



BUCKINGHAM & DISTRICT U3A

Minutes

Group Co-ordinators' Forum held via Zoom on 8 October 2020

Welcome

The Chairman Martin Paul welcomed the Group Co-ordinators and Committee members and opened the meeting. He thanked Roland Simpkins for organising the Zoom arrangements.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Steven Thompson, Lorna Joy, Carolina Keneally.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 May 2019 were approved with some minor corrections that had been submitted to the Secretary.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported that the organisation's finances were in good condition and have permitted the Society to waive members' subscriptions for 2021.

Membership Secretary's Report

The Chairman reported that the organisation has 780 members, in line with past membership numbers. The Membership Secretary would like to step down at the Annual General Meeting in November 2020. She urges the members to provide her with their e-mail address in order to improve communication and reduce postage and printing costs.

Webmaster's Report

There continue to be complaints about the RoundCube email communication system. It would be very welcome if members would inform him of changes so that the Society's website can be kept up to date.

Speaker Secretary's Report

The Speaker Secretary reported the attendance at the Zoom open meetings is low and is dropping. He asked for ideas as to how to increase participation. A Group Co-ordinator said that it would help to have more cheerful subjects. Steve Heywood observed that a lot of members do not like to and will not use Zoom.

Group Liaison Officer

Steve Heywood reported that many groups were using Zoom in order to hold meetings successfully. All of the groups are complying with the Third Age Trust Covid guidelines.

Matters Arising

Group Co-ordinators On-line Forum

The Chairman led a discussion about establishing a web forum for Group Co-ordinators. There was a discussion of whether such a forum should be on FaceBook, the website or WhatsApp. The Webmaster pointed out that a web page is static and Facebook tends to get immediate comments.

Towcester U3A has a Facebook site as well as a website. The FaceBook site is a closed group. The Third Age Trust also has a FaceBook group.

Any forum would be limited to Group Co-ordinators (a private group). Steve Heywood pointed out that many people refuse to use Facebook. The Webmaster has a strong preference for a forum on FaceBook. The Science and Technology Group has a forum.

The meeting decided that the Committee would investigate the matter and organise a forum that would be run for two to three months to see how it gets on.

Experiences with Covid Restrictions

The Third Age Trust Guidance is quite good, but Helen Preston reported that it is difficult to find Covid guidance for music groups. Much of the advice which exists is for professional musicians, but Tina Mitchell reported that she has consulted information published by Brass Bands UK and the Musicians' Union, which gives detailed instructions about the correct protocol to follow.

Judith Dipple reported the Brackley Wind Ensemble had resumed their (weekly) meetings but for only six people at a time, and that they had a very comprehensive risk assessment.

The Music Ensemble has been meeting outside in groups of six and, latterly, in Padbury Village Hall, which is a Covid secure venue. The group has been divided into sub-groups of six, but fears were expressed that this may not be in conformity with the Third Age Trust guidelines and risks not being covered by its insurance.

The point was raised that, in order to be in conformity with Third Age Trust Insurance, groups need to comply with U3A guidelines, ensure all Covid safety procedures are in place and undertake appropriate risk assessments. Meeting in groups of 6 would be acceptable under these terms under the Rule of Six, which was applicable at the time of this meeting.

Newsletter

The Chairman said that the newsletter is now being published semi-annually. There has been a problem with having sufficient content for some time and the Covid pandemic has made the problem worse.

One possibility is to stop publishing the newsletter for a while. A second suggestion is to only publish it on-line. The Brackley U3A publishes its newsletter online.

The Chairman called on the Group Co-ordinators to survey their group members for their views.

Carolina Keneally, the Newsletter Editor, is going to step down, after many years, at the Annual General Meeting in November 2020.

Volunteers to Serve on the Committee

Several Committee Members are retiring in November, including the Chairman, the Membership Secretary and the Secretary. The Chairman urged members to volunteer for these positions and pointed out that the Committee shares out its work so that no Committee Member has too much to do.

Di Procter is moving away and the Society will need a replacement to organise Theatre visits.

The Group Liaison Officer thanked the Group Co-ordinators for attending and contributing to a very useful discussion. The Zoom method had been a success.

Any Other Business

Pam Tonge asked if there would be Diaries for next year. Paddy Collins answered that he has asked the Third Age Trust, who provide the Diaries, whether there will be Diaries for 2021 and has not had a reply. There is nothing on the Third Age Trust Website about Diaries. If they are made available, he will order them.

The Art Appreciation Group has been meeting in members' gardens. Some Groups have been meeting in the Stoneleigh House Hotel in Buckingham.

Some venues have been asking for retainers for groups who meet in them. The Treasurer advised that groups should not accede to such demands. Space will be available.

Ann Abraham reported that the Ambling Group has not been meeting due to the age of its members and the Covid pandemic.

Steve Heywood said that while many groups have not been able to meet there is great enthusiasm and many groups are managing to meet. They are following the guidelines to the letter. There is some interest in starting new groups.

The next Open Meeting will have a talk on Five Generations of an Anglo-Indian Family.

Charity No. 1177534

Attendees

Committee Members: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Speaker Secretary, Group Liaison Officer, Treasurer, Webmaster

40 Group Co-ordinators

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