Petersfield
Charity No. 1060354

MINUTES OF A MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING held in-person and via Zoom on Tuesday 16 August 2022 @ 10am at 2 Home Way, Petersfield

Present in person: Steven Watts (Chairman)
Gordon Watts (Treasurer)
Robina Whitehorn (Secretary)

Via Zoom: Peter Lake (Lead on Communications)

In attendance in person: Louise Fox – prospective MC member
Marie Hook – prospective MC member
Marjorie Day – prospective MC member
Charles Price – prospective MC member and Chairman

1. **Apologies** – Jenny Thwaites, Groups Co-ordinator; Linda Hutton, Membership Secretary

2. No interests were declared.

3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting -** The Minutes of the previous meeting of 19 July 2022 were agreed as a true record.

4. **Matters Arising –** Peter Lake stated that a report on his discussion with the Membership Secretary about the renewal process would be covered under Any Other Business.

5. The Chairman stated that John Bevan had withdrawn as a prospective member of the Management Committee.

6. **Finance Report –** Gordon Watts, Treasurer presented the Finance Report to date. The largest recent expenditure had been £1,488 for postage to the Third Age Trust. Otherwise, support for Group activity continued, though at a reduced level during the Summer lull. The deficit presently stood at £3,485, less than budgeted.

   No significant income was expected before the end of the Financial Year.

There were outstanding payments due to the Community Centre and for the Copyright Licence. A final deficit for the year of approximately £3,700 was predicted leaving a Reserve total in the region of £31,000.

7. **Budget 2022-3 –** The Treasurer presented his proposed budget for the Financial Year 2022-3. He had assumed a membership of 650, though at this stage it was impossible to predict how the termination of cheque payments might affect subscriptions; nor was it clear how the introduction of Associate Membership on 1 September might be reflected. It had also been assumed that Gift Aid would remain at 25%.

   Expenditure predictions were therefore a TAT capitation fee at £4, £180 for each Open General Interest Meeting, similar TAT Beacon and postage fees, and a Christmas event of the same nature at in 2021. Group subsidies, presently committed until August 2023, were budgeted to remain the same at £780. Overall, a deficit of £6,800 was predicted, leaving a Reserve of £24,600. It being the Committee's Policy to retain a Reserve of twice annual income, this Reserve figure represented 2.2 times annual income. The Committee agreed with the Treasurer that the pandemic and post-Covid subsidy of Group activity should be reviewed in 2023. Members also noted the current inflationary economic situation and its potential impact on costs; they felt that there was presently sufficient buffer against financial uncertainty, but that the situation should be closely monitored in the coming months.

   The Budget was unanimously approved.

8. The Treasurer stated that the Bank Mandates for cheque and electronic payments would be updated following the AGM. **ACTION: GW**

9. **Membership Report –** The Membership Secretary had submitted her report via email.

   Total membership stood at 680, with two new members having joined since the last meeting, one resignation and one deceased. She had received six applications for Associate Membership which were being held over until 1 September. She recommended that a note should be sent to conveners reminding them that members of other u3as who attend their groups should now join Petersfield u3a as Associate Members.

   After a slight delay, renewal letters had just been posted. Approximately 370 emails had been issued advising members that cheques can no longer be accepted and the Membership Secretary had received approximately 20 responses. She and the Treasurer had agreed that if any renewals are made by cheque, they should be politely returned with a request for payment to be made by SO or bank transfer.

10. The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate for the Membership Secretary to remind conveners about the introduction of Associate Membership, in consultation with the Groups Coordinator. Noting that the original decision had been made in Summer 2021 (Minutes of MC Meeting 28 June 2021 and website Membership FAQs refer), it would be helpful to quote the original message when writing to conveners. It would be advisable to do this as soon as possible given that the new Membership year would

start on 1 September. RW would ask the Membership Secretary and Groups Coordinator to action. **ACTION: RW / LH / JT**

11. **New Member Update –** Marjorie Day stated that seven new members had joined in July; none to date in August. The Members' Coffee Morning on 27 July was most successful, despite many people being on holiday. John Donlan had the Petersfield u3a website set up on display, and he had a steady number of members with questions. His presence greatly enhanced the event, and it was hoped he may be persuaded to attend again. The next Member's Coffee Morning will be on Wednesday 28 September from 1000-1200 at the Community Centre; such gatherings were proving extremely successful for new and current members wanting to meet others over coffee and conversation. The Committee placed on record its appreciation to the Welcome Team.

    It was agreed that in view of the move to all electronic banking, Standing Order forms should be available at all future such gatherings.

12. **Groups Update –** The Groups Coordinator had sent a report by email;
    - It was proposed to have a Cheese and Wine tasting get together for the Conveners, ideally in November. The tentative plan was to ask the Wine Appreciation groups to help with the wine tasting, and to lay on cheese and soft drinks for an informal get together of group leaders in the Community Centre.
    - Two embryonic groups Singing for Fun and Play Reading, were due to start shortly, supported by Louise Fox
    - As groups begin to reconvene after the summer break, it was also proposed to send a reminder to advise the Coordinator of any vacancies in the groups and if there was a waiting list. This would precede the formal end of year audit. It was also to further request invitations to visit all groups eventually.

    A budget of £500 was agreed for the conveners' event. **ACTION: GW**

    It was confirmed that prospective new members were able to pay one visit to one group prior to joining formally.

13. **Speaker Selection and Administration – General Interest Open Meetings -** The Committee discussed at length concerns expressed by the Speaker Secretary, specifically relating to budget, publicity, attendance, IT and overall event organisation. The recent Open Meetings Forum had addressed many of these matters but had reached no immediate conclusions.

    It was agreed that the issues discussed at the Forum needed to be progressed during the Autumn as the pattern of member activity and attendance became clearer after the Summer lull. For the immediate future, it was decided that a small Speaker Group for General Interest Open Meetings should be set up, comprising those individuals with specific inputs to the overall organisation. The present Speaker Secretary should be asked if she wished to lead such a group herself or wished to be a participant with responsibility for speaker bookings. The Chairman would ask Jenny Thwaites to discuss this more fully with the Speaker Secretary. **ACTION: SW**

14. **Communication with Members –** The IT Administrator had commented that many members were not fully aware of the three main channels of communication, and their respective functions and extent – the Petersfield u3a website, Connect and News and Views. It was agreed that there was a plethora of information available to members but that no further purpose would be served at this stage by an additional individual email communication. The most recent edition of Connect had contained a detailed explanation of each publicity channel, and the Editor of News and Views would be requested to include a similar item in the next edition. **ACTION: SW**

15. **National AGM of the Third Age Trust 6 October -** The MC considered the Resolution proposed by the Third Age Trust to increase the individual annual subscription to the Trust (presently £4 per member) from 1 April 2023, and each year thereafter, by an amount based on the UK's State Pension increase. The Chairman reported that at a recent South East Regional meeting of Chairs, there had been universal opposition. This was echoed unanimously by the MC; the proposal was not presented within the context of a strategic analysis or plan and appeared to be a knee jerk reaction to the post-Covid shortfall in membership. It assumed that all members of the u3a were of State Pension age and appeared to be entirely open-ended. Noting that the Trust had Reserves of £1.7m there was no explanation of how its Reserves Policy would apply in these circumstances, nor of any cost saving measures being undertaken. There was concern that prudent u3as with healthy Reserves Policies and realistic Annual Budgets, such as Petersfield, were being called on to support those that were less financially sound, with the underlying warning of a reduction in TAT services if that support were not forthcoming.

    The MC reaffirmed its commitment to devote Petersfield u3a's resources to the support of loyal members and group activity during Covid Recovery. It was agreed to cast Petersfield's vote against the Resolution. **ACTION: RW**

16. **Petersfield u3a AGM 10 October –** The Secretary confirmed that arrangements were on track in accordance with the previously published timetable, commencing with the issue of the calling notice via Beacon on 12 September. Formal nominations had been received for the prospective new Committee members.
    Charles Price stated that he would be unable to attend the AGM but was content to submit his name for election to the Management Committee and as Chairman in absentia.
    The Chairman requested MC members to submit inputs to the Annual Report by the end of August. **ACTION: All**

17. **Draft Bylaws -** The Secretary also confirmed that she was drafting a set of administrative Byelaws to complement the proposed updated Constitution.

18. **Google "Crawlers" –** The MC discussed a member's concern that Google "crawlers" were able to download the names and potentially email addresses of u3a members. They noted it was a feature of the World Wide Web that these "crawlers" automatically visit publicly accessible web pages and follow links on those pages, much like an individual browsing content on the web. They go from page to page and store information about what they find on these pages and other publicly accessible content in Google's Search index. MC members were aware that their names were in the public domain – eg on the Petersfield u3a and Charity Commission websites – but no other personal data was divulged and role specific email addresses were given. Access to conveners was by dedicated link only. Names only of individual members appeared from time to time in official documentation, such as Minutes of Meetings, which were publicly available in accordance with the policy of transparency. Petersfield u3a was aware of its obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018, and its commitment to protect members' personal data according to the Data Protection Policy.

    The u3a Site Builder platform presently only gives the facility to protect individual *files* on the site. Connect is password protected as it sometimes includes personal emails; weekly circulation is via members only email. Password protection of all files would prevent transparency. A TAT-sponsored initiative to replace Site Builder is well underway using the industry-standard WordPress package and a member-only section is part of the design.

19. **Any Other Business –**
    - The Chairman confirmed that Les Jarman would stand down as President at the AGM and Andy Borthwick had been nominated as his successor. The Committee agreed to subsidise his Zoom subscription as Editor of News and Views.
    - Peter Lake referred to the proposal to seek further volunteers to support the administration of the u3a in the annual renewal letters. Having given the matter some consideration, he had prepared a short paper and requested that the matter be discussed at the next MC meeting.
    - Louise Fox confirmed that her email address was now cmtte.u3aptr@gmail.com

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 12.30pm.

Next meeting: at 10am. Venue: 2 Home Way, Petersfield.

RW 18/08/22

Signed……………………………………………………………………Chairman

Date..