

## Minutes of the Regional Representative Council Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Campus

**Present:** Chair Hilary Wells, Secretary Gill Childs, Regional Trustee Michaela Moody, Annie Curtis, Pat Reeve, Barry Hillyard, Pat Mangwana, Elaine Lovell, Mike Benthall, Karen Highfield-Taylor, Carol Lockwood

**Apologies for Absence:** Treasurer David Kyle, Cyril Young, Lynne Cox, Jane Pavier, Christine Baxter

- Our new Chair welcomed everyone to the Meeting – the first in our new year – saying that she looked forward to working in her new role in the RRC. Elaine Lovell, Lincolnshire Alternate, who was attending for the first time, was particularly welcomed.

2. **The Minutes of RRC Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013**, from which there were no matters arising, were **Proposed** for **Approval** by Pat, **Seconded** by Barry and Agreed by all to be a correct record. The Chair signed the Minutes.

3. **Chairman's Report:** Hilary said that she was not submitting a written Report because she had been in the role for only a short period. She went on to mention the 2014 Regional Conference which is proposed to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> July at Trent College, Long Eaton, Derbyshire. Musical elements are also proposed and the suggested title is 'Taking Part.'

Mike pointed out that although we are anxious not to lose the first three months after AGM in July, it should be borne in mind that decision-making in regard to the Conference was a matter for all RRC Members, not just its Officers. Pat said that the Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire & Rutland Conferences were organized by working parties and Liz emphasized that the progress made so far was presented by herself, our Regional Trustee and Chair as *suggestions* and that nothing was 'written in stone.' Michaela reminded us that it is the host county who is responsible for selecting the venue, within their area and Liz said that securing a place was such an important matter that we should already be considering a location for 2015, when Lincolnshire would be hosts. The Secretary said that there was a feeling of 'dis-involvement', adding that if she had had copies of a drafted poster and a planning checklist, she would have been able to forward these to all RRC Members, thus avoiding the (misguided, we learned) feeling that decisions had already been made. Members agreed and Mike Benthall **Proposed "that a sub-Committee be established, though membership of that sub-Committee would change from time to time. It would be empowered to plan not only the next annual conference but the following year's conference as well. The standing committee would meet between the AGM and the first and each subsequent Council meeting, as necessary, either in person or by telephone conference. The standing committee would take every opportunity to obtain the approval of Council when this could be obtained in a timely manner, but would have delegated powers to make detailed decisions concerning the organisation of the next annual conference. However, the standing committee, wherever a choice of arrangements or alternative arrangements was available, should offer these to Council so that they could approve the choices made in advance and not just be presented with a fait accompli. The standing committee would be convened by the chair of Council and would consist of the officers of the Region including the Regional Representative, a representative of each county**

**nominated by their County and the development teams of the Counties in which the next conference and the following year's conference was to be held". This was **Seconded** by Liz Wilson and **carried unanimously**.**

The discussion about the 2014 Conference continued with Michaela reminding us that the NEC was responsible for Regional Conferences, this year's having been funded to the tune of 85% of total cost. A policy should be set down clearly, to be followed in this and future years; the host county should choose the venue, a sub-Committee should consist of someone from every county and they need not be RRC Members. The Representative should choose the county delegate and Liz was keen to include the Development Team of the host county for the current year and the next. Gill will write to each County Network's Representative together with an invitation to meet at a central point with the Chair and others.

It was considered that telephone conferencing was a good idea and we will use this means in the future. These are paid for by the Third Age Trust.

**4. Secretary's Report:** Gill reported on the correspondence she had received and sent, dealing first with Peter Edge's e-mail that had expressed the belief that although he is unclear as to how regional financing is planned, and whilst agreeing that RRC should have a nominal amount to spend at their discretion without reference to TAT, he did not think that RRC Officers should have to spend time collecting donations from our 90+ U3As. He thought that TAT should provide the discretionary amount from TAT funds as it seems wrong that a body that is fundamental to TAT organization should have to ask for the help of voluntary network groups to raise this money. Gill had pointed out that collecting a donation from individual U3As kept Region's profile high. Peter said that whilst this was true, he perceived the profile was being raised in a negative way, if only because we were begging the question of how the money would be spent. Region's main activities could be paid from budgeted TAT funding and as he understood it, the donated money was needed for other expenses, such as sub-Committee Meetings. In response, Michaela said that TAT's income came principally from capitation, with some revenue from advertising. In funding U3As' activities, they were enabling U3As to better themselves, e.g. whenever five or more U3As are attending Workshops, TAT will pay. The method of allocation was changed last year from a system which, in hindsight, was lacking a clear audit trail and Michaela now has to 'draw down' funds for specific purposes rather than a lump sum being paid at that start of a year. The question as to whether Planning Meetings would have paid expenses, as in previous years.

Discussion followed, with Hilary saying that we are fine as we are, and some others agreed. In the event of his absence, Gill then read out our Treasurer, David Kyle's view of this matter which was generally viewed as outdated. Michaela will respond to David's e-mail messages when Gill has provided her with copy of his messages.

Hilary said that the question of alternative sources of income should be put onto our next Agenda and this was **agreed**. Involvement of Development Teams was considered favourably, whilst recognizing that we may receive refusals.

Gill then advised that we have a potential new Assistant Secretary for the Region – Margaret Potter from Leicester U3A. Some RRC Members are already acquainted with this lady. Gill **Proposed, Mike Benthall seconded**, and there was unanimous agreement that this position was hereby ratified.

Finally, the Secretary referred to correspondence between our past Chair and NIACE, copies of which will be disseminated to RRC Members for consideration.

**5. Treasurer's Report:** The Treasurer's Income & Expenditure Account Summary as at 10<sup>th</sup> September had already been distributed to RRC Members and it was agreed that our position at the bank was healthy enough. The Secretary had earlier distributed a copy of David's message to all U3As' Treasurers, inviting them to make a donation to Regional funds and she read aloud David's message to her dated 17<sup>th</sup> September, regarding the 'interminable machinations' that surrounded the subject of contributing to the funding of the East Midlands Region. He was relieved when a last-minute Resolution had been made and later carried unanimously at our AGM.

The Treasurer had prepared Treasurer's Notes for consideration at the Meeting which, under the first heading of Regional Financing, he very firmly supported Peter Edge's stand and although David managed to raise this issue with the TAT Chairman, Barbara Lewis, asking TAT to give the whole matter some serious consideration, he had, so far, heard nothing. The Treasurer's remarks about Income and Expenditure were noted and we learned that some outstanding travelling expenses had been paid and Pat observed that annual expenditure by 'body' would be good thing. These notes were pre-distributed to all RRC Members.

**6. Education & Development Officer's Report:** Liz's Report took the form of pre-distributed Development Plans, individually prepared for each county and covered immediate past (2010-2012), 2013 and future plans for 2014 and 2015. No queries were raised.

**7. Regional Trustee's Report:** Michaela's Report had been circulated to Council Representatives ahead of the day. She was delighted to Report that dozens of photographs had been taken of our display which included our Development Plans and Mike voiced approval, with which Council concurred of the rolling Business Plan. At the NEC Conference, Michaela had been consolidated from Acting Regional Trustee to Regional Trustee for a three-year term. She told us that a DVD of the Conference had been made and a suggestion was made to possibly Skype the Conference, in future. Pat suggested that Michaela's Report should be sent to all U3As and also posted to our website. Gill will attend to these two items.

**8. Network Reports** for the five (six) counties had been received and distributed before the Meeting and these were taken as read. In the context of new U3A start-ups, Mike asked whether it would be possible for this to be carried out by anyone who had declined to attend our training course although they may be members of a Development Team. The answer was given by firm negative. Karen put forward the possibility of a future on-line course but as this could only go so far, preparation items could be available on-line.

In Northamptonshire, the Boughton House event was a resounding success, attracting 222 visitors and Karen updated us with details of a 23<sup>rd</sup> November event at Arnold Civic Centre and Liz will send a copy of the poster to appear on the website.

**9. Memory Course Update:** In Lynne's absence, Gill reported the contents of Lynne's e-mailed comments that although nothing intrinsic had altered, matters reported last time have

moved on as expected. Liz said that Lynne and herself were to arrange a review of the Memory Course.

**10. Proposed Summer School:** We need suggestions for courses to be offered but there are first three important matters to be settled: (i) the venue, (ii) the tutors and (iii) what do people want to do? Michaela gave outline details of a possible, wonderfully well-appointed venue which may have already been found. This is at the Brackenhurst College of Nottingham Trent University where facilities are extremely good. Suggestions for subjects made so far are: IT for Beginners (there are many computer terminals at Brackenhurst). Maybe this subject could be an enabling course which would be followed up by the next stages of computer use. As Southwell is rich in history, a Walk & Learn course would be very suitable, and there is an Inheritance Trail there, too. Gardening groups may want to attend and visit the walled garden, choirs may be interested in the Lincoln Angels collection of old instruments, and this may lead to Church Architecture, as a study subject. Microscope groups might be attracted to Summer School or art groups and digital photography groups teaching the use of Picasa or Photoshop software. Food science and Caring for Self courses were also suggested. Mike said that he had been previously toying with the idea of running an Environment course and he may be able to tutor in our Summer School. He will prepare and submit a synopsis to Michaela. Yorkshire region have already begun their Summer School and sharing with them for alternate years was suggested. Their charge was £285 for 3 nights' accommodation and the course but we would aim to have four-night stays, limiting ourselves to only 75-80 places, to begin with. Michaela will send a draft letter out to all U3As, seeking opinions, suggested subjects and importantly, asking whether there are any potential tutors within their U3As. These tutors to be unpaid. Gill said that as Brackenhurst is such a good venue, perhaps it would be wise to go ahead and make a provisional booking with them, before word spreads and their accommodation gets taken up by others. All Council Members agreed with this course of action and we will find out what the costs to us would be and we were asked to consider whether we would wish to become a member of a working group. Barry suggested that individual counties may afterwards arrange follow-up sessions which could be self-funding. Carol said that in her opinion, if attendees had to pay for a place on a course, she would have expected that we would be prepared to pay fees to tutors, so that we could engage the better ones. This was felt to be cost-prohibitive. We need to pre-determine our subjects, then look for tutors for specific subjects. It was felt that there will be no shortage of prospective tutors within the membership of U3A. RRC Members will please give the foregoing issues some serious thought and **via the Secretary**, submit their ideas and suggestions.

**11. Conference & AGM 2014:** The Council concurred that the theme for the day was to be adopted as 'Participation' and Networks should be requested to put things forward. Mike volunteered immediately to help and John Downs (Lincoln) should be sought in helping with logistics as far as music/performing arts were concerned. A meeting date of 3<sup>rd</sup> December was agreed, this being a date after all Network Meetings will have been held and where Conference & AGM 2014 will, hopefully, have been added to their Agenda. The planning Meeting to be held in Long Eaton (Michaela to provide the address) on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013, a Regional Planning sub-Committee will be formed, we shall have minuted Meetings. Finally, it was noted

that where Networks did not wish to become involved, we would ask someone from the Development Team to enlist. One county, one vote was emphasized.

Gill suggested that instead of confining the invitation e-mail to County Contacts, circulation should be extended for the Secretary to write to all U3As. Everyone agreed this.

**12. Any Other Business:** Annie said that it was very refreshing to look at so much future planning. Mention was made of the lack of ethnic minority membership of U3As in general. Pat observed that we seem to remain 'very white, non-diverse.' We will put the subject of Equality and Diversity on our Agenda for the Meeting to be held in May next year. Council agreed with Barry's suggestion to have 'Notification of AOB' as a regular Agenda item.

Gill asked Elaine and Pat, until this point serving as Alternates for Lincolnshire and Derbyshire respectively, whether they would be prepared to become County Representatives within RRC and the Meeting was pleased to report that both ladies agreed to take up these roles, which will need to be ratified with the counties.

Gill asked whether Council would agree to invite all three county contacts (two Representatives and one Alternate) to all RRC Meetings. The idea was welcomed although it was noted that we would need a larger room, such as the one used today. Gill will make this decision known to all concerned.

Karen asked Gill to provide her with a list of County Contacts for Nottinghamshire.

**13. Date and venue of next Meeting:** It was agreed that we would continue to use Nottingham Trent University as our venue, for the time being, as no particular traffic upheaval had been experienced in journeying to our Meeting today. The date is Wednesday, 5th February 2014. Gill will attempt to book the same room as the one used today.

**Hilary closed the Meeting at 2.50pm.**

GC 20/09/13.08/02/14