

Minutes of Basingstoke – Old Basing u3a Committee meeting 02-03-23

Attendees:

Rod Marshall
Elaine Budd - Minutes
Tony Summers
Janice Vaughan
Janet Field
Paul Dodge
Madeline Hussey
Richard Field

Guests:

Natalie Larner
Bev Sturdy
Chris Vickers

1. Apologies: none

2. Minutes of last meeting

Janet suggested a change to item 5. Frequency of newsletter needs to be finalised before AGM.

Action Mar23/01 – EB to add to May Agenda

3. Update on monthly meetings

NL has offered to continue to do the role until the end of July. She has not decided if it will continue after that point but will let us know before July. **Action: Mar23/02** Committee to review who will own the activity post July. EB to add to July agenda if necessary.

NL commented that when an ownership change takes place, the Committee needs to consider how the handover takes place to ensure a smoother process than has happened in the past.

It was noted that there was no card reader at the last monthly meeting for new members and had not been considered in the past as our sign-up process has not been so efficient. Even if it had been there, nobody knew how to use it in JV absence. The Committee agreed that there should always be the opportunity to sign up new members so the card reader needs to be available on the day. In the event Janice cannot go, there will need to be a volunteer to pick it up and take to the meeting.

Action Mar23/03: JV to train other Committee members at the next monthly meeting.

NL stated there was confusion on who is responsible for purchasing refreshments. NL offered to take responsibility which was gratefully accepted by the Committee.

There is confusion with the use of the terms “meet and greet” and “monthly meetings”. Going forward monthly meetings will not refer to meet and greet in the organisation notes and will call it the welcome desk. This should avoid confusion.

It was questioned if we need people to guide people in the car park and 3 members of the Committee said it was necessary, so the practice will be continued.

A discussion took place about where to hold the May and June meetings given QMC is not available. TS proposed Sherfield Village Hall. There were concerns raised about the lack of central location and the need for people to be able to travel easily. Although we usually see around 50 cars, many walk or get a bus. It was confirmed a bus route is available, but the buses are infrequent.

Although we will book the Sherfield venue for May and June, before changing from QMC for next year, we will check how much of an issue transport will be for our members. **Action: Mar23/04** EB to poll people when they come to the March monthly meeting on what transport they have used and feed back to the May meeting.

The meet and greet in August will be run by the Group Leader Facilitator – we need to ensure that's in the job description. **Action: Mar23/05** EB to update job description and talk to new incumbent.

It was agreed that we will have the picnic in the park at Sherfield in June, in place of the monthly meeting. A discussion took place on whether we should have another in the west of the town, but this came to no conclusion. The plan is to have the picnic in the field and if it is raining take it into the hall. **Action: March23/06** A formal request to the parish council is required. NL will provide details to JF to arrange this. JF and EB to work together to arrange the event.

A speaker has already been booked for the June meeting, but this is no longer necessary. **Action: March 23/07** RM to apologise to Julie Crawley and have the speaker cancelled.

NL said the u3a line dancers are performing at the Sherfield summer fete on 10th June. A stall for u3a information would be free of charge. **Action: March23/08** MH to follow this up and ensure we are present.

4. Confidential – Personal positions on Committee to request re-election.

The Committee were asked by the Chair if they wish to stand for re-election.

RF is resigning, but happy to stay on the Beacon oversight.

JV will stand for re-election

JF is resigning

PD will stand for election

MH will stand for re-election

TS will stand for re-election

EB will stand for re-election

The Chair position needs to be filled as RM has served 3 years. RM is unsure if he will remain on the committee but will confirm in May.

The Constitution states that the existing Committee must ask for any nominations to the committee at least 28 days before the AGM. EB suggested that this occurs after the May meeting to give enough time to gather all necessary information.

Tony suggested that each nominee is invited to give an overview of their skills that is put forward into the AGM. This was accepted.

5. Actions update:

The Committee reviewed outstanding actions. The following are key supplementary points that arose:

Action: Oct22/18 TS updated Joyce on the issues. Joyce stated that she encourages friends to join the u3a. JF has checked with the insurers: if non-members attend as a taster, then they are covered by insurance. Partners who are non-members can help set up and are covered by our liability. But the central guidance is categorical that non-members or partners cannot be used to fill up coaches as they are not insured. *It was felt that non-members should not be using holidays or excursions as tasters, and this is going to added to the May agenda.* If non-members go on holidays and excursions we will have a liability issue. It was confirmed that our insurance extends to Europe. Any holiday overnight booked via an operator is covered by the operator's liability cover.

Action: Mar23/09 EB to ensure Joyce has this information on insurance (Insurance FAQs on central sites.) EB to find out how Joyce asks people to join and what paperwork she gets for anybody that is on a taster.

Nov/06 – Joyce had offered to get copies of the handbook printed for all members of the Excursions group paying for this with surplus funds from past excursions. But nothing more was said and RM decided to let sleeping dogs lie. Joyce has not raised the matter again. However, RF stated that he has had several complaints. What we do about it will be discussed on the growth/retention meeting, or subsequent discussions. The Committee agreed this was not closed and should be revisited in May.

6. Group costs

Pickleball – it has been agreed to start as a trial in April, this will represent a new hybrid payment structure for our u3a. We will pay Totally Tennis £40 a session and the members will each pay £2.50. The group and deputy group leader are having their induction with JF and after that we need to ensure that members are made aware of availability of places. The Committee wanted assurance that the Group Leader will use the 2 hour slot to get the best value for money. In June we will review the situation and agree what we will commit to Totally Tennis after the Summer.

JV made the point we may have to change some of our literature as it states that this fee covers all costs except holidays and excursions. **Action: Mar 23/11** MH to ensure that all literature and website are updated and make relevant person aware of any changes.

The potential Ukulele group has hit issues as many of the 30 people that have shown an interest, are novices and need training, which is not feasible for the Group Leader. A question was raised on hiring ukulele teachers. The Committee were reminded that we are a self-help charity and therefore cannot hire trainers.

RM felt we should encourage the non-beginners to carry on and the issue should be passed to JF. **Action: Mar23/12** MH to pass on all contacts and information to JF.

Process for new groups

There is an existing process for setting up a new group – it goes to the group convener who goes through a checklist to quantify costs, potential etc and that it meets the requirements of the u3a. The Group Convener talks to the Treasurer before it is taken forward and interest is found.

If it's non-standard, such as Pickleball, this will need to go to the Committee for a vote.

Action: Mar23/13 EB to add this process into the induction as it was forgotten by a couple of the Committee. This will ensure people are aware and we don't cause confusion.

The Committee discussed the use of speakers within a group. JF and TS reminded the group that each member contributes about £40 to be allocated to activities. If we pay speakers, then we need to be fair and ensure that we don't set a precedent. JF suggested that we set up a sub-group to consider the pros and cons. JF to facilitate such a sub-group. A paper will be circulated to the Committee in advance and then discussed in May. **Action: 23/14** JF to circulate paper.

RM said if somebody comes forward with an idea, we should do our best to make it happen.

7. Finance

TS updated us on the position and reminded the Committee that the expectation was that we would lose money this financial year, but the latest forecast is that our finances will improve. We have approached Group Leaders to come up with ideas as we have more flexibility. Use of the terms profit and loss was felt inappropriate, and it was agreed that we would refer to surplus and deficit.

TS has placed £30K on a fixed interest account for six months. This is making best use of the money we have. EB reminded TS that this account needs to be declared to the Charities Commission in July. TS indicated we might put the membership fee down next year. This is confidential and must not be discussed outside the committee till it is voted on.

RF said we could use the money to improve the product we deliver, and this should be discussed at the May meeting. A separate note is to be pulled together for how we could use the money to achieve this. **Action: Mar23/10** Committee to send ideas to EB.

We should remember that lots of the venues we use have not raised their costs as we feared, but this may change.

The question of reducing the membership fee for spouses was raised. It has been discussed before and deemed to be not fair on single people or those with unmarried partners. To be put on decision register.

Tony sent a review of Membership fee structure before the meeting: this received unanimous approval and will be reflected in the decision register.

8. Membership numbers

JV reported that since 1st August 2022 we have 152 new members, bringing us to a total of 799 members as at the meeting date. We have lost 100 previous members this year. It was reiterated we do need to understand why this happens and the Committee should contact all leaving people this year as per meeting 05/01/23.

JV said the exhibition has been very successful in increasing our numbers. The mid-year drop in the membership fee has also helped. We have 69 groups, giving an average of 11.5 groups per member. The target for vibrant u3as is 10 members per group. This should be revisited when we discuss our growth/retention plan for next year.

9. Marketing

MH updated us that our u3a banner broke at the exhibition. In the Marketing sub-committee a replacement needs to be discussed as the last one was deemed not suitable as difficult to open.

New members meeting update - Given the issues with the last meeting, MH is going back to the 20 people to check that they are well integrated. Kempshott is booked and Natalie is going to do logistics. Paul suggested that we have two organisers for the event – PD volunteered as did JF and RF.

Madeline said she believes that having groups working together helps create a healthy u3a. She is looking at additional exhibitions and this needs to be part of a structured marketing plan that comes to the Committee, although no timescales were agreed. **Action: Mar23/15** MH Marketing Plan to be presented to the Committee.

Poster – The Committee approved the design. Madeline to make a few changes to the wording and then EB to go back to the designer and get them printed. Madeline to find the name of the person who offered to help distribute them.

Facebook – No problems were voiced with Facebook paper.

We will use Facebook for growth (public) and retention (private). We need to drive up content so that in the future we can move to different platforms. We could offer training on how to put a post on the system. JF is going to brief the group leaders and point any questions to PD or EB.

Madeline asked if there were any volunteers for the marketing sub-committee. No volunteers were received, so we need to ask other members to join.

10. Growth/retention brainstorming session.

This session is to start the process of outlining a plan to balance growth and retention. Members of the committee believed we are in a good position, but some were worried that this could easily change given the growing ageing population in Basingstoke and therefore growth of our u3a. Waitlists could increase leading to dissatisfaction and people leaving. We need to manage our offer more proactively and there is a suggestion that we have a position on the Committee to manage that offer. JF stated she has lots of proactive ideas, but the role of Group Leader Convener does not allow the additional work to undertake this. The workshop will take place on 26th April. Details to be sent shortly. JF and EB to meet -before the meeting to finalise agenda.

11. Update on group activity

JF updated the Committee on latest group information.

Canasta has started with 19 people and the group is sharing a venue with mahjong which saves on costs. Needles and pins waiting list is being reduced by starting a new group led by JF.

Croquet has an issue – it runs from March to the Autumn. Some members were waiting till membership fees go down before rejoining our u3a. The new policy decision and announcement should stop this. JV is checking membership applications to ensure that people are not trying to get around the policy. JF has made it clear to the croquet group leader.

We have 84 group leaders or deputy leaders.

At the group leaders' workshop in March, JF is looking generate information about what it is like to be a group leader, what the issues are, and how we can get new group leaders. This information can then be used by the proposed Offer Manager to increase the number of groups and by the Group Leader Convener to improve the GL experience.

12. AOB

JV mentioned that she has been approached by members of the Men Shed that need help with IT and we could potentially recruit them to the u3a. RF stated that Margaret Hayes has done such training in the past. RF suggested that JV contact Margaret as we agree that this is a good idea.

Action: Mar23/16

PD asked if we should invest in a second projector for the west of town: it was noted that the lady that runs French has asked for one. It was agreed that it would be a good idea if used by other groups. Given our financial position, TS agreed in principle. PD to pull together prices, where it will be housed and confirmation that it will be used by multiple groups and submit to TS. **Action: Mar 23/17** PD to write business case and progress.

The Committee asked RM for the next newsletter to go out asap, including dates and times of the next Monthly Meeting, the Picnic, and the AGM.

Confirmation mail to go out about the QMC main hall for 8th March.

The next meeting will be in Christ Church at 9.30 – 12.30 on 4th May.

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