Balsall Common U3A

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at 3.45pm on Monday 27th October 2014 at the Village Hall, Station Road

Present: Mary Dawson (MD), in the chair, Lynn Brinkworth (LB), Alan Buckland (AB), Peter Calver (PC), Sandra Heard (SH), Geoff Kennedy (GK) and Martin Richards (MR).

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Richard Davis.

2. Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 28th July 2014

The minutes were agreed as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

(i) Memory Course

It was noted that the first session of the memory course had been held the previous Friday, 24th October, facilitated by AB and Jan Bayliss. All committee members had been present. The three further sessions were due to be held on subsequent Fridays, with the final one on 14th November. After that, the course would be appraised, with a view to rolling it out to the membership generally.

(ii) Attendance of Members of other U3As

The committee agreed that members of other U3As wishing to join one of the interest groups would be able to do so without having to join Balsall Common U3A, subject to availability and payment of whatever amounts the group required. However, those wishing to attend core meetings and to receive correspondence, would be required to pay the membership fee, minus the subscription to National Office.

(iii) Balsall Common Festival

The Festival had been held on 20th September; there had been no formal U3A participation, principally because the area originally allocated to the Petanque group had been required for staging. No alternative was available.

4. Correspondence

GK said that Tony Randall, from Rugby U3A, had been elected as West Midlands Regional Trustee. He had written to U3A Chairmen in the West Midlands to invite them, as well as network (cluster) chairmen and regional volunteers to a meeting with him in Carr's Lane, Birmingham at 11am on Friday 12th December. The aim was to help him to get to know the Chairmen and to set up a Regional Committee to advise on the disbursement of money available from National Office or the West Midlands region. MD said that she would attend and GK agreed to inform National Office.

5. Reports

(i) Treasurer

AB said that the financial position was healthy; the No 1 account held £5438 and the No 2 account, £2595. MD asked whether mince pies should be provided at the December meeting. It was agreed that they would. GK referred to the tax reclaimed on subscriptions under Gift Aid, which was a substantial amount. This was normally done by Peter Driffield, who was still recovering from his injury. AB said that he would contact Peter, once he was fully recovered, to consider the best approach. GK said that, at the Solihull Cluster meeting on 8th October, he had made Balsall Common's £5 contribution to top up the administration fund, which mainly went to pay for the hire of the hall. Refreshments were now provided by each U3A in turn, although Castle Bromwich, who had been due to provide them, had not attended the last meeting. AB said that he would refund the £5.

AB said that there had been a few comments about the quality of speakers at the core meeting, which he did not share and the issue had also been raised about the level of payment. It was felt that the current level was sufficient and that the quality of speakers was, in general, satisfactory.

(ii) Secretary

There were no items of correspondence.

(iii) Speakers Secretary

SH said that she understood that the cluster group had been discussing speakers' lists and asked who at the cluster she should contact – Peter Derrington, the secretary. SH said that she did not consult a cluster or Regional list; it was normally possible to get feedback via the internet, often quite detailed information. GK said that it was an issue that, for some reason, the cluster made very heavy weather of it and did not seem to get anywhere.

(iv) Publicity Officer

PC said that the newsletters had continued to be issued monthly and he was preparing for the next issue of the Bugle. Information continued to appear on the website, including on a cathedral tour organised by Widney U3A. SH said that she had attended the briefing day at Warwick University about the U3A's participation in an inter-generational debate to be held in the House of Lords on 28th November. The facilitator had been excellent. She had not heard if she was to be included in the U3A contingent but intended to attend anyway.

PC said that he had attended a meeting of cluster group webmasters; there was a variety of sites, some having their own, as with Balsall Common and some using the U3A template. He believed that Balsall Common's website compared favourably. As a result of the meeting, a buy and sale section had been established, which made use of Silhill U3A's existing page.

6. Solihull Cluster meeting 8th October 2014

GK had circulated minutes of the meeting held on 8th October, with the agenda. There were no particular matters arising.

7. U3A National AGM 10th September 2014

GK said that he and AB had attended the AGM in Cirencester, for the day of AGM only. It had started with a talk by Professor Richard Farragher, entitled 'What is ageing and what can we do about it'. It was an interesting session where the speaker suggested that medical science was not that far off combatting the main causes of ageing, which, at least, could give people a much healthier old age. There had been no motions for discussion at the AGM; the elections were held although votes were cast against unopposed candidates, including the Chairman. AB said that some interesting documents were circulated, one of which, 'Going Forward', the three year plan, was being circulated round the committee.

8. Possible Quiz Evening

MD said that she thought the U3A should arrange a quiz evening for January/February 2015. She had raised it at the core meeting and there appeared to be sufficient support amongst members. Her preference was to book the Village Hall and to provide food. It was important, however, to cost the evening and to gauge support. Tickets would be sold in advance. Rather than buy food in, she thought committee members should help in the preparation of a simple meal, for example, baked potato. Volunteers would be required to undertake various logistical tasks and committee members could met again after (or before) the December core meeting to consider the organisation further.

The committee agreed to the proposal and to a preliminary date of Friday 20th February (this was subsequently changed due to the Hall being booked for that evening). MD would investigate costs and establish ticket prices etc.

9. U3A Seminar on Managing Growth 20th November 2014

After discussion, the committee decided not to attend the seminar in Doncaster; it was felt that the group's steady growth was currently manageable; the greater risk probably was that membership would plateau or even decllne and the committee would need to respond if that situation looked likely to occur.

10. Meeting of Co-ordinators

The committee agreed that, with a number of new groups and new co-ordinators, the meetings of co-ordinators should be revived. It was also agreed to arrange a meeting at Haigs Hotel at 3pm on Friday 30th January 2015, with coffee and cakes. It would be an informal meeting as previously. MD would contact Haigs about availability and cost and PC was asked to contact co-ordinators to ask them to reserve the date.

11. Other Business

(i) Hall Arrangements

The committee agreed to leave the current arrangements unchanged for setting up and clearing up for core meetings. MR said that it was important for the committee member on duty to read the notes to ensure all the necessary action was taken.

(ii) Committee Elections 2015

MR reminded the committee that the next AGM was six months away and a number of committee members were having to step down. He asked members to consider possible replacements. It was agreed to raise the issue at the co-ordinators' meeting.

(iii) Jazz Group- Committee Room

It appeared that Nick Carter, the new Jazz Group co-ordinator, needed a key for the Westlake Room. MD emphasised the need to keep the number of keys under control and that any new keys had to be obtained through the Village Hall secretary. AB said that the Asset Register should include the information on keys, but he would check again. MD passed her key to Martin Richards for onward transmission to Nick Carter.

(iv) Date of Next Meeting

Monday 26th January 2015, following the core meeting.