Washington Village U3A Committee, The Stella

10.00am – 20th February 2025

Attending: Derek Ginsberg (Chair), Carolyn Baxter, Lyn Bossons, Ron Burr (Observer), Helen Edwards, John Edwards, Bill Hird (Observer), Maggie Hope, Tania LeMarinel, Ian McIntosh, Richard Mulvey (Observer), Pauline Palmer.

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

25.18 Apologies
Sandra Graham, Catherine Hambley, Julie Stevens.

25.19 Minutes of the meeting of 16th January were considered and minor errors being addressed, acceptance was proposed by Lyn, seconded by Carolyn and approved by all.

25.20 Matters arising

24.165 Speaker Secretary's Report
Resolved: Carolyn to contact the chocolate company speaker for AGM as soon as the company reopens in February after refurbishment – Company not available.

24.171(b) AOB
Links with Washington Village, after whom we are named, was discussed, however as contacts had been mostly from u3a and met with much bureaucracy, such as experienced with the possible bench dedication, this was discounted.
Resolved: Ian spoke to Malcolm Pickering: wreath to be purchased on behalf of WVu3a nearer the time (approx £30) for Remembrance Sunday in the Village.

25.12 (b) A forecast for the 25-26 financial year raised concerns as it predicted a surplus which is over 100% of expected expenditure when a surplus of 50% is expected. To resolve this, the proposed choices are to increase expenditure or reduce fees. Lyn proposed and Derek seconded a proposal to reduce fees to £12 per person, per annum, until reserves reach 50% of expenditure. The proposal was agreed by all.
Resolved: Lyn to notify membership of change to annual membership fee of £12 .

Resolved: Lyn to amend membership forms.
On-going Action: Lyn to amend Beacon parameters.

25.14 Regional and Network Update
Network Chairs have not met since Christmas. There is a Regional meeting next Wednesday at Metrocentre community hub to receive a talk on updating the Speakers Lists. Houghton u3a have requested a copy of our original survey to use as basis for their forthcoming survey.
Resolved: Derek to forward survey document from Tania to Wessington

25.15 AGM and Committee Roles
John to send out notice and voting notifications in due course. Last year's report to update. Noted the Chair, Treasurer and Business Secretary are all officer roles. No roles have volunteer replacements as yet, however as a last resort could be covered by other members of the committee. It was pointed out that the committee is mutually supportive, no person will act alone, there will be ample support from other committee members.
Ongoing Action: Derek to forward last year's AGM notes to Catherine for collation

25.21 Monthly Meeting
It has been noticed that over the last few months that several members leave the meeting during the speaker's talk. The committee feels this is disconcerting for speaker. It raised the issue of the meeting's timing: feelers had been put out and the suggestion 10.30-12.30pm replacing 11-1pm is preferable. The Stella management would be happy with this change. Moving to another venue (e.g. St George's) is still impractical given the numbers attending the monthly meeting.
Holding the committee meetings elsewhere was also considered since the background noise in the Stella's bar can be detrimental to members hearing what is being said. It was agreed to try First Washington Scout Hall if it is available when we'd need it.
Action: Derek to include in his email to members, in advance of monthly meetings, reminder of the time of the meeting, the length of the speaker's talk and etiquette expected while the speaker is giving the talk.
Action: Derek will ask for a "show of hands" at the next monthly meeting for proposed timing change.
Action: Ian to check access to First Washington Scout Hall with Doug McIntyre.
Action: Lyn to bring refreshments to the meeting if change confirmed.

25.22 Speaker Secretary's Report
Speakers/performers are now booked until July excepting the short slot following the AGM in May: a 30 minutes talk is needed. The July meeting is a "Summer Fayre": One Voice choir will perform for about 40 minutes and it was agreed to extend the entertainment by asking some groups to do something on the theme of summer in a 10-20 minutes slot. Suggestions included Comedy and Sketches, Creative Writing, Drawing and Painting, Reading groups.
Action: Carolyn to seek May speaker from Speakers' List.
Action: Carolyn to ask some group leaders about performances at July's meeting.
Action: Tania to contact Sheila's Kitchen about strawberry scones for July's meeting.

25.23 Membership Secretary's Report

Nine new members have joined, bringing the total membership to 279.

25.24 Group Co-ordinator's Report

- Sandra plans to book initial meetings for the Adventure and Discussion Groups in the Cross Keys when she is back home.
- No-one has come forward to volunteer as Group Leader for the Theatre & Cinema Group so they are currently just meeting for coffees and chat.
- The Drawing & Painting group had several members interested in potentially joining as a result of the presentation at the last monthly meeting.

Action: Sandra to to book initial meetings for the Adventure and Discussion Groups in the Cross Keys.

25.25 PR Update

- A poster was designed and printed for the Drawing & Painting group. This was shared on WVu3a's Facebook page, "What's On in Washington" and used in the display at the February monthly meeting. Several members put their names down at the meeting to join the group.
- PR for the line dancing group is on hold as Joan says she has enough members at the moment and there is now a waiting list.
- Crispin (Advanced Spanish) also wanted to wait: he'll be contacted again in March.
- Details Drawing and Painting, Kurling, Pickleball and Walking, plus monthly meetings, are now on the 'Links for Life' website (aimed at residents who are looking for things to do across the whole Sunderland and Washington area).
- George has asked for help with PR for the Comedy group: Tania is meeting him and the group straight after the Committee meeting.
- At national level Tania had been a member of the u3a Strategy Group's Communication subgroup. However, given poor communication, failure to provide information about meetings and minutes of such she has decided to leave. She noted that there was a lack of nurturing of those who express interest in involvement. Derek noted that the Chairs' Forum has had comments along the same lines.

Action: Tania to liaise with George and group and point him to resources (e.g. u3a Improv subject adviser).

25.26 Business Secretary Report

- Votes were received from a number of WVu3a members for the Regional and Board Election. There were votes for all nine candidates with four clear winners. These choices have been submitted to u3a and WVu3a informed of this. Some WVu3a members replied with thanks, indicating a level of interest in regional and national issues.
- Emails have also been sent highlighting Northumbria region's activities and events and some of our members have engaged with these.

25.27 IT/Website.

- All members with editing rights to our website were emailed an invite from Siteworks to attend a Zoom Q&A (support) session on Monday 17th Feb at 3pm. These sessions will be held fortnightly going forward.
- Website use has a steady pattern: there is an increase in access in the couple of days after a monthly meeting. 64% access it from phones: so ensuring the look

and navigation are optimised for viewing on a phone should be the focus for future changes. Most visitors come via a google search or directly to the site. A small number have come via linksforlifesunderland.co.uk, Cestria and Wessington u3as. The pages most viewed are: Home, Group Information, Walking, Events, Contact Us, Join Us and the Calendar of Events and activities.
- Several groups operate a WhatsApp group so much of the members' chat and notifications happens in these. N.B. These are independent of our formal IT provision.

25.28 Environment report 19 Feb 2025
- Emailing a couple of suggestions for activities during each month is having small but positive effect. It is worth putting them on the monthly meeting slideshow, but the detail is more easily accessed from the direct email.
- Suggestions for March 2025 are (1) The Great British Spring Clean (15th-31st March) organised by the Keep Britain Tidy campaign. (2) Earth Hour (22nd March, 8:30-9:30pm) promoted by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - switch off (non-essential) lights and appliances for just one hour.

25.29 Treasurer's Report
- January's Report was presented and the healthy surplus of £5,204.05 was noted.
- Lyn raised the issue of going paperless. The committee discussed this and agreed this was a sensible policy. Electronic copies of invoices/receipts are deemed sufficient these days.
- Lyn reported on the Treasurers' Regional Network and Treasurers' Forum (video) meetings. There is consensus that reserves are increasing within u3as, and other u3as are also reducing their subscription fee.
- There are two routes to generating income via members spending: Riviera travel and Easyfundraising scheme. Riviera travel offers 10% donation to a home u3a where a member booking with them gives them the u3a's name. It is believed this has no impact on any discount offered to the members booking a trip. For Easyfundraising items that are ordered via their portal accrue donations for the nominated charity: they work with a wide range of retailers. (After the new committee is appointed the new treasurer will register with Easyfundraising and inform members of it).

Action: Lyn to clarify the details of the Riviera scheme and inform members of it once again.

25.30 Members Liaison

Two cards were sent out last month, and one has been sent to Christine Hope whose husband died recently.

Action: Pauline to email members and speak at the monthly meeting to remind them to let her know if any member should be receiving a card.

25.31 Regional Network
- Derek attended the recent Metrocentre meeting. The organisers commented that few people are attending and they are considering going to biannually rather than quarterly meetings. Any members of a u3a in the region is welcome to attend.
- Derek had a discussion with Jean Cubbins (our regional trustee) after February's

monthly meeting and discussed how to handle expanding size of the u3a.

25.32 AGM

- Derek noted that we will be losing four committee members this year and was glad to welcome three observers to today's meeting.
- Nomination forms will be going out with the AGM notification in March. Forms will be available to complete/leave at the April meeting.

Action: John to email members with AGM notification and committee membership nomination forms.

25.33 Any other business

- Bill asked if a safety announcement should be given at monthly meetings.
- Pauline suggested we buy better biscuits for monthly meetings.
- Next committee meeting to be at 1st Washington Scout Hall.

Action: Derek to make a safety announcement at monthly meetings.
Action: Lyn to investigate buying better biscuits.