



BUCKINGHAM & DISTRICT U3A

Minutes

For the Group Co-ordinators Meeting held at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday 9th March 2022, at Buckingham Community Centre

Present: Total of 36 GCs with 5 Committee Members (see register)

Apologies: Had been received from 13 GCs (3 had sent a representative).

Absences: 4 GCs

Welcome: Lilia Bogle, the Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting and lunch which was being held to support group coordinators in 2022. She thanked all the GCs present and said they were the lifeblood of the organization.

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8th October 2020 via Zoom: These were approved with some minor amendments.

Matters Arising: None.

Chairperson's Report: Lilia Bogle the Chairperson welcomed everyone back to the relaunch of our U3A. She felt that we are moving into more exciting times post Covid, widening our horizons, and that we would see some demographic changes from now on.

This is due to attracting part time workers, for example those who are early retired, wanting a different quality of life and expectations, which we are well placed to facilitate.

We should find a new energy to develop and create a more versatile and adaptable organization in future.

At present we have 66 interest groups, and 7 new groups. Most are running satisfactorily, although some groups have been closing, either due to Covid resulting in lack of membership support, or there being no Group Liaison Officer in post to support them.

We have prepared some publicity leaflets to be circulated in the Community, attended events locally, and there is a Newsletter being prepared. We have some Facebook groups set up, are looking into a new Membership system, and have started holding new member Coffee mornings again.

Our Groups are the responsibility of their Group Co-ordinators, who have a vitally important role, not least to maintain the ethos of the organisation. When new people join, they need to get the message that we are a self help organisation, and not a service one. GCs have a role in promoting members participation and to share the load with them.

In the words of Benjamin Franklin:

Tell me and I forget.
Teach me and I remember.
Involve me and I learn.

Groups have different needs and support networks but all GCs do need their members support, which must be built within the groups. They need to identify shadows for the life of the groups to be continued.

Communications are vital to the success of the organization, such as members passing information to others, encouraging people to attend Open meetings. GCs need to update the Open meetings board with their group information, as well as their web pages. GCs are able to attend Committee meetings and promote their groups, as well as the new Member Coffee mornings.

Support for GCs is available locally from the Committee, the Group Liaison Officer, the web site, Newsletter, Facebook, Open meetings, and social events. There is also the Third Age Trust web site with useful information.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer Paddy Collins reported that finances were currently running very smoothly with a good balance. If anyone had queries about having smaller numbers attending and costs of their venue, they should speak to him. He requested that if GCs sent in payments using cheques, they should make sure to put the group name on the reverse, and the preferred method was using BACS.

Webmasters Report: Derek reported that the Spam filters had been adjusted which was hoped would reduce the quantity of spam messages being received. He felt

changing the name of some group email addresses might help; he has set up an alternative for himself which does get less spam than formerly. Users need to be sure to move any Spam messages to the designated Spam folder and not deleted, because the system learns from messages in that folder. If a message seems suspicious, those using Roundcube can hover the mouse over the sender's email address and it will reveal who it is really from.

He urged them to check email frequently, not necessarily daily, but leaving a 2-month gap is not sufficient.

When new groups are formed it is vital to have a contact name and email address for the web site, enabling anyone to apply to join.

Regarding Technical Support, there is a list of items on the Contacts page of the web site that shows what can be borrowed, e.g., projector. Requests should be emailed to the Technical Support email address.

Anyone using their private email to contact the Committee are requested to make sure they state which group they are referring to. It is recommended that all GCs be sure to use their official email address for correspondence, in order to comply fully with the GDPR.

Membership Secretary's report: Unfortunately, he was not able to attend but the Webmaster gave an overview of the report received. The PC issues were resolved, and Ann stepped down in January. Janti has now dealt with all the outstanding issues, bringing the database up to date.

There are currently 728 people registered, with another 175 not renewing. There are 77 new members since 1st October. Only 38 have no email address, which saves considerably on postage and envelopes when sending out newsletters. He asked GCs to encourage their group members to register an email address, and keep it updated.

Any Other Business: The Vice Chairman reported on behalf of the Newsletter Editor Sarah Katz. He requested that she be sent news items, the aim is to publicise more locally, and in villages, with the wider catchment area. Doing this will inform people of something they may benefit from, and advertising is important to enable a thriving U3A going forward.

Open Forum Questions & Answers:

Ruth Holiday (Table Tennis) mentioned that she and Graham had attended the Community Centre exhibition, before the Christmas Parade. The most frequently asked question at the table was if there was a lower age limit for joining. The Chairperson confirmed that generally there is none except that they should be in part-time employment, and available for daytime activities.

Margaret Clarke (Gardening 2) said they have 42 members, with 6 new this year. This number is difficult to manage as they can't take that many on garden visits, and the other group is in the same position. It was suggested they find a volunteer to help split the group in order to keep it going.

General question was asked about opening a 2nd branch of the U3A, to split up the Buckingham one, but this would mean a long and complicated process of setting it up and getting going which needs volunteers to start and run it (e.g. Brackley).

Pam Tonge (Art Appreciation) was in a similar position with 68 members, having been running for 14 years. Average meeting attendance was 40 people and they may need a new venue. Suggested they look at the RLS Discovery Centre.

Gina Crouch (Bridge) asked about a member who belongs to Brackley U3A, whether they should also join here. The response was that they should fill in a membership application form and tick the box where "member of another U3A" was mentioned, in order to pay a reduced rate.

Arthur Newman (Singing/Board Games) recommended holding meetings at the Buckingham Athletic Club in Stratford Fields, which has 3 different areas available. It has lots of facilities including a bar, projector, kitchen etc. It costs £22.00 for 2 hours. He suggested using Facebook to communicate, where we have a secure closed group. He said that email was not as secure as you cannot be sure where it's going.

Marilyn Crawford (Scrabble) asked for a vote of thanks to the Committee, which was given.

Summary: Chairperson - Lilia summarized by saying that we need our members to step up to support the organisation in whatever way they can, so we can remain one of the best charities within Buckingham; she felt proud and humbled to be part of the organisation, and urged everyone to keep going with their excellent work. The meeting closed for lunch at 11.45 a.m.

Lunch

Charity No. 1177534