Minutes of the Tetbury and District U3A Committee meeting held on 2nd September 2024

Present:

Bernadette Bell (Chair and Publicity), Martin Doidge (Vice Chair and Membership Secretary), David Smith (Webmaster and IT Support), Alan Harris (Treasurer), Anne Cox (Speaker Secretary), and Jill James (Business Secretary).

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Caroline Hose (Newsletter Secretary and Groups Co-ordinator) and Maggie Smith

2. Review and approval of the 31st July draft meeting minutes:

- The Speaker Secretary has contacted Anita Stride to obtain details of a previous speaker on fraud. She has also contacted a source in the police to investigate the possibility of a presentation on staying safe**.**
- The Webmaster has ensured that the Groups Co-ordinator had access to the google drive where the group risk assessments are stored. It was mentioned that the charity registration number has dropped off the website and the Webmaster was asked to restore it **(action DS).**
- The Chair has contacted Judith Randall to discuss the suggestion of groups running the tea/coffee provision at monthly meetings on a rota basis. Judith agreed that this is a good idea, and would also like someone to take responsibility for provisioning. Provisions are purchased from tea/coffee donations received and all transactions are recorded in a book. The Speaker Secretary offered to help with this and also to liaise with groups to create a rota. It was suggested that the groups rota should be in alphabetical order of group name for clarity. The Webmaster will provide a list of current groups and the Chair will send this out to group leaders. **(Action DS and BB).**
- The subject of new group funding is covered in the Treasurer's update below.
- The specification for what we want in the website will be discussed by a sub-group of the Webmaster, the Vice Chair and Tony Hadfield. The process has not yet reached a point where this is required and it will be dealt with in due course.
- The Chair has met the potential leader of a new Board Games Group. This will meet at Upton Mill starting in October.
- The subject of preparations for the September Expo is covered in the separate agenda item below.
- The Webmaster has removed reference to the Summer Picnic from the website.
- The Business Secretary will provide an electronic copy to the Webmaster for the website **(Action JJ).**
- The Speaker Secretary offered to act as Minutes Secretary but not Business Secretary next year if needed.

The draft minutes were approved (Proposed: Vice Chair, Seconded: Webmaster)

3. Update on the Cotswold Link Speaker Database

The Speaker Secretary had attended the Cotswold Link meeting on 5th August, where the subject of the Speaker Database was discussed. In particular there were three questions which formed the discussion:

(i) Should the database be open access or behind a log-in,
(ii) (ii) would the speakers have to give their permission for the storage of their details and
(iii) (iii) what specific information should be held on the database.

No final decisions were made. The Speaker Secretary is still investigating the answers to these questions. The North West Region already has an open facing database but this is not being extensively used. The Speaker Secretary has emailed Malcolm Tulip who administers the current database, but he is not in a position to take on any extra work with this. The next Cotswold Link meeting is on 7th October.

4. Potential Coffee Mornings

There has been a suggestion that we have a regular “coffee morning” at the Goods Shed. This would involve a member of the u3a taking a table, possibly on a Friday between 10am and 12pm, when the Whistlestop Café is open. Members and potential members would be able to find out more about the u3a and its benefits as well as meeting other members and potential members. Two u3a representatives would be present and the Chair offered to be one of these. The event could be promoted in the Newsletter and the Advertiser. The Vice Chair will give the Chair some membership forms for potential new members **(action: MD).**

The last new members’ coffee morning was held in April 2023. The Vice Chair pointed out that since that time 76 new members have joined, and suggested that it might be useful to hold another new members’ coffee morning.

5. Group Leaders Guidelines

The group leader guidelines have been reviewed but cannot be finalised until the protocol for loans is agreed. Small purchases are generally dealt with by donations and charges to group members. The group leaders keep records of these transactions and where there is a balance of £50 or greater this is reported to the Treasurer. This is further discussed in the Treasurer’s update below.

6. Monthly Meeting Risk Assessment and Emergency Evacuation:

There has never been an emergency evacuation test at the Goods Shed, and we have been asked if we could hold one at the end of one of our monthly meetings. The committee agreed that in principle this would be a good idea, although it would be preferable to undertake the test when the weather is dry. There is a duty manager from the Goods Shed Team at all meetings. All duty managers have had first aid training. The Committee discussed where the members should evacuate too and whether there is a need to mark off the names on the attendees list for the meeting. These questions will be discussed with the Goods Shed team as part of the process.

The Vice Chair had prepared a draft risk assessment for our monthly meetings at the Goods Shed. He raised a number of questions for discussion:

1. Maximum Capacity. The Goods Shed has capacity for 200 but this is greater than the seating capacity. The committee decided that capacity for our monthly meetings should be restricted to the amount of seating as a safety measure.
2. Evacuation of the venue. The committee discussed evacuation procedures. It was decided that the Chair and Speaker Secretary would direct the evacuation from the front of the Goods Shed. The Speaker Secretary highlighted the need for torches to be readily available. Other committee members in the audience would assist as required from the tiered seating.
3. The Speaker Secretary brings her computer to the meetings and therefore has access to emergency contact details for members if needed.
4. Drinking water is available at the tea/coffee table.
5. Food served is always commercial products.
6. An induction loop is available.
7. The Vice Chair will check the seating capacity, the emergency lighting, the need for torches with Jenny from the Goods Shed Team and make it clear that the duty manager must stay throughout each meeting **(Action MD).**

7. Updates from Committee Members

CHAIR AND PUBLICITY:

- The Chair has received further information from Highgrove regarding the Christmas Meal. The costs would be £150 per person including VAT. The Chair has therefore investigated alternative venues and the Holford Arms have indicated that they could accommodate us on 5th December. They will come back to us with a menu and price. Attendees would not be able to bring their own drinks, but these could be purchased from the bar. The Vice Chair mentioned that Steepleton have now employed a new chef who is very interested in catering for events.

- the Group Leader Co-ordinator now has four group leaders who have volunteered to help at the Tetbury Expo in September. The Chair will also attend for the day but will not arrive until 10.30 am. She will provide the Vice Chair with leaflets and cards for the stand **(Action BB).** The Vice Chair will attend until 10.30am, setting up the display boards and banners and he will take these down at the end of the day. **(Action MD).**

- Gail Moss has offered her services as a Meet and Greet person at monthly meetings.

VICE-CHAIR AND MEMBERSHIP:

The Vice Chair had distributed a membership report for August showing a total membership at the end of August of 336. Since that date he had received 3 further renewals and 2 new members bringing the current membership to 341. 13 members have not yet replied to his renewal request.

The committee discussed potentially reducing the current year fees for new members joining after the census for the national levy. It was agreed that from 1st April new members' fees would be reduced to £5.

The original category on Beacon used for link members meant that they would receive invitations to monthly meetings, the Christmas Lunch and other events which were not appropriate. Link members' details have now been moved to a new category on Beacon to prevent this.

TREASURER:

The Treasurer raised the issue of the loan protocol that he had been asked to produce. He suggested three different scenarios:

1. The group would like to purchase personalised products (such as group t-shirts or tabards). In this case he suggested an initial loan could be given, to be repaid by group members within 2 months.
2. The group would like to purchase new equipment or other goods to develop the group, up to a maximum of £100. In this case he suggested a loan which would be repaid by group members within 12 months.
3. Alternatively, all group expenditure could be collected from group members in advance.

There was further discussion as to whether loans were appropriate given that previously groups were expected to be self-financing.

The committee decided that the Chair should ask Carmel Burton to investigate how other u3a groups deal with this when she attends the next Cotswold Link meeting **(Action BB).** The committee also decided that no reference to the potential loan system should be included in the group leader guidelines until this happens and is further discussed.

WEBMASTER & IT SUPPORT:

- Existing website:
    a. There have been issues of corruption of the layout of the website.
    b. The Webmaster restored an earlier (23rd August) version which worked initially but was corrupted the next day after the automatic update had taken place.
    c. The Webmaster has discussed this with Lawrence Moss and it seems that some plug-ins that Lawrence used when building the site may be causing the problem.
    The Webmaster is trying to identify the culprit and work around it. This is trial and error, testing one at a time. In the meantime, new website content should not be added until the issue is resolved. The website needs to be checked every day.
    d. It is interesting that the u3a team that manage the Siteworks project have "approved" plug-ins. If an unapproved plug-in is used, they will not help to resolve any issues.

- New website – Sitegrounds
  The Webmaster has done the training course and was very impressed. Tony Hadfield will do the course this month.

  The Webmaster now has access to dummy website builder software to run on his PC.

  There is a workbook to complete using this dummy website which will take approximately 20+ hours. It will be done over the winter.

- Beacon
  a. The Webmaster continues with ongoing tweaks and permissions
  b. There is an issue with emails sent from Beacon not being received by one member using BTinternet.com. The Webmaster has researched this on the Beacon user group and found it to be a common problem. BT servers can blacklist Beacon in certain circumstances. We cannot change what the BT servers choose to do. The individual should put Beacon as a safe sender. As the affected members would not know that they have not received an email we perhaps should mention this issue in the next newsletter. However as this is also distributed by Beacon this may not help.

GROUP LEADER CO-ORDINATOR AND NEWSLETTER SECTRETARY

The Group Leader Co-ordinator had distributed a report prior to the meeting.

8. Any Other Business:

There was no other business

9. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting will be on 9th October at 2pm at Upton Mill Care Home. Chair to confirm with Upton Mill **(Action BB).**

Minutes approved 9th October 2024

Proposed: Speaker Secretary

Seconded: Webmaster