

# Ferndown & District U3A



Ferndown and District University of the Third Age

Registered Charity Number 1073206

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at St Mary's Church, Ferndown**

**Committee members present:** Brian Williams, Bob Reeve, John Mullett, Jenny Bass, Gerry Lewis, Richard Tucker, Judith Hodges, Maggie Shew, Jean Stone, Clare Clayton, Glyn Bosanko

**The Minutes of the AGM** held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015 were proposed by Derek Holden, seconded by Joyce Earll and agreed by all present.

**Chairman's Report:** Brian Williams welcomed all to this AGM and hoped that everyone had received a copy of today's agenda, together with all the attached necessary paperwork. He expressed the hope that we could conclude the formal business in about an hour and then enjoy a little socialising over the provided refreshments, something which tended not to happen much during the academic year. He also asked that any proposer/seconded identify themselves for the sake of the secretary taking the minutes.

To avoid possible future problems which could arise from new regulation, we asked the U3A National Office to review our 20 year old Constitution. Their verdict was that it was 'not fit for purpose' and highlighted 8 areas where it fell short of current requirements. It was agreed it would be easier to write a new constitution than try and update our current one. You have the results of our efforts amongst your paperwork. This constitution has been completed in conjunction with the U3A National Office and the Charity Commission and hopefully you will approve this new document later in the meeting.

This has been a successful year for our U3A. We are financially viable and John will give details of the accounts at the end of my talk. We have 500 members and ran over 80 courses during the year. Our busy timetable means we have to find accommodation for at least 50 different classes each week. We are always on the lookout for suitable local accommodation. Use of the St Mary centre rather than the Barrington Centre for our AGM today shows our increased usage of alternative local facilities. All the venues we hire are of a high standard but expensive to hire. We are thus profoundly grateful to those leaders who offer their homes as venues for their classes. They are proving important in keeping our costs down and offering comfortable and safe venues for our members.

We are always on the lookout for new courses each year and Bob will update us on current ideas shortly. About 25% of members attend more than 5 classes thus taking advantage of the new facility of being able to attend up to 8 different courses for the one fee.

The introduction of free tea, coffee and biscuits at our Friday morning events has been well received. We have been able to find a wider range of speakers for the meetings and attendance has improved. Alongside the Discovering Dorset program the Friday events have become an important activity for our U3A.

For those who feel the Christmas break is too long we have arranged for one of our star speakers Nick Tucker to give his 3<sup>rd</sup> talk on 'reflections on British Justice' on Friday Jan 6<sup>th</sup>. This event thus falls in the week before we start the spring term on Jan 9<sup>th</sup>. All his previous talks have been excellent, very informative and good fun so make a note in your diary now to make sure you get there.

All courses and activities are only possible because of the generous contribution of time, effort and professionalism from our team of 70 volunteer group leaders. Without them we would have no courses. We thank them all very much indeed for the wonderful job they do for us all. Unfortunately this year three of our long serving leaders have died, Ron Clement, Barry Wye and Olwen Reeve; we offer our condolences to all their families and friends.

As the U3A is a self-help group, for the regular classes to function smoothly we need those enthusiastic groups of volunteers in each class who make tea, coffee and wash up and help prepare and clear rooms for each class. To you all a big thank you and please continue with the good work.

Apart from class learning we offer many activity events. We currently offer courses such as Table tennis, Badminton, various dance classes and keep fit. For extra curriculum activities every month we offer 3 and 5 mile walks, singles lunches, skittles and Boules. Coach trips and organised visits to places of interest and entertainment have been enjoyed by many members and well attended. We would like to give a special thank you to all the organisers of these events as they make a big difference to the social life of our membership.

To avoid Gerry nagging me I must remind you of the Christmas show next week on the 14<sup>th</sup> December price £3.00, at St Mark's Church at 2pm. As always we are confident you will have a great time with lots of fun.

We will again end our academic year by having an Open Day in May. At this event we are able to advertise and display the activities and skills we have to offer to the residents of Ferndown.

A Chairman's life is made much easier by the quality of the committee he works with. I can assure you all we have a great committee. I thank them all for all their efforts and commitment in making all our lives more interesting and fulfilling. It's with great pleasure I will introduce each member of the current team. I am confident some will further our message and will tell you of their plans for next year. **Bob Reeve** Group Co-ordinator, **Glyn Bosanko** Minutes Secretary, **Jenny Bass** Bridge Co-ordinator, **Richard Tucker** Membership Secretary and Data, **Judith Hodges** Program Compiler and Newsletter Editor, **Maggie Shew** Website Co-ordinator, **John Mullet** Treasurer, **Gerry Lewis** Social Secretary, **Clare Clayton** Accommodation and **Jean Stone** Publicity.

Now you have met the committee please feel free to approach any one of us with any ideas you may have to improve the activities or courses we offer.

Because we have again maintained our membership at the 500 level the extra fees paid and the Gift Aid raised has given us a surplus again this year. So despite the increase in accommodation costs we still feel able to freeze our fees for the fourth year running. In addition for this year only we will, via a coupon on the application form, offer each current member a £10 bonus voucher to be used when paying their fees for next year. This will bring the renewal fee down to £37 for all members who re-join. We can only make this offer for this year as we have to await the outcome of giving back this £5,000 to our members on our finances.

Finally I would like to thank all members who contribute so greatly to the success we enjoy as an organisation and look forward to next year being more successful than this year. Thank you all.

**Bob Reeve, Group Co-ordinator:** Bob thanked everybody who had sent condolences following the passing of his wife, FU3A member and group leader, Olwen. He went on to emphasise the committee's gratitude to members and especially leaders, who continued to inform and challenge us all. The Normandy trip would continue despite the sad death of Barry Wye. Bob told us that he was happy that 50% of members had ticked at least one of the 'activity' boxes on the application form. However, that meant that 50% of members did not tick a single box. He felt that members who gave more got more out of the organisation. He asked that we pass on the word and encourage people to come forward and volunteer to lead, even if it is only a one-off. We were hoping to get offers in by the beginning of February so that the groups could be confirmed at the Leaders' Lunch on March 27<sup>th</sup>. He was also grateful that Jean Stone would be assisting him in this area.

**Richard Tucker, Membership Secretary and Data:** Last year the membership reached over 500. The current membership stands at 490 and it is expected to rise to over 500 by the end of the academic year. Maintaining the computer database which contains the details of all these members is a time-consuming job, and I want to mention some ways in which you can help to keep this task manageable.

We now have some 400 members who have email and this is our preferred method of communication. It saves time and costs which would otherwise be incurred using the post. Please keep us up to date with any change in your email address.

Can I now just say something about the way group allocations are made, because this is not always clearly understood.

It is important to understand that in order to give every member an equal chance of getting on to their choice of group, we do not operate a 'first past the post' system. Instead, all applications are processed on a single day at the end of July.

If a group is over-subscribed, members are placed on a waiting list by means of a random selection program. We feel this to be the fairest method of giving every member an equal chance.

On the subject of obtaining group allocation results, if you have a computer we ask you to access your details from the website. These are available from the day after the publicised July date. Please do not, as nearly 100 members did this year, email requesting results.

Finally next year we will introduce a new database called Beacon, which is provided by the U3A nationally. It will give us additional features and, most importantly, give us support and maintenance from a central U3A body rather than relying on third parties.

The preparation work prior to its introduction has been extensive and technically demanding, and we are fortunate in having been able to co-opt Malcom Gill, who has contributed a great deal of time and

effort leading to the introduction of Beacon which is now running in parallel with our existing system until the year end. Thus, next year's results will be in a different format because we would be using the Beacon system.

There was a query from the floor regarding the security of the Beacon, and if there was a contingency plan should the system be corrupted or hacked. Richard assured the members that as group members had developed the system this would have been taken into consideration. The Chairman also assured us that as we were governed by the Charity Commission, they would have made sure that the system was indeed secure.

**Maggie Shew, Website Co-ordinator:** Maggie reinforced the website address and emphasised that she could only post things if she actually received them. She needed news, any news, group news, individual news, and photos. Anything that could go on to the website. But no sensitive data. Members could email her and leave a message on the FU3A phone, or even talk to her face-to-face. We either use it or we may end up losing it.

**Clare Clayton, Accommodation Officer:** As an organisation we do not have our own premises and therefore it falls to the accommodation officer to find a venue for all the courses put on by the U3A except those held in leaders homes.

In finding the right places we have to consider:

- The type of activity
- The number of people likely to be involved
- The facilities offered – including storage
- Any access issues
- The cost
- The actual availability of the premises

We also try to bear in mind travelling to the venues – particularly if we are aware people are reliant on public transport.

Most of the premises in use this year are situated within a mile of Ferndown town centre. However it is becoming increasingly difficult to find all the accommodation we need within this area. We have this year lost the use of the Youth Centre which provided excellent facilities for a variety of activities including table tennis. Likewise, the Barrington Centre is now home to Ferndown Town Council and the Community Police base – using valuable space that was previously available to us.

We are aware that not all venues have been ideal this year and we do thank you all for your understanding in, at times, putting up with less than perfect premises.

In future it may be necessary to cast our net a little wider to find places that actually serve our requirements better. This may in some cases involve a little more travelling but we are sure you will agree that it would be a small price to pay for having a more suitable venue. As a matter of interest some 52% of our membership come from areas outside of Ferndown itself so they are already travelling further to come into the town.

Unless it is absolutely necessary we try not to change a venue mid-year. In September we enter into contracts with our various venues and attempting to break these can involve additional costs – as well as giving the U3A a bad name which really does us no good at all.

We do hope that most of you do find your class is suitably placed but if difficulties arise we will endeavour to resolve matters as best we can.

Finally, Clare reminded the leaders that each group they ran needed a separate green form.

**Judith Hodges, Program Compiler and Newsletter Editor:** Judith endorsed all that Maggie had said. She, also, needed information to go into the Newsletters. If there was good news then let us share it. As regards the Brochure, it was a 3 month process, which was ongoing even up to the last minute, followed by at least 3 separate proof readings. She reminded the leaders that they really should check their individual groups at the Tutors' Lunch and agree what was to be printed or tell her about any changes. Judith informed us that there was a brand new poster being prepared which she hoped would encourage newcomers to join us. Brian also mentioned that there was a new Noticeboard now in the Library.

**Gerry Lewis, Social Secretary:** Brian informed members that Gerry was slightly under the weather, having broken a toe recently. Gerry told us about Dianne Conway's grandson who was very poorly, and he wanted to thank all those who had donated more than £100. He encouraged members to view the information that was available in the foyer of the church regarding forthcoming events.

**John Mullett, Treasurer:** John reported that we had had another financially-successful year, and details could be found attached to the agenda. In brief, our income was up by £1,773.41 and Gift Aid also rose by £600.77. There was also a small amount of interest amounting to £188.58. As regards to expenditure, accommodation costs were up by £3,604.75, due to increased charges. John reminded us that we had to pay Head Office a capitation charge of £3.50 per member, amounting to £1,848. A new projector and bridge tables contributed towards the £932.77 charge for equipment. Printing, postage and stationery amounting to £1,202.56 consisted of paper, printing ink and stamps for mailing items to members without computers. Sundry expenses covered refreshments, the FU3A mobile phone top-up, computer security and other minor expenses. He reminded us that our accounts had been properly audited in line with all legal requirements and for presentation to the Trustees, HMRC, the Third Age Trust and the Charity Commission. If anyone wanted more details they could see John afterwards and he would talk them through his detailed spreadsheet.

**Adoption of Annual Accounts:** The accounts were proposed for adoption by George Yossava, seconded by Betty Ford and agreed by all present.

**Approval of New Constitution:** The Chairman explained that we had opted to change the tenure of committee members from 3 years to 6 years. It was felt that there was not enough continuity in a 3-year term and that the shorter period was initially to avoid a domineering chairman and a dodgy treasurer being at the helm for too long. The rest of the constitution conformed to the latest legislation and was approved by the Charity Commission and U3A Head Office. The new constitution was proposed by Jim Barber, seconded by Doreen Dunning and agreed by all present.

**Election of Committee:** The Chairman was happy to inform the members that the whole committee was standing for re-election and in addition, Yvonne Warner would become a new committee member. This would take our numbers up to 12, still well inside the new 17 maximum number. This was proposed by Rita Burke, seconded by Jim Cooke and agreed by all.

**Election of Honorary Accounts Examiner:** Unfortunately Ian Burr was on a walk this morning and so could not be present to be elected, but he had agreed to continue in this position.

The Chairman offered thanks to Jean and Judith for organising today's refreshments, along with all the helpers involved.

John Gooch took the floor to offer his, and all the members', gratitude and thanks for all that the Chairman and other members of the Committee were doing.

**Any Other Business:** As there was no other business, the meeting closed at 12.10pm

The next meeting of the Committee is on **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2016 at 10am** at Heatherlands Community Centre