

Welwyn Hatfield U3A

Minutes of 35th AGM

Held at Breaks Manor on Wednesday 9th March 2022

1. **Apologies** - S. Brown J.Brown, A. Coulthard, J.Davis, S Hall D.Hall M.Perren, R.Curiel, L.Curiel, R.Scales, S.Horsford and J.Green
2. **Minutes of 34th AGM** – amended item 4 to the constitution now readsProposed by Marie Scales seconded by Pam Williams – was passed unanimously following a vote on Zoom. Then the minutes were accepted by the members present and signed and dated by Pam Williams
3. **Matters Arising** – None
4. **Chair's Report – PW**

This last year could be regarded as one of transition or maybe evolution for our U3A. After our successful Zoom AGM last year, we continued to hold fortnightly speaker talks via Zoom for those members who were able to tackle them with alternate coffee mornings for members to keep in touch. These worked very well for us but there was still a sense of eagerness to get back together again. I particularly enjoyed the talk on Clement Attlee but their variety is what makes them so interesting. Many study groups used inventive ways of being able to carry on – distanced strollers, book groups in outdoor settings, video visits to gardens, live streaming of walks in London and Oxford, zoom quizzes. And I won't forget Tony's zoom disco, where I laughed so much I burst a button on my trousers! What a joy it was and what efforts people have made to carry on regardless with ingenuity and good cheer.

But soon the possibility of actually being with other people presented itself. I was delighted when the Isle of Wight trip went ahead and the prospect of leaving Hatfield and going further afield at last took place. This was a most welcome break and it was good to be with familiar faces again. Then at the end of the summer term we were able to hold our summer garden party. It was not quite the same – we had to bring our own refreshments owing to continuing covid concerns – but the sun shone so we were able to be outside and we were entertained by our own ukulele group and Tony conducted a quiz. This, we hoped, was a foretaste of what was to come.

And then at the beginning of September we held our first live Wednesday meeting with Tony Tutton giving a talk on his life in music. This was hugely successful, partly because Tony was one of our own, but the talk was very entertaining and brought back many memories. On a sunny morning we welcomed 110 members to this talk. Our venue, The Breaks, looked splendid with a fresh refurbishment and so did we, smiling and being together again. Weekly meetings progressed from there with only the occasional cancellation due to covid. My personal favourites were the ones on Irving Berlin and the Duke of Windsor and his relationship with the Nazis but there was plenty to inform and entertain. One legacy of the zoom meetings has been that a group has formed on Thursday mornings for live chat for those people unable to get to Wednesday meetings. Many thanks to Ann Davies for organising this. It's open to anyone, whether you are able to come along on a Wednesday

morning or not. In September another travel group visit took place to Northern Ireland, which again was very successful with its contrast between the reminders of “the troubles” and the stunning scenery.

On 10th November we held our regular Meet the Groups session, which is always a pleasure as it enables us all to see the outcomes of some of the artistic and other endeavours of our valuable groups. This session enabled us to see the progress of the Ukulele Group and the development of the Wartime Memories group. This was followed by a meeting with group leaders where we had to announce the findings of the committee over the issue of funding for hall rentals for groups who require them. This was a shadow which had been hanging over us for several months. During this time the committee, but most especially our Treasurer, Sue, and our Groups Co-ordinator, Joan, had been much exercised by the challenge of resolving this issue. Much research and consultation was undertaken into the practices of other U3A's and the national organisation. However, because we all care deeply about our U3A and wish to see it continue as far as possible in the same format as has been so successful, we had to make some unpalatable choices. The only course open to us, in view of rental charges, was for study and/or interest groups to be self-funding where room hire is necessary, which is in line with almost all other U3A's. Obviously, this was not welcomed wholeheartedly but it is to be hoped that, when the figures are examined, members will accept that we had no alternative. Sue will deal with the actual figures involved in this matter in her Treasurer's Report. At a subsequent Group Leaders Meeting and lunch at the end of January Sue explained the implications for groups and leaders and methods of collecting contributions, which are quite complex but not beyond the capabilities of our members, especially with the support of Group Leaders and the Spring Term “grace” period.

Meanwhile, fun was still taking place! At the end of November we were able to hold one of our famous dances, led by Tony Tutton and his new band with fish and chips to boot! I was heartily sorry to miss this event but family commitments intervened but I am reliably informed that a good time was had by all. Then, at the end of December, we were able to hold a somewhat modified Christmas party and quiz. It was a case of Bring your own drinks and nibbles. But it worked and thus on to the main event - well for Christmas at least. Despite our doubts, we were able to hold our Christmas Lunch at Mill Green Golf Club. This proved to be very pleasant location and almost 100 people attended to partake of the usual Christmas fare, together with some other options. So we were able to feel that life was, at last, beginning to return to normal.

With the new year came another New Members Coffee Morning, organised by Dianne Coxon. It's good to report that membership remains healthy and we are still attracting new members. Membership is very ably managed by Peter Fox and assisted by Dianne who is responsible for New Members. Steve Hall's sterling efforts on publicity have certainly helped to boost our profile and many thanks to Steve for that. At that meeting I spoke of the three pillars of our U3A, when once I referred to two. Now I consider that, after the Wednesday Meetings, which are our forum for meeting and dissemination of information, the study or interest groups which promote members' interests, the third pillar is Communication, which has become so much more vital over the last two years. This is

comprised of the Website, our Newsletter, the email Mailchimps and the national Third Age Matters magazine and, during lockdown, members of the committee attempted to communicate by telephone those members who did not use the internet. All of these contributed to our efforts to stay in touch which was so vital during this pandemic.

So, now it's time to say goodbye, as chairperson at least. My two-year tenure has been a strange one, having been elected two years ago, only to be faced with an almost immediate lockdown. I felt like a rug had been whipped from under me and wasn't quite sure what I could do nor how to fulfil my role. Initially I came up with the idea of writing a blog for the website as something that might be useful in terms of communication. So I began writing about what I was doing under the circumstances and including a few recollections and remembrances. But there wasn't a lot happening so I ventured further into some autobiographical events. These grew and I was writing about one a fortnight. I continued with these until, thanks to the enterprising Ann Davies and Jill Longman, we began our Zoom meetings, which became so successful. I have been so fortunate in this role in having the support and expertise of the rest of the committee. What a team! They have all worked so hard on your behalf and I would like to give thanks to them all for all they have accomplished during the last two years in a spirit of co-operation and companionship. You know who they are! Marie Scales - Secretary; Sue Talbot - Treasurer; Joan Scales - Groups Co-ordinator; Peter Fox - Membership Secretary; Dianne Coxon - New Members Secretary; Jill Longman - Speakers Programme and Zoom admin; Ann Davies - Zoom admin; Steve Hall - Public Relations; Colin Slade – Health & Safety; Roger Swaine - Web Master; Hazel Bell – Editor, Newsletter; and other Committee Members - Ann Madell; Roy Madell; and Dave Charlwood. I would also like to thank Penny Barratt – Deputy Chair, who had to relinquish her role owing to conflicting work pressures.

And thank you to you all for your support and friendship.

5. Treasurer's Report –ST

Pleased to present the finance report for 2021.

Our Accounts have been audited for 2021 and many thanks to Gail Maisey for her diligent work. The accounts report the facts and figures on income and expenditure and show we are in a healthy state financially and a good base for going on through the year. A small deficit is noted due to the unexpected rentals paid for the study groups during the last term, being caused by the closure of the previous free venues.

During the greater part of 2021, we aimed to be as active as possible, paying for two Zoom licences to enable many on line meetings, to have fortnightly speaker meetings and continuing to update our website and communication with our members and continue to produce the termly newsletters. Our hopes were to resume activities continuing with Zoom meetings and be as active as possible during 2021. We were able to re-open for the autumn term with the weekly Wednesday meetings and many of the study groups were able to meet in new venues. At the end of last year's report, we hoped we would will be able to resume activities in towards the end/latter part of the year, maybe even see a Christmas Quiz, party and lunch – and we managed all three!!

As mentioned, the venues that had previously been free of charge and closed due to Covid lockdown but unfortunately the rooms were no longer available to us on re-starting the groups. This meant a lot of work looking for new venues suitable for the needs of 23 groups. Instead of rentals totalling a few thousand pounds per year we faced over £6500 just for the one term. Taking this to an annual cost and budgeting for 2022 we would have needed to find over £20,000. Following the Third Age Trust (TAT) guiding principles we were required to change groups to become self-funding and to keep the annual subscription as low as possible. After many meetings with the TAT and with the group leaders we put a new course of payments into action, to be effective for the summer term 2022.

There has been a large range of the amounts paid as annual subscriptions again. Also, where members have moved away or left for one reason or another and they have not cancelled their Standing Order (SO) with the bank. Standing Orders are solely the responsibility of each member and the banks will continue to pay out until the member changes or cancels their SO with their bank. Also, old SO are paying out incorrect amounts and members end up paying too little or too much. This still applies to 2022 where incorrect subscriptions are still received, as are those from past members. We need to stress that it is very important to check your standing order every year and to cancel when you leave the U3A.

We look forward to an active 2022, continuing with the u3a motto of “Learn, laugh and live”.

Vote to accept the Accounts and Report – Proposed by J.Mackie and Seconded by H.Bell

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 The report and accounts duly accepted

6.Appointment of Auditor

Gail Maisey – Proposed by S.Talbot Seconded by A.Davis

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 The report and accounts duly accepted

7.Membership Secretary’s Report – PF

Despite the Pandemic, with the continuation of meetings by Zoom and Physical meetings we have had a positive year with many New Members joining.

Since the last AGM our membership

35 Members left plus 33 members whose membership lapsed in 2021 as they did not renew / pay their membership fee last year.

84 New Members joined including 32 this year alone

Our current membership is now 828

As you should be aware from the website, eMails and 40 letters sent out to those members who do not have email addresses, we maintained the base membership fee of £20.

I am pleased to say that 712 of you changed your standing orders (or left them at £30 from a previous year) and are therefore paid up. Including Honorary members this equals 741

75 members have yet to pay their fees, as of today.

Please recognise that unlike Direct Debits we do not have access to your Standing orders and therefore cannot change these on your behalf. It still amazes me that people do not check every so often their bank statements or list of Standing orders. We still receive payments from people who passed or moved away.

We have 29 Honorary members. Honorary members are not required to pay an annual subscription from the end of the year in which they reach 90. So please ensure I am informed that you have reached this age and then cancel your standing order.

Similarly, if you change you address, telephone number or eMail address please ensure I am informed, as we then not only update the database but also the mailing system we use and the U3A trust use for The Third Age Matters Magazine.

Just as a reminder, in our compliance to GDPR, we do not keep your bank account details. The standing orders you sign are passed to the banks once we have added your membership number to them.

8. New Member's Secretary's Report DC

Throughout the pandemic we have had a stream of New Members Enquiries.

Whilst WelHat U3A website is a fund of information there are a variety of ways to apply to become a new member. Initial enquiries can be made by telephone, email or by completing the online application form and attending a weekly meeting to collect a Starter Pack.

As secretary I then post a New Members Starter Pack which contains the following:

Enrolment and Bank Standing Order form to be completed and returned to the Members Secretary in an addressed brown envelope, Gift Aid form and Map of the two venues, Skills sheet, a copy of the latest program and Newsletter if available.

In October 2021, during the pandemic, we successfully held a New Members meeting via Zoom, but it was extra special when, in January, we were able to invite all New Members from the previous year to a face to face meeting at Welwyn Cricket Club.

The relaxed Monday morning session, in an excellent venue, proved very popular. We had forty members attending. Members commented afterwards they appreciated being able to put a face to a name and find out how the WelHat U3A is managed and by whom.

The Committee have discussed future New Members meetings and there will now be one in the Spring and a second one in the Autumn. They are to be renamed as Welcome meetings so anyone may wish to attend to find out more about the running of the U3A even if they are not a new member.

9. Group Co-ordinator's Report - JS

Thanks to all Group Leaders for keeping their groups going during these difficult times. Some groups have closed over the past two years, and others have had a change of leadership (larger groups now having a team of helpers) but new groups have also started up. Thanks to Mary for running two groups for people to share their memories of the 2nd world war and its effects on them and their families. Ann and Jill run the Thursday Zoomers group, which has developed from Wednesday coffee mornings during lockdown, primarily for those who still can't get out to group meetings. We also have two more "foody" groups – Tony's Curry Club and my Tea and Cake tearoom visits group, both of which had their inaugural visits last month.

Most groups are now running face-to-face meetings, some in new hired venues and others in members' homes. It was quite a task finding alternative venues after the Council withdrew the use of the halls attached to their residential complexes, many thanks to everyone who helped in this. Some groups are continuing on Zoom – which most of us had never heard of a couple of years ago - and it is a great format for sharing Youtube videos, powerpoint presentations etc.

It was great to see so many groups represented at the first Meet the Groups session in over two years, and again at the Art and Photography exhibition last month, with a very good turn-out of members finding out more information from Group Leaders and their members. In September we are hoping to invite non-members to join us as part of the national u3a day.

10. Programme Secretary's Report – JL

This time last year, we could only meet virtually. We had settled into a routine of Wednesday mornings alternating between coffee mornings and speakers, all accessed via Zoom. While realizing that Zoom meetings were not to everyone's taste, we all worked hard to make them as accessible as possible and there were some definite advantages: we were able to hear from speakers who live too far away for it to be sensible for them to travel to us in person; also those members who joined in virtual coffee mornings included some who had never managed to attend meetings in halls and they all got to know each other as they probably would not have done under "normal" circumstances.

Nevertheless, when the decision was taken to return to meeting in halls in the Autumn Term, it was with much excitement that we began to arrange weekly speakers again. I am grateful to the other members of the Speakers Team, namely Corrie Godfrey and Jill McKinnon, for their tireless efforts in finding and booking such fascinating speakers. Numbers coming to the halls have been lower than in the pre-covid era, but they are still

good. I must mention that the record attendance for a talk is still held by our very own Tony Tutton at our first meeting in September!

While enjoying being able to resume physical meetings, we are aware that there are members who are still unable to attend or do not feel comfortable to return. We have been recording talks, when possible, and will continue to do so. If you or another member you know of would like to have access to these recordings, please let me know. We are doing this without investing in expensive new equipment or requiring a lot of technical knowledge, and it is largely down to the continued enthusiasm and support of Ann Davies that this is possible. Ann also leads the new "Thursday Zoomers" group which enables those who most enjoyed the virtual coffee mornings to continue their social interaction.

Our Wednesday programme is planned well in advance so I can assure you that you can look forward to a very varied selection of talks in the coming months, that I trust will provide something for everyone.

11. Election and Approval of Officers

Chair – Steve Hall Proposed by M.Scales Seconded by J.Davis

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 S.Hall duly elected

Deputy Chair – Ann Davies Proposed by M.Scales, Seconded by J.Davis

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 A.Davies duly elected

Approval of Treasure – Sue Talbot and Secretary Marie Scales to continue their term of office

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 S.Talbot and M. Scales to continue their term of office

12. Election and Approval of Committee Members

Joan Scales – Proposed by S.Hall Seconded by D.Hall

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 – J.Scales duly elected

Colin Slade – Proposed by R.Swains Seconded by J.Longman

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 Colin Slade duly elected

Tony Tutton – Proposed by P.Williams Seconded by A.Madell

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 Tony Tutton duly elected

Dee Thomas – Proposed by A.Davies Seconded by M.scales

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 Dee Thomas duly elected

P.Williams – Proposed by D.Coxen Seconded by A.Madell

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 Pam Williams duly elected

Doreen Hall – Proposed by P.Fox Seconded by M.Scales

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 Doreen Hall duly elected

Steve Dringer – Proposed by R.Madell Seconded by A.Madell

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 Steve Dringer duly elected

Approval of Peter Fox, Dave Charlwood, Jill Longman, Roy Madell Dianne Coxon and Ann Madell to continue their terms of office

Votes for 83, against 0 abstained 0 all to continue their term's of office

13. Any Other Business

i) Item raised by Tony Bristow re subscriptions and hiring of venues, he proposed that we reinstate to subscription to £30 and use the extra income to subsidise the hire charge of the venues and that this major change in our practice should have been taken to the members as it was when the subscription was raised from £15 to £30 and not been a committee decision.

M Scales responded that under item 2 of the constitution subscriptions fall under the "Administration"

A.Davies responded by saying that when the subscription was raised from £15 to £30 it would be doubling the subscription rate so the committee decided that it would take a vote at a meeting.

S.Talbot responded by explaining that she had consulted with local and national u3a re self funding of groups and that the vast majority of u3a's subscription are between £15 and £25 which is in keeping with tu3aTrust as to keeping the subscription as low as possible.

A few members had spoke in support of this objection general discussion then began with Tony Drew asking why Wednesday Meetings were not a group.S.Talbot responded by saying that Wednesday were the core of our u3a because any member can choose to attend as well as visitors. Also prior to the planned talk the business can take place, booking trips, speaking to committee members and socializing with members .

M.Cleveland stated we had been in a very fortunate position to have had the free use of council venues from when we started until last autumn correct and that we are now following the guidelines set by the Trust that groups should be self funding.

Following the discussion the Proposal was to consult the membership re subscription charge and subsidizing rental of the venues.

Proposed by Tony Drew Seconded by Tony Drew

Votes for 9 against 73 abstained 1 the motion was rejected.

ii) Jean Mackie offered her thanks to Pam Williams for all the work that she has during her term of office as the Chair of our u3a.

As there was no further business Meeting Closed at 11.40

6.