

Basingstoke – Old Basing U3A Committee Meeting

Thursday 21st January 2021

Attending: Rod Marshall, Richard Field, Margaret Hayes, Marie White, Liz Horner, Sue Seymour, Linda Wain, Madeline Hussey

1. Apologies: Ian Stimpson and Janet Field
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes 25/11/2020 – Sue queried terminology in section 11 which should have read “Budgets” and not “Accounts” which Rod will change. Minutes were then agreed and will be signed at a later date.
3. Open Actions – Linda hasn’t got back to the Samaritans as yet but she will contact them.
4. Marketing Sub-Committee Update – Madeline apologised that she hadn’t been as involved as she would like to be but thanked Rod, Richard and their other halves as we have made a major step forward with Facebook. We are looking for links with other organisations. She asked if we are delivering paper versions of the newsletter for those who do not use email. Rod said we are, but we need to check which of these members have renewed their membership which Linda will do.

Madeline mentioned that a lot of the local magazines are on hold due to the current crisis and said that we are looking for other ways to encourage younger members. She said that Facebook is a good way forward to get new people. Richard suggested that Group Convenors (“GCs”) enter items and photos on Facebook and he is happy to give a tutorial at the end of the next GCs’ meeting about this. Margaret said that she has urged the GCs to enter items on the website and Facebook. Rod would be happy for any Facebook items to be sent to him and he or his wife will post them. Richard wondered whether we could invite a GC to one of our meetings.

5. Group Activities Update/Group Convenors Meeting – Margaret reported that she had been in touch with the GCs and has told them about Facebook. She doesn’t feel that we need any more Zoom accounts and that the problem seems to be the setting up of Zoom meetings which some of the GCs have difficulty with. Margaret is starting a Language Group Zoom meeting every day of the week. Richard assists her with some of them, Liz has offered to help and Margaret said she may hand over the Spanish Group to Liz. They will sort this out. Madeline also offered to help Margaret out with this.

A lot of Groups are using Zoom now. Margaret wants members to contact GCs to be included in activities and Linda has put this in the welcome letter. Margaret says that GCs have to be encouraged to use the website and Facebook more. The next GCs’ meeting will be on 16th February - Margaret will arrange.

6. Monthly Meeting Webinars – Linda reported that the webinars are going well and that the number of members attending is increasing. The feedback forms are interesting and give us a good idea of what the members are enjoying watching. She is still networking with other u3as and reported that 30 Overton members joined in for the talk on China. The February, March and April meetings will be via our own Zoom access with speakers and the opportunity for Q&As. February will be a talk on the history of the Basingstoke Canal, March a speaker impersonating Henry VIII and April a talk on TV production. Costings for one to four single meetings with 100+ attendance will be investigated, rather than making a recording for a second presentation.

7. Membership Renewals – Linda said there were 752 members, with 505 having already renewed and 247 outstanding. She will send out a reminder letter. It was agreed that members be told their membership will expire at the end of February if renewal fees have not been paid by 28th February. Sue noted it had been agreed at a previous meeting that we would follow up the reminder letter with a phone call (other u3as had found this to be an effective way of getting more members to renew) and it was agreed to do this around mid-February.
8. New Members – Linda informed the Committee that there are 25 new members, including seven since the beginning of January. Madeline asked if any of these members had said where they had heard about the u3a. One was through the piece in the Basinga and one was a face to face invitation from Linda.
9. Treasurer's Report – Sue referred to the accounts previously supplied to the Committee and apologised as they were not particularly easy to read. Our bank accounts look healthy but the bills will start coming in when we get back to normality - venue bills are the main expense. Joyce's events money is ring-fenced in the current account for use of that group only, but we have made refunds and it has now been run down. Sue still can't get into PayPal. She has issued an official complaint to the Financial Ombudsman. Liz suggested that we contact Head Office for advice. There is an upcoming local u3a Treasurer's Meeting and Rod suggested that this may be a question for the speaker at that event. Sue confirmed that we are only talking about £111 but it is our money which is being held by PayPal.

Sue and Linda had some problems with BACS renewal payments but these were sorted out with help from Liz.

10. Dropbox to Wix Conversion – Richard has been working on changing over from using Dropbox to Wix, saving us a fee and making things easier to access for all Committee members. Richard gave the Committee an overview of the relevant part of the website which will only be accessible using a password which Richard shared with the Committee. (This password is not being recorded in the minutes.) Our licence for Dropbox runs out in May so this is a good time to convert and gives the Committee time to become familiar with the new Wix set-up.
11. Beacon Update – At a recent local Chairmen's meeting, Rod said the Beacon expert on another u3a committee had said Beacon 2 is far behind where it was due to be. Liz hasn't had any updates on Beacon lately but recent issues have been sorted out quickly. The main problem had been that emails were being sent to deceased members. Rod said that if this happens again, we must of course apologise but should not promise that "this won't happen again" until we are certain the root of the problem has been identified and fixed. It was proposed that deceased members be removed from the database straight away and lapsed members after two years, and a discussion ensued as to where we keep the deceased and lapsed members' information as we have to keep information for a certain period of time to satisfy HMRC requirements linked to Gift Aid. Liz will look into options for this.

Sue asked why it is that members get timed out by Beacon without any warning when they take a long time to complete a task, as she and Linda had found when they were working on a project recently. Liz will look into this too.

Margaret said some emails are not getting through to members. Liz confirmed that a lot of members do not notify her if they change their email address, which is usually the problem. She suggested that the GCs check email addresses with members of their Group at least annually and report any changes to her.

Liz believes the new version of Beacon will be with us fairly soon but added that everyone will have to be retrained.

12. Contacting Members without email addresses – There are 21 members without email addresses and items which need to be relayed to them are being distributed by five Committee members. Rod raised the question as to how, if Committee members so wished, they should be reimbursed for printing, postage etc. It was agreed that anyone wishing to be reimbursed should be and printing will be costed at 10p per page.
13. Newsletter Rota – Rod is happy to put each Newsletter together but has asked for items to be sent to him for inclusion. He asked Margaret to mention this to GCs. The aim is for the next one to go out mid-February so items should be sent to him by 10th February.
14. Any Other Business – Sue asked for guidance on joining our Facebook Group which Rod gave. Marie reported that 69 u3as are now moribund which will be investigated as to the reasons why. 500 are very active and 79 are partially active, whatever that means. Richard reiterated that we have done very well during this awful time with many of our Groups using Zoom. Sue said that we need to keep our membership up if we want to remain solvent in September. Rod said to wait and see how many members we have at the end of February.
15. Date of Next Meeting – 11th March 2021 at 2.10p.m

Actions: Linda to contact the Samaritans

Linda to check how many members who do not use email have renewed their membership

Linda to send out follow up letters for membership renewal

Liz to look into archiving the records of deceased members

Minutes taken by: Brenda Austin