

Basingstoke – Old Basing U3A AGM

Wednesday 14th July 2021

Via Zoom

Attending Committee Members – Rod Marshall, Janet Field, Sue Seamour, Linda Wain, Richard Field, Margaret Hayes, Liz Horner, Marie White plus 88 members. 96 in total.

Welcome by the Chair – Rod welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked members for attending.

- 1. Apologies for Absence** – Janet informed the meeting that she had received 40 apologies from members including Trustee, Madeline Hussey.
- 2. Minutes of the Meeting 12th August 2020** – There were no matters arising. The minutes were agreed and would be signed at a later date. (Signed on 22nd July 2021).
- 3. Chairman's Report for the period from September 2020 to July 2021**

Rod explained that his report was available online and had been sent to members prior to the AGM, so he was not going to read it out to the meeting. For the record however, it is reproduced here.

This is my first annual report as chairman, and what a year it has been.

When I was elected chairman at the 2020 AGM, the Committee was already learning how to tackle the various issues facing all u3as. The Third Age Trust has issued guidance regularly, setting out how u3as should respond to announcements from Government. We have taken great care to make sure we comply with the guidelines, both for the safety of our members and because the insurance cover provided to u3as nationally required us to do this. Achieving this was not just down to the Committee however. Our group leaders, and all our individual members, had parts to play too. So thank you to everyone for doing their part.

One major development has been the widespread adoption of Zoom. Encouraged by the Third Age Trust, u3as around the country learned to appreciate what a useful tool Zoom could be for allowing meetings to take place online.

Although the use of Zoom was encouraged, this was of course optional and decisions on whether or not to use it were left to the leaders and members of each group. Some activities were well suited to this new means of meeting, but by no means all. We ended up paying for three Zoom licences, and I think even those members who are not very keen on it would agree it has been a lot better than nothing.

Most of you will recall that we extended the 2019/20 membership year to 31 December 2020 in response to the impact of Covid on our activities. We then asked for a greatly reduced membership fee of £15 for the period from January to August 2021. We were pleased that more than 600 members paid this, and quite a few of those who chose not to renew their membership contacted us to say they expected to re-join with effect from September this year, if conditions had returned to something approaching normal by then. We look forward to welcoming them back.

Further, 39 new members have joined our u3a since the start of September 2020, and a few new groups have started too. Many u3as have found the last 16 months or so very difficult, so your committee is very encouraged by these numbers and we are all grateful for everyone's support. Thank you.

Something we have discovered is that attendance at monthly meetings has generally increased since these went online. Various factors may have contributed to this, including the absence of any need to travel and the difficulty of doing other things during lockdown. As we do not know how many members will be happy to attend face to face meetings again when we restart in September, the committee has decided to hold both physical and virtual monthly meetings during the final quarter of this year. We hope this will give us a better idea of what members will prefer in 2022. We are also looking into the possibility of holding so-called hybrid meetings, where physical meetings can be attended remotely by members who are unwilling or simply unable to attend in person.

While on the subject of monthly meetings, we were venturing into the unknown when we started to hold these meetings online, but it has worked well. The highlight to my mind was guest speaker Tony Harris's portrayal of Henry VIII, and I am delighted to say he will be appearing again later this year, in a different guise.

Despite the impact of the pandemic, various developments give me hope for what the future holds for our u3a. New groups have started, new members have been joining and we had three members express an interest in joining the committee. U3as do not run themselves and there are various people I want to thank:

- All of our group leaders, who I think are the lifeblood of a u3a.
- Brenda Austin, who acts as the minutes secretary for the Committee. The work that Brenda does goes unseen by everyone who is not on the Committee, but she prepares the minutes with extraordinary efficiency.
- All the Committee members, including Ian Stimpson who stepped down from the Committee earlier this year, for their hard work in helping us to cope with unprecedented circumstances.

Many u3as around the country have suffered sharp falls in membership due to Covid, but I think we have fared relatively well. This reflects a real team effort by the Committee and we in turn are grateful to the members who have stayed with us during these challenging times. If you know anyone who was a member last year but chose not to renew back in January, please remind them that we will soon be issuing renewal invitations for 2021/22 and very much hope that they will re-join our u3a. There is strength in numbers.

There were no questions.

4. The Accounts for the Year

4a Treasurer's Report for the year ending 31st May 2021

Sue said her report was available online and had been sent to members prior to the AGM, so she was not going to read it out to the meeting. For the record however, it is reproduced here.

The Lloyds bank balances as at 30th May 2021 were:

- current account £15,055.67
- additional current account used for membership fees £9,662.50
- deposit account £8,271.68
- Paypal account closed 8th March 2021 and balance transferred to current account.

Therefore total funds available for activities and other expenditure was £32,989.85 at the end of the financial year. We were not holding any funds for Social Activities (Excursions, Trips and Holidays) at 31st May 2021. We expect to hold reserves to allow for unforeseen events and the winding up costs if we closed. The combined bank balances figure is high because of the need to keep these reserves and to allow us to meet costs until the next membership fees are due.

Our funds are also higher than we expected because we budgeted, somewhat optimistically, for activities to start earlier than they actually have. The excess will be used to allow us to hold the membership fee at 2019 level.

Expenditure was less than usual because of the corona virus closure however there were still substantial payments made, for example, capitation fees of approximately £2,500. We also paid £2,900 approximately for venue and Zoom hire. Several of our venues refunded us for unused hire even though their contracts allowed them to charge us. These refunds were £410 in total.

With the easing of lockdown groups are starting to plan future activities which will result in expenditure returning to normal or near normal. We have several new groups starting which will increase expenditure. Some groups are adding August just for this year to their venue bookings.

We have established a Provision sub-committee to throw more light on future activity and costs.

We budgeted for 600 members and at year end we had 642. It represents a fall of approximately 110 members from 2020. We will struggle financially in the future if the membership continues to be this low.

A member asked if greater activity creates more revenue. Sue replied that it's the opposite – greater activity creates more costs, not revenue. It was pointed out that Excursions / Holidays are self-financing and not part of u3a costs.

There was a question about costs involving in producing a video. Guy Caplin is producing a free short video to promote our u3a via the website, Facebook etc.

Sue emphasised to group convenors that if they are changing a venue booking or adding one for a new group, she needs to know in advance to approve the cost.

4b Acceptance of Accounts – Janice Vaughan proposed acceptance of the accounts and Barry Ward seconded.

5. **Election of Committee** – There had been an on-line vote prior to the meeting, but the results were not revealed until members had voted in the meeting. Nobody voted against the new Committee either on line (128) or during the ZOOM meeting. All committee members were accepted.
6. **Election of Independent Examiner** – Ray Wilshaw was proposed by Joyce Cook and seconded by Helen Worgan. Everyone, both on line and attending the ZOOM meeting voted in favour. Ray was duly elected.
7. **Proposed New Constitution** - Rod explained that the new proposed constitution had been produced by National u3a. Members of the committee have worked through it in detail and thought it had many advantages over the current constitution. There are three significant changes:
 - it enables us to hold hybrid meetings and voting can be online, by proxy and by post.
 - it sets a 9 year limit on trustees and 3 year limit on any committee role.
 - it gives detailed guidance in a number of areas which the committee may be faced with.

A member asked whether the time limits on committee members would start from the signing of the new constitution or retrospectively. Rod said we would need to check with National Office. If it was retrospectively, the 9 year rule would affect two Trustees and the 3 year rule would affect two Trustees.

Action: Chair/ Business Secretary to verify with national Office

A member asked whether the proposed constitution changes the independence of any u3a. Rod replied that this was not the case.

Another member felt that the biggest problem with the 3 year limit would be replacing the Treasurer, which is a key role. It was pointed out that we had 6 applicants for the Treasurer role last time. However this is a valid point for all roles and the Committee needs to consider succession planning very carefully.

Rod revealed that 128 members had voted online. 95% had voted for the new constitution with a few abstentions. With the votes from the meeting, the new constitution was accepted.

8. Any Other Business

- i. There was a question about the use of Timebank by our u3a

Action: Rod will look into this and respond

- ii. A member suggested the use of shared roles on the Committee. Rod explained that we had to have names attached to Officer roles. He said that we were happy to have people help with the work of the Committee.

Action: The Committee to discuss this idea

- iii. A married couple, not present at the meeting, had sent in a question via email. The Business Secretary asked the question on their behalf. They asked whether there were any membership concessions for married couples. We do not have any concessions and this was supported by members at the meeting. They said that people join the u3a as individuals and join groups as individuals. They also cost the same as individual members. The consensus was that it would be discriminatory against single members or non- married members.

Action: Janet to feedback response to couple

Rod closed the meeting at 16.15

Minutes produced by Janet Field