

# **Verwood u3a Annual General Meeting**

**Wednesday 11 October 2023**

**At The Hub Verwood**

Present:

Committee: Jan Mills (JCM) Chair, John Tolley (JT), John Morris (JBM) Treasurer, Diane Northam (DM) Groups & Venues Coordinator, Howard Wells (HW) Vice Chair.

32 other members were in attendance.

Apologies: Louise Horsley (Secretary) Sue Coveyduck, Jenny Reed, Angela Daymond, Barbara Shea, Diane Wise, Laurie Northam, Colin English, Carole English, David Glendinning, Elizabeth Glendinning, Heather Morris.

The Meeting opened at 1400 hours.

## **Chair's Welcome**

JCM welcomed those in attendance and gave a Vote of Thanks to David Allen who had stepped down as Membership Secretary after many years of service; Tony Bird who had managed the website for several years and Mike Parsonage who had also stepped down.

JCM reported that there are currently 316 members, 78 of whom are new to Verwood u3a. This is the highest number of members we have had to date.

She reported on progress of using 'Beacon' as an information and communications systems management tool to assist with the administration of our membership, finances and emails. 'Beacon' is a National u3a database system and they give full support in running it. The Committee has agreed to run a six

month pilot of the system. Two Committee members had met with the Administrator from Ferndown u3a, which has been using 'Beacon' for eight years. The cost of running the system is £1.00 per member per year, but we will not incur any cost until the pilot is completed. Member Tony Bird (TB) had requested that there should be a full cost/benefit analysis before we commit to this system. JCM said that the Committee had already agreed to pilot the system - we already know the cost and the benefit cannot be measured until we are using 'Beacon'. The current system we use is not fit for purpose and will become more unwieldy as we continue to grow. We have been successful in seeking some funding towards this - JBM will explain in his report. JCM advised that out of more than 800 u3as throughout the country, 570 are using 'Beacon'.

JCM said that we had a very successful Open Day with almost 100 people joining on the day, 43 of whom were new to us. She said that we now have more than 40 groups and activities and said this was only possible because of the commitment of the Group Leaders and she thanked them for all they do for Verwood u3a. She continued by thanking her fellow Committee members for their time and support.

Vern Harris (VH) asked what 'Beacon' offers that we don't have now? JCM said that the present system was not designed for the way we use it, it is complicated and easily allows errors to be made, which 'Beacon' would not allow. As our membership grows it will become more difficult to manage our data and communications .

## **Treasurer's Report.**

JBM reported that the financial year end had been moved from 31 May to 31 July, so this is a 14 month year, in effect. The operating deficit has been reduced from £3,826 to £2,954, helped by the introduction of the "Spare Ball" which has produced a nett surplus of £630.

JBM reported that there should be a break even figure by the end of the financial year 2024.

Subscriptions were at £7,350 and venue hire at £10,702. Subscriptions have been increased this year from £30 to £42. In 2016 the subscription fee was £40 but had been reduced by a previous Committee in order to reduce the surplus which stood at £14,000. Subscriptions in 2022 had totalled £5,179

More members are now checking the Gift Aid 'box' on the online application form on the new website. This has realised £1,700 already this year. We receive an additional 25% of subscriptions where members are tax payers and agree to Gift Aid.

Depreciation this year was at zero against £666 last year.

The Committee had also decided not to provide a lunch for Group Leaders this year.

JBM was pleased to announce that Verwood u3a has been successful in its' application for a Grant of £1,500 from Verwood Town Council towards the cost of running our activities. This is not reflected in these accounts. We applied for this Grant as we are seeking to continue to grow our membership. Lindsey Dedden (LD) declared her pecuniary interest at the Council meeting to discuss the Grant and did not

take part in the decision process when allocating the grant to Verwood u3a.

Paul Thackeray (PT) raised several points;

- Venue rentals were up 44% from the previous year. He enquired whether there was any indication of an increase this year? DN responded that some of the venue hire has increased significantly. The Hub has kept costs low but this will increase at some point.
- He sought confirmation about the Spare Ball revenue. JBM confirmed that the £630 revenue is nett.
- Some groups such as badminton and table tennis are more costly than most in terms of rentals and the frequency of groups and he queried whether members should pay more for such groups?

Nancy Tolley (NT) highlighted that some groups were quite small but were benefitting in the same way as larger groups.

PT proposed a Vote of Thanks to JBM for the accuracy of the account information. This was seconded by Gareth Mills (GM) and carried.

VH suggested we consider approaching 'Solar Funds' for financial support. This will be looked into.

The Approval of Accounts was proposed by PT and seconded by GM.

## **Election of Officers**

JCM reported that as Chair she was one year into her 3 year term. She stated that the existing committee members were prepared to stand again. Members agreed that: Howard Wells,

John Morris, Diane Northam, Louise Horsley and John Tolley will continue in their roles on Committee.

HW proposed Tony Wilson (TW) as a new member to take over as Membership Secretary. This was seconded by Rosemary Jones (RJ) and carried.

Jo Dix (JD) was proposed by JBM and seconded by Vern Harris (VH) to join the Committee to shadow JBM. This was carried.

### **Appointment of Auditors**

JBM said that Jeanne Roberts has agreed to stand again as Auditor.

PT proposed the appointment of the auditor, this was seconded by VH.

### **Report on Groups**

DN reported on the increase of the number of groups and thanked Group Leaders for their time and efforts. A new Manager has been appointed at Verwood Hub, whom she had yet to meet.

There have been two well attended meetings of Group Leaders. It has been agreed to remove the strict regime of having "terms" to allow Leaders more flexibility. This has made it more of a challenge to accommodate requests for bookings, but it is working well.

The idea of having short courses such as Geology and Mindfulness have been well received. It is thought that

Language Conversation courses would work well if run to this format, if teachers could be identified.

## **Publicity and Information**

HW thanked Tony Bird again for his work on the previous website. He congratulated Gareth Mills on the new website that he has built. A show of hands indicated that over 60% of those present looked at the website regularly. The website has received a lot of positive response from members and visitors.

HW mentioned the Spare Ball again and said that there was still room for new participants.

HW mentioned Forest FM and said that he was always looking for individuals to join him to do interviews to promote u3a and that these interviews were now on the website.

There is a plan to provide refresher courses in CPR and use of defibrillators.

There are several people who have expressed interest in being speakers at a u3a event; these are being considered.

HW reported that there were still a few places at the Christmas Lunch on 20 December.

TB said that he had started the website 12 years ago. He congratulated GM on writing the new website.

GM thanked everyone who has supported him whilst building the website, offering comments and suggestions. He said there is now a live Forum that all members can join and groups can set up their own group forum within that. GM said that Committee Meeting minutes are now on the Forum for all members to see.

## **Any Other Business**

(TB) requested that the Minutes of the AGM be placed on the website within a month of this meeting. This was agreed.

TB suggested a regular coffee morning for new members. NT said there is a bi-monthly coffee and cake sessions at The Hub for all members to attend. JCM agreed to ask members if they were interested in regular, casual coffee mornings, to contact TB.

In her absence Sue Coveyduck has proposed a Vote of Thanks to the Committee and especially to Gareth Mills for all his work on the new website. This was greeted with a Round of Applause

Meeting ended at 1515 hours.