that Reps ensure that the speakers' database is sent to the appropriate person in their U3A. The format has been simplified to enable printing. If it is too small to read on the screen she advised that using ctrl + will enlarge on screen and ctrl - will make the on-screen print smaller. She will be putting this instruction at the top of the document.

Please keep sending Avis up-dates. She will always get permission before making any additions to the database.

Avis will be speaking at the TVN workshop and would welcome any advice or tips beforehand.

11.2 Rep's list: Susie reminded all U3As to remember to tell her when their contact details changed.

11.3 Events Contact List

Maintained by Mike Price and up-dated following each event. This is working well.

11.4 Website

Len had produced a data graph of the number of hits over the past 8 years and a graph of the last year. There did not appear to be a correlation between increased numbers of hits and TVN Reps' meetings.

The Events calendar for 2018 will be put on the website shortly.

Susie thanked Len for all the work he puts in to maintaining the website.

12 AOB

i/ James Wright (Marlow U3A) said that his U3A had run 14 "Memory courses" but felt the course needed up-dating. Unfortunately Dr Dillon who developed the course has passed away and he was looking for help in how to proceed. Goring Gap has run 4 courses and have made their own amendments to up-date the course. Didcot also commented. Ormskirk U3A who originally promoted the course appear to have relinquished any rights. Bob Duckmanton was asked to contact the Regional Trustee for Ormskirk to ensure that this was the case.

ii/ A scam re e-mails supposedly from the chairman and sent to a generic e-mail address for a U3A Treasurer requesting a bank payment was reported. Bob was asked to look into this.

iii/ A query was raised about the John Lewis offer of free space in its stores for meetings. Some U3As have had contact and are using space e.g. staff areas, these are generally at branches of Waitrose. The initiative has been left to local branches of John Lewis making contact with their local U3A. For many no contact has occurred.

Bob said that he had been asked to apply on headed note-paper specifying dates to the local Waitrose store in order to have use of their meeting room.

Sainsburies also appears to be making their cafeteria available at times when the area is closed to the general public.

Date of next Reps meeting

Thursday 25th January at Benson Parish Hall 10am for 10.30am followed by lunch if pre- booked (£6) *

* Please respond when the agenda is sent out, apologies are appreciated just as much as responses indicating who will be attending. Lunches should be booked **before** the meeting. Thank you.

Date

Chairman

08/11/2017

Useful details:

TVN www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk

SE Region <https://u3asites.org.uk/south-east>

Citizens 800 Project www.citizens800.org/u3a

SE Region Trustee bob.duckmanton@u3a.org.uk