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**Thames Valley Network**

A MEETING OF TVN REPRESENTATIVES HELD ON

26th JULY 2024, at

Benson Parish Hall, Sunnyside, Benson, OX10 6LZ

**Minutes**

* **Attendees:** Fay Sinai (Chair), David Morton (Vice-Chair/WebAdmin.), Derek Randall (Treasurer), Susie Berry, Avis Furness, Patsy Thornton, Stephanie Steevenson (Min. Sec.-to be co-opted), Graham Tabersham (Abingdon), Roberrt Goddard & Carol Morgan (Bracknell Forest), James Cadle (Chess Valley), Annette Dearmun, Karin Dawson-Smith & Anne Marie Lord (Chinnor & District), Christine

Clinch (Chipping Norton), Richard Elliott (Didcot), Peter Foot (Faringdon & District), Celia Barnshaw (Goring Gap), Rodney Ellis & Mike Price (Greater Thame), Patricia Lee (Headington), Michael Wright & Rosemary Byrne (High Wycombe & District), Jenny Alder (Maidenhead), Val McCarthy (Oxford), Mary Butcher & Jacqui Weiss (Reading), Annette Thompson (Ridgeway), Peter Beesley (Slough), Anne Hughes, John Sutton & Nigel Webb (Thame & District),Lee Selman & Jack Telling (Wallingford), Beverley Birmingham (West Oxford)

1. **Apologies for absence** – Ann Martin (Abingdon), Elizabeth Rowe-Jones (Banbury), Shelagh Richards (Bracknell Fell), Janet Mills (Haddenham), Pamela Cronin (Henley-on Thames), Katherine Daking (Hungerford), Frank Parisi (Milton Keynes), Mary Blake (Newbury), Linda Cole (Reading), Margaret Wall (Reading), Neil Kelly (Thameside), Simon Evers (Weston Turville), Carol Crago (Windsor), Julie Collieu (Witney), John Waddington (Wokingham)
2. **Minutes of the last meeting** (None for reps’ meeting 3rd MAY 2024 – no secretary)
3. **Matters arising** (Not on the agenda)
4. **Chair’s Report –** Fay Sinai (distributed with the agenda) Fay mentioned the huge success of the Festival in York, including lectures, games, activities, music etc. SE Region Network (SERN) meeting took place on Zoom and the main discussion was on Fit for the Future. TVN expects our meetings and events, led by our network members., to pass information to their u3a members. Avis administers our Network meetings and the last one even included a rep from New Zealand! Fay mentioned trying to improve our image in our communities. Alan Walmsley is now Chair-Elect of the u3a to be confirmed at the u3a AGM to be held on 16th October in Milton Keynes.

**5. Treasurer’s Report -** Derek Randall/Rod Ellis

* See Financial Statement (distributed by email) Thame Rep found the report to be full of error warnings. Suggestion was to turn the Excel file into a pdf file. Derek said this was his last meeting and that he had been a Treasurer for 23 years and did not mind being called a Luddite as he is reluctant to use online banking. Rod Ellis has stepped forward to take over once Lloyds bank has accepted him, hopefully by the next meeting in October. Balance = £8573.18 and the balance is slowly decreasing to a more reasonable position.
* Four talks ran at a loss but as we have a good balance this has not been a concern up to now. Fay explained that two of the talks gave donations to charities rather than giving a fee to the speakers. Qu: I s there a ceiling to speaker fees? Answer: No, but a reasonable charge is fine, say £200 or less. Some speakers ask for their fee to go to a charity instead of to them. Wallingford said speakers need often to charge a travelling fee, but these are Zoom speakers, so this was irrelevant. Faringdon asked if we are denying the best speakers if their fees are too high, i.e. over £200? Derek said we could pay a higher fee, but attendees would need to pay more. There was praise for the standard of the present speakers. A reminder that u3a speakers charge nothing and are often of the highest standard. Greater Thame said the best speakers are often recommended by word of mouth.
* The events team has been asked if Study Days will return. Location is a big question and also who is going to run them? The subject would have to generate a lot of interest.
* Rod Ellis of Greater Thame introduced himself as our future Treasurer but explained there are difficulties at present with Lloyds bank.

**6. Report from the SE Region** – Susie Berry mentioned the election of Alan Walmsley as national Chair and that he is right for the job. There is going to be an election for a Deputy Chair. Margaret who organised the Festival is known to be putting herself forward for this post. Next week we are likely to hear who is going to become the new CEO, and the u3a had 85 applicants for the post.

Fit for the Future: latest email sent an A4 summary/crib sheet to be used by committees for ease of understanding. Susie said she would send the summary around with the Minutes of this meeting. There will be three Q and A sessions, the first on 1st Aug, second 14th Aug and then 3rd Sept; see website to submit questions.

Festival at York. Susie spoke of its success. York was a good location for all our u3as for travelling. It is unlikely there will be another next year, but possibly the following year.

Chichester offers our SE Region Summer School, 2nd to 5th Sept, with one or two vacancies still on offer but going fast.

Susie mentioned AI which is here to stay. Surrey university and Royal Holloway have organised money for students to study for 4 years as to how AI can help older people continue to live independently in their own homes. Surrey has contacted Susie to ask u3a members to put forward suggestions as to how this research could help older people maintain their independent lives. 20th Sept = meeting for Susie about this and will bring it back to our next meeting.

**7. Network Link** – Avis Furness (distributed her report with the agenda) Avis said a special thank you to Derek. She also apologised for not supporting Beacon earlier as she is completely positive about it now.

Link meetings are on Zoom and any member is able to attend, not just committee members. Over 100 members attended the last meeting. Wed 2nd Oct = next meeting. and will be on how to organise a meeting. TicketSource is used for these meetings.

**8. Discussion and Q and A.**

* Fit for the Future. Already discussed above.

**9. Events Team Report –** Susie Berry – see Treasurer’s report above for some discussion on this. Attendance fee for the Zoom talks is to go up to £2. Our Licence goes up to 100 attendees and we have to pay extra to allow more attendees. Zoom is flexible for all our members. Suggestions for speakers are always welcome. Reading asked if any speakers could ever be rebooked and heard again. Susie said there isn’t any reason why not.

**10. Information**

* Database of Speakers (maintained by Avis Furness) Avis sent the latest out to

her list on 25th July, with changes in blue, so easily spotted. Red entries are those

that are not verified. Some speakers were removed e.g. if their expenses are too steep.

Please notify Avis if speakers are either very good or very poor, e.g. using in-

appropriate language, as once happened, so that speaker was removed to the

end of the list. Bracknell Forest asked for a ‘Review’ system on our speakers,

where a star award could be given. Avis is worried about the size of the

document but is hoping to include this, and any other information which

would be useful for Speaker Organisers. Greater Thame said the list is useful.

* ‘FaceBook’ (maintained by Avis Furness) 55 members and very quiet. Please

contribute if you can – ‘u3a Thames Valley Network’. (Just to confirm – this is a ‘closed’

group.

* List of Interest Groups (maintained by Fay Sinai) Fay is only interested in the

namrs of the groups, not who is running them.

* TVN Contacts list (maintained by Fay Sinai) – does not need to include

absolutely everyone on the various committees!

* Events contact list (maintained by Mike Price) - about a 1000 on the list and is

running smoothly on TVN website. The recording of speakers talks is not possible

as it is extremely complicated to record speakers. Faringdon said he turned on AI

in Zoom and he received a summary of his meeting immediately afterwards and it

is a transcript without faces. There was a warning about Copyright breaches.

* Website [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk) (maintained by David Morton) Google will

no longer say the website is ‘dodgy’ as alterations have been made.

**11. Any Other Business:**

Faringdon asked about the two Boards in Fit for the Future: Has work been done on the differing responsibilities of the two new entities? Susie says lots of work has been done and is being done on who has taken decisions in the past and who would make those decisions in the future. We are by far the biggest Region and questions have been asked about Regional representation. Review dates have been built in on this matter.

Abingdon said he has asked for volunteers at every meeting, but has had no response – are there any secrets to recruiting? Chinnor started up a STAR group and volunteers came forward for small tasks and they could then do more, but Abingdon already have that group. Fay says the problem in Abingdon is partly that they meet once a week and that is a big commitment. Bracknell Forest says ‘coercion’ works!

Ridgeway agreed they were finding it hard to get people onto committees, but a lunch (with alcohol) for new members proved a good recruiting ground.

Didcot sent out a request to all Group leaders and a new Secretary was forthcoming.

Thame has a ‘really useful group’ and an email comes out on the Sunday before each meeting. Communication is the secret.

South Bucks are looking for speakers for groups and would like other u3as to share their sources more often. Speakers who have produced a talk could more often do it somewhere else to make it worthwhile. Bracknell Forest mentioned something called ‘Speaker Swap’ but it is thought to be only in some regions.

Chinnor suggested members do not have confidence in themselves to take on roles. Might we say that on joining the u3a ‘what are you going to do for it?’ is a question to ask maybe on membership forms?

Chipping Norton has on their joining form a place to add in the skills people possess.

Greater Thame organised a Zoom talk for Treasurers in the past and will put together a questionnaire to see if this should be repeated.

Headington asked why she had not seen anything other than the Finance information for this meeting. Fay offered to find out why this might happen as she takes the names from TicketSource. David sends out the Contact list on Beacon.

Wallingford has 90 members and a small committee. Treasurer said some u3as have had problems with Gift Aid. The money from his last application was in the account after only

5 days!

**13. Date & Venue of next Reps’ meeting –**

**Friday 25th October 2024 at Benson Village Hall.** (What do members want to do in the afternoon? How about splitting into groups of ‘chairs’ ‘secs’ ‘treasurers’ etc. Everyone agreed this was a good idea and the more the merrier for the afternoon session. Attendees would have to book in for lunch if they want it.)

**Friday 7th February 2025 on ZOOM.**