

**MINUTES OF THE TWENTY FIFTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF HARROW U3A
HELD AT 10am TUESDAY 7 MARCH 2017
IN THE ELLIOTT HALL, HARROW ARTS CENTRE, HATCH END**

Present: Anne Gerrard (Chairman), Gwen Wright (Vice Chairman), Madhu Badale, (Hon.Treasurer), Lynne Dorff (Hon. Secretary), Georgina Butcher (Life President), Valerie Bard (Jt. Membership Secretary), Kathy Westhead (Jt. Membership Secretary), Rhoda Luer, (Study Group Co-ordinator), Mike Allen (Publicity), Susan Field (Members Liaison Officer), Alan Klein (Premises Officer & Equipment Organiser), Helen West (Speaker Secretary)
Members not serving on the Committee: Stephen Dorff (Newsletter Editor), Dennis Kersh (Webmaster), Jack Kushner (Tours & Visits Chairman).

Apologies Pam Gonsal (Web Editor); Hedy Gauvrin, Gloria & Lionel Refson; Peter Cole; Shirley Grossman; Judy Loffman; Sandy Myrants

In addition to the Committee, 149 members were present.

1. **Minutes of the twenty fourth Annual General Meeting held on 1 March 2016** were accepted unanimously and signed by the Chairman. Minutes proposed by Tony Richardson and seconded by Georgina Butcher.

2. **Matters Arising** – None

3. **Chairman's Report**

First may we offer a warm welcome to new members, we hope you have a long and fruitful time with Harrow U3A and also welcome to all the familiar faces as well.

At this, the end of my first year as Chair I decided to check on last year's minutes that we have just approved, as read and inwardly digested. I was reminded that we had the presentation by Sandra Bruce-Gordon and Harvey Vasey about the future of the Arts Centre, of which more details to come later.

We were able to keep Mike Allen on the committee for his valuable experience; which leads on to the thanks that are needed for the rest of the committee, our life president Georgina Butcher, the Yahoo message sender; Lynne Dorff our secretary, Madhu Badale, the treasurer, Rhoda Luer, who organises all the groups, Sheila Lowe who deals with enquiries, Susan Field the liaison officer and Alan Klein the premises officer.

We welcomed Gwen Wright as Vice-Chair who also deals with publicity and Helen West as speaker's secretary. This year we will lose the valuable Val Bard who has done stalwart service as joint membership secretary with Kathy Westhead. We are pleased to welcome Frances Howard as her replacement. We have also benefitted lately from members who have accepted our invitation to attend meetings to offer their experience in various fields.

Other valued members are, Stephen Dorff for his work as newsletter editor, Dennis Kersh and Pam Gonsal for keeping the website in order and Mathilde Kaplan for the technical support; the entire Tours and Visits team, and not to forget the RUMs (really useful members)

I thought that as you will soon be receiving the financial audit of our group I would try to give you a broad audit of our classes. Of the over 90 groups, roughly 50 are held in members' homes leaving about the same number at HAC. The facilities provided by the Home Group Leaders or hosts are greatly appreciated. It goes without saying that all the Group Leaders are very valued members and we acknowledge their commitment and hard work. This year we have two long service certificates to present, a little more appropriately than I managed last year. They are for Alf Keiles and Sandy Myrants.

We would ask that you please show your appreciation to your Group Leaders with support for any small tasks like taking the register, and draw your attention to the volunteering forms on the signing in tables, and now would be a good moment for some applause for these hard working members.

To go back to the audit of study groups; during the last year we lost at least three groups, gained three, unsuccessfully attempted to create two others, coped with change in at least five and are concerned that about

four more are under threat. The main reasons for these changes are age, we might be living longer but no one lasts for ever.

Which inspires me to adapt a quote of JF Kennedy, “ask not what your U3A can do for you, but what you can do for your U3A”. We have been described, even in the local press, as a “self- help” group and this is what we need to focus on. It is after all, the founding ethos of U3A, which we need to remember.

We are not all experts but by holding hands and sharing the responsibility things can be achieved. This is what our literary group did when we lost a highly skilled leader; the group is now different but it still exists! Unless we become more proactive the number of our groups is going to diminish.

I would like to remind you of the fact that the U3A is a National and International organisation. Two of us Harrovians attended the celebration of the creation of the 1,000th group in the UK; the report of which I hope you read in Third Age Matters, as I hope you noticed Harrow’s first entry for some time about the new stile funded by the walking group, to be found in the Coast to Coast section.

I have become involved with a new movement that you might have heard of, The Friends of HAC. Its original aim was to fight for the safety of our only Harrow community centre, when it looked as if the council and Cultura could not reach agreement. This group is now planning to fund raise for specific aims to help Culturalondon and hopefully to organise volunteers for it. Do please give support to them when the time comes. This leads on to the present situation at HAC, which we are assured is looking very hopeful. The hand over from the council to the Trust is hoped to be by the end of this month, the delay is apparently down to the lawyers. We also hope very soon to hear officially that the council has agreed the budget for repairs to the roof which you can imagine is a major issue; as it is the splendid roof of this building that is listed.

We have no idea of the timescale for the new developments. They will no doubt cause great disruption but the pain will be worth the gain. We will all have to be patient and adaptive.

Having mentioned our website earlier could I ask how many of you visit it, even occasionally? On it you will find a great deal of both interesting and useful information about a range of subjects, so please make good use of it.

Your committee will be investigating another aspect of modern technology, with respect to both membership systems and subscription payments. Several of us will be attending a seminar and we hope to implement a more efficient and useful procedure. We will consult with you, as have the membership secretaries already; and we will keep you well informed.

Finally I would like to promote the Easter and Summer schools that will be running this year. The London branch at Belsize Park have a theme of London for their three day course. Many excellent lectures and a splendid sandwich lunch from 18th to 20th April. It would be nice to see Harrow better represented at this very enjoyable event.

Then there is the Summer school, only a stone’s throw from Blackfriars Station on 1st to 3rd August at St Brides. Details of both are on pages 10 and 11 of the latest Third Age Matters and of course on the National website; another event when we can practice the “strap line” of our National organisation to “Learn Laugh, Live” and celebrate the value of age, experience and indomitability that is exemplified by the U3A.

Questions arising from the report:

- a) Eric Silver asked for a comparison of membership numbers. Kathy said approximately 1100. However, this number was lower than 3 years’ ago when it peaked at 1400. This could be due to other U3As opening up locally, people joining for a year but not renewing or unable to join a specific class.
- b) Some members had not received their Third Age Matters. Names would be taken and investigation made.

Chairman’s Report proposed by Pat Rae and seconded by Stephen Dorff.

4. Treasurer’s Report

Good morning ladies and gentlemen and fellow U3A members. The accounts as usual have been prepared for the requirements of the Charity Commission by Grant, Harrod, Lerman & Davis. Jeremy Harrod has kindly joined us to help me answer any questions.

Copies of the accounts have been sent to all members via yahoo email and I trust you have brought them with you. These show the accounts for the year. We have produced a separate set of income and expenditure accounts for Tours & Visits which are attached with U3A accounts.

As you can see we have a healthy reserve. Our long term aim is to keep it healthy and enjoy the benefits U3A has to offer.

Jeremy thanked Madhu for her sterling work and said it made his life a lot easier. The finances are being well looked after.

Questions arising from the report:

- a) Pat Rae asked if there was a forecast for the coming year due to lower membership. Madhu replied that a forecast had not been carried out as it was not felt necessary. It was difficult to reflect the true picture but she would discuss the matter with Jeremy. Pat felt it was necessary due to the uncertainty surrounding the Arts Centre development. Jeremy said it was a valid point which he felt sure would be discussed at future committee meetings.
- b) Richard Maylan asked how many years Jeremy had acted as Independent Accounts Examiner. Jeremy thought it was between six and seven years. He said there was no time limit on such an appointment and the Chairman asked for a show of hands which approved his appointment.

Jeremy invited questions on the Tours & Visits Accounts. None.

The appointment of the Independent Accounts Examiner and the adoption of the Accounts were proposed by Morris Jones and seconded by Paul Klein.

5. **Tours & Visits Chairman's Report – Jack Kushner**

We have a small but dedicated group of hard working members. There have been 8 theatre and concert trips, plus 24 other outings, totalling 32 events. In all 1076 people attended these events. However, owing to uncertainty over Brexit a lot of outings we are trying to book are proving problematical as some organisations will not commit themselves on price.

Two members of our group have recently been hospitalised, which has made our job more difficult. However, I am glad to report they are now recovered and back with us. Once again, may I appeal to the membership for help on our Committee. If only one person came forward it would make all the difference to our workload.

6. **Ian McCannah, London Region Trustee** gave a short talk on the structure of the U3A in the UK. This included background information on the services available from Third Age Trust and London Region. There was a lively Q&A session on issues such as publicity, length of service of committees, ethnic diversity and membership etc.

Ian invited questions.

- a) Bill Garvey questioned the lack of media publicity. Ian explained that whenever U3A had been approached by the media regarding loneliness, isolation etc a response had been given but the media tend to approach Age UK rather than U3A. Ian responded that a £25,000 campaign was run last year which did increase awareness but results were disappointing. They have advertised for a Publicity Officer
- b) Barry Marcus asked why committee members should be limited to a set term of office. If the officers were doing a good job then why prohibit them from continuing. Ian responded by saying that the new Model Constitution had been agreed with the Charity Commission which stated there should be a maximum term of office, i.e. 3 years for Chairman and 5 years for Treasurer. He pointed out that new ideas were needed, plus flexibility. Also enthusiasm can diminish with age and it becomes unattractive for new members.

- c) Abdul Rupani asked how to attract more ethnic minorities. He suggested visiting mosques etc. Ian replied that as all U3As are autonomous it was up to each group to do this. His own group, Barnet, had held an open day, had visited schools, mosques, synagogues etc but very little response. Ethnic groups have their own support structures and do not feel a need to join U3A. However, he thought it was only a matter of time before these issues would be resolved due to further integration.
- d) Bill Garvey said he had invited ethnic groups to attend but had a low uptake. He had also attended pre-retirement courses and spoken of U3A. He said the media should become more involved. Ian said many more groups were using social media as a means of publicity, but he had come across many groups which did not want additional members.
- e) Vivienne Barclay suggested contacting local radio stations such as LBC.

Anne thanked Ian for his highly informative and interesting talk.

7. Election of Officers

Anne read out the list of current officers and those standing for new positions. Mike Allen would become Publicity Officer and Frances Howard would become Jt. Membership Secretary taking over from Valerie Bard. No further nominations were received. Proposed by Bill Garvey and seconded by Toni Waxman.

8. Any Other Business

- a) Stuart Winton expressed concern about the position of U3A and HAC for next year. Anne reiterated the information she had given in her report. She did explain that a large grant had been received from the John Lyon Foundation and that Harrow Council had now given a grant instead of the original loan.
- b) Angela Oliver spoke about the Bridge class which is likely to close due to falling numbers. There was discussion about uneven numbers of people attending Bridge classes and the reluctance to accept single players.
- c) Pat Rae asked whether there could be a course on how best to use social media. She asked if Mike Allen would be willing to take such a course as he had previously run computer courses. Mike replied that he had no knowledge of social media but would welcome anyone who wished to run such a course. He also suggested courses on ipads, iphones which could be held at Bentley Wood School, but these would also need volunteers to help run them.
- d) Georgina thanked Ian for circulating the London Region quarterly newsletter.
- e) Eric Silver asked what would happen to classes held in mobile classrooms when the re-development of HAC begins. Anne said she had been reassured that these would be replaced with temporary classrooms.
- f) Vivienne Barclay said the Bridge class was on the same day as current affairs. She said the same people always play and it had become uninteresting. It was suggested people change places in order to mix with different players. Mike suggested a new person was needed to organise this and to bring in new ideas.
- g) Rhoda said new people were needed to take over groups from leaders who were retiring. Members must be willing to help themselves and share responsibility.
- h) Sheilah Lowe said she had taken part in several Shared Learning Projects and other U3As told her that their members meet and set up their own groups without a leader. Help is available from National Office.
- i) Bill Garvey offered a vote of thanks for the hard work of the Committee.
- j) Rhoda mentioned the New Members Meeting which will take place on 16 March. If a member knew of someone interested in joining, then they should come along.
- k) Ian McCannah asked the members if anyone was interested in taking over his role on London Region.
- l) Anne mentioned the Memory Course which would be starting on 13 April. Details in the next Newsletter.

The meeting closed at 11.30am.