Washington Village U3A Committee, The Stella

10.00am – 21st November 2024

Attending: Derek Ginsberg (Chair), Carolyn Baxter, Lyn Bossons, Helen Edwards, John Edwards, Sandra Graham, Catherine Hambley, Maggie Hope, Tania LeMarinel, Ian McIntosh, Pauline Palmer, Julie Stevens. Observers: George Dickie, Jackie Robinson,

24.143 Welcome
The Chair welcomed Committee members and observers to the meeting.

24.144 Apologies
None

24.145 Minutes of the meeting of 17th October were considered; acceptance proposed by Maggie Hope, seconded by Lyn Bossons and approved by all.

24.146 Matters arising

24.131 Environment Update
Information for the last two months has been updated. The council's IT recycling collection will cease at the end of October with redundant cables ended on 14th October.
Resolved: Helen to contact Laura in respect of cable recycling in November.

24.133 Sunderland Active website information had been sent out. The Walking Group had been added to the Sunderland Links for Life website. Group leaders are to be asked if their group want to be promoted, for example the Tai Chi Group are only taking new members in January so do not require promotion at this time. The Guardian advert has been criticized for its low impact U3A information. Noted that their information is not being disseminated down to u3a's.
Resolved: Sandra to ask Group Leaders if they wish their group to be promoted in social media and to pass positive responses to Tania.

24.134 The new u3a structure is felt to be confusing and a presentation believed will assist with clarification.
Resolved: Maggie to ask Jean, regional trustee, to come and give a presentation on the relationship between local, regional and national u3a, possibly at the AGM as the most appropriate time. Jean has accepted and invited to speak at February meeting. Maggie/Carolyn happy to continue with new member table in the monthly meetings.

24.136 Group Coordinator's Report
The members survey asking for suggestions for new interest groups received varied responses with, in some cases, only one member interested in a particular group suggestion. These have been advised the group is not viable. Only a few have agreed to meet to take group suggestions forward, further progress is awaited. The group board has been updated, per a suggestion, to have more photos and less text. A discussion group might be feasible on topics of the group choice. Spanish is currently cost free and runs on a Monday morning but the date and time is flexible and can be negotiated. There has been discussion around a eg Carpe Diem group with a view to attracting more men. The suggestion could be a bucket list group for individual active activities such as quad biking, archery etc.
Resolved: Sandra to send out an email asking interested persons in the discussion group to meet after next monthly meeting.
Resolved: Sandra to send out an email asking for interest in a possible activity group.

24.140 Tea/Coffee and a buffet which will be served by Committee. Followed by a raffle organised by Lyn (Julie, Sandra and Catherine assisting with tickets) with a recommended price of £1 a strip. Raffle prizes to be donated. Carolyn to provide a table quiz.
Resolved: Derek to send a general email reminder to include raffle donations request, and the u3a's subsidizing the cost of the buffet.

24.147 Speaker Secretary's Report.
Speakers are now booked until May 2025 with a further three pending for the new speaker to set up. The spreadsheet will be updated to show proposed speaker contact details. No speaker is required for the AGM. Carolyn requests the opportunity to speak at a future meeting to clarify the requirements of the speaker role, this is agreed.
Action: Derek to further request volunteers for the committee and inform of all the committee roles which are to become vacant.

24.148 Membership Secretary's Report.
Three new members bring our total membership to 266 this month.

24.149 Group Coordinator's Report

- Adventure group has 12 interested although only three or four stayed behind after the monthly meeting. A further meeting to be held in the Cross Keys tomorrow to take this further.
- Discussion group will hold a meeting in the new year to discuss proposals.

- Real Ale group has five members who will meet on 22nd November to discuss taking the group further.
- Reading group three has closed as insufficient members, the library has been informed.
- Spanish for Beginners, no change to group.
- Drawing and Painting to have a display board.
- Theatre group has no further developments yet and have until the end of March 2025 to identify a new group leader.

24.150 PR Update

Tania will be contacting group leaders for the new Comedy & Sketch group, Line Dancing, Painting & Drawing and Advanced Spanish groups to suggest ideas to help promote their groups within WVu3a, locally and on social media. She also attended the regional lunch at the Littlehaven Hotel in South Shields on 22nd October where approximately 70 members from local u3as attended. It was a good networking opportunity but the new Chief Executive, Iain Cassidy, only spoke for 5 minutes so there was no information on his ideas/plans for the future of the u3a. The Christmas buffet has been organised and Lyn has paid the invoice to Hideaway Cafe. Delivery will be made at 11.30am and a couple of extra meals were booked just in case. All vegan/gluten-free meals will be individually labelled/named and Tania to distribute these to ensure everyone gets the right meal.

24.151 Business Secretary Report

The u3a market place is now only accessible by Tania and John and problems accessing the lanyards have been reported. For information, we are advised that the Charity Commission annual return in excess of £25,000 income requires more detailed information that we normally send. We are currently below that level so this information is to raise awareness that we are nearing the threshold.

24.152 IT/Website update

We are advised that most people come directly to our website or via a search engine with a log of referrals being kept. The log of the committee Gmail accounts is ongoing. Each Gmail account remains with the postholder. The photo library has no photos for the Bridge group, Spanish Beginners or Advanced although are in place for other groups. They are sufficient to give a flavour of activities. The system automatically clears/archives activities which go past the current date. A possibility of setting up a welcome page, for example, speakers for monthly meetings, was discussed.

24.153 Environment Update

Since October information has been sent out suggesting activities such as how to improve recycling, for example as per cable collections. There was an event day on 9th November. December will focus on foraging materials for Christmas decorations.

24.154 Treasurer's Report

The Report was noted. The net balance remains healthy. The Charity Commission recommended our balance should be 50% of the expenditure, which means we may

again be slightly over this year. This has enabled us to subsidise food at our Christmas meeting.

24.155 Members Liaison Report.
Three cards were sent out last month. Two for long term illness. The suggestion of sending long term illness members Christmas cards to be sent out to those members who are unable to attend the Christmas meeting was agreed by all. The cards are free as they are provided by one of our members who makes the cards. It is also agreed that the card provider be presented with a bouquet of flowers as a thank you for her contribution.

24.156 Regional & Network Update
At the Network Chairs meeting only three Chairs attended. This is an opportunity to share information across the groups. Our u3a are noted as one of the most successful. Some u3as have difficulty with low membership or committee membership. It is believed to be our willingness to encourage developing new groups as the basis of our success. All Chairs are eligible to join the Regional group. At the Regional zoom meeting held last week of the one thousand u3a nationally only 70 Chairs joined the group. Most of those were from the larger u3as with membership in the thousands. Discussion ranged around what u3as want the national focus to be, although no one from the national was there. Concerns included recruitment; marketing and PR which was not believed to be cohesive. The lack of communication was felt to be very discouraging.

24.157 Christmas meeting
The Stella has nine round and nine square tables which can seat 140. All tickets have now been sold. The schedule is as follows:
10.30 Committee arrive – no member entry until 10.45 to enable the room to be set up.
10.45 Members may enter – they are to be directed into the pub lounge if early.
11.15 Ken Tong and friends to commence – ending at 12.00
11.30 Food arrives
12.00 Tea/coffee served and table quiz circulated.
12.15 Committee to distribute food.
13.00 Quiz followed by raffle (tombola style) (£1 per strip)
Tania is bringing a tablecloth for raffle prize donations
Julie/Sandra selling tickets
Pauline/Catherine ripping up ticket strips for the prize draw
Tania printing labels for specialist food and reserved sign for band
Reserved sign for band to be placed at toilet side of room
Frank doing sign in register

24.158 December Committee meeting
Meeting at the Black Bush at 11am on 19th December for a one-hour meeting, followed by lunch at noon. Meal selection to be put on committee's What's App for Ian to forward to Black Bush.

24.159 Any other business
(a) Microphone/blue tooth speaker is requested for the quiz group as members had

difficulty hearing at the November meeting as the surroundings were too noisy. A spare microphone is available to borrow from the monthly meeting and agreed by the committee that the cost of a blue tooth speaker may be investigated.
Action: John to investigate the cost of the blue tooth speaker

(b) In view of the requirement for all external trainers to be qualified, Ian presented the trainer certificate and insurance for the Tai Chi instructor.

(c) George invited all to attend a scratch comedy session in the Stella or the hall after the Christmas meeting with an expected finish time of 1.30/2pm. George to advise Derek when this is confirmed so he may include it as part of the pre-meeting email announcements. The intention is to set up a grins and giggles buffet and invite participants and audience. Noted that grins and giggles group are pending a name change to Comedy and Sketch Group.