



MINUTES OF THE NINETEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD AT 10.00AM ON TUESDAY 22nd MARCH 2011
IN THE HATCH END SUITE, HARROW ARTS CENTRE, HARROW

Present: Georgina Butcher (Chairman), Ronald Channing (Vice Chairman) Gabi Otvos (Premises Officer), Cecil Cherns (Hon. Treasurer), Jeannette Cobb and Barbara Kloss (Joint Care Officers), Gwen Wright (Newsletter Editor and Publicity Officer) Alan Klein (Speakers Secretary), Sheilah Lowe (Enquiries Officer) Anne Gerrard (Honorary Secretary) Sonia Sheldon (Group Leader Administrator) Susan Wolf (Group Study Coordinator) Pat Rae (Membership Secretary) and approximately 230 members of Harrow U3A.

Apologies were received from the following members: Ray and Maureen Lubert, Roy Rae, Jean Jones, Jean Kenton, Meera Mahida, Daphne Singer, Janet Robb, Frances Jackoby, Cynthia Gershon, Toni Waxman, Jack Kushman, Judi Loffman, Pam Lea, Ralph Rukka, Inga Stone, June Solomon, Len Tuersley, Edna Speilman, Sandra Levy and Len Cox.

The Minutes of the Eighteenth Annual General Meeting held on 16th March 2010 were accepted unanimously with the addition of Gwen Wright's name in the list of posts as Newsletter Editor. Proposed by Joyce Davis and seconded by Hans Speilman. There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report: Georgina Butcher presented her Annual Report as follows:
Welcome to our AGM. As you know this year is our 20th Anniversary year and a very special welcome to those of you who have been with us since the beginning.
Many have given years of service to Harrow both as Group Leaders and committee members, including Daphne Singer, George and Mary Vulkan, Pat and Roy Rae, Jack Leon, Glenys Tuersley, Jo Maier, Erica Osmond and Toni Waxman. We owe you all a debt of gratitude because without you we would not be here today. I would however like to thank all our group leaders who work so hard on our behalf. I would also like to say a big thank you to all of you who have lent your home for our classes.
As you may be aware all our neighbouring U3As have capped their membership, feeling they have all they can cope with. Hillingdon is the latest and is now proposing, with our help, to see another U3A in the Pinner/Northwood area. An open meeting will take place at Fairfields Hall, Northwood Hills on April 6th. We now have nearly 1,500 members with 88 study groups, of which 33 have no vacancies, which is not healthy. Rickmansworth has 500 members and 55 study groups and Bridport and District, relaunched in January 2010, have 250 members and 33 study groups. Our priority must be to eliminate our waiting lists.
We have no plans, as yet, to cap our membership, but will have to consider perhaps seeding another U3A in the Kenton, Greenford, Sudbury area in the future.
We need more group leaders. If you have an interest you want to share but are hesitant to get started, talk to existing Group Leaders, they will be happy to advise you. If there is no similar group you will find a list Network Co-ordinators in your U3A News. Ask them for advice on how to get started. It does not have to be a long course, short courses are very welcome. The more variety the better.

It is a good idea to keep the numbers low so everyone can participate. I have a notice from a group of people who have been in the WEA for many years and spent most of their lives in Adult Education and working in the voluntary sector but are now finding the costs and bureaucracy prohibitive. They are now forming their own study groups because, and I quote "U3A is a welcome addition to provision but does not suit everyone and sometimes the numbers are so great that it makes attendance a daunting experience."

We must remember we cover about a 45 year age range and all of us will, or already have a hearing problem. Sometimes the needs of younger members differ from the needs of older ones.

As part of the Harrow Informal Adult Learning Partnership we are participating in a trans European study programme on reminiscence work. Funding has been provided by Grundwig and we are sharing the project with Finland, County Cork and U3A Warsaw. Sandra Levy, Kathy Westhead and I have been invited to the Warsaw Conference at the end of May. Harrow will be hosting a similar conference on November and Warsaw U3A look forward to meeting us. The second SLP is with Mind in Harrow, if they get a grant, to do research on mental health in Harrow and the story of Shenley. A couple of people in Psychology have shown an interest in this project. Both these shared learning projects are locally sourced. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the retiring members of the committee, Anne, Gabi, Pat and Roy and Barbara and Jeannette for their hard work and support over the last three years.

I have heard that HAC is going to employ a firm of caterers to take over the running of the Green Room Café and perhaps reopen Gilbert's Bar, which they hope to have up and running in September. The new Greenhill Room is scheduled to open at the end of May.

In conclusion I would like to remind you that U3A is a cooperative of study groups and we are totally self funding. That was probably the wisest move our founders made and the reason we are so successful. If we had to rely on Government or Local Authority funding it would have been a very different story. We are indeed all in this together.

The Examined Accounts and Accountant's Report having been previously circulated, Cecil Cherns (Hon. Treasurer) gave the following report.

The accounts have been prepared to the requirements of the Charity Commission by Grant Harrod Parkinson as in previous years. A copy of the abbreviated accounts for the year ended 30 September 2010 has been left on your seats. Full copies which contain all the additional statutory information required by the Charity Commission and others and which are of little relevance to the actual accounts are available on the table. The copies you have give totals of income and expenditure for the year

You will see from the summary on page 9 that we had an excess of expenditure over income of £8,556 compared with an excess of expenditure of £1,081 for the previous year. The main reasons for this much larger excess are:-

1 large decrease in bank interest

2 a large increase in rental and hire costs due to a sharp increase in charges by Harrow Council over which we have no say

3 postage charges increased substantially

These were the main additional charges. There were some decreases in expenditure in various areas but these were insufficient to counter increases elsewhere.

For the current year and next year, we face substantial increases in rental and hire costs; a 13% increase in postal charges and a 2.5% in VAT. Only part of the extras for postage and VAT are applicable this year but will be in full next year. This year we are celebrating our first 20 years and there will be an estimated net cost of £1,250

My forecasts for this year, based mainly on these increases show an excess of expenditure of about £15,475 and £16,315 for 2011/12 at the current rate of membership subscriptions. We have, at present, fairly good reserves of about £47,000 but these will not last for ever and we cannot absorb such increases in excess of expenditure for long

Your committee has, therefore resolved that membership fees be increased by £5.00 per person for next year starting in October 2011 and a further increase of £5.00 per person from October 2012. This will bring single membership up to £40.00 for a single person and £75.00 for a couple at the same address.

The increase in fees will mean the forecast excess expenditure for 2011/12 will reduce to £9,315 compared with £15,475 if fees are not increased.

CHANGE OF ACCOUNTING SYSTEM

Almost as soon as I had taken up the job of Treasurer, it was suggested that although we knew from the accounts how much everything cost in general terms, we did not know what this expenditure had actually been for. It was felt that we ought to know, for example, what individual centres of expenditure were. Your committee decided, therefore, that the accounts should be recast to reflect this, so from the beginning of the current financial year we have introduced changes to the record keeping so that future accounts will show, for example what are the costs for membership such as cost for speakers/leaders; room hire and other costs; how much does the newsletter actually cost in printing, postage etc; what are our secretarial expenses and our administration costs. It should give your committee a much firmer basis on which to control expenditure. But it does mean that with the current year's accounts, when published, it will not be possible easily to compare with the current accounts. In future years comparisons will be simple.

These changes have been agreed in principle with our Accountant; the final presentation will be decided at the time of the next audit in October/November.

I should like to conclude by paying tribute to our outgoing chairman, soon to be Life President, Georgina Butcher. Without her continuing and unfailing help, advice and encouragement (and occasional bullying) I doubt whether I would have been able to carry out the task of Treasurer this past year, let alone stand for re-election.

Edith Littler asked why the costs for guest speakers had risen by such a large amount. Cecil explained that the changes in the accounting system made it impossible to answer her question. Bill Garvey noted that the affiliation fees had risen by 50%. Cecil replied that as the membership numbers had increased so did the capitation fees to National Office, in addition to the changed accounting system. Eric Silver suggested that the new committee will need to look at this issue. Pat Rae responded by explaining that National Office capitation fee had risen to £3.50, which covers the cost of postage for U3A News. Glenys then added that TAT had increased the fee at the last AGM, the first increase for 7 years. They are now directing more money into the regions. Pat Rae asked members who had not filled in the gift aid form to do so at the next renewal. This has earned us 28p in the pound but this amount is to decrease. Gabi Otvos pointed out that we get Public Liability Insurance from TAT as part of

their service. Ivan Benjamin asked why there was a deficit for outings. Cecil again explained that the new system made it impossible to answer but pointed out that the accountant was happy with the figures that had been provided. Pat Rae, in the absence of Tours and Visits' treasurer commented that there is a very fine line that can be crossed if tickets or outings have to be cancelled. George Vulkan emphasised that each outing tries to price trips to cover any problems. Bill Garvey suggested that it would be helpful if affiliation fees were noted separately from capitation fees. Harry Hurst suggested using a lower grade paper for the newsletter making it lighter to post. He also recommended investigating a franking service. Leslie Walter pointed out that postage will be rising in April and was reassured this had been dealt with, with prepurchases. Marian Rhones suggested that people who nit picked at the account should do the job themselves. Mike Allen pointed out that if members would download the newsletter from our website this would save a great deal of money. Sheilah Lowe proposed that the accounts be accepted; it was seconded by Glenys Tuersley and passed unanimously.

Appointing an External Accounts Examiner

The appointment of Grant Harrod Parkinson for the next financial year was approved by the members. Ivan Benjamin queried the procedure for examining the accounts instead of them being audited. After some discussion Cecil Cherns requested that the question be put in writing so that he could prepare an answer.

Harrow U3A 20th Anniversary Celebration

Gwen Wright announced that the event will be held in Elliot Hall and that although many tickets had already been sold there were plenty left. She hoped that members would enjoy the memorabilia celebrating the twenty years we have been in existence, have fun and meet old friends. There will be application forms in the next newsletter.

Approving the appointment of Georgina Butcher as Life President

It was explained that Georgina would automatically be an ex-officio member of the management committee and therefore able to offer her wealth of knowledge for their support. The appointment was proposed by Edith Littler and seconded by Eric Silver. The membership approved unanimously.

Election of new committee members

It was confirmed that the following officers will continue in their non-elected posts:
Gwen Wright – Newsletter Editor; Sonia Sheldon – Study Group Administrator; Alan Klein – Speakers Secretary; Mike Allen – Webmaster; and Matilda Kaplan – Technical Support.

There were no contested seats. The following members were elected to the committee:

Chairman – Ronald Channing	Premises Officer – Meera Mahida
Vice Chairman – Eric Silver	Membership Secretaries – Jacky Gordon
Study Grp Coordinator – Susan Wolf	- Kathy Westhead
Hon. Secretary – Lynne Dorff	Hon. Treasurer – Cecil Cherns
Publicity Officer – Jack Lester	

The acceptance of these elections was proposed by Hans Speilman, seconded by Zoya Siddiqui and passed unanimously.

Address by Glenys Tuersley, Chairman of the Greater London Forum U3A.

Glenys started by noting Georgina's contributions in the educational and social circles in Harrow. She thanked both Georgina and Gwen for their hard work in the past, wishing Gwen success as National Representative for the Greater London Region and affirming her opinion that Georgina will be a valuable Life President. She referred to our newsletter which is much admired by neighbouring U3As and emphasised the importance of the new Publicity and Membership Secretaries for our group.

She explained that all U3As are autonomous, that is, they operate independently and this has been the key to their success. The Objectives and Principles in providing freedom of operation have proved effective in changing times. This is based on voluntary and informal practice.

She took us through some of the history of the politics of adult learning and pointed out that we are growing at a rate of 40 new U3As per annum. She emphasised that it is our affiliation to the Third Age Trust that maintains this ethos. She referred to Harrow's affiliation in 1991 and that part of the mission statement includes the responsibility of assisting in the creation of new U3As when the need arises. We have done so in the past and need to continue this support.

She pointed out that closed membership of a group can lead to stagnation and an unwelcoming reputation. It also precludes young blood joining the group. She also emphasised the importance of the constitution as a support and justification for actions. She mentioned the role and responsibilities of the trustees as part of a charity. She warned the members that we are at the mercy of the local tax office as well and the changing financial climate.

She then spoke about the Third Age Trust; formed thirty years ago that supports all the groups throughout Britain providing resources and advice across a huge range of subjects. She explained the reorganisation of the regions that Gwen is now going to become part of, and the difficulties of arranging an AGM for such a large organisation with the need for regions to run their own summer schools and conferences. She mentioned the international study groups and shared learning projects that continue to keep us vibrant.

She concluded by emphasising the value of our U3A and requesting that members contribute as much as possible and to take care of its continuance. She wished the new Chairman and committee every success in the coming year and promised support for the membership in all ways possible.

Any other Business:

Robert Lowe informed the members that he had received notice that Freedom Passes are under threat and requested that people write in explaining the benefits they carry. The details will be passed to Gwen Wright so that they can be included in the newsletter; there is also an e-mail address that can be used. Georgina agreed to send it out via the group e-mails. Jo Harris emphasised that the NPC are gravely concerned about cutbacks in Harrow. She mentioned the Health and Social Care Bill that will affect the young and seniors most. She spoke about the "March for the alternatives" for which there are leaflets available. Alan Klein announced the next monthly speaker, Neil Arnold on "Mysterious Animals of London" followed by Ruth Waterman on the "Life of the Concert Violinist". Eric Silver spoke about clarifying the changes in health care and explained that the council is taking over areas of local health. Sheilah Lowe raised the issue that she is getting enquiries about membership from people in distant areas and felt that it might have an impact on local people being able to join. Hans Speilman suggested that we could have a catchment area but Dr John Marks who lives in St Johns Wood felt that people should be able to join their group of choice. Zoffar Ahmed queried if our membership was capped and was reassured that it is not. Kathy

Westhead pointed out that each U3A has different study groups and felt that interchange between them is a good thing. Sheilah reported that some WEA groups would like to join us but would like to continue meeting in the evening. Georgina replied that it could be considered. Glenys commented that although we have some affiliations with the WEA it is not usual. Leslie Walter asked if the committee monitors the turn over of membership. Georgina replied that over the twenty years 6,000 members have joined and there had been much movement.

Closing Address by the new Chairman

Ronald Channing opened by thanking the membership for their confidence in the new team and said that he had noted the advice given by Glenys and would call on her help in the future. He expressed his admiration for the U3A as a wonderful organisation which enriches us all in many ways. He urged members to protest against the cuts for Freedom Passes. He celebrated the experience and knowledge that is held by people of our age and welcomes the mixture of old and new. He emphasised that everything is done by volunteers and asked for people to step forward to help. He paid tribute to Georgina's 15 years of service to the group. He reiterated her plea that new Group Leaders need to come forward. He closed by saying that he is looking forward to the 20th Anniversary celebrations and the coming year; and in thanking the committee members for their work.

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Signed by the Chairman