



SANDBACH & DISTRICT U3A

Registered Charity No: 1105144

MINUTES OF 15th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - MONDAY NOVEMBER 5th 2018 SANDBACH TOWN HALL 10AM

Committee Present: Arnie Laing (Chairman), Alan Casey, Kevin Dean, Barrie Hacking, Alice Holmes, Geoff Coldwell, Sandy Boyle, Paula Reilly-Cooper, Don Rickards.

Present: 147 members

1 Welcome And Introduction

Arnie Laing welcomed members and opened the meeting.

2 Apologies for Absence

Christine Kerr, Brian Kerr, Sandria Bessant, Margery Hawkins, Lesley Reed, Ann Holding, Sushila Wingham, Rosamund Tanner-Tremaine, Chris Tanner-Tremaine, Ann Plant, Paul Plant, C Lythgoe, John Wyatt, Pat Wyatt, Reginald Hood, Irene Hood, Rob Wheeldon, Ruth Wheeldon, Mick Jackson, Stuart Blackwell, Margaret Blackwell, June Rigby, Ralph Browes, Alan Butler, Don Joy, Geoff Harrop, Joy Harrop, John Herriman, Shirley Herriman, Richard Howells, Pat Howells, Joan Coulson, Christine Coldwell, J Simcox

3 Minutes of 2017 AGM

The minutes were accepted as a true record
Proposed Jinty Pyke, Seconded Lesley Farrar

4 Chairman's Report -Arnie Laing

I attended my first AGM a year ago as a relatively new member and the leader of 2 groups and was elected to the committee in the role of vice chairman. Alan Casey, ex-chair, had approached me to become involved. He is a mentor to me on the committee along with Kevin Dean and Barrie Hacking, the membership secretary. The fantastic working commitment of these three gentlemen and everything Alice Holmes does for this organisation cannot be praised enough.

I was looking forward to 3 years in the vice-chair role but instead, some 3 months later in Feb, when Alan Butler sadly decided he could not continue as chair I have been deputising as your Acting Chair. I have tried to keep my feet on the ground in this role.

My first requirement was to chair the EGM and since then have officiated at several committee meetings and most of the monthly Members' meetings.

In this role I've also attended a new member induction meeting, a new Group leader induction meeting, cluster meeting of local U3As, Sign Up day, a Sandbach Today event, and more recently, with acting secretary Sandy Boyle, a U3A regional workshop entitled "Keeping it Legal"

Representing Sandbach U3A has involved me in attending the Dementia Friendly Sandbach steering group. (They are holding a Christmas celebration Buffet Lunch Mon10th Dec at the Masonic Hall tickets £3 inc a raffle ticket) I also attended a Dementia Friendly Awareness

training session, which I would commend to you all as a worthwhile exercise to increase your understanding of those who live with dementia.

Our U3A, with about 1400 members and nearly 100 activity groups potentially, if not actually, is the largest group or association and representative body, including employers in the immediate area, so Sandbach and District U3A is an important part of an ever growing local population who are no longer in full time employment. Importantly we are representative of a good cross section of that part of the local community

New groups this year include Fitness Exercise on Wednesday morning at Sandbach United ground, the monthly Sunday lunch discussion group and Wine Tasting group 2.

I have accepted an invitation to attend the CVS AGM as U3A representative. This will include a Governance seminar.

I will also be attending the AGMs of Sandbach Partnership and Sandbach today.

Additionally I will attend a further U3A Workshop, "Financial Matters" about financial aspects of running a U3A.

For most of my life I have had the embedded thought that **"you can please some of the people some of the time but never all of the people all of the time"**

As Acting Chair I'll admit there have been a few challenges, which in hindsight are best described as character building, that were often just time wasting and unnecessary annoyances for a committee of volunteers trying to do an honest job to the best of their abilities on behalf of the membership.

The worst was an anonymous malicious submission relating to the EGM, by someone who was not even present, sent Gillian Russell, the North West Trustee and to the Third Age Trust who declared it to be spurious and unfounded after investigation.

These experiences give an interesting interpretation to our strap-line "Learn, Laugh and Live!"

Thankfully, this sort of incident does not reflect the fantastic positive thinking, support and attitude displayed by the majority of the membership, who realise and appreciate that everything in our U3A cannot happen or take place without the hard work of all members who volunteer their help plus the dedication of Group leaders and Committee Members.

A publication entitled "Learning not Lonely" (Living Life, Extending Horizons, Challenging Conventions) was published this year by the Third Age Trust, a report by Sam Mauger, the Chief Executive.

In this report there is a section headed "Challenges" which includes Perception, Mainly weekday activity, Embedding volunteering, The retirement offer, Extending the opportunity, Extending the offer to more sections of the community, Attracting younger people who have retired.

We also have the Ministry of Loneliness, a new government department lead by Tracey Crouch, continuing the work started by the late Jo Cox MP. In "Learning not Lonely" it says "there was a conscious view that the U3A model was the antithesis of loneliness"

So, who would want to be chair of Sandbach and District U3A? This is not a rhetorical question as we do require a vice chair on the committee.

For most of this year there have been 10 other committee members along with myself who have served with great enthusiasm and diligence. Their hard work on behalf of the membership must be acknowledged, which has been a true inspiration and I cannot praise their support enough.

Although on the committee for only part of the year, acknowledgement and thanks for their work must first go to Alan Butler as Chair, Jinty Pyke as Secretary and Geoff Pyke as Group Co-ordinator.

One other "acting" on the committee since March is Sandy Boyle who deserves special mention for stepping forward to be Acting Secretary until this AGM in addition to arranging Sign Up day.

Two others elected with Sandy and me at the last AGM have not been shrinking violets either, as Paula Reilly-Cooper took on being Group Co-ordinator, which she wishes to continue and Don Rickards helped arrange the Group Leaders lunch and was involved on other projects

Leaving the committee today are Alex Black, Geoff Coldwell and Judi Hewitt who will all be greatly missed and deserve thanks from everyone for their service.

John Roome as Newsletter Editor deserves a mention and needs more support with news items and group reports to continue his fantastic work.

Alice Holmes, a lady of many U3A roles, has again kept so many members occupied and entertained with trips and social occasions arranged throughout the year. She is ably supported here today and on many other occasions by her excellent team of "Tea Ladies". Doreen Hebden produces tickets and Don Joy creates the posters. Thanks to both of them. Our very successful quiz nights in April and November are great fun and well supported thanks to our quiz master Keith Poynton. Thanks to him and all the team that runs these events.

Then there are those on the volunteer lists plus the Postal Distribution group and the ex-Group Development Project who still organise new Members' meetings.

One of the final and very important thanks must go to John Page, our outgoing Auditor.

Thanks going to group members who take responsibility may come as surprise but it is important that members support and help group leaders. Do you help set up the room before the meeting and tidy away afterwards or do you just attend and leave immediately when the groups finished? Please remember that in U3A leaders and members are all equal!

SWISH stands for Sandbach Web Integrated Support and Help. It is our new on-line potentially "all singing and dancing" facility which is being developed under the stewardship of Alan Casey and a dedicated team. Like all the best things in life, this continues to be honed and some gremlins are still to be eradicated.

It should be noted that the off-line membership processes will continue to exist.

Fiona Bruce, our MP, has stated she is a great supporter of this U3A and has particularly enjoyed performances by the Brass Band.

Thank you for indulging me. If I've got things wrong, forgotten anything or missed someone out, this was not intentional. I have sometimes named teams of volunteers rather than naming individuals, but please all accept my thanks.

5 Treasurer's Report - Geoff Coldwell

Audited accounts were distributed. Geoff reported an increase in income due to growing membership which resulted in an increase in income from groups and from instructor led groups. The increase in Gift Aid also reflects the increased membership. There has been some increase in venue costs and in instructor fees. We have a surplus of income over expenditure in 2017 – 2018 of £138.34.

Geoff thanked Louise Adams, the past treasurer, John Page, the auditor, for their help and support.

There were no questions on the accounts.

The Chair called for the report to be accepted

Proposed – Isabel Carrahar Seconded – Kay Fabian

The report was accepted.

6 Appointment of Auditor /Independent Examiner

The chairman thanked John Page for his work as auditor for a number of years. David Twidale has agreed to accept the nomination for the role.

Proposed - Peter Robertshaw Seconded - David Whitworth

Vote Carried

David Twidale is appointed as Auditor/Independent Examiner.

Independent Examiner is the new title from the Charity Commission

7 Election of Committee Members

Four people have agreed to be nominated as new committee members and eight existing members are willing to continue

New members

- Isabel Carrahar
- Tony Richards
- Sam Boardman
- Pam Thomas

Proposed Sandy Boyle seconded Don Rickards

Vote carried

Existing members

- Arnie Laing
- Paula Reilly-Cooper
- Don Rickards
- Alan Casey
- Sandy Boyle
- Alice Holmes
- Kevin Dean
- Barrie Hacking

Supported overwhelmingly by meeting to continue on committee

8 Appointment of Officers

Chairman - Arnie Laing
Secretary - Sam Boardman
Treasurer - Isabel Carrahar
Group Co-ordinator - Paula Reilly- Cooper
Programmes and Venues Co-ordinator - Don Rickards
Membership Secretary -Barrie Hacking
SWISH - Alan Casey
Library Officer - Pam Thomas

Vote Carried

9 Motion On Change To Constitution

At the Extraordinary General meeting there was some dispute about the wording of paragraph 14 of the constitution.

It presently reads - *“The executive Committee may call a Special General Meeting of the U3A at any time **and** if at least 5% of the membership request such a meeting, stating the business to be considered. The secretary shall call the meeting. At least 21 days’ notice of the meeting shall be given. The notice must state the business to be discussed. There shall be a quorum when 5% of the members are present.”*

The proposal is to replace the word **and** by **or**.

Ken Brown commented that he thought this matter had been dealt with on a previous occasion. John Page clarified the matter.

Vote in favour carried with 1 abstention

10 Motions On Fees To Be Paid By Group Leaders

Arnie Laing introduced this item which was held over from the EGM for further investigations by the committee.

Each U3A is operationally independent, but as member of the Third Age Trust we agree to follow the principles of the U3A movement.

Two of these are the Mutual Aid Principle and the Self Help Learning Principle.

These state that **no payments are made to members for services rendered to any U3A**
And that **there is no distinction between the learners and the teachers; they are all U3A members.**

It has been the custom and practice within Sandbach and district U3A, since its inauguration, for Group leaders, at their own discretion, not to pay annual membership and session fees.

This can be interpreted as payments being made to group leaders in contravention of the principles stated, and in consequence we should make it a condition that group leaders must pay.

Conversely, there is an argument that free membership and/or session fees is a concession that recognises the additional contribution made by leaders and which is often more than compensated for by unclaimed expenses incurred by those leaders.

The committee has decided that this matter should be put to the membership at the AGM today and asks that you vote for each of the following proposals A and B

A – Group leaders must pay the annual fee (yes/no)

B – Group leaders must pay the session fees for attending their own groups (yes/no)

All the immediately past and present committee members, including all those newly elected committee members, have paid the annual fee.

After a long discussion about the best way to prepare for the AGM vote about group leaders paying the annual membership fee and session fees, the committee agreed to recommend that members vote as follows:

Your committee requires group leaders to pay the annual fee and allow them to choose to pay session fees or not

One of the key issues here is about change for our U3A. Change in any organisation is fraught. We are used to the status quo and will want to fully understand why change is happening. It is important to explain things well, particularly with a change such as this which could be seen as detrimental to a particular group of members.

This change will bring our practice into line with the ethos of the U3A movement which is **by the members for the members with no member receiving any form of remuneration for their role.**

Any money that is not expenses is deemed remuneration and both the U3A and the individual in question could fall foul of financial regulations. It could be viewed as “payment” which should be declared.

Since the collapse of the “Kids Company” charity the Charities Commission are taking a far closer look at all registered charities.

In fact only 26 group leaders have not paid

Ken Brown gave a brief history of the rise of the practice of group leaders not paying fees if they so wished. Leaders spend time and money in preparing sessions and often do not claim expenses. He was opposed to the annual fee being mandatory for group leaders

Joyce Watson said she had joined U3A in order to give her services as a leader freely. She was happy to pay the annual fee but not session fees.

Sheena Lewington spoke in favour of leaders paying annual fees but not session fees

Christine Roche also expressed this view

Jill Brown said that group leaders often used their own money in preparing sessions and they should not be out of pocket. This view was echoed by Iris Scannell.

Bill Dowell asked why this matter was being brought up now when the practice had been in existence since the start of Sandbach U3A. He personally paid the annual fee but not all leaders felt they should.

Arnie responded that it was because of the closer scrutiny by the charities commission.

John Page, ex treasurer and auditor, said that the payment of the annual fee by all members was necessary because we are a registered charity. As such we can claim gift aid on all donations, which is how the charity commission considers the annual fee. This year we claimed back about £1600. We are part of the U3A trust and must abide by the rules if we wish to remain a part of the Trust. If we decide not to follow the rules we leave the trust and lose our charity status. We are in deep trouble if we reject motion A.

Ann Colley said that paying the annual fee gives membership of other groups and access to other U3A activities.

The matters were put to the vote

A- Group leaders must pay the annual fee

Yes - 119

No - 31

Abstentions 7

Motion Carried

B - Group leaders must pay session fees for attending their own groups

Yes - 7

No - not counted

Abstentions 2

Motion defeated

11 Questions From The Floor

Susan Roberts commented that she had noticed in the Q and A that when an observation or question from the floor became seemingly uncomfortable, the Chair said 'moving on' or similar. The Chair apologised to members if he had been guilty of this but was conscious of the need to manage time available. He accepted that he had been chastised.

12 AOB

None

The meeting closed at 11.14am

Signed Chairman

Date