

MAGHULL AND LYIATE U3A: GROUP LEADERS' MEETINGS, 11.30 am FEBRUARY 2016

February 2nd, Present: Tony Snape (Meeting Chair), David Allen (Chair of M&L U3A), Brenda McKenzie, Mary Prendergast, Anne Carr, David Kearney, Phil Davidson, Brian Leach, John Jackson, Denis Stevens, David Ward, Marie Bramwell, Blair Allwood, Ron Higham, John Lea, Maureen Birchall, George Birchall, David Scott, June Avery, Marj Atlay, Ann Raw, Barbara Short. (Frank Mercer, Clive Walker: Treasury; Clare Baxter: Minuting Secretary)

Apologies: Rhoda Myers, Maureen Collier, Geoff Kean

Tony Snape welcomed everyone to the meeting. He explained that Clare Baxter would be taking minutes and asked people to introduce themselves before speaking.

February 9th, Present: Brenda McKenzie (Meeting Chair), David Allen (Chair of M&L U3A), Joan Martin, Peter Martin, Margaret Kendall, Eric Jones, Jane Jones, Colin Bennett, Marj Grundy, Hilary Loughlin, Phil Hughes, John Ramsden, Bill Ashton, Ian Gent, Carolyn Comaish, George Dobie, Sheila Merry, John McKenzie, Bill Howarth, Pat Kelly, Clare Baxter (Minuting Secretary)

Minutes: minutes from meetings held last October had been e-mailed to leaders in November and are available on the website under the Group Leader page. It was not felt necessary to provide copies at the meeting.

A.O.B.: Feb 2 Patient Practice Groups (Phil Davidson) and Photocopying.

Feb 9 Parking, Photocopying, Feedback from new members

Matters arising:

Accrued funds (Frank Mercer): It had not been agreed at the last meeting to channel accrued group funds into central funds. This is most illogical. The topic was covered in Frank's paper 'Reserves and Individual Funds' circulated to Group Leaders ahead of the October meeting. Anyone needing a copy of this paper was asked to see Frank at a Tuesday Coffee Morning. The matter should be addressed at the end of the financial year. Group Leaders were asked to look at their balances, see what unpaid liabilities there were and think what might be needed as a small float. Some groups (e.g. Day Trips, Gardening, Theatre, Architecture) need to have a clear record of monies collected in advance of events that will not take place until after March 31st.

Accounts: the Accounts will be presented in a slightly different way this year, instead of just a cash statement. They will be adjusted for outstanding liabilities (money owed but not yet spent – e.g. room hire, money collected in advance for trips).

David Ward explained that he liked to run his groups economically, but is not always sure how much money he will need in future. Frank suggested groups would be expected to carry some funds, just a small sum as an expenses float. Tony commented that this is a pragmatic approach.

The last date for giving monies to the Treasurer will be 22nd March as there is no meeting on 29th March.

Peter Martin asked about procedures for purchasing items. Frank told members they could either see the Treasurer in advance and ask for funds or use a personal credit card and reclaim the cost of purchase.

There was some discussion as to why some groups are able to purchase equipment while others are refused permission. This could sometimes be because a group has already raised the funds. Hilary Loughlin said Line Dancing had surplus funds but was not allowed to buy a computer.

Bill Howarth pointed out that equipment belongs to the U3A, not the group. It was agreed to revisit this issue of a Line Dancing computer at a committee meeting.

There was a query as to whether some members were taking non-member partners on trips. A current card must be shown when bookings are taken.

Health and Safety: All Group Leaders should now have stuck the new version in their handbook. Further copies were available at the meeting and the Leaders' Handbook is available on the website under the Group Leaders' page. Group Leaders were reminded that Health and Safety is largely a matter of common sense.

PAT Testing: this was completed with no serious issues that could not be resolved on the day. Group Leaders were reminded that if they bring in electrical equipment it must be put forward for testing.

Newsletter: Much positive feedback has been received on this, especially as it is so much easier to read. It is a high quality document creating a good impact. People need to be reminded to submit copy in good time. (Deadline for next newsletter is 8th March.) As there are now more groups, there is a problem with space, so leaders were asked to be concise.

Charity Giving: will be discussed at next Committee Meeting. Macmillan has been supported for the last few years, but this year it will clash with the 10th Anniversary. We may want to think who to support in future.

News from Committee Meeting:

Collection of subs: Mary Prendergast explained the new arrangements for collecting subs at group meetings. Group leaders have been asked to provide lists of their members. Some have been received and Mary asked for the rest as soon as possible, but certainly by 16th February. Mary and Brenda will visit groups, giving advance notice of visits. The idea is to save work for the Group Leaders. Group leaders were asked to remind groups of the visits; to ask them to bring a cheque for £12 or the exact cash in an unsealed envelope; and to remind members of the groups that they are not insured if they have not renewed. Rhoda has made some reminder notices. Other renewals will start on March 22nd in the Sanctuary. Group Leaders were also asked to check that all members have up to date cards.

Brian asked if there was a 'period of grace' and a cut-off date of the end of May was agreed. However, it is very important for anyone going on a trip to have renewed, so organisers must check cards. Marj urged leaders to remind members that insurance is tied in with membership.

Brenda has information on the dates of the visits and asked leaders to see her at the end of the meeting. David Allen explained that many people do not attend the coffee mornings so this arrangement will make it easier for them to renew. The forms are pre-populated to make everything quicker and simpler. Only £6.00 is charged for new members joining after Christmas.

Health and Safety: there will be two sessions this year when the fire alarm bell will be set off (February and August) and the Fire Wardens (Terry Horribin, Peter Martin and Phil Davidson) wearing high-vis jackets will indicate means of escape. It was stressed that this does not involve an evacuation of the premises. Marj suggested that people are pre-warned the week before as well as on the morning.

10th Anniversary: Ideas are welcomed as to how the anniversary is to be celebrated, by groups and the U3A as a whole. Leaders were asked to let David Allen know of ideas. September 27th has been

suggested as a provisional celebration date for an extended coffee morning and an anniversary edition of the newsletter, but this has yet to be agreed.

Brian Leach suggested that Group Leaders speak to their groups to see if anyone is willing to help, not just give ideas. Some individual groups have ideas (e.g the three cycling groups plan to do something together.)

George Dobie asked how long the celebrations might be likely to last. Although 27th September is the main day, groups are planning celebrations already to spread the celebration. Badminton is organising a handicap competition, for which Bill Howarth will present a President's Cup, in perpetuity. Mary asked all leaders to update their plans on the website.

Tuesday speakers: It is hoped to start a series of speaker meetings on Tuesday mornings, from early March onwards, in the Sanctuary. It is hoped these might encourage people who do not usually come to the coffee mornings. The talks will run from 11.00-12.00/12.15. In order to allow leaders to attend, tables may be put away at 10.45 on speaker days. There was some concern over curtailing the coffee morning, so it was agreed some tables could be left up if leaders wish. David Kearney pointed out that the committee, with the authority of members, had decided to trial the speaker sessions and it was agreed this should happen.

The first speaker is Dr Macaulay from Home Instead, speaking about Dementia. Brian Leach thought this was a sensitive subject and that Tuesday mornings should be happy occasions, not distressing ones. However, others thought it useful to have expert opinions on the topic. June Avery stressed that attendance was voluntary.

Margaret Kendall, who is organising the speakers, suggested a charge of £1.00, to cover speakers' expenses. There would be no speaker in August. Concern was expressed over the History group, which meets on Tuesday afternoons. It was also agreed more helpers are needed to help clear chairs.

Bill Howarth explained that the system of speakers had collapsed in the past because Group Leaders did not give their support; Group Leaders need to encourage people to listen to the speakers.

This is a trial which will be revisited if it does not work. Bill suggested it might be good to have a keynote speaker this September.

Notices on Tuesday mornings: in order to reduce the number of notices, communication reminders need to be improved. David Allen needs to receive prompts and summary information before Monday night (by phone or e-mail). Once notices are received in good time it should be possible to put a rolling programme of notices on the TV screen in the coffee room, leaving verbal notices to be used as an exception, rather than every week. This should really improve communication. Thanks were expressed to Phil Davidson for sorting this out.

Newsletter: it was suggested there might be a single page bulletin sheet for alternate months when there is no Newsletter. A new team would be needed who would liaise closely with the existing Newsletter team.

David Kearney felt very strongly that this is impractical and unnecessary as we already have good means of communication: the notice boards, the website, the Newsletter and soon the TV screen. The matter was shelved.

Sale of Work: money raised here was included with the collection from the Carol Service and approximately £500 was sent to Woodlands, from whom a letter of thanks has been received. Tony thanked everyone.

Christmas events: as many groups organise their own meals it had been agreed to leave out the Christmas meal but continue with the Christmas Social, perhaps with a different venue and different entertainers. Thanks were expressed to Sylvia Adams, who did a good job in 2015. The Southport meal has shown a steady decline in numbers over recent years. Tickets for the Christmas Social sold well, but 25-30 people did not turn up, so the event lost some of its atmosphere.

David Ward said he would be sorry to lose the Christmas meal as it gave members an opportunity to meet members they might not normally meet.

Carol Concert: Wreaths that were made to decorate the church for the Carol Service were distributed by Lill in the days following the event. Margaret Kendall will take over the organisation of the Carol Concert for 2016. It was agreed 1st December was too early to close down for Christmas. The 6th and 13th December 2016 have been reserved, with 13th the favoured date. The meeting wished the 13th December to be fixed.

GP Surgery Coffee Morning: this was held on 12th December, with four U3A members attending. The weather was very poor, so numbers attending were disappointing.

Phil has been approached by another GP group and was wondering how many other people are involved. He felt that the GP Surgeries are not really talking to each other and that they need to get together over this.

Sending e-mails: leaders were asked to 'blank copy' people when sending e-mails, in order not to give away the e-mail address, by putting 'bcc' in. Mary suggested everybody check old e-mails, to make sure they are not giving addresses away. Phil said there was some evidence of e-mails not being sent and suggested members request an acknowledgement of receipt of the e-mail.

Places on committee: there are currently vacancies on the committee and with the new Constitution there are time limitations on office tenure, so there will be more vacancies. Leaders were asked to see if anyone might be interested.

News from Group Support

New Groups: new team leaders were invited to meet the Group Support team, to help them feel welcomed and supported. New teams include: German, Beginners' French, Beginners' Cycling and Sunday Strollers. Leaders are Peter Duffy, Marie Bramwell, Ross Adams (Active Sefton), John McKenzie. Margaret Kendall had taken over as leader of the Foodie Group and June Avery has taken over Badminton 2. Bill Ashton has agreed to be leader of the Beginners' Cycling Group.

Results from the questionnaire sent out in November: this information has proved very useful and it is intended to update the information at Group Leaders' Meetings three times a year. Group leaders were asked to check their information is still correct.

It appears that once a beginners' group is started it fills up very quickly. For example, a Beginners' Cycling Group was formed and it filled up within a week. A real success story is the start of the German and Beginners' French Groups which were started by members of the French group: the Beginners' French Group is full and the German very nearly so. Leaders should look for opportunities to support any member from their group who would be willing to start a beginners' group. That is the role of Group Support.

Physical activities (as well as day trips) are the ones that are full. Sue Daniels has offered to start a Real Ale Appreciation Group, possibly liaising with David Scott in looking at the architecture of Liverpool pubs.

In order to open the group to more numbers, the Foodie Group will now meet in the Red House.

Hilary asked about the possibility of a slower group for Nordic Walking, but it might be possible instead to have a shorter walk. Brenda was very happy to go at Hilary's speed.

There is little space in the newsletter, but Brenda has put details of new groups on the website.

A.O.B.

Patient Practice Groups already dealt with

Photocopying: the volunteers are sometimes inundated. We may need to think what we are doing, consider our costs, check we are not exceeding our permissions, and look possibly at a consortium of groups using a quality printer.

Feedback from new members: only twenty came; most are already assimilated into groups. We need to ensure that all new members are made to feel welcome and to remember that we were all new once.

Parking: Pat Kelly wondered if it might be possible to have parking bays marked outside the church, but there is plenty of space over the road in Tommy Gent's Way and the cost of painting the bays would have to be considered. Another suggestion was to ask the school head to request that parents vacate the car park by 9.15 on Tuesdays.

Computer help desk has kit available for lending out. Group leaders were reminded that computers should be registered for the group, not the person.

A question was raised about the **Queen's 90th birthday** this year and whether or not U3A will celebrate the event, perhaps by a special tea.

The meetings closed at 12.37 and 12.30.