

MINUTES OF THE GROUP LEADERS' MEETING

6 April 2017

Small Lounge, Village Hall, Countesthorpe

Present: Ursula Wild, Sheila Baldwin, Shirley Frost, Tony Claricoates, Liz Lockwood-Jones, Pat Hillyard, Barry Hillyard, David Wild, Sheila Holmes, Jill Clayton, Linda Warner, Ruth Westley, Glenys Catterall-Annal, Allen Donkin, Theresa Morgan, Graham Cox, June Hawkins,

1 Apologies for Absence

Mikki Wilde, Mike Thompson, John Armstrong, Diana Lee, Ian and Patsy Paterson,

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Copies were distributed.

3 Matters Arising

- There were no matters arising

4 Individual Group Finances

- Graham Cox (Treasurer) was welcomed and introduced to the meeting.
- Graham warned GLs not to hold cash, but to pass it to him promptly. If an individual GL were to die and were holding U3A cash, it would actually be considered to be part of the deceased's estate, and the U3A would have great difficulty and possibly a lengthy delay in proving ownership and recouping the money.
- Ursula reminded the meeting that requests for capital items can be considered by the Committee, and a form is available for this purpose (*download from the website – archive/general and reference/April 2015*), or from Ursula). It is important that expenditure is not incurred before approval has been received.
- Expense forms with appropriate receipts are required for reimbursement of expenditure, and should be handed to the Treasurer. (*Download from the website – archive/general and reference/April 2015*), or from Ursula)
- Graham will soon be providing full year projections for each group's financial position, following the half-year audit.
- A new carpet is being purchased for Carpet Bowls group.
- Barry Hillyard holds the U3A laptop and projector – available for use by groups.

5 Amending the Unpaid Subscriptions List

- An updated list of outstanding subscriptions was provided for GLs to check and remind anybody in their groups/s who still needs to renew.
- If anyone has information about listed names who will not be renewing, please advise David Wild, Membership Secretary.
- Tony Claricoates enquired on the effectiveness of the lists and GL activity in chasing late payers. David Wild replied that it had some effect.
- The success of the 'meeters and greeters' was recognised. Many new members had remarked on the friendly welcome extended by our U3A

- David Wild reiterated the policy that subscriptions are only up to 31 March, no matter when during the year they are paid. An individual may attend one general meeting as a guest, and one group taster session before full payment becomes due. June Hawkins advised that this ruling appears on the website homepage, on the What's On, and will be covered in the December Newsletter. This ensures proper U3A insurance coverage for individuals.
- When sharing cars (eg: SWANS, CARE Walking, Birdwatching, Garden Appreciation, History groups), the driver assumes responsibility for the passengers under his/her driver insurance. No money should be given to the driver as this may invalidate the insurance. Paying for a coffee for the driver, or the parking charge etc, can be suitable alternatives.

6 Meetings Timetable

- Sheila Baldwin noted that many activities, especially those involving trips, tended to be on Wednesdays and Thursdays, thus excluding the same people who have other commitments on those days.
- She circulated a timetable showing the days of the week when most, but not all, the groups meet.
- It was explained that in some instances, group meetings were dependent upon the availability of local village venues (eg Village Hall, Methodist Hall, etc), and also in some cases, such as Theatre, the timetables of productions coupled with parking situations at the Village Hall.
- It was pointed out that whilst the timetable was useful, it did not indicate the fact that some groups meet weekly, others fortnightly, others monthly and so did not give a complete picture.
- It was agreed to try and ensure a variety of days for activities where possible, such as Travel, History and Theatre, but much depended on factors outside the control of the GL.

7 News From the Groups

- **Scrabble.** Shirley took over from Lesley in February. A few members had left the group, but a regular attendance of 12-14 was reported. Expenditure on a new game may shortly be required.
- **Birdwatching** continues with an unchanged format mixing indoor talks/videos with visits to birdwatching sites. There are around 18-20 active members from a list of 30+ names. Outdoor events have mainly centred on Rutland Water and Brandon Marsh. The group pays for the small lounge even if unused, but remains solvent. Janet Easey will be taking over the group from January 2018.
- **Guitar** remains static with 6 or 7 members attending weekly. The group plays a variety of music styles and also sings on occasion.
- **Travel** group had to postpone the October planning/social evening due to few members able to attend. It will now take place on 17 January. Outings since April have included visits to Worcester, Blenheim Palace, Cambridge, Dudmaston and a Gin Distillery. The short holiday to the North West included two NT properties, the Manchester Ship Canal, Southport and Liverpool and had proved very successful. The 2018 holiday to Bembridge, IoW, has proved so popular that it had virtually sold out on the first day with only 3 twin rooms remaining. Jill thanked all those who helped to organise the programme of outings, and said that all trips had been well supported.
- **CARE Walking** reported some turnover of members, as some wanted more walks and left to join other rambling groups. Walkers usually number in the low twenties, with some only attending in decent weather. It is proving difficult to get walk leaders – though considerable support with planning and pre-walking is provided by Allen. Some members of the group lead more than one walk. Usually the weather is kind to the group!
- **Computers** is not really a formal group, but a facility to assist members with any IT difficulties. It tends to operate 2 or 3 times per year at present, on demand.

- **Handbells** reported a new member had joined, and that the full complement would be 18 if all turned up. 10-12 is the average attendance. The group will be performing 4 Christmas events – Countesthorpe Spectacular, Foston Church, Oak Court and the Odd Fellows in Cosby.
- **Beginners' Photography** may be offered later in the year.
- **Nordic Walking** continues with only 2 regulars with occasional additional walkers.
- **Carpet Bowls** continues to thrive with 16-18 regular players. A replacement carpet is being purchased.
- **SWANS** has a small turnover of membership as some new people join and others drop out. There are 42 names on the list but the average is 12-16 walkers. Liz Lockwood-Jones plans to relinquish co-ordination of this group in March, and is seeking somebody to take it on. Walks are varied, and some involve shared cars, others public transport. Walks cover many of Leicester's lovely parks, some canal-side strolls and city walks as well as quiet lanes and byeways.
- **Discussion** has welcomed a few new members, including one gentleman, though as usual, the group seldom reaches any conclusion! Recent topics have included Moving to a New Environment; Perks for Pensioners; To What Extent Does Terrorism Rule Our Lives; The Impact of Fashion; and What is the Role of Sport in Our Society? The December meeting will take place in the Residents' Lounge at the new Mulberry Court in Blaby and the topic will be Hot News.
- **Literature** has welcomed 3 new members and 10-12 people meet to discuss a wide variety of books. Sometimes it is a specific title, other times an author or even a genre. Discussion is not especially academic, but concentrates on being enjoyable. A short summary appears on the website each month.
- **Allotment Gardening** will be taken over by Val and Andy Grant, with the existing three members leaving, though available for support if necessary.
- **Solo Sunday Lunch** will stay as a closed group, as there are 22-25 members attending. The group continues to meet at Ullesthorpe Court and this is generally successful. It is difficult to find alternative venues, or to get different people to organise the lunch. Sheila indicated that there will be no Solo Lunch in December.
- **Creative Writing** continues successfully. The group has lost three members but gained two new ones, so there is a gentle 'turnover' of ideas. Writers continue working around a monthly theme, and in November will be producing just a very short piece which will leave time for a workshop activity, to get the creative juices flowing!
- **Theatre** group continues to suffer from small numbers and some cancellations due to lack of support. Trips are almost always mid-week, though different days where possible, but it is dependent upon theatres' own programmes. A mix of serious plays, musical theatre and a ballet is sought, with local theatres supported as well as visits further afield to Milton Keynes and Birmingham. The Great Gatsby at Concordia, Hinckley is reasonably well supported, but the next two productions at Market Harborough need more numbers to be viable. Seat prices and coach costs continue to rise, making it more expensive than it used to be.
- **History** continues with its mix of talks in the winter months, and trips out. Some of these are local, using shared cars whilst those further afield use the coach. Thanks were given to all those who help with outings, and support for the talks. The Planning Meeting has successfully produced an interesting programme for 2017-18, with the short break in September to be centred on Llangollen. Full details will be available at the meetings, and on the website.
- **Fit for Life** has had a change of Instructor from Karen Bent to Debbie Cooper. The group has seen a drop in numbers, and it is barely viable at present as 12 are needed to cover costs. There has been Di Lee has spoken to the Treasurer and they are monitoring the situation.
- **Flower Arranging** continues with steady membership, though there has been one new member recently. Space is a limiting factor, and it is planned to retain this as a closed group, though anyone interested should speak to Pat Quinn. The group works to a programme of themes, and in January they will be undertaking leaf manipulation!

- **CHEWS** group dropped from 5 to 3 members, but now has one new enthusiast. A new regime has been introduced with 2 meetings per month – one a quick weigh-in, and the other a longer meeting, with coffee. Numbers are swelling (hopefully, not waistlines)!
- **Garden Appreciation** has a Planning Meeting in November. The group generally has about 4 outings per year – sometimes in conjunction with either Travel or History Groups, and these have proved popular. Visits to members' own gardens have been particularly successful – no special preparations but a joy to see the different gardens and talk about them with their owners.
- **Pilates** continues with its core group of between 8 and 15 members and is solvent. Costs are held at £5 per session or £20 in advance for 5 sessions – which need not be consecutive weeks. The new Instructor, Debbie Cooper, is good. Mats are no longer provided, so members have to bring their own.
- **Cryptic Crosswords** members continue to enjoy their small, closed group. They began as novices, worked through books and are improving. The Guardian crossword is generally okay, but it is getting hard to improve. The group cannot accommodate beginners as members are all at a similar level. They have a rule that they don't shout out answers, but put up their hands! Good fun for the brain and good cakes, courtesy of David!

8 Any Other Business

- Barry Hillyard intends to offer a Classical Music Group, based on a series of CDs "The History of Classical Music" – as used by another U3A, and supplemented by members' own music. This could be 2 hours, monthly, and possibly in his home, depending on numbers. Sign-up sheet will be placed in small lounge.
- Theresa Morgan attended the meeting as she will be offering to start a Craft Group. This could take a variety of forms, with different crafts such as scrapbooking, card-making, etc, across the ability range. Theresa to provide an introductory 'write-up' for the December Newsletter. Sign-up sheet will be placed in small lounge.
- Ursula advised the meeting that there will be no raffle at the December general meeting.
- Ursula thanked all the Group Leaders – without whom our U3A would not be so successful.

The meeting closed at 4.10 pm

9 Date and time of next meeting:

Thursday, 19 April 2018 (3 – 4 pm) in the Small Lounge.