

MINUTES OF BRIDPORT AND DISTRICT U3A ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD at 2pm on TUESDAY 15th JUNE 2021 (using Zoom)

Membership present: Attending via Zoom: 28

With a total membership of 541 at the time of the meeting, the required quorum of 55, being 10% of the membership, was exceeded with 84 advance proxy votes from members being recorded.

Committee Members Present

Pat Grafton (Chairman), (Vincent Sheppard (Vice-Chairman), Valerie Gierth (Treasurer), Paul Tebbutt, Diana Coleridge, Tony Dix, John Grantham, Maria Forbes, Heather Harvey and Mick Holgate

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

Pat Grafton welcomed everyone to the meeting which had unfortunately needed to be held virtually but she looked forward to next year's meeting which should be under easier circumstances. She thanked those who had submitted votes in advance and noted that twice the number of members necessary to meet our quorum had been achieved

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Valerie Jones, Peter Marchant, Stella and Dennis Cotton, and Karen Herbert.

3. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM

The advance voting result was that 71 members agreed that these be approved and the vote to accept them as being correct was proposed by Alan Hobby and seconded by Philip Morgan-Smith. The Chairman's copy was signed as being a true record of the proceedings.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well, that was a strange year, wasn't it! When I wrote my report for the 2020 AGM, we had not long emerged from the first Covid lockdown and were wondering what would happen next. Now as I write this year's report, we are cautiously coming out of the third lockdown, and hoping that we may be able to return to a degree of normality in the not too distant future. In particular, we are looking forward to meeting up with friends face-to-face at U3A meetings of various kinds and perhaps even giving one another a hug in sheer delight at being together again!

However, despite the absence of meeting each other in person, our U3A has been increasingly active throughout the year, in contrast to some others which stopped completely. While some of our interest groups did elect to close down for the duration, many others kept going through a mixture of email, phone, social media, Zoom and our new website. In addition, a whole new raft of 'At Home' groups was formed specifically to counter the absence of full group activities; John Grantham has been the main impetus behind these groups and I thank him for his efforts. We even gained several new members who joined especially to take part in one or other of these particular groups!

Details of all our groups, both new and old, active or 'resting', are listed on our new website, which I do hope you've all looked at by now; if you haven't yet, please do so. Among other things, you'll find the Risk Assessment forms that are essential if you're planning to start face-to-face meetings of any kind again; they're available on the Downloads page. Tony Dix, our webmaster, has worked enormously hard on the website over the past months, ably assisted by several other committee members, and I'd like to thank him for all he has done and continues to do.

Of necessity, our usual programme of monthly talks came to an abrupt stop last year, but this was soon replaced by online talks, as speakers came to terms with the new conditions and adjusted their presentations to a Zoom format. In addition, extra talks and workshops were arranged from time to time, covering such diverse subjects as taking good photos on your phone or following the huge undertaking of burying the National Grid power lines that is currently taking place in the Winterbourne Abbas area.

In an effort to keep members informed and in touch, a monthly Newsletter was introduced last autumn. In addition to news of our own U3A's activities, links have been provided to the main U3A website to help keep members up-to-date with the developing situation in regard to coronavirus and the resulting restrictions. Besides being emailed to the majority of members, hard copies of the Newsletter have also been posted to those members not able to use email, in the hopes of reassuring them that they are not forgotten in an online world.

The twice yearly meetings of the West Dorset Network of U3As have continued, inevitably by Zoom, and we have had representatives at these, as it's always interesting to find what other branches are doing. I have to say that Bridport & District U3A comes out very favourably for the quantity of group activities it has managed to keep going in such difficult circumstances!

There will be some changes in the make-up of the committee this year as several of its members stand down. Our long-serving Business Secretary, John Collins, retired in April after 8 years in post, well past what our Constitution states should be his time in office! Grateful thanks are due to him for all he has done over many years; you've certainly earned a rest, John! Karen Herbert has taken on his role, in addition to that of Newsletter Editor.

Paul Tebbutt, who has been our Groups Coordinator for the last two years, is also standing down in order to help his son with a new business venture. He will be much missed, having worked enormously hard to encourage both existing and new groups and arrange extra activities where possible, much of it in difficult Covid times. Thank you, Paul, our loss is your son's gain and we wish you well. John Grantham will be holding the fort on a temporary basis, but we will be looking for a new Groups Coordinator once the new committee takes office. Please don't be backward in coming forward; your U3A needs You!

6. TREASURER'S PRESENTATION OF ACCOUNTS

Valerie started her presentation with a slide showing Income and noted that membership, and therefore our income, were down this year by around 20%, in line with many other u3as.

Expenditure was also very different because of Covid and also down by about 20%, with the major outgoings being, as in most years, due to the fees, over £2,000, levied by the Third Age Trust. The second largest item is postage. Most of this, nearly £1,900 – sounds an awful lot – is not all on postage stamps. The majority of the cost is the money we pay to Third Age Trust Trading Ltd for direct mailing the Third Age Matters magazine to members, but as Pat mentioned, we did spend very much more this year to help our members. All the Membership cards were posted out, and we sent out hard copies of emails and monthly newsletters to those members who don't have email. Some of the other additional expenditure arose as we started paying for Zoom for any groups who wanted to meet on Zoom, although, I must admit, some Group Leaders are over generous and say "No, I'll pay for that because I Zoom with my grandchildren".

Now the Reserves at the end of the year are high and I've been saying this for some years now. We had hoped that in the past year to December 2020, we could use part of the reserves for some sort of celebrations for our 10th anniversary, but obviously nothing could be arranged. Of those total assets of £14,951, £14,093 was money in the bank.

In the current year, we are continuing to pay additional postage, Zoom subscriptions, and the committee agreed some months ago, that when we did come out of lockdown, we would pay the total cost of rental fees for groups who decided to meet in halls. The estimate is that between September and the end of December, this would cost us about £1,500.

It is very difficult to say what the surplus will be at the end of the current year, but the committee will look at the possibility of offering present members a reduction in fee, that is, if we still have largish reserves.

On completing her summary of the accounts, Valerie asked whether anyone had any questions.

Robin Amswych asked why the u3a Trust had increased its fee when in view of the circumstances, we might expect that they would be charging less. Valerie explained that it was actually from next year that it increases from £3.50 to £4.00, seemingly to help meet the costs of new premises and increased staffing, but acknowledged that there seems to be less support from them now than we have enjoyed in the past. Robin asked whether the committee had written to the Trust to express our displeasure; Valerie replied that we hadn't written and agreed that it was something the new committee could consider.

Alan Hobby requested that if the committee does write to the Trust, could we complain bitterly that the DVD Library is being closed because, we are being told, it is too expensive and they don't have the staff to support it. It was agreed that this point could also be made if we submit a letter of complaint to the Trust.

Ann Riley asked for clarification of the Grants and Donations sum shown under Income. Valerie explained that it was a grant from the Third Age Trust to assist with our 2019 Open Day event.

7. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL EXAMINER

82 members had voted in advance to renew the appointment of Kevin Senior as Independent Financial Examiner. This motion was proposed by Mary Thomas, seconded by Robin Amswych, unanimously supported and carried by the meeting.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS TO THE COMMITTEE

In addition to the current committee members who are standing for re-election, i.e. Valerie Gieth, Diana Coleridge, Mick Holgate, Tony Dix, Maria Forbes and Heather Harvey, two additional members have also been proposed and seconded for election. They are Vincent Sheppard who is offering to take over the role of Chairman from Pat Grafton, and Karen Herbert who is willing to replace John Collins and serve as Business Secretary. Also standing for election is John Grantham, who was co-opted during the year to enable a handover from Paul Tebbutt who is retiring from the role of Groups Coordinator.

83 members' advance votes were in support of their election, with one vote against. The motion was proposed by Ann Riley, seconded by Roger Smith, and unanimously supported and carried by the meeting.

9. PRESENTATION OF PROPOSALS

Alan Hayball, currently no longer a u3a member, put forward a proposal that a refund of £10 of the membership subscription should be made as he felt that the majority of members had been overlooked during Covid restrictions and that this would lead to substantial reduction in membership numbers.

Members had been asked to vote to approve one of the following Proposals or Abstain.

- (i) from a member to refund £10 of the membership subscription;
- (ii) from the Committee to use the monies to survive and thrive: to use funds more effectively by subsidising costs for any groups to meet in more safe and Covid-secure venues.

In the event the voting was 77 in favour of proposal from the Committee, with four votes against and three abstentions.

Therefore the committee's proposal was accepted.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Alastair Forbes asked if there was a possibility of holding our previously cancelled 10th Anniversary at a later date. Valerie confirmed that the committee expected that celebrations for this, and for the branch surviving the Covid restrictions, would be held at the first opportunity.

Vincent referred to a communication from Peter Marchant who had written in wishing that a statement of his thanks to the Committee is recorded.

Jennifer Malyon expressed her thanks to Pat Grafton for serving so well and for so long as Chairman.

Pat thanked all members of the committee for their help and support, particularly for the additional effort that has had to go into arranging this virtual AGM using Zoom.

Marilyn Stevens thanked the committee for all their hard work over the past year.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 2.40 pm.

Signed: Vincent Sheppard

Date: 26/07/2022