

Minutes of the **Ferndown u3a Annual General Meeting** held on **Friday 12th**
March 2021 at 10.30am

by Zoom video correspondence

1. **Welcome & apologies for absence:** The Chairman welcomed all members to this unusual form of AGM – Zoom Conference Call – and thanked them for their co-operation. Every member had either been sent the AGM papers by email via Beacon or by post to the 29 members who did not have internet access. A quorum would be as many as were tuned in. Up to 100 could view the AGM via Beacon but a recording would be made available on the website for those not in the lucky 100. Many successful Friday morning presentations had taken place in this format and Bob would endeavour to make this one just as stimulating.

Some 30 apologies had been received and a list of these members would be attached to these minutes. One of these was from our Honorary President Gerry Lewis, who doesn't have email. He sent his very best wishes to everyone, and is looking forward to being back with us as soon as lockdown circumstances allow.

Traditionally our AGM is held in December. That wasn't possible this year, and we had delayed until now in the hope that lockdown regulations would allow us to hold a face-to-face meeting. Sadly this had not been possible. But we needed to hold it now in order to report to the Charity Commissioners by the end of March.

Our financial year runs from June 1st to May 31st. Even in a normal year we formally report on a financial year which ended over six months earlier, but this time it's over nine months.

2. **Approval of Minutes of last AGM held on Friday 13th December 2019:**

Approval of the Minutes was proposed by Malcolm Gill, seconded by Keith Banks and agreed unanimously.

3. **Adoption of Management Report for 2019–20:** This was proposed by Jean Stone, seconded by Jude Hodges and approved unanimously.

4. **Treasurer's Report & Adoption of Accounts for 2019–20:** This was proposed by Ken Hutton, seconded by Jo Brearley and approved unanimously. Ralph briefly re-iterated the comments in the Explanatory Notes on the

Accounts which had been sent to every member. Whatever income we received, we always had fixed costs of Third Age Trust, Licences, Beacon etc.

5. Election of Independent Examiner for 2020–21: Ian Burr had accepted the invitation to serve once more as our Examiner. This was proposed by David Oddy, seconded by John Gooch and approved unanimously.

6. Election of Committee for 2021: Bob Reeve expressed his thanks to all the members who had served during the last year. In addition, our co-opted members Jo Brearley and Thelma Poole had agreed to stand as full members. We also had 2 new Associate members in Angela Larcombe and Colin Perry. As the number of nominations did not exceed our maximum of 17, the Committee could be voted in 'en bloc'. This was proposed by Jude Hodges, seconded by Keith Banks and approved unanimously.

7. Presentation to retiring Committee Members: The Chairman thanked Jude Hodges and Derek Holden for their work on the committee. Derek had been a member for many years, and had served as Accommodation Officer and Social Secretary. He was reliable and always got things done with a smile. He was also a talented karaoke singer and members would be able to hear him in the Talent Show which the V & E group are planning for next year. A thankyou present would be on its way to Derek.

Members only had to look at Brochures over last few years to see how much Jude Hodges has contributed to Fu3a: Cookery, Art History, Philosophy, Mindfulness..... The list goes on. But much more than that. For several years she had overseen the Brochure production and worked tirelessly to get it accurate and complete. In addition, there have been the catering events like the very successful Spanish evening. She had also been responsible for making spaces 'Covid-safe' in the autumn. Jude is stepping down from the Committee because of family commitments, but has said she hopes to return at some future point. Hopefully, she is just taking a sabbatical and she would be very welcome to return. And of course Jude will get a thankyou present, too.

8. Chairman's Report on 2020–21 to date: "INTERIM REPORT on the current year – i.e. from June 2020. You'll have a chance to ask questions at the end.

During June and July 2020 members of the Committee worked hard to encourage existing Fu3a members to renew their membership for 2020/21. Our aim was to be ready to 'resume business' as soon as Government pandemic regulations and Third Age Trust advice allowed.

Almost 500 members responded to this call, and your Committee much appreciated their encouragement. Your support confirmed that you didn't want

our u3a to close down 'until it was safe to come out' – as many u3Aas have done: but to be ready to open again as soon as practicable.

Colleagues put a lot of work in during August and September to make all our venues 'Covid-safe' in the hope that we could start then. But it was not to be. We have all been extremely disappointed that lockdown restrictions have prevented most of our Groups from meeting as they would have wished during this period.

But we have also been impressed by how successfully many of our members have adjusted to meeting via Zoom. If you were one of those who surprised your family and friends (and possibly you yourself!) – well done!! We must thank the technical wizards in our Zoom team for making all that possible.

Many of our members are also enthusiastically supporting our *Something Every Day* programme: and we are enormously heartened by the messages of appreciation and encouragement which we continue to receive. These messages reflect a sense of mutual support which has been especially important during the long, dark days of winter – when everyone welcomed the chance to listen, talk, and laugh together. I want to thank all those who have been presenters within the *Something Every Day* programme, and have enthusiastically supported it.

In a moment I'll come on to the plans already underway for 2021/22: but before I do that I want to say a word about finances.

We have achieved a lot this year: but there has been much that we were not able to do. We have not spent as much as we would normally do, though obviously we still have our fixed costs [and Ralph has reminded us what these are]. [Third Age Trust membership, Beacon membership, brochure production, licences, etc].

With all that in mind, our Finance & Membership sub-group has done a lot of detailed work over the winter, with this result:we anticipate that we will be able to offer current members a voucher for at least £30 – hopefully £32 – to set against the normal fee for next year which we are holding at £42.

That means that in 2021/22 you can all have '*Ferndown u3a for a tenner!*' The voucher amount can't be finally fixed until all our expenditure for the current year is known – but we want to recognise as fully as we can the real measure of support you gave us last summer.

We are committing a significant proportion of our reserves in doing this – though of course in the process we will be reducing those reserves towards the level expected by the Charity Commissioners for our sort of organisation. Our goal remains to run balanced budgets – with levels of pre-Covid membership fees and enrolments – by 2023.

Let me spell out why we are offering a voucher and not making a refund – before the two or three sad souls in the membership complain again that they should have had their money back already! Firstly, it would have been quite wrong to contemplate any sort of reimbursement until our expenses this year were known.

Making a refund – as opposed to offering a voucher – would have involved significant financial expense (as well as a huge administrative task) in posting 500 cheques out to members – the vast majority of whom would then send the money back to us as part of next year’s membership fee.

The ethos of Ferndown u3Aa has always been that our whole programme is open to everyone. We don’t cherry pick, and only pay for what we want. We all pay the same, irrespective of how much we get from the programme – and how much we contribute to it.

Fundamentally, we need to be certain that we have the financial viability to support – within our new brochure programme – this shared ethos: and that argues for a voucher, and not a refund.

Last year it was disappointing that there were members who chose not to continue to support our u3a. They said they would ‘wait and see how the pandemic progressed’ and then expect Groups to reconvene at the drop of a hat if circumstances allowed.

A huge amount of work goes on throughout the year to ensure that our programme of activities is devised, financed, accommodated, and delivered for the benefit of all our members. It is not something that can be turned on like a tap.

So once again this summer we will be saying to members: ‘help us to plan ahead by re-enrolling once more: we can’t plan properly if we don’t know which Groups you’d like to join’.

Especially this year we are looking to everyone to find new members to join us. Two copies of our new brochure will be posted to your home address towards

the end of May – the extra copy is for the friend or neighbour you encourage to join Ferndown u3a.

But that's for June and July, and for next year. What's happening in the meantime?.....

Virtual Coffee Morning March 26. Two weeks time, '*Bunnies & Chicks – to cook, bake or make*'. Shoot first? Bring your ideas, or show us the results. Anne Hutton leads.

After March 29th – rule-of-6 groups. Our outdoor groups can meet in that format in May (the Greenfingers Group already has plans for April): and the same arrangement will apply for our Sponsored Coastal Walk on Saturday May 1st – details to follow. Open Day Friday May 28 – if we can't meet indoors, it will take place in the open air – details to follow.

June 1st: Applications open. July 9th Applications close."

[Summer programme: Richard outlined the provisional plan – June: Mottisfont, July: Oxford's Bakery; Sept: Wareham and that's only the start of next year's programme. Bob thanked members of the Visits & Events sub-group.]

Opening Friday September 17th will be back in the Barrington.

[Clare commented on planned accommodation. All accommodation requests had been submitted to the various venues. The Barrington renovations are nearly finished and it is expected to open on 1st April. Bob thanked the members of the Accommodation, Equipment & Risk sub-group.]

That seems a good place to stop. We are working hard to put a full programme in place starting in September – with all your old favourites as well as some new ones."

At this stage of the AGM, Bob asked if there were any questions or comments.

David Keen said that he and Sandy would be happy to hand-deliver some of the Brochures when they became available. This would be mentioned at the next Committee meeting.

Jennifer Lodge wanted to thank everyone involved in the Zoom productions. It had really kept her going in lockdown and she wondered if the same format could be used for groups after lockdown. Bob assured her that we basically wanted to get back to face-to-face meetings but that the facility to use Zoom was there if the Leader so desired.

Stuart Newby wondered what would be the ideal figure for the reserves. Bob said that it was difficult to be precise but the suggestion was that it should be about 3 months' normal operating costs, and in exceptional circumstances, 6 months. The ball-park figure was round about £15,000, and this was consistent with our forward-planning budget. Richard mentioned that we have to rely on history and intuition and look carefully at the figures, in addition to monitoring the cash-flow system.

Beryl Reid asked if the one-off or monthly groups represented 1 of the 8 groups on the Application Form. Bob answered that if it were a one-off then it would not count as 1 of the 8. Jude mentioned that it would be clear on the Application Form that selections were in priority order, with 1 being the highest.

At this stage, Richard thanked Bob for his inspirational leadership of Ferndown u3a and this was unanimously supported.

9. Fu3a Charity of the Year 2021 – 'The Fletcher Foundation': Keith Banks informed the members that 'The Fletcher Foundation' was a local charity supporting breast and prostate cancer. He was setting up a dedicated 'JustGiving' page, the details of which would follow later. In addition, there would be collecting boxes. He also had in mind a Grand Xmas Draw for a large hamper.

10. **AOB:** There was no other business, and so the Annual General Meeting for Ferndown u3a closed at 11.30am.