

## Minutes of Exeter U3A Committee Meeting

Held on Monday 4th October 2021

**Those present:** - Vivienne Watson, Chair, Dave Parsons, Lesley Churchill-Birch, Stephanie Ward, Anne Staley and Minna Egan

**1. Welcome** Vivienne opened the meeting at 2pm by welcoming everybody and explaining why Julie was not with us.

**2. Apologies.** Julie Crichton-Smith

**3. Minutes of the meeting dated** 5th July 2021 were passed with a couple of amendments. a) Dave would not be putting anything in the Newsletter about Digital Eagles. b) National AGM Officer Vote should read Liz Thackray and Michaela Moody.

**4. Matters arising** as we decided to leave information about St Stephens until later in the meeting there were no matters arising.

### **5. Any other Business**

Annual returns for the Charity Commission had been delayed due to their systems not working correctly but Stephanie has finally managed to do the returns. There had been a problem in submitting the Constitution as apparently the changes had never been forwarded and we were still working to the 2015 Constitution. However, all is now well but we need to make sure that in the future Steph submitted the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 to the Charity Commission on 3/8/21. The delay was due to problems with the Charity Commission's online submission service.

Steph advised that The Charity Commission has accepted our revised Constitution but has told us that it should have been approved in advance of presenting it to members for acceptance.

Steph asked if the student Marnie Broomby who had expressed an interest in the History Group had joined. Dave confirmed that she had attended the History Group Meeting but Anne confirmed that she had not yet applied to join Exeter U3A, which she would need to do to continue attending History Group meetings.

Steph advised that Leslie Moss's write ups in the latest Newsletter indicated that on two occasions several 'locals' who were not u3a members joined her tours. It was agreed this was difficult to prevent and no further action was necessary.

### **6. Reports**

**Finance.** Steph apologised that the finance report was fractionally out of date but substantially it represents where we are at now. She offered to answer any questions.

**Speakers.** Vivienne apologised to the committee for a mis-communication concerning Todd Gray's talk and we've ended up with Slavery when most people voted for Cloth.

There was a suggestion from Stephanie that a template could be constructed so that Jan could easily inform everybody of all the details of the bookings. However as the meeting in question was a little different in that Todd Gray gave us a choice of subjects it's easy to see how we got the wrong choice as the committee decided on Cloth but the wrong choice was sent for Jan to book. It was felt that this would not occur as we go back to live meetings so it was decided against doing the template idea for the time being.

It was then agreed by all that there would be no December meeting but Jan had booked a Speaker from the BBC for January.

**Membership** Anne clarified that we actually had 35 new members, not 34 and felt that people were coming back slowly though Beacon Training had encouraged more to join. She also said that as 3 people couldn't make the dates offered, we should offer more training sessions.

Anne mentioned that one person from her reading group Hardy Ford, who has now joined was keen on being Membership Secretary. She suggested to him that he should have a while to think about whether he liked u3a; she was going to invite him to the next committee meeting to observe in early November and maybe co-opt him onto the committee. She also suggested he took a couple of tasters and of course he will know about the Groups Fair and will also have information about Todd Gray's talk.

Stephanie went on to talk about what we were going to do about people who had lapsed in the last 18 months (some of whom may have died) and Anne said she would write to all those who were the lapsed, only about 20, from April 2020 onwards so that we can find out what the situation is. There then followed a long discussion on members who we know have died and those who didn't actually resign but were waiting to see what happened following the opening up of things. There will be some who have died who we haven't been told about.

Dave said we did need to delete people who had resigned after a reasonable time rather than keeping their records.

Regarding membership Anne has also sent a list of all members to Helen for the University Liaison group has given her a list of 200 odd members.

Anne then went on to talk about the old sign in sheet for meetings; that it needed updating. Was there any way of doing it easily? After some discussion, she said she would be able to produce a spreadsheet list, with Dave's help if necessary, for the monthly meeting. (Steph said it's worth keeping those lists for future reference for a little time)

Viv would speak to Kay about being a meeter and greeter again and Minna will speak to Marcia who used to oversee the sign in sheet in the past.

**Action.** Vivienne and Minna

**Convenors cafe.** Penny Amraoui has decided not to carry on with this, but Vivienne suggested that maybe if we had a subject, perhaps Julie would be prepared to do it. Vivienne would ask Julie

**Action.** Vivienne

## Groups report

Finance Report - Steph's written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and she noted that there had been two or three new/renewing memberships since the report was written. No questions were raised on the report.

Groups Report - Julie's written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting and showed a lot of groups were operating face to face again. Steph reported that activities were starting to take place again in Paid for Venues and she would be sending out requests for PFV payment for July-September 2021 shortly. This is one of the most onerous parts of the Treasurer's role. It was noted that the Groups page of the Exeter U3A website is not currently up to date and probably shows groups that no longer operate and needs to be updated.

Devon Link Report - Steph's written report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. It was noted that we receive lots of requests from the Regional Trustee and National Office via Devon Link to get members involved in studies, focus groups and other volunteering activities. It was agreed that appropriate opportunities could be advertised on the Hot News page of the Website or in the Newsletter but we would not be repeatedly e-mailing all members directly.

Devon Link Previously the Committee paid for the Quiz organised with Devon Link which happens once a year. However members have now agreed that they will pay the £12 - £16 themselves. Stephanie has agreed to go to the Network Link meeting on 12 October where people from all sorts of different groups meet up.

There was a lot in discussion about what gets sent to us from Devon link which they ask us to pass on to members. It was decided rather than sending this out to all members which they ask, that Anne would simply draw new members attention to the website where members could discover the various activity groups run by national. They had encouraged people to answer a survey on the future strategy of u3a. However, the meeting was not interested in doing this as some people would have it anyway; Stephanie also gets a bite sized National Newsletter which she puts on the website.

## **7. November Monthly meeting**

Minna has had an email from Eileen expressing an interest in having a hybrid meeting in November. This is also being promoted as a policy by national u3a. However, there was only a small number who answered the survey and people are presumably not interested.

The photography group did have a hybrid meeting but it didn't go very well. They used Mint equipment which wasn't working as it should. Dave said it is the most difficult thing to do in a room. Dave said that feedback is a problem and the building may not be suitable for this system. In addition, 'technical support' at the Mint was possibly not terribly knowledgeable. In this case, the photography group worked around it, but Vivienne felt we should wait until the technology is perfected a little more before committing to having a hybrid as an option.

If Minna sends Vivienne the responses from the Survey she will email to everyone who responded but will send a draft first for the committee to look at. It would be on the lines that we feel the technical difficulties encountered have made us reconsider starting hybrid meetings at the moment until the technology is more robust. We've actually had 35 responses.

### **Action** Vivienne and Minna

A discussion went on to talk about the possibility of recording meetings. However, it was felt that speakers probably would not want to be recorded for obvious reasons.

Jane Chappell had emailed about the start time of meetings: could they be extended so that people can chat more at the beginning. Perhaps we could start the speakers later and finish at 12.30. However it was noted that Reception closes at 12pm and we would also have to advertise well in advance. Dave said we still have new sign in sheets at the back so people could speak to conveners after meetings, but in any case we should leave it for November's meeting. We would need to get any changes in meeting times in the Newsletter but in any case we should also take into account the extra cost.

## **8. Purchase of CLA**

Steph advised that our existing CLA (copyright) licence ran out on 31/7/21 and following a reminder early in August we had renewed our licence at a cost of £60 in August

## **9. New bank account**

Steph advised that our existing bank account is currently named Exeter U3A Registered Charity No 288007 which was incorrect as it included the Third Age Trust's charity number and not our own. She had contacted the bank to get this changed and has now been told that our account is currently not recorded as a Registered Charity account at all, despite the name, and as the existing account is not suitable for a Registered Charity we will need to open a new one. Despite an official complaint the bank is insisting on this and although our existing account can continue to run while we set up the new account it will have to be closed eventually. It was accepted that Steph would have to open the new account, which could take the bank around six weeks to process, and we would probably need repeated reminders to members to start using the new bank details when they are in place.

Stephanie said the bank hasn't got us listed as a registered charity although our existing bank will still accept money, but we do have to have a new number as if and when we come to change anything (at the AGM) the account will be frozen. So we have to have a completely new bank account and new online banking and we obviously have to tell the membership. So we really need to get the timing of that right which should be at around about Christmas.

Dave queried whether we should therefore change banks but Stephanie said that for this type of account people are suggesting Lloyd's are OK. She said that she follows the 3rd Age Trust Facebook page and what most people have said is that Lloyd's bank works well so we are going to stick with it. She also said that this should have happened a long time ago. She had raised the issue some time ago with Keith that this type of account was the wrong sort. It will take about 6 weeks to set up a new bank account and online banking so as soon as we have a new account number we should send an email out to everyone.

## **10. St Stephens Event**

Julie is going to email all conveners so we can get people to fill out a doodle poll. We can probably set up 24 tables with groups sharing. We will need people to set up tables at the beginning just before 9:00 a.m. to open up by 10am. Stephanie offered to do this.

Christine at the Mint will organise teas and coffees between 10am and 1pm and Joyce Burgess did say she was willing to help too. There will be sheets on each group table so that people who are interested in joining the u3a can put their email addresses on.

**Action:** Vivienne, Stephanie, Julie

### **St Stephens Grant**

An Open Day Grant scheme is in place which we could apply to for up to £200 to fund expenditure on the St Stephens Group Fair. Steph will complete the application and circulate it to committee members for comments before submission to our Regional Trustee for approval. There is no guarantee that the application will be granted.

The grant has to be in before the event. Stephanie contacted Susan Parker some time ago about a Grant of about £100 for the u3a day and has been chasing them but we can apply for an Open Day Grant of up to £200 as the Group's Fair could be classed as an open day. To get new people, Julie could put something on the FB page and various places around the city would be posted with something if something could be printed. Costs are: Hire of room £120 plus the flag £162.50, Advertising would not incur a cost, 'Other' could cover the flag. Stephanie would submit the costs to the Regional Trustee by email (Susan Parker). We also need to submit 500 words no later than one month after the event. Vivienne offered to do this but it would have to be submitted no later than one month after the event. We may well not get it but it's worth asking.

It was felt it would be useful to have a space in the Mint for keeping some stuff for St Stephens. Regarding this, it seems the Mint have categorically said no before; but perhaps we should offer a donation for a year as it is a liability for them. The food bank do have an office upstairs and Anne will email Vivienne their address to write and ask them.

The flag. The meeting considered if we should buy a flag and Stephanie said it was £162.50 for a 2 sided flag if we get it from Stormpress. It was felt to be something we can use over and over.

**Action:** Anne, Julie, Stephanie and Vivienne

Advertising: we should also ask the Central Library and St Thomas if they can put something up and Express and Echo could be approached to advertise the event. Vivienne offered to ask Central library, the Pennsylvania store and Stephanie agreed to put a poster on the Facebook page and Anne would do Exminster.

**Action** Anne, Vivienne and Stephanie

## **11. December meeting**

It was decided that there would be no December meeting.

## **12. Conveners Lunch at Exeter College**

Every year we've had lunch at Exeter College and they have now been in touch. It was £450 previously and was excellent. But if we do it we should think of it after Christmas. Stephanie said we should choose carefully who can come because some conveners have done nothing. We should get a list from Julie of conveners who are operating and invite them. Julie should keep an eye on who comes to the group's fair.

It was subsequently decided that we should set it aside until the summer and see how things are with the conveners.

## **13. Additional Beacon Training**

We had 7 or 8 to the last training and it was felt this was a good number but we could have 8 or 10. If there are less people we change the venue. Perhaps we should target people who have had the password and log in details.

**Action:** Dave

**14. U3A Carol Singing.** It was agreed that it would be good to have a Carol concert. Perhaps after the last meeting of the choir on 21st December. We can decide early November at the next meeting.

## **15. Date of next Meeting**

This will be Monday 1st November 2021

The meeting closed at 4.30pm