

Minutes of the Regional Representative Council Meeting
held on 19th October 2012 at Nottingham Trent University, Clifton Campus

Present: Chair Alan Morris; Secretary Gill Childs; Treasurer David Kyle; Liz Wilson (EDO); Barry Hillyard, Lynne Cox, Pat Reeve, Cyril Young, Penny Forsdyke, Mike Benthall, Carol Lockwood, Karen Highfield Taylor, Christine Baxter, and Michaela Moody (Regional Trustee).

Apologies for absence had been received from Hilary Lucas and Annabelle Meek.

1. Membership 2012/13

(a) A list of RRC members for the next year had been circulated.

(b) Alan welcomed everyone to the Meeting and apologised for the postponement from September 12th due to a clash of dates with the TAT AGM and absence of key individuals.

Newly-appointed Regional Trustee Michaela Moody was introduced, as were new members Gill Childs (Secretary), Penny Forsdyke (Lincolnshire Regional Rep) and Karen Highfield Taylor (alternate Nottinghamshire) and Liz Wilson in her new role as Regional Education and Development Officer. Carol said that there was a newly-appointed representative for Derbyshire, Hilary Wells. An email advising this had regrettably failed to arrive and an invitation to attend had not been sent to Hilary. There is also a new alternate member for Derbyshire, Pat Mangwana.

2. Minutes of the Meeting dated 9th May 2012

(a) Item 4, the fourth line should read "Continue the setting up of Area Development Teams." With this amendment the minutes were Confirmed, (Proposed Barry Hillyard, seconded Pat Reeve). The Chair signed the Minutes and the confirmed copy will be posted to the website.

(b) Matters arising from the Minutes not on the Agenda:

(i) Item 4 regarding the use of a laptop at Committee Meetings, it had been concluded that this was impractical in different rooms but could be tried at some stage.

(ii) With regard to Len Street's article on TAT structure, as there was no reference to this in the following issue of 'Third Age Matters', a conscious decision had been taken to leave opinions unremarked.

(iii) In depth study: D H Lawrence Groups had met in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

(iv) Vice Chair: It was important to maintain the RRC as a body small in membership number. It was Agreed to appoint Liz Wilson for this year.

3. Regional Trustee

Michaela recounted the process by which she had been appointed; she had been asked by TAT to submit a written summary of her extensive involvement in U3A since 2003, including participation at Network and at Regional level. She has global interests and was ready for a new challenge. The Chair assured Michaela that although she may need to explain the circumstances, she would not need to fight the battle about the process. Liz said that Michaela had been nominated just before the National AGM and co-opted on the basis of her written submission.

4. Chair's Report:- Constitutional Change: Election of Regional Trustee

The Chair considered we should not become preoccupied by constitutional issues as to do so would not only be time-consuming, but we could also lose credibility with U3As. However, we do need to set matters straight and clarify the process by which a Regional Trustee is elected. We also need to be clear about the contribution of the Region to that process.

In an e-mail, Andrew Hawkins (Chair of Ilkeston U3A) sought regional constitutional change, whereby a candidate must be endorsed by a majority vote of those present at the Region's AGM and that the region should decide who it wanted and against its own criteria.

Alan felt that Andrew had missed the point made at 7.5 of the Regional Constitution where the crucial sentence is "Election of the Trustee will be as specified by the TAT."

Having been unable to find any TAT written statements about the rules for Regional Trustee elections the Chair had written to Lin Jonas seeking clarification. He would meet with Andrew Hawkins, hopefully having received a reply from Lin.

A substantial discussion took place in which many points were raised including:

- The need for a common basis for the rules for the election across the twelve regions of U3A in the UK. This may be an equal rights issue if nothing else.
- Ensuring that member U3As know something about the candidates in advance of voting.
- Cooption of a Regional Trustee not being within the principles of representational democracy.
- Wondering what other, similar, organisations do in such circumstances.
- What were the NEC processes and criteria for cooption?
- Were the current rules established at the EGM in May 2008 and had it just been forgotten to transfer these to extant documentation?
- The need for the Region to dovetail its arrangements with the national ones.
- The emphasis at the national AGM 2012, in presenting the TAT Annual Report, that the Charity Commissioners place responsibility for the TAT's actions and use of money on the Trustees. They are Trustees of the Trust first and foremost and not regional representatives.
- The view that Regional Trustees are both representatives and national Trustees.
- The complexity of these issues.

In conclusion the Council Agreed that the following constitutional amendment be placed before the Regional AGM 2013 (Proposed Cyril Young, Seconded Barry Hillyard):

"7.4. Nominations for election of Chair and EDO must be made in writing and must be in the hands of the Secretary at least four (4) weeks before the AGM. Nominees shall be proposed by one and seconded by another member U3A. Candidates will attach to their nomination form, a personal statement of not more than two hundred (200) words.

7.5. Should nominations exceed vacancies, candidates will be permitted to address the meeting. Election of the Chair and EDO shall be conducted at the AGM by one vote per U3A present at the meeting.

7.6 Election of the Trustee will be as specified by the TAT. The candidate or candidates will be invited to present a short address to the appropriate Regional AGM and to answer questions from the floor by way of introducing themselves to U3As in the Region."

(Re-number existing paras 7.6 to 7.10 accordingly.)

5. Secretary's Report

Gill expressed her enthusiasm for working with the Council. She would contact Hilary Wells and the Derbyshire alternate.

6. Treasurer's Report

David had circulated copies of his Income and Expenditure Account for the year to 31st March 2013, the Summary to 25th August 2012 was factual and would be subject to no adjustment. Of our 'imposed' annual TAT budget, David reported we have actually received £3,000 into the RRC bank account. We have spent, so far, £2,330 leaving a balance of £670 at the bank and £5,344 with the TAT. This sum covered conferences, admin, etc. This was broken down into £4,172 'formula' (calculated per capita by Region); £1,620 committees, admin; £2,500 Conference and AGM and £50 website. Our year ended at the Regional AGM in July whereas the TAT and Region financial years ended in March. David said the money had arrived from TAT very quickly this year. Liz's bid had been for £15,000 but this had not been met. Allocations had been on a per capita basis and it is likely that this basis will be used again next year. There could be extra monies available for Network and Regions but TAT are reluctant to spend more. This had led to the need for U3As to make contributions and the Treasurer said that he now has the schedule of member numbers to hand and can prepare the invoices accordingly. David and Gill are working together to identify the best person within each U3A to whom the invoice should be submitted. At the bank we had £1,491 with the only foreseen expenses being for rent of today's meeting room and travelling expenses incurred. Carol asked and it was confirmed that the cut-off point in the banding of contributions was 200 members.

7. Education and Development Officer's Report

At a meeting of the Nottinghamshire Development Team, the conclusion had been reached that there was need for more U3A's in the area. A workshop involving the whole Network had identified where new ones might be set up.

8. Network Reports: Written Reports were received

a) Derbyshire – Carol indicated there will be a family history workshop in Buxton, a philosophy conference in Buxton and a creative writing workshop in Long Eaton. The very encouraging number (280) of members in Derby U3A where there is a new, vibrant committee had been referred to.

At a Development Team meeting, Alfreton had been identified as the next potential U3A (May 2013) following by Dronfield (October 2013) and Carol had also suggested Hope Valley (2014) as a target area. Carol reported that very few members in Derby use e-mail and a trawl was suggested to find the best practice for communication. Various ways to deal with the situation were suggested, based on experience elsewhere: members were asked to provide 12 x stamped, addressed envelopes; finding alternative ways of dealing with Newsletters: and with the arrival of non-mouse based computing becoming available, more people may eventually convert to the electronic version. The Network picnic had been a success with 30 people taking part.

b) Leicester and Rutland – Barry gave an oral report. Insurance matters had been discussed and a decision taken to produce a list of all Groups in the Network so people can know what is available at a neighbouring U3A if there are not the numbers to support a viable Group in their own U3A. 140 different Groups had been identified in the 2 counties.

- c) Lincolnshire – Penny added that there had been particular concern about fire marshals. There are no national guidelines but the need had been stressed for signing in on arrival at meetings and signing out in the event of leaving early. It had been suggested that all Group Leaders should keep attendance records. Mike said that village fetes and fairs were good opportunities to canvass for potential members and Michaela added that a summer event at Tattershall Castle had attracted large numbers (see page 85 of Third Age Matters.)
- d) Northamptonshire Pat was very pleased that ten U3As had attended the Network Meeting. Interaction between Kettering and neighbouring U3As had been noted, which was good but when other U3As were invited to take part in a wild flower walk, 28 visitors had arrived! The Development Plan is a work-in-progress.
- e) Nottinghamshire – Karen drew attention to a very active Development Team which had set up the workshop session concerned with new U3As and the development of individual U3As (see Item 7, above) and results are still being collated. A summary will be put onto the Network website. Also, the first Network Lecture, with speaker Alex McMinn, had been well received with 65 people attending. Further such lectures may take place annually. There is to be a meeting to gauge the interest in having neighbourhood groupings in the South of the County. It was reported that County Councillors had been approached for a financial contribution when new U3As were starting up and so far, £2,500 had been received. This is an initiative which helps embed the idea of U3As in councillors' minds. Belper U3A had met with Amber Valley Adult Education and this had led to an offer of free accommodation for Groups.

David said that he'd been interested to experience how Network feedback was coming from other Counties.

9. Intentions and Actions for the RRC and Region: The Chair's Report referred to and he suggested that the sub-committee consider:

- Region and Networks running workshops for Group Leaders and Groups Co-ordinators (there is Regional policy for Leader support). Using workshops attracted TAT funding.
- Research. The Chairman said that U3A UK's Aims and Objectives expressed the expectation that U3As engage in research. We should seek a person to act as a Regional Coordinator.
- Mike had written a presentation for Treasurers within his area and he was willing to make these available for the Region, either for individual U3As or in Groups. He was asked to e-mail details of the basic structure to the Treasurer. Such initiatives should include people considering working on committees.

10. Regional Development Plan

Alan introduced the rationale for a proposed Regional Development Plan. In addition to the identified Purposes concerned with communication and having a longer term basis for activities it was agreed that it would also provide for greater continuity. Liz then went on to explain the ensuing pages in more detail.

It was Agreed, nem con, that a Development Plan be formulated.

Key Development Areas A-D were accepted and Area E should be the development of a financial risk assessment strategy. David will prepare a draft consult Mike.

It was Agreed that the way forward was for the Officers (Michaela, David, Alan, Gill and Liz) to prepare a full Draft for the next meeting based on the structure provided in the first draft paper.

11. Memory Course

Of the 78 U3A's who attended the Ormskirk and Auton provided Workshop in March 2012, 38 U3A's wish to remain involved. When progress reports had been requested, 26 U3As had responded of which 10 had indicated they intend to start a course. The Chair suggested that was a very satisfactory outcome. Nottingham have completed their first class.

Newsletter 3 will go out shortly.

Some U3As had expressed the view that they could write their own course rather than follow the O & A model which had been two years in development and then trialled for eighteen months!

Alan thought that Region could offer U3As the opportunity to re-group and listen to other U3As and then provide help to follow the model. Liz suggested a meeting to generate a re-focussing exercise. Christine said that Nottingham Trent University were researching related matters, though across different age groups, and it would be interesting to be in touch.

Christine will follow this up.

Although it was hoped that some training would be provided by members from Aughton and Ormskirk. this has not happened and will not now be possible.

Of the 78 U3As in the Region, 38 have asked to be kept informed about the Memory Course or are going to keep Lynne informed of developments. Of the 38 canvassed for information about where they had got to with regard to providing, or not, the memory course for their U3A, 26 have responded. (Lynne had also heard, indirectly, of one other U3A which has begun.) (Leics: 6/21 = 29%; Derbys: 7/10 = 70%; Lincs: 4/22 = 18%; Notts: 9/16 = 56%; Northants: nil)

One U3A (Notts) has completed a course; for four (Derbys, Leics, Lincs) there are plans in place for a seminar and to start a course. For a further eight feelings are very positive but nothing is off the ground yet; most are waiting for the New Year. Three offered no news or progress but were not negative about the course. Five U3As are looking for more input or want to attend a course elsewhere before they will attempt anything in their own U3A. Three have said they will not be doing a course or have the subject covered in their current groups; and one U3A is going to be presenting their own new coverage of Memory.

There is still a lot of interest but members who attended the seminar in March at Nottingham are losing their enthusiasm as the prospect of a course in their U3A dwindles away. This is mostly to do with the numbers of available, or course-ready, members within any one U3A. The course needs, ideally, two each of administrators and presenters but in many cases only one member is willing and able. Whereas members have, in some cases, come together across their Network to pilot the course and self-train, they are not ready or willing to join together to present the course to more than their own group, at least at the beginning.

Some concern has been expressed by U3As wanting to find a cheaper way to present the course to members. The cost to individuals will be £5 for the handbook plus a share in administration costs and any hire cost over four sessions. Using the same set of handbooks, and copying from them where necessary, for all courses cuts costs but might be in breach of copyright and is not recommended.

Where U3As have piloted the programme, there are still degrees of concern over both content and process. This has, and will, lead to some changes being made to both the material used to present the course and the style of delivery.

12. To set up RRC sub-committees

The Chairman reminded the Meeting that hitherto, arrangements for the AGM and Workshops had been handled as two separate sub-committees. He suggested and it was

Agreed that one sub-committee could deal with both matters. On the basis of all Networks being represented and of some continuity, it was Agreed that for 2012/13 the sub-committee should comprise: Carol, Barry, Mike, Pat, Liz, Gill, Michaela and himself. There could be co-opted additions, e.g. Cyril, if the AGM is to take place near Kettering.

13. Report on Regional Conference 2012

The Chair said these events had gone well, overall. There had been no dragooning of members to attend and 100 had done so. The speakers were good with Eric Midwinter outstanding. Gill said that Mike should be applauded for his conduct during and after the AGM and this was supported by members.

In 2012, Margaret Taylor had been excessively pressured and she was commended for her sterling work. The Treasurer said the arrangements had all come in on budget – an achievement much appreciated and highly commended.

14. Regional Conference and AGM 2013

The principle of rotation of venue between Counties was Agreed as was that the AGM and Conference 2013 be held in Northamptonshire. Cyril reported estimated costs at possible venues:-

Kettering Conference Centre – parking, equipment, with catering £40 per head.

Kettering Park Hotel – accommodation and parking, with buffet £30 per head.

Holiday Inn near Corby – charge similar, location not so good as others.

Highgate House, Creaton at junction 1, A14 – excellent parking and facilities, cost not yet known.

Hothorpe Hall was suggested by David.

Pat and Mike suggested Northampton Holiday Inn, junction 18.

Other possible venues would be researched and the sub-committee will decide on the best option.

15. NEC Report

Liz will provide a brief statement to append to the minutes.

16. Regional Website

Peter Edge, our webmaster, is proving a great help. Items to be added to our website must be submitted via Michaela, Alan, Liz or Gill only. Gill felt the website could have more historic events assigned to an archive. It sent out the wrong signals to keep them at the forefront when they were long past. All Committee Members were asked to explore the website and let Gill know, by e-mail, which items could be added and which removed to the archive.

17. Regional Newsletter

Liz will be writing the Newsletter as soon as possible.

18. Alternates

At Karen's suggestion it was Agreed that alternates would be invited to attend RRC Meetings where possible: two per meeting, on a trial basis and that meeting papers would be sent to all alternates.

19. Distribution of Agenda and Papers

All present had agreed that to receive papers in one batch had been an improvement. Gill will aim to forward the papers two weeks before Committee Meetings. Dispatch depended heavily on representatives sending their Reports to her in good time.

20. Any other business

It was Agreed that if we receive mail canvassing miscellaneous events, we would not circulate any details or allow the originators to advertise via U3A regionally.

21. The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday, 9th January, 2013.

There being no other business, the Chair closed the Meeting at 3.25pm.

Gill Childs, Secretary, 23/10/12

APPROVED