

Basingstoke – Old Basing December Committee meeting

Minutes of Basingstoke and Old Basing u3a

7th December 2023

Present: Paul Dodge, Rod Marshall, Tony Summers, Elaine Budd (minutes), Nick Gosby, Colin MacDonald, Pip Valleley, Derek Western, Bev Sturdy, David Noble

The Chair welcomed Derek Western to the Committee in the role of PR.

Apologies: Alastair Sim

Previous minutes:

The minutes of the November Committee meeting were reviewed, rewording of the only to the only query in advance of the December meeting was agreed. The minutes were signed off subject to change agreed.

Matters arising:

Lloyds signatures: TS ran through the previously distributed document on the issues related to getting Lloyds Bank to change our committee members authorised to sign payments. PD, RM, TS and EB will be full signatories. BS will be a restricted signature and Joyce Cook will have viewing information. At the moment, AS is not the group leader of Tai Chi but when he retakes the position, he will need limited viewing **Decision:** All of the above was approved by the Committee.

TS outlined that budgets are all on track, the surplus is likely to be as forecast. The Chair asked for confirmation of surplus which is shown in the full year forecast. TS informed the Committee that venues are still not putting up prices which may positively impact the full year accounts. TS updated new members of the Committee how and why the reserves have built up and the logic we have agreed for reducing them. He confirmed that we plan to lose £6K a year in the short term.

Actions:

The Committee confirmed that all actions showing to be closed, could be archived. All other action updates are recorded in the action register.

In addition, there was a discussion on the unsubscribe list, if somebody unsubscribes from emails will they get information on renewals? **Decision:** When people unsubscribe the Membership Secretary has to keep a list to enable us to fulfil our constitutional obligation to be able to write to all members for the AGM. **Action Dec23/01:** EB to add to the role of Membership Secretary

New members meeting leading to a discussion on groups.

PD gave a debrief of the new members meeting. It was felt it went well and the general feedback to the questionnaire was positive. The Committee felt proud that many said that our u3a were friendly. Members also liked the idea of tea and biscuits, whilst discussing the topics. It was clear that the number of people present that use our website is poor. However, CMD stated he has had notification that the website is being used much more and he believed that more people are being pushed onto the site to view NewsEdit. This was seen as a positive, and in line with the Committee's objective to make more information available online.

PD confirmed, that after some negative feedback, PV, NG, PD visited the line dancing group. They found that the Group has changed its way of working and they have not made all members aware.

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PV is getting information for dissemination via all communications mediums so that all members are informed and can decide if they want to apply. The issue had been on the mixing of groups and the intermediates and beginners are now differentiated and the later is a real beginner's group and this needs to be publicised asap. **Action: Dec23/02**

CMD said that Beacon and the website information on groups are not aligned. He expects at the January GL meeting they will be asked to ensure that they are aligned. This will allow us to know better how groups are working and if there are spaces.

RM stated that the most common grumble on the enquiries site is that they cannot contact the GLs directly. There was also a complaint about not attaching the NewsEdit to the notification of publication e-mail and it is only available on the website. The later had been agreed by the Committee previously and the decision was not overturned, the former should be addressed by the new members portal and should form part of the presentation to GLs at the meeting in January. EB asked that the GLs be made aware of the additional enquiries this may lead to. **Action Dec23/03:** PV/PD to provide list of items to be discussed at GLs meeting to be ready for next Committee meeting.

PV said she has received feedback that there are a lot of wait lists and was asked why the Committee is obsessed with growth. EB described the meeting in 2023 when we discussed growth and retention. Although we lose about 100 people per year, due to moving, ill health, death and other priorities, as our main source of growth is from word of mouth, the more we grow the more it perpetuates growth. EB confirmed we are not advertising nearly as much as we used to, for example in local newsletters. It was the growth/retention meeting that resulted in the formation of the role of New Group Development manager to increase groups to help manage the waitlists by offering alternatives. On waitlists, the new system of marking which groups have waitlists is in place, but the exact number was not available to the Committee during the meeting. CMD made the point that the information on Beacon is not reflecting reality, and who shows up to meetings and we need the GLs to do more work on showing what is really happening in their groups.

NG made the point that some GLs use their waitlists combined with members so that they fill spaces when people are on holiday, ill etc. There was a discussion on the ease of splitting groups which is achievable but not easy. The previous GF did some work on this and found ways of letting groups expand as an alternative, for example PA systems, different halls etc.

Members portal

PD referred people to his project proposal document for the membership portal which CMD have also reviewed.

He reconfirmation the reasons we are implementing the portal; that we have over 900 members and the traditional way of renewing is unsustainable. He confirmed we are in the process of recruiting an Assistant Membership Secretary to help on the roll out and to sit on the sub-committee. Other u3a's have taken on the membership portal and although there are issues, they would not want to go back. However, there are other u3as that are not moving in that direction.

TS said that based on historical input there will be problems with reconciliations that he would like to be addressed. EB asked that addressing this issue needs to be included in the project plan. PD said that people are paying by BACS currently are the most difficult to process, because of a short term issue as BS cannot see the bank accounts. **Action Dec23/04:** Payment issues to be added to the project plan or risk and issues register.

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PD said that we have a strong story for the members as to why they should move to the membership portal. TS reiterated that we will have a mixed environment for payment for a few years.

PD went through the plan and suggested a subcommittee of PD, DN, CMD, PV and Assistant Membership Secretary. In January we need to:

- set up a PayPal account.
- start the communication, we will have articles in NewEdit
- Sell it to the GLs and make them aware of how simple it is, so that they can help the roll out.
- Distribute the simple video, completed by CMD, on how to use it.

Subsequently we will have workshops for GLs and Committee members in February to allow them to use it, iron out issues and equip the GLs to be selling this to their group members. In March we start the roll out for all members including video instructions, via mail, website, Facebook.

Through to June we would be reiterating the benefits of the new portal. EB asked if we could get all new members to join via the portal once we start the roll out, but CMD said this would not happen straight away. TS said renewal by Membership Portal would improve over time. There was a discussion on how best to use this facility to reduce the numbers renewing at the meet and greet. NG raised a concern as members will be given a facility in the new membership portal to join groups. In Beacon members can be given one of 3 statuses in a group: Group Leader, Group Member or waiting list. In practice we also have deputy group leaders for many of our groups and they also have Group Leader status in Beacon. He asked CMD, when a member clicks on link to send email to Group Leader requesting to join the group, who receives the email? All leaders of the group or just one and if so which one. CMD did not know as he has not yet had an opportunity to trial it. We need to know how this works before the function is enabled in case we need to make changes to Beacon and advise the group leaders accordingly. This should be added the project risk and issues register.

EB said it was important to have a risk and issues register and these need to be addressed as part of the project plan. CMD restated that this will need GLs to do work on their beacon data. **Action Dec23/05:** PD to produce a risks and issues register to be added to the project plan and reviewed monthly at Committee Meeting

PD said there will be increased enquiries about the system and it has been agreed that DN will be answering questions and issues. A register should be included in the monthly update to the Committee. **To be put into decision register**

TS said he was very opposed to PD's idea of charging a higher membership fee for people more who do not use the online renewal. In fact, due to the PayPal fee, it should be those that do use it that should be charged, however this would undermine our objective. This is for a March discussion, but EB stated we need to look at the equality and accessibility policy as it penalises non-IT literate people.

Action Dec23/06: TS to apply for a PayPal charity account.

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New roles on the Committee

Via email, the Committee voted for a co-opted role of Assistant Membership Secretary. Two people have applied. One is Marilyn Bennett who was an IT Consultant who rolled out software packages. She also teaches the elderly at college, PV and BS know her. BS and PD were going to do the interview, but EB said that would be unfair due to BS knowing the person in advance. EB was volunteered.

Beacon Training

PV, with her background has asked about what software is available to help people to do training and make it more interesting. Her suggestion is that there is a rolling presentation at the GLs meeting on how it is done. Are there funds for us to use this? EB said that as with all spend, a business case needs to be signed off by TS showing costs and benefits, TS confirmed there are funds. CMD said he became an instant expert on Beacon, and he does not know what GL's do, therefore he does not feel comfortable providing training. The Committee felt that if cost effective, this type of training is a very positive option. **Action Dec23/07:** PV to provide costs to TS.

Role descriptions

All changes to the role were voted in and should be loaded onto the web. Now the only roles without an up-to-date description are webmaster and systems manager. **Action Dec23/08:** EB to send all the latest through to CMD.

Risk assessments

CMD said after updating the website he is concerned, as a trustee, that the risk assessments are not in place to cover ourselves in the event of insurance claims. He believes that we need a central SharePoint to store EB said this SharePoint was agreed 6 months ago but has not been implemented.

EB was concerned about extra work falling on most of Committee and the GLs. DN stated that running a committee necessitated the work required. EB did not agree that everything must be a priority. There followed a heated discussion about workload of DN.

EB asked if some of the GL's do not comply with completing them what are the consequences? Were we really going to shut down groups? The excursions were used as an example, and this is not a path the Committee wants to do down. PD acted as devil's advocate to understand the scale of the requirement, for example, how many risk assessments we are looking for, 3 years history, one for every group, one for every excursion or change of venue etc. It was suggested that the Committee fills it in for the GLs. EB asked if the GLs did not produce the forms and they were completed by Committee members who did not know the group or the venue, if they would be valid for insurance purposes? TS asked if the insurance policy requires us to do risk assessments? DN stated the health and safety site says we should understand all the risks but did not know if it specifically asks for risk assessment forms. The recent accident at St Paul's was discussed but even with a risk assessment it would not have avoided the accident, which was not the fault of the GL, venue or u3a. RM asked if all this covering of ourselves by filling in forms is actually helping people to sleep better. EB

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questioned the focus of the current committee and sited that in previous minutes the focus was on members and the groups, this is no longer the case.

BS asked the question if the members could be asked to sign a form saying that they do the activity at their own risk. This question was not answered.

PAT testing was added into the discussion, it is important to find out what is required by insurance and what each venue requires, before starting wholesale testing and putting in new rules for the GLs.

Action Dec23/09: AS to investigate.

DN and TS were given the task of reviewing the subject of risk assessments and to investigate what is required by insurance, Health and Safety etc, as he believes we are overengineered on many things.

Action Dec23/010: DN and TS to produce study ready for January or February meeting for review.

The consequences of lack of compliance should be included.

AOB

TS has asked if AS has arranged different venue for Jan and March given Queen Mary's college is not available? PV questioned the Meet and Greet. **Action Dec23/11:** AS to mail Committee with the information.

NG raised that he has been to the line dancing and before the visit we had been told they have been taking money off members, they said for music and refreshments. We need to understand from GLs, if money is being requested from members, what is it being used for. **Action Dec23/12:** PV to investigate with all GL's and report back to Committee for discussion.

PV raised the GL meeting asking who is responsible for the arrangements. PD stated we also need to have refreshments and he reminded us that he is still looking for a refreshments manager. He is hoping to get agreement from somebody soon. The venue needs to be booked and it should start sharp at 1.30.

CMD updated the committee on current members:

- 941 members
- 1 genuine lapsed
- 1 deceased
- 2 non renewals
- 14 queries.

CMD said his availability in January is limited.

A vote took place regarding the printing and sending it out in the post of the 25 year commemorative booklet for members. It was agreed that this was not a good use of money but more importantly not good for the environment and this Committee wants to be seen as supporting sustainability. It will be put on the website. **Action: Dec 23/13** PD to talk to Pat about this decision

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PD confirmed that EB is standing down. The role will be advertised, and we need replace as it's a constitutional requirement. EB has offered to stay in post till somebody is found up to the end of February.

Next meeting is a 9.30 -11.30 4th January at Christ Church Chineham