



## Thames Valley Network

### Minutes of the u3a Thames Valley Network Representatives' Meeting held via Zoom video link Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021.

#### Present:

**Committee:** Avis Furness, Chairman (Reading); Fay Sinai, Vice-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); Gill Le Du (Henley); Margaret Sherrington (West Oxford); Patsy Thornton (Wokingham).

**Representatives:** John Orchard, Fay Sinai (Abingdon); Patricia Foster, Chris Fieldsend, Caroline Elmitt (Banbury); Fritha Irwin (Bourne End & District); Bruce Collins, David Lenton, Janet Russell (Bracknell Forest); Kathy Dunmore (Carterton); Mike Lawson (Chalfonts); James Cadle (Chess Valley); Peter Metcalf (Chiltern); Bryan Roebuck (Chinnor & District); Christine Clinch (Chipping Norton); Kath Oldham (Didcot & District); Peter Foot (Faringdon); Mary Turner (Goring Gap); Christine Townsend, Deborah Miller, Mike Price (Greater Thame); Gill Le Du (Henley-on-Thames); Francis Gerrard (High Wycombe); Brian Baldwin (Milton Keynes); Mary Blake (Newbury); Margaret Lipscomb, Valerie McCarthy (Oxford); Babs Cooper (Princes Risborough); David Morton (Reading); Judith Pernette, Annette Thompson (Ridgeway); Carol Bradbrook-Taylor, John Sutton (Thame & District); Stephanie Steevenson (Thatcham); Dave Humphries (Windsor & District); Pam Jones (Witney); John Waddington (Wokingham). Pam Davidoff (West Sussex Network) guest.

**Events publicity:** Mike Price

**S E Region: Regional Trustee** Susie Berry

**Regional Trustee Assistant Bucks, Berks, Oxon.** Pam Jones

**1. Welcome and Apologies:** The Chairman welcomed all present via ZOOM and offered a warm welcome to Pam Davidoff as our guest from the West Sussex Network.

**Apologies** had been received from Mary Herbert (Bicester); Mike Bellamy (Bourne End & District); Sue Hookway (Goring Gap); Judith Elliot (High Wycombe); Mary Butcher, Jane Sellwood (Reading); Christine Phillips (South Bucks); Sue Carvey (Swindon); Neil Kelly (Thameside, Wallingford); Beverley Birmingham (West Oxford); Wendy Nicholls (Witney); Pam Hares (Wokingham); Tessa Dove (Woodley & District).

**2 Minutes of the last meeting** (30<sup>th</sup> July 2021). Circulated prior to the meeting. The Minutes were approved.

**3 Matters arising.** None that would not be dealt with as part of this meeting.  
item 6.2 the £80,000 for the Beacon contract, Susie reported that a refund has been agreed and payment should be received shortly.

#### 4 Chairman's report

**4.1** The Events Team took a well-deserved break from hosting Events in August, but continued with preparing Events for September, and getting flyers out to all the members.

Events continue to take place on Zoom with bookings made through TicketSource. Avis thanked David, Mike and Susie for enabling the background technology which is a vital part of our operations.

The Events Team were also congratulated on their hard work and inventiveness in coming up with so many excellent talks. Feedback from Reps and members through Chat and e-mail show how much these are appreciated and enjoyed.

With the autumn programme of events well underway thoughts are turning to 2022 and Reps are asked to let the Team know of any ideas for talks.

Avis organised another Zoom Quiz in September, which went well, and is preparing for another in December. Feedback from members indicates that they enjoy being put into teams, in breakout rooms, at random, without knowing who they will meet, and appreciate the opportunity to talk to members of other u3as.

**4.2** Tutorials on Zoom breakout rooms run by u3a will be held in November, the links for signing up are on the u3a website (go to Zoom Tutorials under the Events tab at the top of the home page).

**4.3** The South Eastern Regional Network meeting in September included discussion about organising u3a outings and holidays. Consequently, a workshop called "Doing it Right" ensuring that we follow proper practices in the everyday running of our u3as will take place on January 12<sup>th</sup>, 10.30am-12.30pm. Further details to be sent to Reps.

**4.4** The Third Age Trust AGM was held on September 27<sup>th</sup>. The Trust now has a new Chair, Vice-Chair, and Treasurer, we wish them well.

**4.5** Avis will give a talk to Abingdon u3a at the beginning of November.

**4.6** The TVN Facebook Group is now up and running, currently 7 members. (use the link <https://www.facebook.com/groups/377393767067766> or search Facebook for Thames Valley Network).

The purpose of the group is the exchange of ideas, suggestions and questions on matters which concern a u3a and its members. It can also be used to provide information about Study Events, and any other information that may be useful.

Reps were asked to let their members know about the group (all members of u3as in the TVN are welcome to apply to join). Members are required to declare which TVN u3a they are from and agree to keep to the rules.



## 8 Events Team Report

**8.1** Events have taken place almost weekly and have been very well attended. The Events Team took a break in August but a full programme is now underway and includes the return of some speakers. As expected there has been some drop off in attendance as restrictions have eased. However no face-to-face meetings are planned before Christmas.

An Autumn Concert given by the Brandenburg Singers will take place next week on Zoom. Reps were asked whether they felt a Carol Concert in London on 8<sup>th</sup> December would be supported, it was agreed that TVN will not go ahead with this.

**8.2** Details of events will be put on the website approximately one month in advance.

**8.3** Derek is not including accounts for each Event but the balance aggregated for all Events is in credit.

**8.4** Susie asked Reps to let the Team have any ideas for future events and, even better, suggest a speaker.

Avis thanked Susie and the Events Team, TVN is really fortunate in having such a hard working and resourceful team. Congratulations had also been received from a member of another Network.

Avis confirmed that any comments in the Zoom chat would be saved and sent to Committee members.

## 9 u3a 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 2022

**9.1** An Anniversary Woodland will be located on the England/Wales border in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The trees are two-year old sapling native, deciduous trees. The cost includes tree planting and 12 years of maintenance to ensure the tree(s) become established. More information can be found on the u3a Brand Centre website. This includes a list of tree species. Members have noted that the cost for 10x 10 trees is cheaper than for 100 trees, a subscription for 100 trees includes extras such as a commemorative plaque.

**9.2** The Anniversary Quilt competition is open until 15<sup>th</sup> November, more information is available on the website.

**9.3** Avis is in touch with the Round and About free magazine delivered in some areas. It is very helpful in publicising events and will be a useful resource for promoting the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Avis has made contact to see if they would like to do a feature on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. She will let Reps know their response and areas covered.

**9.4** Reps were invited to share any plans in hand, comments or suggestions.

i/ **40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** Goring Gap are planning "The Great u3a Tea Party", Banbury plan to hold a picnic and Abingdon plan to have a picnic tea party. A park bench dedicated to u3a was also suggested.

ii/ **How many u3as are holding face to face meetings?** Many u3as were doing so, some offer hybrid meetings, but the number of members attending vary.

iii/ **DBS checks and safeguarding issues.** This was raised as a u3a group meeting and playing table top games with residents in a public room in a care home had been asked to provide a safeguarding policy for the members, not the residents, and were told that convenors would need to have a DBS check. Susie will take this up with National office. She pointed out that safeguarding relates to those who have contact with vulnerable adults within their u3a.

iv/ **Induction of Committee members.** In theory all Committee members should be inducted when they join committee. There is an approved workshop for Committee members covering the basics of Trustees responsibilities. This could be run by TVN. **See Min. 12 Dates** on page 5.

v/ **Recruiting Committee members** It was acknowledged that recruiting committee members was not easy especially given that expectations and workload involved could be overwhelming. Two u3as had sent assertive e-mails to all members recently each having a positive outcome. Reps were cautioned to use this approach sparingly. One Rep advocated the need to encourage members to actively engage as committee members through positivity rather than promoting this as onerous which can be off-putting, it was suggested that u3a looks into the practice of positivity.

Susie advised Reps that there is a section on recruitment for committee members (How to build support for recruitment in your committee.) in the Toolkit on the website.

## 10 Network Information

**10.1 Speaker Database** (maintained by Chairman). This has been corrupted and will be up-dated and sent out as soon as possible.

**10.2. List of Interest Groups** (maintained by Fay Sinai) This is available on the TVN website. Fay asked Reps to ask their convenors to let her know which groups are now meeting, new groups and those that have closed.

**10.3 TVN Contacts list** (maintained by Chairman). **Please let Avis have up-dates as they occur.** This list is also held by the Vice-Chair. To comply with GDPR it 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) An expanding list now with 2000 members with events.

**10.5 Website** (maintained by David Morton) [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk) David reported that the website was well used especially with regard to events.

Avis thanked David for maintaining the website which is very informative and easy to use. She also thanked everyone for maintaining all these sources of information.

## 11 AOB

i/ New members meetings for those who have joined u3as over the past 18 months/2years are much appreciated with members feeling welcomed and valued.

ii/ A question was raised regarding how large u3as manage their membership lists.

## 12. Dates



As a “private group” its contents will not be seen by anyone who is not a member of the group.  
The simple rules are mostly based on the standard rules normally seen on Facebook Groups plus the addition of Rule 4 “no jokes, no cartoons and no inspirational messages as sometimes these can lead to controversy. As the moderator Avis will enforce the rules if necessary.  
Time will tell whether this group will be popular, or effective, if not it can be closed down.  
**4.7** A national Facebook group called u3a: Let’s Talk Tech has been launched recently. Its’ focus is on experiences, ideas and advice on technical matters, especially hybrid meetings.  
**4.8** Finally Avis reported that staff and volunteers at national office have been receiving some abusive calls from members. The Trust and the Office will be implementing a no-tolerance policy for abusive calls. Avis reminded Reps that even if there is a genuine grievance being abusive is not the way to resolve issues.

## **5 Network Link Meeting Report**

**5.1** Avis was involved in the planning for the Network Link meeting which took place via Zoom on October 12<sup>th</sup>. Pre-Covid meetings were held face-to-face, twice a year, with representatives limited to one per network, using Zoom has enabled the Network Link team to open up the meeting to many more participants. 160 reps attended this meeting from Scotland to the Scilly Isles.

Having responsibility for keeping the attendance list Avis was pleased to see that TVN was the best represented network at the meeting.

Despite some glitches the meeting was a great success. Subjects discussed were the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, Member Services, Beacon as a resource for Networks, and Third Age Trust Trading Limited (TATTL). The presentations at the Network Link meeting are available on YouTube (link sent out with the agenda e-mail).

**5.2** The TVN committee is not adopting Beacon at present but will keep an open mind on this resource.

**5.3** A Network Newsletter is planned, and, with support from the u3a office, the first issue should be out in January. A link has been sent to Reps, with around 200 members already registered, it is hoped that Reps will sign up and encourage their members to sign up, too. The newsletter will include articles about networks across the country and how they operate.

## **6. Treasurer’s Report      Financial Statement to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

The statement of accounts for the third quarter of this year, including minor changes to date, had been circulated to Reps prior to the meeting.

Funds amounting to £13121.69 are available in Lloyds Bank. Credits due to members amounting to £1872 are included, but any monies not reclaimed by the end of this year will be deemed to have been donated to the Network. Since the last report of 30<sup>th</sup> July a refund has been received from the River & Rowing Museum, the booking and deposit fees paid for two meetings and cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been repaid in full.

Avis thanked Derek, as always, for keeping our financial records with great attention to detail.

## **7. SE Region Trustee’s report**

**7.1** The **Autumn Gathering in the SE Region** will take place on **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November**. This will be a long morning with breaks. Liz Thackray will speak on the future of the u3a movement, Michaela Moody will speak on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. Breakout rooms will be used for discussions. Susie encouraged Reps to join, places can be booked via the website.

**7.2** At the **National AGM new officers** were appointed: Liz Thackray as Chair, Michaela Moody as Vice-chair and Derek Harwood as Treasurer.

**7.3** To ensure transparency rules, customs and practice will be documented.

An overview of the Board, Trustees and the six advisory committees (Finance, Governance, Learning, Development, Communications, Diversity and Inclusion) will seek to demonstrate that the skills-set satisfies the aims and objectives as required by the Charity Commission. This will include how committee members are appointed. Vacancies will be advertised widely including in TAM and on the website.

**7.4** Following consultation the Board has decided that **u3a Day** will be held during the week (Saturday to the following Sunday) in which the autumn solstice (21<sup>st</sup> September) occurs. Any day in this time period can be chosen by each u3a.

**7.5** The Trust AGM has traditionally been held in August, **the next AGM will be on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022** and will be a hybrid meeting.

No Conference is planned for 2022 but ideas are sought for 2023.

**7.6 New Strategic Plan** All u3as have been contacted via e-mail and a survey sent out; to add comments go to [strategy@U3A.org.uk](mailto:strategy@U3A.org.uk) Susie reminded Reps that it is important to think about where we are going in the future. The idea is to develop a plan for 6-7 years ahead but to include annual planning within this.

**7.7** Michaela will give more details of **plans for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** at the SE Region Autumn Gathering and also in TAM. **Growing the future tree planting** will be included.

**7.8** Shopping at **the Brand Centre** is cheaper when buying in bulk. Discounts are under consideration and more items are now sustainably manufactured and good quality. Diaries are selling fast.

**7.9 The new Digital Strategy Review** will ensure all platforms including site-builder, Beacon and the u3a’s websites are communicating with each other and delivering.

**7.10 Beacon** for Networks will not be adopted by TVN at present. Take-up of Beacon for u3as is almost 50%.

**7.11 Click and save for Gift Aid** has been revised and will now be activated centrally, individual members can sign up for the year.

**7.12 COP26** the u3a has a stand at this conference stewarded by members of u3as in Scotland.

**7.13 Susie also emphasised that abuse of staff, u3a members and volunteer phone staff will not be tolerated.**

*A short discussion followed, several points and responses included:*

*1 The new Network Newsletter is for everyone and will be sent by e-mail.*

*2 Some members were encountering problems when searching for the Facebook page, Avis will look into this.*

*3 Printed paper banqueting roll was proposed as a useful item that could be sold through the Brand Centre. Susie will pass this on.*

**Next Reps' meeting – Friday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 10.30am via Zoom**

Avis closed the meeting at 12.15pm and thanked everyone for attending and added seasonal greetings.

Date ..... Chairman .....

08/11/2021 Useful details:

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>