

## U3A THAMES VALLEY NETWORK

### Representatives' meeting held at Benson Parish Hall on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015

Mike welcomed all to the meeting.

**Present:** Committee – Mike Price Chairman (Greater Thame), Susie Berry Vice Chairman (Ridgeway), Agnes Budagowska Treasurer (Swindon), Anne Marie Lord Secretary (Chinnor & District), Avis Furness (Reading), Gillian Le Du (Henley) and Len Smith (Wokingham).

**Third Age Trust** David Chesneau (Regional Assistant SE Region)

**Representatives.** John Orchard and Fay Sinai (Abingdon), Geoff and Val Young (Aylesbury Vale), Norman and Esme Dutton (Banbury), Ian and Josephine Wright (Carterton), Tony Darbyshire and Val Smith (Chalfonts), Eric Magson (Chess Valley), Tim Layfield and Peter Metcalf (Chiltern), Rosie Hetherington and Dorrie Oliver (Chinnor & District), Joan Reid (Greater Thame), Elaine Parkes (Haddenham), Anne Partridge (Headington), Jean Myhill and Bill Teasdale (Maidenhead), Derek Child (Newbury), Peter Carey (Slough), Colin O'Rourke (South Bucks), Glenys Bettley and Rick Budagowska (Swindon), Anne Fisher, Peggy Miles and Derek Randall (Thame and District), Joan Ford and George Goldsmith (Wantage and Grove), Margaret Sherrington (West Oxford), Pam Hares (Wokingham)

#### 1 Apologies:

**Representatives:** Joan Nesbitt (Abingdon), Greg Sneddon and Lynne Dawson (Aylesbury Vale), Theresa Doherty (Bracknell Forest), Geoffrey Glover (Chalfonts), Peter Foot (Faringdon), Ann Walsh (Goring Gap), Geraint James (Princes Risborough), Jane Sellwood (Reading), David Tippins (South Bucks), Belinda Horn (Wendover), John Wiggins (Windsor and District), Susie Brigden (Witney), Lesley Summers (Woodstock)

**2 Minutes of the last meeting (31/07/2015).** It was proposed that these were a correct record of the meeting proposed by: Ian Wright (Carterton) seconded by Patsy Thornton (Wokingham), agreed unanimously and signed.

**3.0 Matters arising** None.

#### 4.0 Chairman's Report.

Mike thanked everyone for coming and welcomed David Chesneau, Regional Assistant to Hilvary Robinson (SE Region Trustee) and Peter Carey from Slough U3A (formed just this September). Slough U3A is warmly invited to join the Thames Valley Network.

Mike went on to say that Chairs from the Networks in the SE Region met at Farnham in September. It appears that TVN is one of the most active Networks. It was felt that support for individual U3As with a problem needs to come from the Third Age Trust rather than the networks trying to get directly involved.

Mike drew our attention to the Historic Pathways Project display. This was part of the display set up at Wellington College recently for the short conference as the project comes to an end. Projects have been run over the past five years and Mike asked for ideas for future projects.

#### 5.0 Treasurer's report

Agnes circulated copies of the TVN Account Summary for October 2015.

To date two U3As are not affiliating to TVN.

Under Expenses she explained that "Venue Rental" includes the catering for many events as venues offering catering do not show a breakdown of costs.

Under Income "Events income" stands at £4309.00 and includes final payment to Wellington College, an outstanding amount for Culham, a small amount for another event and delegate payments for the Opera Study day. She is currently holding £4144.36 for these events.

Cash available is therefore £6053.65.

Affiliation fees may not be required next year.

A query was raised regarding the balance at the start of the year and how much had been raised through Events. Some Events show a surplus and others a deficit, in general they do not create an additional income. Affiliation Fees have been received this year. The October accounts summary is an interim statement. End of year accounts are dealt with using an accountant.

Responding to the question – "what are the events and how do they happen?" Mike made the following points:

- i The Network enables U3As to get together for discussion/networking.
- ii TVN organises Study days relating to aspects of organising/running a U3A eg Constitutions, committee members. These are funded by the Third Age Trust.
- iii Events/study days are also organised to cover subjects requiring a specialist speaker and maybe appealing to a small number of people. This would be more viable within TVN than in one U3A only and provides a valuable opportunity to learn more about a specialist subject. These Events are organised by U3A members through the Events team.

The Events team produce a flyer and a programme for each Event/Study day. This information is circulated to all U3As by Mike using the Contacts database (these are usually the Chair, Secretary and the TVN Rep), it is also put on the TVN website. Individual U3As are expected to circulate the information to its members.

## **6.0 SE Region Trustee's Report 30/10/2015**

David Chesneau introduced himself before he gave the Trustee's Report produced by Hilvary Robinson. This was his first meeting since being appointed the previous Tuesday!

**6.1** In her Report Hilvary said she was delighted to attend the celebration of our 'Historic Pathways Project' on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October and was sorry she could not stay longer. She thought the Exhibition was very professional and illustrated what U3As can do if they work together on a Project! She thanked Patsy for co-ordinating everything and would like it to be on permanent display somewhere. She also suggested that we consider publishing it in book form.

**6.2** Hilvary has 3 Assistants in the S E Region. Wendy Tuppenney resigned recently for family reasons and David Chesneau, former Chairman of Camberley U3A, is the new Assistant.

**6.3 In July the Charity Commission issued new rules (CC3) – U3As need to be aware of them as instead of saying 'should' they say 'must' in some places. This document was sent to all U3As with "A Summary of Trustee Duties and Responsibilities" by National Office.**

**6.4** The 'Awareness Campaign' continues and Hilvary has had replies from 25 different institutions/organisations in the S E Region.

**6.5** National Office now disseminates information from Regional Trustees to any U3A so Hilvary will no longer have to notify Network Chairmen and ask them to email it to their U3As.

**6.6** If there are any problems in U3As please let your Network, Regional Trustee or National Office know as soon as possible. It is always easier to sort things out at an early stage rather than let it get to crisis point.

**6.7** Pam Jones, the new Third Age Trust Chairman, is keen not to lose U3As – since we are nearing our 1000<sup>th</sup> U3A – she feels that it is no good celebrating 1000 U3As if we are closing U3As too!

(One problem has been that some U3As have closed their books in the past, which is against the Charity Commission rules as to be a Charity you have to be open to all comers, this has resulted in members all growing old together with no new blood coming in).

**6.8 A series of 4 Discussion Papers can be downloaded from the Members' Area on the National Website –**  
**Keeping your U3A Vibrant,**  
**Making Communication a Priority,**  
**The Challenge of Finding Committee Members,**  
**The Challenge of Finding Group Leaders.**

**6.9** If a U3A organises an Event to advertise itself to recruit younger members a **Grant of £200 is available from National Office.**

**6.10 Training Development Officers have been trained to assist new U3As from the Steering Committee to their first AGM. Regional Volunteers will continue to set up Launch Meetings** and will now work with U3As that need help. (In the S E Region Zazia Pratt continues to be our Education & Development Officer.) **Currently a Regional Volunteer is needed in the Thames Valley area.** Pam Jones formerly fulfilled this role.

**The Training and Development Officers will also give talks and workshops in the New Year. We are asked to look out for some in our area as Hilvary has asked for 'Participative Learning' based on the 'More Time to Learn' booklet in response to the 'Paid Tutors' paper issued in January.** If you would like a talk/workshop on a particular subject please let Hilvary know. John Ellison, Third Age Trust Treasurer, is available to talk to Treasurers too.

It was noted that Representatives had not received information referred to in this report.

## **7.0 Network Activities**

### **7.1 Events Team Report on 2015**

Patsy Thornton introduced herself as the Events Co-ordinator. She reported that this had been an exciting year of events with more to come.

Referring to Mike's response to a question about Events (see section 5) she advised that anyone organising an event needs to research the costs, estimate how many people might come and then set a break-even cost per delegate.

Frequently events are booked up a month after the information is sent out. U3As (and individuals receiving the information) are encouraged to advertise events and pass the information to friends and are advised to submit their applications as soon as possible.

**The following events have taken place since the last meeting:**

**Wallingford Day** on 21<sup>st</sup> August organised by Susie Berry (85 delegates)

**Henley River and Rowing Museum – Civil War.** This was organised by Patsy for September and was fully booked. However there were many glitches throughout the day and the bookings officer (new in post at the time) has offered

the venue free for another event. Patsy will arrange this on a similar theme and offer places initially to who attended in September, the only cost will be for refreshments. (It is likely to be in May 2016.

**Forensic Science day** 30<sup>th</sup> September organised by Mike Price and attended by 200 delegates. Take up far exceeded expectations. The speakers were excellent but the venue at Culham was poor in terms of arrival check-in/security and refreshments.

**The Historic Pathways Event at Wellington College** in October saw the culmination of the 2-year project. This was an excellent event, Reps were encouraged to look at the small selection of items displayed, Avis had led a quiz and will provide copies to U3As on request. 50 delegates attended, although 100 could have been accommodated.

#### **Remaining Events for 2015**

**4<sup>th</sup> November Network day “Constitutions and Committees Forum. What are my responsibilities?”** at Benson. This has been organised by Susie Berry with Pam Jones (Chairman of the Third Age Trust) and Carole Millin (U3A Training Support Advisor). This is a free event as it is supported by the Third Age Trust. It is hoped that every U3A will send a representative Susie invited those who have not yet responded to sign up at lunchtime.

**24<sup>th</sup> November History of opera** arranged by Anthony Burdall has 4 places remaining at date of this meeting.

#### **7.2 Programme for 2016 :**

**Sat 12<sup>th</sup> March Staying Connected-Living with Hearing Loss** at Oxford Brookes University Gipsy Lane Headington. Speakers include specialists in audiology, social aspects and coping mechanisms and lip reading. Places are limited. Margaret Sherrington spoke enthusiastically about the support she had received from other U3As in TVN when she suggested the event. Organised by Margaret Sherrington and Pauline Martin (W Oxford U3A)

**28<sup>th</sup> April The Work of William Morris** at Kelmscott Manor organised by Gill le Du (Henley on Thames U3A)

**May ? The Civil War revisited”** at the River and Rowing Museum Henley on Thames organised by Patsy Thornton (Wokingham U3A)

**11<sup>th</sup> June Practical Wildlife Day (moth tracking and talk)** at Woolley Firs Wildlife Centre Maidenhead led by Jon Cole (Wokingham U3A).

**21<sup>st</sup> June History of Railways** at Swindon Steam Museum organised by Glenys Bettley (Swindon U3A) (offers of help welcome)

**Sept ? Children’s Literature** at Oxford University Press. Arranged by Fay Sinai.(Abingdon U3A)

**Sept ? Wildlife event part 2** at Oxford University Museum of Natural History with Jon Cole

**October ? Wine tasting day** at Benson Parish Hall arranged by Margaret Sherrington

**October ? Learning Languages in Later life** organised by Susie Berry (Ridgeway U3A)

**November ?** a special combined event. Paul Inman of Oxford Brookes University has offered to host a day for U3A members and his own students. The theme may be “Robots and artificial intelligence”, he will organise the speakers. There will be a maximum of 150 places for U3A members.

**Dates for 2016 will be up-dated and Mike will circulate these with the Minutes**

#### **7.3 Events in 2017**

Patsy asked for ideas. The following are possibilities: Social history of the Thames Valley, Crime and punishment in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, Gilbert and Sullivan (Marlow U3A), Family History, a day looking at craft activities.

#### **8.0 Network Information**

**8.1 Contacts List** Please keep Mike up-to-date, at present he includes the e-mail address and telephone number if given.

Mike is also maintaining the database of attendees at events. They receive information on new events direct and can share this with friends in their U3A, it is another useful way of getting information out to U3A members.

(NB information is usually sent out to this group two weeks after U3A contacts receive it). Mike does ask whether people want to remain on this database.

**8.2 Speaker’s Database** This has been up-dated and will be sent out shortly. Please let Avis know of any changes/feedback especially new speakers.

The list of Interest groups in the U3As in TVN has been up-dated.

**8.3 Network Website** Len reported that there were fewer hits in August and September compared with last year. 333 in August, 323 in September and 335 in October. He requested that we use the website especially as information is put there as soon as possible after he has received it. [www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk](http://www.u3atvnetwork.org.uk)

## 9.0 Open forum

**9.1** Anne Partridge (Headington U3A) highlighted equal opportunities and in particular the difficulties faced by members who use wheelchairs. To keep costs down many Interest Groups with few members meet in member's homes and accessibility for all is not always possible. She raised the issue as this is something all U3As should be considering.

**9.2** Norman Dutton (Banbury U3A) described how existing local U3As had been involved in the formation of a new U3A at Brackley. Following an informal public launch in September (150 attendees) all main officers on the Steering committee are in place for the next 6 months and 167 members have paid a membership fee to cover 6 months. Norman made the following points:

- i The Third Age Trust has detailed procedures for setting up new U3As. They are to be commended as superb!
- ii It was a pleasure on a personal level to be involved.
- iii A website is to be set up and Brackley will be using Norman's expertise for this.
- iv He found it heartening to see the enthusiasm generated as U3As worked together and recommends "cross fertilisation" especially where U3As are suffering from inertia.

This led to the meeting being made aware that Chipping Norton U3A had written an open letter stating that due to lack of members coming forward to be on Committee it would have to close. a meeting is to be held on 4<sup>th</sup> November. Mike said that he thought there had been response to this and that a committee might now be set up.

The issue of payment of Capitation fees when people join more than one U3A was also raised. In general it appeared that local U3As may have an agreement between themselves as to whether their treasurers would handle some members not paying a capitation fee.

**9.3** Colin O'Rourke (South Bucks) endorsed the point about cross-fertilisation through interest groups regarding speakers and activities.

He was disappointed in the free publicity material supplied by the Third Age Trust for the "Awareness Campaign".

**9.4** Patsy Thornton (Events co-ordinator) said that Richard De Payer (?), curator of Bucks. County Museum, was running an Islamic Project incorporating art and music etc and would like U3As to help with volunteer support. More than 100 events are planned mainly in Buckinghamshire. Contact Patsy for more information.

## 10 AOB

**10.1** The issue of holding cheques for Events was raised. **It was agreed that an e-mail/letter should be sent ASAP acknowledging receipt** and stating if possible when the cheque is likely to be presented (ie within a month/two months etc).

**10.2** As Chairman of TVN Mike frequently receives requests to circulate information to members by outside bodies. Normally he asks them to do this for themselves and he specifically excludes anything that is commercial. He asked for the meeting's agreement with this. Representatives present fully endorsed this.

**10.3** Mike is happy to circulate information regarding events organised by TVN U3As if they are inviting members from other U3As.

**10.4** The 3<sup>rd</sup> Age Trust policy regarding speakers who are U3A members (current policy says they cannot be paid) is recognised as an issue as there are people who are retiring and would like to join a U3A but would like to continue as paid speakers. As a Network should we ask the 3rd Age Trust to look at their policy? This will be tabled at the next Reps' meeting.

Mike closed the meeting with thanks to all Reps.

Date of next meeting Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2016 at Benson Parish Hall. 10am for 10.30am

date .....

Chairman .....

04/11/15

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