



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Littlehampton u3a
held on Tuesday 30th April 2024 at 2:00 pm in the United Reform Church**

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was formally opened by Rod Lee the Chair who welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming. Rod made the audience aware of Fire and Safety Precautions. Rod also reminded everyone not to vote at this meeting if they have submitted a Postal Vote.

Rod introduced the current committee to the members:-

Josie Mitchell (Business Secretary), Lynn Freeman (Minutes Secretary), Rosemary Grove (Membership Secretary), Liz Robshaw and Sally Hennebry (Group Coordinators), Bryan Bithell (Bulletin Editor), Derek Waite (Beacon Manager and interim Treasurer), and Lynn Freeman (Events Co-ordinator).

Our current Treasurer, Michelle Venn, has decided to stand down as of yesterday. Therefore, there will be a change in the nomination for Treasurer to Derek Waite, who has offered to stand on an interim basis until we can find a new Treasurer.

Unfortunately, due to the recent departure of our Treasurer, the accounts are incomplete and have not been signed off. Therefore, the accounts will not be finalised today.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Elizabeth Blake, Keith and Geraldine Bowden, Bruce and Rosemary Green, Bob Murdoch and Doreen Dunning.

3. Minutes of AGM 25 April 2023

Approval of Minutes (copies issued to all members)

Proposed by Bryan Bithell, seconded by Leigh Bithell and approved by unanimous vote.

4. Matter arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's Report

Hello everyone and welcome back to the United Church for our 2024 AGM. It doesn't seem possible that it has been a year since we last got together, but having sat down

to write this report, it soon became clear to me just how much we have achieved in the last 12 months, and I guess because of that the time has passed quite quickly.

So, by way of a recap, I would like to share with you some of the highlights of the year as far as we on the Committee are concerned:

- Firstly, after much deliberation and preparation, we have introduced Beacon as our membership management and payment system. This has improved our ability to communicate with our members, Group Leaders and group members. It has also helped us to maintain more accurate details about our members, and we have given you the opportunity to edit the details that we hold for you on our database.
- We now have a permanent online membership renewal and new membership application system, also through Beacon, which has greatly reduced the amount of time that we spend on renewals and applications. It also reduces the chance of mistakes occurring due to human error when transposing the written details onto the database, as used to be the case. And hopefully for most you, it has made it easier for you to renew and pay for your membership, although for those members who still prefer a paper-based option, we will continue to provide hard copy alternatives to the online process.
- As a result of using Beacon, we have been able to email all renewal Membership Cards to the members, although we are aware that not everyone is able to download these to their phones or print them from their computers. Therefore, we have made hard copy cards available for all those members who require them.
- We carried out a survey of our members so that we could understand what you require from your membership, where we might be falling short of your expectations and, of course, where we are getting it right. Thanks in part to the survey we have introduced a new programme of events which I will mention in more detail in a moment.
- We replaced our Treasurer and we also filled the vacant role of Events Co-ordinator after a period of over two years without having someone in the role.
- Our Coffee Mornings have continued to flourish, and we have now introduced speakers from local charities and community groups to come and speak to the attendees. These sessions have been received very well by all concerned.
- After a break of over three years, we have reintroduced a full programme of monthly Speaker Meetings. Again, these events were requested by many of you as part of the members' survey.
- We had an Open Day and we attended the Littlehampton Town Show, and we signed new members at both of those events.
- We had a very successful and well-received Christmas Party.

- We also organised a 'thank you' lunch for our hard-working Group Leaders and, for me personally, it was a great pleasure to see all the Group Leaders in one place, and to finally meet them face to face. The feedback that we have received suggests that this is an event that should be repeated on a regular basis.
- We have started 3 new interest groups, so my thanks go to the members who have had the courage to organise those groups and become Group Leaders.
- The weekly Bulletin has gone from strength to strength and continues to serve the members of Littlehampton and Arun West with clear, concise and useful information in an attractive format.
- We have started a Facebook Group which now has 69 members and provides those members with both u3a and other useful local information.
- Through careful financial management and the ongoing recruitment of new members, we have maintained the annual membership fee at £10 for Individual Members and £6 for Associate Members. This fee will also remain in place for the membership year that will begin in March 2025.

Now, I realise that these are the Committee's highlights, and you may all have your own personal highlights which are probably very different from ours. These could be that you have joined a new group that you are enjoying, that you've learned a new or higher level of skill, that you have organised or attended one of the excellent group events such as the Line Dancing Social, that you've grown your group numbers significantly from a standing start, or simply that you have made some new friends who, I'm sure, will now be with you for life. As we know, the u3a provides us all with different opportunities, perspectives and outcomes and I sincerely hope that you have had some significant highlights during the past year.

Our membership renewal took place on 1st March and at that time we had a very healthy membership of 655 members. As always, we lost a few members at renewal, and this year it was 93, but we have already signed 38 new members since 1st March, so it won't be long before we achieve and probably exceed last year's number.

We are also seeing a gradual increase in the number of men who are joining our u3a and this figure now stands at 31% which is up from 22% two years ago. I am personally very pleased to see that we are attracting more men to our midst, and I would urge them to join some of the dancing or singing groups which is where some 'levelling up' is definitely required.

We continue to maintain a very good relationship with our neighbours at Arun West and Arun East, and as you know as members of Littlehampton, you are entitled to join any of the groups or events that are being run by Arun West. I also have regular conversations with the members of the West Sussex Network which is a very useful forum for all the local u3as to share their concerns, get new ideas and seek assistance where necessary.

And in keeping with our neighbouring u3a's capabilities, as we now have an excellent Events Co-ordinator in Lynn Freeman who will be ably assisted by Sally Hennebry, we have discussed the possibility of introducing more events during the coming year. Our plan is initially to organise a theatre group or two and some summer days out, either by coach travel or by using our own personal transport. Lynn and Sally are already considering the options and will soon be in discussion with local theatres and travel providers to establish the next steps.

We also wish to run regular meetings to welcome our new members and provide them with all the necessary information that they will need to get the best from their u3a membership.

Of course, none of these activities happen on their own, so as always, we owe a debt of gratitude to two primary groups of people who give up their time and devote their energies into ensuring that Littlehampton u3a runs smoothly and efficiently. They are the Committee Members and the Group Leaders.

My personal thanks go to all my colleagues on the Committee for all their hard work and support as they are a vital part of the operation. However, this year two of those people have decided to step down. They are Mo Booth, who held the role of Joint Membership Secretary since her appointment in 2022, and Michelle Venn our recently appointed Treasurer. I would like to thank them both for the contribution that they have made to the running of our u3a.

As far as the Treasurer role is concerned, Michelle made her decision to step down only a few days ago so we were unaware when we produced the documents for the AGM that she wouldn't be standing for election. Therefore, there is a change to the proposal for the election of Treasurer and I am very grateful to our Assistant Treasurer and Beacon Manager, Derek Waite who has offered to stand for the role as an interim measure until we find a new full time Treasurer to replace him.

And, as previously mentioned, it's a big shout out to all the Group Leaders who, week after week, make sure that all the interest groups operate safely and efficiently, and that all the members have a great time whether they are in someone's own home or in an outside venue. They are a very dedicated group of people, and we couldn't operate Littlehampton u3a without them.

It is inevitable, bearing in mind our ageing demographic, that some of our members have passed away during the past year. So, I would like to take a moment to remember them and to recognise the contribution they have made during their time with us at Littlehampton u3a. I wish to thank them all for their contributions and to offer our very best wishes to their families and friends.

So, in conclusion ladies and gentlemen, it has been a busy and, I believe, a very productive year, and I have enjoyed my second year as Chair. However, a number of us on the Committee, myself included, are starting our third and final year as your representatives and therefore it is essential that we start the process of encouraging other members to consider joining the Committee so that we can be replaced and the good work can continue.

Without a Chair, a Secretary or a Treasurer this u3a cannot operate, so as a bare minimum those three roles must be filled by this time next year. In my opinion the best way for that to happen is that anyone who may be interested should come and join the Committee in a supporting role so that they can learn the ropes and decide if this were something they would like to do. You will have our full support and you will also have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping your fellow u3a members in their quest to Learn, Laugh, Live.

So, my challenge to you all is to give it some serious consideration and let me know if you are interested. For my part, it has genuinely been one of the most challenging and rewarding things that I have done since my retirement.

I offer my sincere thanks to all our volunteers and to all of you, the members, for your support, and I now hand back to Josie to continue the meeting. Thank you.

6. Approval of Treasurer's Report & Accounts for the Year Ending 28 February 2024

The Treasurer will talk through the accounts for last financial year which ended on February 29th 2024.

This report has been produced at very short notice due to the sudden and unexpected resignation of our Treasurer Michelle Venn.

It may therefore be less comprehensive than in previous years and I ask for your forbearance with this.

As the Chair has explained, due to the sudden departure of our Treasurer, we are unable to present an audit of last years' finances. We will arrange to have this available as soon as is possible

Towards the end of last year, we were informed that our previous long-time accountant, Alan Moyse, was retiring, and would not be available to act for us this year. It was decided that since both Littlehampton and Arun West had used the services of Alan Moyse and would need to find a replacement, both had experienced Treasurers, (Michelle Venn for Littlehampton and Mike McKrill in Arun West), and both were subject to the same time constraints, it made sense for each u3a to prepare the report for their neighbours.

Our finances are in a stable condition, and there have been no causes for concern during the year.

Our expenditure, however, reflects the increases in the price of everything that we buy, including services, printing, postage, refreshments, etc, in the same way as in our own personal budgeting. The increase in the costs of Hall hire (largely due to the increase in energy prices), are having to be met by the Group members themselves, and we are fortunate that they have understood this and no Group Leader has reported dissatisfaction by their members.

An additional new cost to us is our adoption of the Third Age Trust Beacon Database Management System, which Committee agreed on in the summer months and came into operation in November. Beacon is in use by over a half of the 1100+ u3a's in the UK and the cost to us is £1 per member per annum.

Additionally, like all banks and e-commerce organisations, PayPal charge a fee for collecting membership payments via credit/debit cards at a rate of 1.4% plus 20p per transaction, resulting in a modest reduction in our income. Although members now have the opportunity to renew membership, update their personal details and join online using a credit/debit card, there is little other direct benefit to members. The benefits to Committee Members though, have been considerable, especially to the Membership team and Groups Coordinators. A recent implementation has meant that some Group Leaders have been able to more effectively update their groups, email their members via Beacon, and have access to a group "ledger" where appropriate.

A further example of increased costs is the price of the "Third Age Matters" magazine (now known as "u3a Matters"). The annual charge for this is now £3.80 per receiving member and we would encourage any member who receives the magazine but no longer requires it, to contact us so that we can remove their details from the mailing list.

One area that Committee will be discussing is the possibility of increasing our members' awareness of the value to us of Gift Aid donations – currently less than 70 members have consented to donate.

It was decided that this year, there was no justification for asking members to support a motion to raise the membership fee, but in common with all u3a's, it will be subject to discussion every year, as part of the ongoing supervision of our finances.

We are showing a different reporting document from the one that we have seen in previous years. This document (CC16a) is made available by the Charity Commission for use by Registered Charities such as u3a's.

Looking at the Balance Sheet, it shows the state of our finances as at the 29th February 2024 and compares it with the situation a year earlier. The balance at the bank (the

reserves, the Unrestricted Funds) at £7,037 are equivalent to £11.24 per member (626 at 29th February).

Looking at Section A1, Receipts, we have a limited range of sources of income, such as Membership fees, Gift Aid, income from Events, Coffee Mornings, Grants and donations.

Section A3 Payments: Affiliation costs to the Third Age Trust are now £4 per member.

The Committee will, of course, continue to monitor the finances closely and take any necessary remedial actions that may be required.

We do all banking activities online. Invoice Payments are made by the Treasurer and have to be authorised by another Officer Committee member and paid straight into bank accounts, so, when submitting requests for expenses or reimbursements, members are asked to please include your sort code, account number and account name.

We ask that those who pay money into our bank continue to make our Treasurer's life as easy as possible by letting him/her know when you pay money into the bank account and if you cancel sessions at the various venues for any reason.

7. Approval of the Accounts Examiner: Mr Mike McKrill

Since no accounts were available, no vote to approve them was necessary.

**8/9. Announcements of Nominations for Officers and Committee members
Election of Officers**

Treasurer: Derek Waite. Proposed by Bob Jordan, seconded by Barry Vidler.
Approved 92 votes.

Beacon Manager: Derek Waite. Proposed by Barry Vidler, seconded by Ruth Vidler.
Approved 92 votes.

Events Co-ordinator: Lynn Freeman. Proposed by Val Pool, seconded by Ruth Vidler.
Approved 94 votes.

10. Election of Other Committee Members

No nominations were received by post or proposed on the day for other committee members

11. Motions

None submitted.

12. Presentation of Group Leader Long Service Awards

Certificate presented to Bob Jordan for 5 years as Supper Club G/L

Certificate presented to Joy Muggeridge for 10 years as G/L of Yoga

Certificate awarded to Rosemary Grove for 10 years as G/L of Keep Fit

13. Any Other Business

We apologise for the fact that the Accounts are incomplete and we will rectify this and have them approved externally as soon as possible. We will then circulate them to the members for final approval.

At this point the formal part of the meeting was brought to a close at 15:20. The Chairman thanked everyone for coming along to this AGM, and welcomed everyone to stay on for a chat and to enjoy the refreshments available in the side hall.