

Minutes of Ambleside & District u3a AGM

2.15pm Monday 11th September 2023

At the Ladyholme Centre, Windermere

Prior to the meeting, the Agenda, Chair's Report and Financial Statements were circulated. The members of the u3a had the option of voting by post or by email (the only option when voting by email was to accept the committee's recommendations in full). 134 valid votes were received, all accepting the committee's recommendations. Of these 134 voters, 13 attended the in-person meeting and their postal or email votes were discarded so that they were able to vote in person. Present at the meeting were 34 members so the total taking part either in person or by post/email was 155, thus reaching the necessary quorum of the Ambleside and District u3a. (In addition, there were 7 postal/email votes that were not counted due to being late or incomplete.)

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Rachel Isherwood, who welcomed those who attended. Apologies were received from Kathy Cole, Tim and Judith Bartlett, Zoe McFadzean, Carol Simpson, Rachel Webster, Paul and Cecilia Flint, Carolyn Lees, Mike and Frances Green, Joan Carus, Vicky Harrison, Charles and Judith Flanagan, Tina Butler, M. Douglas, Graham and Rita Stemp, Lorna Kelly, Nigel and Christine Riley, Ann Forbes.

1. Minutes of AGM 2022

The minutes of the AGM of 12th Dec 2022 were accepted unanimously and there were no matters arising.

2. Chair's Report (*appended*)

Rachel thanked the Vice Chair, Mike Huggins, for his help in producing the report. As the report was already circulated it was not read out in full but the following points were raised:

- The current membership is 285, still down from pre-Covid days but gradually increasing. Members were asked to spread the word and encourage new recruits.
- Our interest groups would not exist without the efforts of the coordinators so members were asked to consider assisting within, or running, an existing group or even proposing a new group – our range of offerings is not as wide as some u3as.
- The committee was thanked for their work over the last year, in particular Beth Harvey for her work in taking over as Treasurer – there is a lot of financial administration to do – and Nigel Nixon (outgoing Treasurer) for his help in the handover.
- Sarah Traynier was thanked for her work as Secretary over the last 6 years and presented with a gift as she steps down.
- Although not able to be present, the proposed new Secretary, Kathy Cole was introduced:

“As a volunteer, Kathy will be a very welcome member of the committee. She lives in the USA for approximately half the year, usually being in Windermere from November to April. Kathy joined our u3a in December 2022 and is a member of the Spanish Beginners group and the Walking group, leading some D walks and taking part in the walking trip to Spain last March. She was Secretary of the Beatrix Potter society for 6 years, working with people from 4 countries, using Zoom for meetings and is familiar with IT and membership databases etc.”

There were no questions.

3. Treasurer's Report and Approval of Accounts for 2022-2023 (*report appended*)

The accounts and Treasurer's Report were circulated prior to the meeting and Beth spoke mainly on the issue of this year's deficit.

Our major cost, which can only continue to rise, has been the printing and circulating of our paper newsletter. Secondary contributing factors are the cost of the Third Age Trust magazine and a slight underpayment to the Third Age Trust which had to be made up this year. We have sufficient reserves to

see us through but the committee have had to look at ways of cutting future costs and have decided to move to issuing our newsletter online as we did during the pandemic. (Paper versions will still be provided for those who are not internet users.) If anyone has any concerns about this move, please address questions to Chris Traynier.

The Social Account shows a small deficit, which is due to the timing of the receipt of deposits across the year end. If anyone wishes for more information, please contact Beth or Nigel Nixon.

Our savings account at the Furness Building Society shows zero interest as the bond will not mature until 2024, when all interest will be paid.

Beth thanked Chris Traynier and the outgoing Treasurer, Nigel Nixon, for their help and concluded by reminding all members that subscriptions for the new year are now due.

There were no questions and the accounts were accepted unanimously.

4. Appointment of Independent Examiner of Accounts

Anthony Willey was appointed as independent examiner of accounts unanimously.

5. Election of Officers

	<i>Proposed by</i>	<i>Seconded by</i>
Chair: Rachel Isherwood	Joan Carus	Chris Traynier
Vice Chair: Mike Huggins	Frances Green	Beth Harvey
Treasurer: Beth Harvey	Mike Huggins	Joan Carus
Secretary: Kathy Cole	Sarah Traynier	Frances Green

All were elected unanimously.

6. Election of Committee

	<i>Proposed by</i>	<i>Seconded by</i>
Frances Green (<i>Membership Secretary</i>)	Chris Traynier	Janet Rudd
Chris Traynier (<i>Newsletter Editor and Deputy Treasurer</i>)	Janet Rudd	Rachel Isherwood
Joan Carus (<i>Committee Member</i>)	Beth Harvey	Sarah Traynier
Janet Rudd (<i>Committee member</i>)	Rachel Isherwood	Mike Huggins

All were elected unanimously.

7. AOB and Questions

Nigel Nixon asked for more detail on how the deficit in the accounts will be addressed. The move to an online newsletter will make a significant contribution but there could be further savings if members elect to receive the Third Age Trust magazine online. This could be an item for next year's AGM.

Barbara Crompton raised the point that many members might prefer paper newsletters – during the pandemic, she printed out the online newsletter for some of her neighbours. Other u3as have two subscription rates, charging extra for those who want a paper newsletter, and this was suggested as a way forward. The costs/savings are not known at this point but the idea could be investigated if members wish. One advantage to an online newsletter that was pointed out was the ability to increase the print size for easier reading. Please address Chris Traynier with any questions or comments.

Jacky Truelove, the Welfare Officer. Jacky would welcome a volunteer to take on the role - this request will be inserted into the next newsletter.

Closing Remarks

Rachel thanked everyone for attending and invited all to take refreshments.

The meeting ended at 3.00pm.

CHAIR'S REPORT WITH INPUT FROM VICE CHAIR

As we move further away from Covid's impact it has been marvellous to see more of our members enjoying the various activities that Ambleside & District u3a offers. We know only too well, and appreciate, the Group Co-ordinators and so many others who have worked hard to keep us going, to promote our activities and ensure that we do what we can to meet the needs of our members. Membership is slowly rising again after the drop during Covid, something that all u3as and other voluntary organisations found. Don't forget to encourage new members or any lapsed members. Membership is such a modest cost, isn't it? We want our u3a to thrive and it is the enthusiasm and energy of the membership that makes it so.

As you'll remember we had to defer the AGM last year to give time to seek Committee replacements, an issue that had been a real concern, especially as we were then unable to find a Chair. There was an excellent turn out at the Marchesi, almost too many given its capacity. After the meeting there was a performance by the RockDrops, our u3a group, run by Michelle Rudd. They played a range of pop and country music, mainly from the 1960s. For many of us it was a reminder of our younger days. Mike Huggins, our Vice-Chair, dug out his guitar and mandolin to join them, so you might have noticed him. Apparently old rock and rollers never die, they just get disconcerted. If anyone can sing that sort of material or play an instrument, and you'd like to join, Michelle holds regular jam sessions.

There have been good turnouts at the (always interesting) General meetings that run monthly (except for the summer months) at the Marchesi, and it has been good to see the rising numbers that attend and also enjoy the tea/coffee and biscuits too. These talks are free to members, despite the costs of hall booking and speaker. Thank you so much to the folk that organise, especially those who manage the refreshments. We are all appreciative!!! Meetings with our members is always a pleasure and there have been great talks. Mike tells me that our next year's talks are already almost all organised, so look out for details in the Newsletter.

We've had Colin Aldred on his Aerial Artwork; Colin Shelbourne on his career as a cartoonist; Valerie Welti talked about the Canary Girls; Judith Shingler & Alison Peak drew on oral histories of Westmorland life; and Stephen Beresford, of Windermere Jetty Museum discussed his work there on the boats. We had a fascinating talk from our local u3a member Lorna Kelly who demonstrated her musical talents while telling us about her early life in Rhodesia. The audience loved this and asked for her to do a further talk which is due in 2024. We would love to have more of our members providing talks. Let Mike know if you could volunteer. Our final talk before the summer break was by Paul Flint who reminded us about the life of Arthur Ransome. We are now looking forward to further talks in October (Cumbrian Family History) & November (Lady Anne Clifford) and will finish 2023 with a pre-Christmas get together on 11th December.

At the end of March, we held a meeting at the Marchesi for our Group Co-ordinators both active and potential. It was a very useful opportunity to provide feedback, air issues and problems and meet each other in a purposeful and sociable way. It ended with a nice afternoon tea, served by the Committee. Our Co-ordinators facilitate and enable group activities by dealing with administrative issues; we are grateful to them all. If any u3a member brings expertise or enthusiasm and thinks they could add a new group, please do let us know. We are always keen to expand and can sometimes provide help with some initial funding to get things going.

There isn't space to discuss all the groups, as neither I nor Mike attend them all, though they are listed in the Newsletter. I know the Walking groups are certainly doing well with varied programmes of weekly walks run in our local area. In the last year they had a walking holiday in Spain and are waiting to go to Wensleydale in October. As a member of the recently re-established Writing group, I enjoy the monthly challenges we set ourselves without which I would write even less than I do! Mike is a member of the Local History group which has had some really fascinating and very interesting visits, that he was sad to miss. Joan Carus, one of our dedicated Committee, has led this a long time and would appreciate any support you can give.

I know Mike enjoys Barbara Crompton's reading on Zoom group, as it gives him the opportunity to read books he might not normally choose, and to listen to others discuss them so well. He is a member of the Table Tennis group, now led by Carolyn Bradley, which currently can have anything up to eighteen attenders to play doubles on the two tables, so there's time for some gossip too. He also attends Peter Cook's Cultural History group, which has a wide range of talks. Like other groups needing accommodation, there is a small charge to cover the ever-growing costs of room hire and any refreshment (Peter Cook also

organises our Facebook page). Christine Riley, who is now getting the Ukulele group slowly back into the u3a fold, has recently been providing new insights and direction to the vexed question of publicity, and we look forward to seeing her develop that over time.

Now turning to our Officers and Committee. Our u3a constitution places limits on how long anyone can serve as Chair (3 years), Vice-Chair (3 years) or on the Committee (6 years). These limits are there for two reasons: to refresh the Committee with new faces and new ideas, and to reassure potential candidates that joining the Committee isn't a life sentence! Last year term limits meant that Mike Huggins had to step down as Chair but could remain on the Committee, whilst our Treasurer (Nigel Nixon) & Membership Secretary (Elizabeth Moreton) left the Committee after 6 years in post. Finding people willing to join the Committee and take on Officer roles is always difficult but without them, Ambleside & District u3a will cease to exist so I would ask everyone to think whether they could find the time and commitment to take on a position.

The Committee meet typically 6 times a year, on Zoom, to minimise travelling. We keep meetings as short as we can depending on what issues we need to resolve, usually an hour or so. Being on the Committee doesn't have to take over your life! Please give the matter some thought.

Last year our AGM was delayed to December to give time to find volunteers. I am very grateful to Beth Harvey for stepping up as Treasurer. She has done a sterling job as her report shows and I am delighted that she is willing to continue in post. I would also like to thank Alison Carter for her help as Deputy Treasurer in Beth's first few months in office. Equally I'd like to thank Frances Green, for taking on the role of Membership Secretary and she continues to be our Beacon organiser; Chris Traynier who gives service well beyond the call of duty to the onerous work of sorting out the valuable Newsletter; and Janet Rudd, who has provided a great contribution as a general Committee member. We had no nominations for Chair at last year's AGM so it was left to the Committee to fill the post and I agreed to take on the role at our January meeting.

This year it is the turn of our secretary, Sarah Traynier, to give up her post and retire from the Committee. Sarah has been a wonderful secretary throughout my time on the Committee. Her minute taking is model of its kind - accurate, brief and to the point. She has handled the many and varied issues that have arisen with great good sense and good humour. We owe Sarah a big vote of thanks.

Apart from the Committee there are other valuable and important roles to fill. For some years our website has been looked after by Mike Green and John Atkinson. They did an excellent job of recovery after the crash last November where we unavoidably lost a lot of data, and the website is up and running again, but Mike has indicated that he would like to pass on the baton. The website hosting is to move to a new provider at some time in the next year or two. The process will be largely handled by TAT and the new Internet Service Provider (ISP) but there will inevitably be some changes to make at our end. We need someone, ideally with some knowledge of website maintenance, to take over from Mike and work alongside John to see this through. Many thanks to John for continuing. If you could offer any expertise or just basic assistance at all that would be wonderful, as most of us on the Committee lack the knowledge to help. We also need people to contribute new photographs and articles. It would be wonderful if more of our Co-ordinators could just spend a short amount of time to do that.

Finally, I must thank Jacky Truelove for the support she provides to our u3a in her role as Welfare Officer, Elizabeth Moreton for volunteering to help Frances with Beacon Administration and lastly to Mike Huggins who makes my role of Chair go smoothly.

Rachel Isherwood

TREASURER'S REPORT

Post pandemic, in person events have recommenced and our costs have risen accordingly. A huge thank you to all the Group Co-ordinators, particularly those reliant on speakers and venues, for doing so much to keep spending under control over the year. The more people attend, the easier it is to break even and ensure a range of speakers, so do please look at the programme and see what interests you.

Although we are in deficit this year, our general financial outlook is healthy thanks to our reserves. Our membership fee remains at £12, below the national average of £15. Membership income has remained relatively stable over the last year. Our biggest cost challenge has been the rising production and distribution costs of paper newsletters. These items account for the bulk of our deficit on general spending.

You may notice that interest from our building society account is not on the balance sheet. These funds are in a two-year fixed term bond account and the interest due will be calculated and paid at the end of that term in 2024. Consequently, no interest has been paid or accrued to us this year.

My thanks to Alison Carter for all her assistance. I would also like to thank Nigel Nixon for all his support this year and his continued work on the walking holiday accounts. Detailed accounts for the Spain 23 walking holiday have, I know, already been distributed to the group but if anyone has any specific questions on social spend or any other aspect of the general accounts, do please contact me at amblesidetreasurer@gmail.com.

Beth Harvey
Treasurer