

Thames Valley Network

**Minutes of the u3a Thames Valley Network Representatives’ Meeting**

**held via Zoom video link Friday 29th April 2022.**

**Present**

**Committee:** Fay Sinai, Chairman (Abingdon); Derek Randall, Treasurer (Thame & District); Anne Marie Lord, Mins. Secretary (Chinnor & District); Susie Berry, Events Co-ordinator (Ridgeway), David Morton, website support (Reading); Avis Furness (Reading); Gill Le Du (Henley); Patsy Thornton (Wokingham).

**Representatives:** Patricia Foster and Liz Rowe-Jones( Banbury); Tomy Duby (Bicester); Fritha Irwin (Bourne End); Janet Russell, Bruce Collins, Carol Clark and Diane Jones (Bracknell Forest); Lilia Bogle (Buckingham); Kathy Dunmore (Carterton); Mike Lawson (Chalfonts); James Cadle (Chess Valley); Peter Metcalf (Chiltern); Kath Oldham (Didcot); Peter Foot (Faringdon); Mary Turner (Goring Gap); Josie Croft (Greater Thame); Gill Le Du (Henley); John Twydle and Amanda Taylor (Maidenhead); David Part (Marlow & District); David Mummery (Mid-Bucks); Brian Baldwin (Milton Keynes); Mary and Robin Blake (Newbury); Gerald Vinestock (Oxford); Babs Cooper (Princes Risborough); David Morton and Jane Sellwood (Reading); Gill Haughey (Ridgeway); John Evans (South Bucks); Sue Garvey (Swindon), Carol Bradbrook-Taylor (Thame & District); Neil Kelly (Thameside, Wallingford); Stephanie Steevenson (Thatcham); Ian Crookhall (Wendover); Beverley Birmingham (West Oxford); Dave Humphries (Windsor & District); Pam Hares and John Waddington (Wokingham)**;** Paul Atkins and Chris Mould(Woodley & District).

**South East Region:** Susie Berry

**1 Apologies had been received from:** John Orchard (Abingdon); Peter Sharp (Aston Clinton); Francis Gerrard and Judith Elliot (High Wycombe); Mary Butcher (Reading); Judy and Nick Sturley (Wendover); Kenneth Rose (Weston Turville); Pauline Williams (Wokingham); Tessa Dove (Woodley); Margaret Sherrington (TVN Committee); Mike Price (Events publicity and Greater Thame).

Taking the Chair as newly elected TVN Chair, Fay Sinai thanked Avis for her leadership through such unprecedented times over the past three years.

**2 Minutes of the last meeting** (4th February 2022). Circulated prior to the meeting.

**2.1** Bruce Collins (Bracknell Forest)referred to **9ix** and clarified that **he had reported** that “a member had documented the lives of members and produced a book.” Noted.

Stephanie Steevenson (Thatcham) asked for information on the up-dated Speaker database **10.1**. Avis sent this out before the AGM meeting earlier today. She has already received further up-dates/corrections and will be reviewing it as soon as possible.

The Minutes of 4th February 2022 were agreed.

**3 Matters arising.**

None that would not be dealt with elsewhere.

**4** **Chairman’s report**

Avis had given a report at the AGM prior to this meeting.

As newly elected Chair Fay gave a short resumé of her involvement in u3a since she joined Abingdon u3a in 2011 and more recently the TVN Events Team. She is looking forward to having the opportunity to share her experience with others through TVN and elsewhere within the u3a.

**5 Treasurer’s Report Financial Statement to the 29th April 2022**

The statement of accounts for January to April inclusive had been circulated by email prior to the meeting. As stated at the AGM earlier, the sum of £12669.30 was carried over from 2021.

There have been five fee paying events to date, these show a surplus of £365 but when taking note (1) into account, the actual surplus will be reduced to £265 for the events. Note (1) refers to a cheque for £100 that will not be presented until later in the year.

Administration costs include £288 to cover our Zoom licence for the first six months of this year and an annual fee of £131.88 for the Website.

As the balance stands at £12614.42, we remain in a very healthy position.

There were no queries, Derek was thanked and the accounts were accepted.

**6. SE Region Trustee’s report**

**6.1** The Third Age Trust has published the statistics showing u3a membership figures for the past 5 years. Susie reported that the SE Region had lost 7% of overall membership and just one u3a had closed. Membership numbers are expected to return to pre-pandemic figures. She was delighted to say that the SE Region has performed better than any of the other Regions.

**6.2** Susie confirmed that Headington u3a was the 500th u3a to subscribe to Beacon and offered congratulations.

**6.3** Forty squares had been selected for the 40th Anniversary Quilt; three of these were made by the quilting group in Witney u3a. The quilt is to be professionally pieced together and will be unveiled in Manchester the first week of June. However its’ permanent home will be in Witney Blanket Museum where it will be installed on 8th August. Susie invited any interested members to contact her if they would like to attend the unveiling. Numbers may be limited .

**6.4** Nationally there is a substantial budget for Grant applications e.g., for Open Days which may be linked to the 40th Anniversary. Conditions apply, one of which is that the event must be open to the public and grant money will be used for publicity etc but not to purchase goods such as banners that can be used on other occasions. The Grant available is £200, contact Susie.

**6.5** Staff numbers at National Office have increased. Staff work in the office as teams with designated office days, in between times, they work from home. This enables National Office to maintain a limited office space. The arrangement seems to be working well.

**6.6** Susie is a member of both the Social Prescribing and the Respect Agenda committees.

**6.6i/** Social Prescribing. In 2019 the National Academy for Social Prescribing was set up with a view to drawing together relevant organisations which might have a relevant part to play in social prescribing. u3a had been identified and is part of this but there has been, and is, a need to emphasise that u3a can make available relevant information for surgeries but cannot actually provide care, this must be arranged by the member for him/herself.

Bucks Health Authority had organised a Social Prescribing day at Missenden Abbey, u3a had been invited and Susie attended along with members from local u3as.

**6.6ii/** Respect Agenda. Set up following an increasing number of abusive emails and phone calls received by staff and volunteers the committee is planning to develop a script that can be used in these circumstances. The Third Age Trust operates zero tolerance covering all paid staff and the u3a volunteers who support them.

Improving the relationship between staff and trustees is also part of the agenda.

**6.7** A Board meeting has agreed that Site-Builder is no longer fit for purpose in relation to Beacon and will be migrated to a bespoke WordPress system. This will be free to u3as, assistance will also be available to manage this. It may not be available until the beginning of 2023 as there is a lot of work to do.

u3as will not need to have Beacon in order to access the website. They can be integrated but this is not necessary.

**6.8** Beacon I has been up-graded and a second server added as backup.

Beacon II is no longer going ahead and all monies have been recovered.

**6.9** The SE Region Spring Gathering held earlier in the year had been very successful.

**6.10 i/** Discussion followed as to why the National Office was in London. Susie responded that London is viewed as a hub and easily accessed by those travelling from around the country; moving the office elsewhere would involve moving staff.

**ii/** Asked where diversity is being addressed, Susie spoke about the Equality and Inclusion Committee which has recently become the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion committee. It is a full committee reporting to the Trustees, the new Chair is Susan Parker who is also a Trustee for the SW Region. [susan.parker@u3a.org.uk](mailto:susan.parker@u3a.org.uk) There is a range of workshops available and a coffee morning on 25th May, see the National website for information. Workshops are being run on a monthly basis.

**iii/** In the recent past TVN members have been asked to consider anti-bias, we were asked whether this has been taken further.

**iv/** There was discussion around perceptions of diversity and ethnicity within u3a. It was pointed out that ethnic minorities are featured in leaflets and publicity profiles. Opportunities have been taken up to engage with minority groups but interest in u3a is not always forthcoming. Some u3as such as Croydon have websites that are worth looking at.

**v/** Clarification was sought on the meaning of the logo u3a. The original model of u3a was of u3as that were linked to a university. Legally it is not possible to change University of the Third Age but in explaining what u3a means today it is usually stated that this is a wonderful self-help organisation.

**vi/** One u3a attempted to promote itself locally among part-time staff in two large supermarkets unsuccessfully.

**vii/** The issue of a digital divide between those with technological skills and those without or with limited skills, was brought up. There is help available through the National office regarding laptops and there are workshops on using Zoom. Susie will send details of the initiative by Barclays Bank which offers help with IT to older people.

**7 Network Link Meeting Report**

Sue Russell is due to take over as Chair of Network Link following the meeting on 22nd June. Invitations to this meeting will be sent out shortly, Avis will ensure they are sent to reps .

There was a successful Network Link meeting in February.

Avis wrote an article for the last Network Link newsletter. There is a link to the newsletter on the Third Age Trust website.

**8 Events Team Report**

TVN is the most active Network in terms of holding Events and this success is very much due to the efforts of David in ensuring the website is kept up-to-date, publishing the flyers and hosting the Events on Zoom, Mike Price for maintaining the events contacts list so that interested members are kept informed, as well as to the marvellous team of organisers who have come up with so many ideas including excellent speakers.

Approximately one event per week was offered through ‘lockdown’ with 52 events taking place last year. At the height of lockdown 350-400 people would book each event. With easing of restrictions numbers have now dropped and two events per month are likely to be offered. The percentage of those who have booked and actually attend has increased.

**Programme of** **Future Events:**

9th May 14.30 – Anaesthesia. Past, Present & Future – Prof. Tom Clutton-Brock

late May - Escape from Poland – (George Nowacki) tbc

10th June 14.30 – Summer Quiz - question master Avis Furness

14th June “Roses” including a demonstration by Katherine Kear

23rd June – visit to RHS Wisley tbc

8th July History of Wallingford – Judy Dewy & Steve Capel-Davis

29th July TVN Reps meeting at Benson + lunch + Welcome to My World - William French

NB a ‘save the date’ flyer will be sent next week.

There will be a charge for the lunch which must be pre-booked.

It will be available for Reps and also for those attending the afternoon event/presentation.

The presentation will be a “welcome back” event and will be free of charge.

31st August – visit to Kelmscott Manor

6th September 14.30 - Weird & Wonderful World of the Law – David Allen

21st September 14.30 - History of Botanical Art – Dr David March

4th October 10.30 - The Battle of Agincourt – Patsy & Ted Thornton

13th October 10.30 Life in the Stone Age - Neandertals and Us – Dr Jill Eyers

28th October 10.30 Reps’ meeting face-to-face or on-line to be agreed at the July meeting.

**9 Discussion – the future use of Zoom in our u3as.**

Some u3as have invested in improved technology to facilitate continued use of Zoom particularly as it enables less mobile members to be included. National Office has provided support particularly where u3as have opted to use hybrid meetings.

The point was made that Zoom allows access to speakers who live at a distance avoiding the need to pay travel expenses, neither would there be hall hire costs.

It was clear from discussion and views expressed in the Chat that Zoom will continue to be used by some u3as to facilitate meetings such as committee meetings, some groups are continuing to use Zoom but arranging a few social gatherings to maintain more personal contact. Some will use Zoom in order to access speakers who live further afield so avoiding high travel expenses. Other u3as are meeting face-to-face for group and open meetings. A few favour hybrid meetings but this relies on facilities/technology being available.

**10 Network Information**

**10.1 Speaker Database** (maintained by Avis). An up-dated version has been sent earlier today but Avis has already received corrections and will re-send once she has dealt with these. She asked reps to keep her up-dated.

**10.2. List of Interest Groups (**maintained by Fay Sinai) This is available on the TVN website. The list is dependant on information sent to Fay by Group co-ordinators or Chairs of the TVN u3as.

**10.3** **TVN Contacts list** (maintained by Chairman). Avis will make any amendments following this meeting and pass it over to Fay. Please let Fay have any up-dates especially in terms of new personnel.

To comply with GDPR this list is not circulated elsewhere. Contacts usually include the u3a Chair and any other who needs to be kept informed.

**10.4 Events Contact List** (maintained by Mike Price) The list has around 1900 members.

**10.5** **Website** (maintained by David Morton) [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk) David reported that the website was

kept up-to-date and is well used.

**11 AOB**

**i/** A query placed in the Chat from Marlow & District u3a will be raised at National Office.

**ii/** Reps agreed that TicketSource would be used to register their attendance at the next Reps meeting.

**12. Dates Reps’ meeting at Benson on Friday 29th July at 10.30pm** Coffee/tea available from 10am.

Optional lunch from 1pm will need to be pre-booked.

Fay closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Date ……………. Chair ……………… 07/05/2022

Useful details:

Chair TVN Fay Sinai [fay.sinai@icloud.com](mailto:fay.sinai@icloud.com)

TVN [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk)

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

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

(Use the link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/377393767067766> or search Facebook for Thames Valley Network).