# BUCKINGHAM & DISTRICT U3A

# Minutes

For the Group Coordinators Meeting held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 15th May 2025, at Buckingham Community Centre

Present: Total of 16 Group Coordinators (GCs), 2 of whom are also Committee Members, and 5 other Committee Members (see register).

Apologies: Had been received from Committee members Howard Mordue (Chairman), Dorothy Morgan (Web Master) and Katerina Owen (Group Liaison Officer) and from 12 GCs.

Welcome and aims of the meeting from Group Liaison Officers
Mark Owen welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the main priority of today is to find out if there is anything more the GLOs and Committee can do to help GCs. He asked GCs to let the GLOs know of any issues or requests before Committee meetings, which are held monthly on the Monday before the open meeting on the Wednesday.

Mark introduced himself and Arthur Newman (Group Liaison Officers), Sue Geary (Treasurer), Heather Haydock (Secretary), Sheryl Hargreaves (Newsletter Editor), Steve Meakin (Technical Support) and Steve Warnes (Membership Secretary), as well as the Committee members who had sent apologies.

Approval of Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th March 2024 These were approved with a show of hands.

A few words from the Committee

Dorothy, Web Master, provided a message for GCs including where to find resources for GCs on the website and advice on accessing and using the webmail system. See Appendix for the full message.

Steve Meakin, Technical Support, shared information on the list of technical equipment available for U3A meetings. This includes two projectors, various portable projector screens, a portable amplifier/speaker, and wireless and wired microphones. He is working on introducing Auracast, which allows people with suitable hearing aids to connect via Bluetooth. In the main hall of the Community Centre, we have access to a large projector screen, two microphones, a PA system, an induction loop and a lectern. There are other resources including a laptop that can run PowerPoint, the capability to copy VHS onto DVD, Bue-ray or computer and the capability to scan photos and restore them using Photoshop. He recommended the repair café for repairs to electrical items.

Sue, Treasurer, noted that groups should be self-funded. The insurance is paid centrally and the policy can be viewed on-line – items bought by the group are covered but not the personal possessions of group members.

Sheryl, Newsletter Editor, reported that the aims of the newsletter are to share what we are doing and to provide information for those who are no longer able to travel to meetings. She would welcome contributions from GCs.

Heather explained her role as Secretary and noted that she is also GC for the Environmental Sustainability group. She recommended holding joint meetings with other groups with a shared interest in the topic as a good way of making further connections.

Arthur said that we have nearly 70 groups and it is disappointing that so many GCs are not at this meeting. The GLOs struggle to get a response to emails from many GCs too, and some GCs are reluctant to include new members.

Tina Brown suggested starting a new group on Family History as the existing group is full and has a waiting list. The GCs of the existing group would be willing to mentor the new GC but not come to every meeting.

Stan Surzyn has an Excel spreadsheet that he has been maintaining for years so he is reluctant to move to the Simple system. Sheryl explained that it can be done easily by sending the spreadsheet to Dorothy, Web Master. Arthur said that it is important to use the Simple system so the latest information is available on group members and to check that all group members are members of the U3A. People must be members of U3A to be covered by the U3A insurance.

Discussion of Health & Safety responsibilities

Lesley Suggate asked what constitutes an accident to be reported, e.g. someone slipped on an outing but was not hurt? The response was that it should be reported on the U3A system using an accident form if sufficiently serious, for example if the fall could have led to injury that might

prompt a future insurance claim. The accident form can be found on the website at Health & Safety; Risk Assessments | Buckingham & District U3A.

Steve Warnes led a discussion of health and safety and the responsibilities of GCs. Examples were provided from walking groups and other groups.

The GC should give the relevant information, and the members are free to choose how to act, e.g. walkers can be advised to use a walking stick but not required to use one. Another GC recommended that a risk assessment should be done for groups that meet in halls too, but it only needs to be updated when something changes. New members should be made aware that a risk assessment has been done; the risk assessment does not need to be updated unless the new member introduces additional risks, e.g. uses a wheelchair.

There is no need to do a written risk assessment every time group members car share to an event, but you should think through the risks. In this case it is different from taking friends to a social event as it is organised through the U3A. Some simple guidance on risk assessment for meetings in homes was produced by Chester U3A and could be adapted for Buckingham.

Mark Orchard talked us through a risk assessment he developed for an Astronomy group excursion. Each group has a U3A subject advisor nationally that can help.

Steve Warnes's walking group send out a message on WhatsApp before each walk, highlighting the risks associated with each walk.

U3A can provide cards for people to fill out and carry detailing any medical conditions. These used to be handed out at open meetings. Heather agreed to find out if these cards are still available.

Heather said paramedics will check whether you have filled out medical information on your mobile phone. We could give advice to group members on how to do this.

It was suggested that template risk assessments for different types of activities/venues would be useful.

We are looking for a Health & Safety coordinator to join the Committee, and it would be their job to develop guidance and template risk assessments.

Action: Appoint Health & Safety coordinator, develop guidance and template risk assessments.

The meeting was closed at 11.45am.

Appendix – Message from Webmaster

Welcome everyone!

As you will know, I am responsible for looking after the “back end” systems for Buckingham U3A, including the website and email accounts held on the server. Currently we have about 90 email inboxes, not just groups but Committee related. I also look after the site hosting account, and have some related Admin tasks on the Simple system.

As a reminder, you will find on our website several resources specifically for GCs - these include the GCs handbook, our policies, and risk assessment forms/reports. The Simple Membership help guide can be found there as well. The resources page also has a copy of the up-to-date TAT insurance cover note and finance advice, along with the music licence.

There’s also information on the technical resources available for groups, which Steve Meakin will be able to discuss with you.

With regards to the webmail (aka Roundcube) each group is allocated an individual “official” email address, and that address is shown on your group listing on Simple. The group listing is set up by the GLO or myself and can be seen by anyone looking at the listing page.

It’s used as the main contact method for any new applicants to join your group. You will receive a login and password to access that inbox.

We don’t show any personal contact information on group listings, and restrict it on some of our site pages, because this has led to some very unpleasant incidents in the past, related not just to scammers but “spoofing” where they pretend to be sending from BU3a but most definitely are not. I catch most of the worst of those before they get to your inboxes, fortunately, and the filters take care of the rest.

Once a new applicant has contacted you by email, then it’s your choice whether to reveal personal contact details; however, I’d recommend you check on the Simple system to see if they are a member. If they haven’t joined, then they won’t appear in the list of members when you try to add them to your group there. It may be that they would like a taster session before joining, but at least you are aware and can ask them at some stage.

It’s important to keep the group description up to date as I post a list on the website roughly once a month, and it’s better for that to be correct if possible, so as not to potentially mislead anyone new. Most GCs are using the Simple system as a convenient way to email all the group or just a few, in a way which is GDPR compliant. You are able to update your group description, along with size/vacancy, time/date and location which can all be changed by you. Note: if you don’t know how to do any of that, then the GLO can assist you.

However, please do remember that replies to messages will come into the webmail where you can access them in whatever way suits you best:

1. Log in to the webmail with the group email address and password – very straightforward and can be saved in your browser. You will get that information sent to you when the group is first set up.
2. Link it as a new (separate) account in Outlook, Gmail, MacMail, Thunderbird – or whatever email reader you want to use. That way you can still reply with a message looking as if it comes from the official address.
3. Have messages forwarded to a personal email address. I don't recommend this due to the security risks to your personal email – the forwarding takes place before the spam filters operate, so you would be more likely to receive unwanted (sometimes unpleasant) messages, with a risk of hackers gaining access to that home account.
4. Using an official email address looks professional, and provides an audit trail because any succeeding GCs can see the same inbox, and what has happened before – we have the same set-up in the Committee which works very well. My own preference is never to reveal my home email address for usage in this way, due to the security risks mentioned; however, the decision is yours and entirely at your own risk.

I hope that covers it, but if there's any queries not mentioned then you can get in touch.

Dorothy Web_master@buckinghamu3a.org.uk