Northumbria Region u3a

Regional Support Team Zoom Meeting

19th May 2023

From 14.00 – 16.25

Present: - Cecilia Coulson (CC), Malcolm Wilkinson (MW), Mike Wallace (MMW) Ted Watt (TW), Sandi Rickerby (SR), Mary Barlow (MEB).

Visitors: - Mike Cook (MC)

Apologies: - Mo Brown, Jane Mathieson, Ann Carr, Mary E Dunning, Peter Barnett, Pam Turner, Trevor Robinson, Maureen Taylor.

Welcome: - Cecilia welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for turning up ahead of time. As Mike Cook was already present, she asked if we could change the agenda and have the item on Facebook first before agreeing the previous minutes and matters arising. This was agreed.

Facebook: - MC informed the meeting that there were 18 followers and that two events were noted on the page.

CC asked if a piece about events already held could be posted. CC said she was thinking about an outing Whickham has had and the national Off the Wall event. MC replied that events already held along with forthcoming events could be posted.

Already quite a few u3as have Facebook pages and it is possible that these could be linked to the regional one.

Various ways of getting our Facebook page better known were suggested a) an article in Messenger b) more information on the website c) remind people in emails sent out d) ask u3as to put information in their newsletters. Post Meeting Note - Already sent an email to all RST members and 'leads' of Networks re the information from Mike Cook 20/5/2023.

Minutes: - MW proposed the minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2023 be accepted as an accurate record and seconded by Ted Watt. The members present agreed they were, and the proposal was accepted.

Matters Arising: - CC noted a Trust Volunteer national Induction seminar was cancelled and that she and various other members in the region were unable to obtain places at subsequent sessions. SR said she would take this up with the national office and look into the possibility of holding one specifically for this region.

A generic email address has been created for use with our policies - nru3ageneric@gmail.com.

CC asked SR if Trust Volunteer and Regional Volunteers were one and the same, or different. SR replied that as far as she was concerned, they are one and the same.

Reports: -

Chair (CC) – Report already circulated.

Business Secretary (MEB) – Nothing to report.

Post Meeting Note – The Charity Commission site was updated with the changes regarding committee members after the AGM.

The Charity Commission are improving the sign in process, and we will shortly be asked to set up a new personalised Charity Commission account.

Treasurer (MMW) - Details were given on the region's financial status.

Distribution of the Legacy Fund – Amendments were suggested to the proposed form asking u3as for their banking details. It was suggested that members have until 17th June 2023 to reply with the intension of distributing the money by the end of June.

Financial Year End – CC asked was it possible to change it from the 31st December to the 30th April. MMW agreed it could be done but there may be problems getting the accounts agreed before the AGM was held towards the end of April.

MMW also said it could have implications for gathering information for subscriptions.

David Pattison when he looked at the accounts suggested working out a budget for the Three Year Plan. MMW said as there are no events being planned at the moment it is difficult to put a value on anything. A budget is therefore in abeyance for the time being.

The Zoom licence for the new year has been renewed.

Events (CC) – Report already circulated.

Could we again ask u3as where possible to open their events to other u3as. It could help fill seats.

The team consisting of MW, Bob Pullen and CC have met and will be holding another meeting on 5th June. Post Meeting Note - Pat Marcus and Sandra Davison will hopefully attend the meeting on 5th June.

Communication (PB) – No report although he did send comments on other aspects of the agenda which CC read out at the appropriate place.

Messenger (MEB) – Reminder that the closing date for the next issue is 25th June.

Regional Trustee (SR) – SR has recently visited both Middlesbrough and Bishop Auckland u3as.

Cestrias Chair Robert Berry is concerned that a Chair will not be appointed once he has served his term of office next year as nobody is coming forward. SR has provided the chair with information on closing a u3a as requested but will get an update in September.

MMW commented that Boldon were in the same position earlier this year. He suggested that members were informed that any money they hold will not be returned to them should they decide to close.

New structure - It has been suggested that each Regional Trustee invite a member of their regional committee to London on 14th June to give their views on the roles within the proposed Pilot Council which aims to be the conduit between the Board and members. It is hoped that this will improve communication and get away from the idea of them and us.

It is expected the u3a Council will support the delivery of the strategic aims for the movement. Initially the Development Learning, Equality and Communications Committees will report progress into the pilot Council rather than the Board and secondly new proposals will be developed for new groups to become effective in 2024. The Governance and Finance Committees will continue to report to the Board.

SR is proposing that she will accompany this person down possibly the night before and to accompany them to the meeting. The cost will come from funds held by the Regional Trustee. CC to lift the italic information and send out via email to all RST and 'other' contacts she has.

Finance – The accounts for 2022/3 show a modest surplus. There has been a significant reduced spend on development projects and a lower than expected take up of grants available to u3as. There is a plan to reduce the current reserve over the next three years.

It is expected that the Board will not be seeking an increase in subscriptions for 2023 at the AGM in October.

The treasurer will provide regular issues of 'Finance News Extra', a half yearly report and there is a graphic 'Where does your money go?' on the website.

The system for assisting new u3as has been revised and they will be eligible for a £300.00 Grant.

TAM – It is expected that TAM editorial services will be contracted out to Redactive the company currently managing TAM advertising revenue. There is a possibility that in the future there will be an online version of the magazine.

Possible Joint Venture with Age UK – There is significant concern regarding the closure of banks in the High Street. People have difficulty in changing signatories, paying in cash etc. Treasurers in some cases have therefore held monies in their homes for longer than usual until they can access a bank. It is proposed that members maybe asked what difficulties they have encountered. MMW said that he could provide numerous instances where people have had problems. CC said that banks were looking at setting up hubs and SR noted that we need face to face banking.

The Off the Wall project was reported as a huge success. The online programme had attracted around 850 registrations with approximately 170 members attending from 53 u3as.

It has been suggested that a weekend Festival of Learning is held in 2024 showcasing u3a activities. A possible venue is York University and 19/21 July is pencilled in.

Barnsley u3a had a walking cricket session which Angela Ripon attended, and it was filmed by the BBC and will be shown on the One Show on 9th June.

SR is stepping down this year as Regional Trustee but will remain on various national committees. Do you know anyone who would be willing to take on this role. SR is willing to meet and talk to anyone who may be interested.

Feedback from AGM – CC read out comments from PBs email - While there is nothing wrong with counting every vote, if there is an obvious overwhelming majority it should be sufficient to record it as such, thus saving the time of counting every hand in the air.

Other members commented that as u3as only have one vote and that surely it is not difficult to count the votes of the 20 to 30 u3as that attend.

MEB noted that approximately two years ago that we used a voting paper. One member of each u3a attending was given a voting paper on arrival which asked for their u3a and whether they were for or against a motion. These papers were collected, and the votes counted with the results given at the end of the meeting. It was agreed we would try this method again at the next AGM.

Other comments received were a) not enough chips b) the tables were too close but then we did not initially know any numbers.

Updates: -

Speakers List **-** CC read out PBs comments. PB had spoken to Jeff Armstrong at the AGM, and he is proposing to have a new version ready by the end of June. PB will simplify the data and make it available on request with confirmation that it will remain confidential. PB is hoping to receive this via email although Jeff did ask for his home address.

Three Year Plan – TW, MED and CC have met. TW is looking into splitting up the region into four graphic areas. It is hoped that members in these areas will meet up and organise focus groups.

Organise Quarterly Meetings – It is proposed that we ask the Events team to help. MW did say he may be able to assist.

Policies – CC and MEB are meeting on Friday 26th May to hopefully finalise all the issues.

Do we need Regional Networks for Interest Groups, and do we need reports.: - It was agreed we do need reports so that the Chair and Committee are aware of what is happening in the region.

It was suggested that we hold a Networks Event to include a buffet/meal to thank the Chairs etc., for their work.

Continuation of Regional Support Team monthly meetings: - It was agreed that we would revert to just the Regional Committee holding monthly meetings. The Support Team would be invited to a meeting prior to the quarterly meeting.

Equipment Loan Scheme: - In the absence of anyone willing to administer this it was agreed that CC would provide the equipment when a request is received from a u3a.

Any Other Business: -

Banners - New banners are needed as the existing ones have the old logo and are showing signs of wear and tear. Post meeting - SR phoned CC on 22nd May 2023 – there's money available from the Regional Trustee to provide new banners.

It was noted that Kelvin Rushworth may hold some banners and CC will request he returns these.

Name Badges – TW needs one.

One-to One meetings – CC asked if anyone wished to continue the use of these meetings or would it be easier to have time in the monthly meetings set aside for members comments. The later idea was agreed on.

Beacon – CC read out comments from PBs email. - We cannot contact specific group leaders (i.e. walking group) because this type of information is not in our Beacon (and it would be a big job to add it and keep it up to date).

Our Beacon does allow us to create new roles and we have added Groups Coordinator. Technically, in Beacon, this is known as a Class. So far, we have not used this much, and we only have a record of 4 people.

Post Meeting Note – An email is being sent out reminding u3as to remember to inform region of changes to chairs, secretaries, treasurers etc following their AGM and will also ask if they use Beacon to let region know.

Meanwhile, Kathy Clegg started a new Regional Group (or Network) for Groups Coordinators (N Groups Coordinators). This Group has 35 members. Not all members of the Group are necessarily Group Coordinators and obviously not all u3as are represented.

CC noted that at present if an email was sent out to all RST members via Beacon, she cannot see who the emails were sent to or who sent a reply.

This was postponed until PB was able to attend the meeting.

MMW noted that he would be willing to attend any u3a that was in difficulty finding Chairs etc. SR said that she was attending a meeting on 26th September, and he was happy to come along.

Date of next meeting is 16th June.

Name	Position	Date

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