

HGS U3A
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held on 28 July 2022 at 10.00 am

[Draft]

Quorum check

To be valid, the Annual General Meeting of HGS U3A needs a tenth of its members – a minimum of 51 – to be present or to have appointed a proxy. 48 members were present or represented so the meeting was inquorate.

10.15 am Meeting adjourned.

10.20 am Meeting resumed.

Opening comments

Richard Abramson, Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking group leaders, volunteers and members for their contribution to HGS U3A.

Trustees' Report

The full version of the Trustees' Report and the Financial Accounts is available on the HGS U3A website, <https://hgsu3a.uk>.

Key events during 2021-22:

- We maintained the U3A through the latter stages of the pandemic.
- The number of members and groups has grown.
- More groups are meeting in person or in hybrid meetings using Zoom.
- Members have enjoyed a great variety of Topical Talks.
- Thanks to the efforts of our Groups Organisers, new groups have been set up, including the Classical Music Club; Science, Nature and Technology; Jazz Appreciation; Cycling; Outdoor Sketching; Embroidery; and The Musicals.
- Articles about and advertisements for HGS U3A have appeared regularly in *Suburb News*.
- A successful coffee morning was held for new members, and more will follow.
- At our Open Day on 20 July, many current members signed up for new groups.

Where we are today:

- HGS U3A is a registered charity.
- We have just over 500 members, including 36 new members who signed up at the recent Open Day.
- We offer more than 65 interest groups, of which about one third are on Zoom only, one third use external venues, 13 meet at members' homes, and nine are outdoor activities.

- HGS U3A has a Board of nine Trustees, each with specific areas of responsibility, as well as a team of Advisers.

Trustees:

Chair	Richard Abramson
Joint Groups Organisers	Malcolm Brahams, Tina Stanton
Membership Secretary	Margaret Bendor
Newsletter and In Conversation	Eleanor Levy
Publicity and organiser for Topical Talks	Judi John (later confirmed by election)
Treasurer	Arjun Matthai
Webmaster	David Powers
Secretary	Mayah Weinberg

Judi will take over from Myke Jacobs, who is standing down for medical reasons. Richard thanked Myke for creating the exciting programme of Topical Talks and for developing HGS U3A's PR enormously. Myke will carry on finding speakers for the time being.

Advisers:

Myke Jacobs	Topical Talks
Mike Berg	Zoom
Alan Lee	Beacon
Neng Chong	Computer matters
Simon Freeman	Venue hire

[Note – subsequent to the AGM, certain changes were made: Simon Freeman has been appointed as Treasurer, and will not deal with venue hire, and Judi John will deal with Topical Talks from 2023 onwards but not with general PR]

Our plans for the coming year include the following:

- To continue to set up new interest groups.
- To find new group leaders when the current leader steps down. All group leaders are unpaid volunteers.
- To maintain our presence in *Suburb News* and to raise our profile outside the Suburb.
- Our aim had been to gradually increase our membership to 500. As we have now exceeded that number, the Trustees will decide where we go from here.

Treasurer's Report

Arjun Matthai commented that this was his fifth Treasurer's report. HGS U3A's finances had been tested over the past year, but had survived. He referred members to the HGS U3A

website for the detailed financial accounts, a breakdown of expenditure, and the Independent Examiner's report.

To summarise, gross income including Gift Aid was just over £14,000, down from £17,000 in the previous financial year, mainly due to a reduction in Gift Aid and other income. We ended the year with a deficit of £738, compared to a surplus of a little over £11,000 the previous year. This was due mainly to increased costs – almost £15,000, compared with £6,000 the previous year, during the pandemic. As the threat of Covid has receded, people wanted to meet in person again. HGS U3A hires premises such as the Free Church, the Free Church Hall and Fellowship House for groups to meet, and unsurprisingly prices have gone up.

We have just under £26,000 in the bank. Over the years we have built up a sound financial position. The accounts were independently reviewed by Mr Ravi Patel under Charity Commission rules, and given unqualified approval.

Arjun concluded by saying that he was glad to have done the job of Treasurer for five years, and he hoped the organisation would go from strength to strength.

Subscriptions

Arjun recalled that in 2018-19, the year before Covid hit, fees had been £40 for an individual member and £70 for two people living at the same address. In the year ending August 2022, the corresponding figures were £25 and £40. For next year we propose subscription rates of £35 for an individual member and £60 for joint members. It is envisaged that this will cover our deficit and allow HGS U3A to continue to be run in a financially responsible way. An additional £2 is payable by those who pay by cheque. Paying by BACS transfer is preferable, and it is hoped to simplify the process still further.

Richard proposed a vote of thanks to Arjun for his contribution to HGS U3A.

10.35 am Meeting deemed to be quorate as per the HGS U3A constitution.

Resolutions

- To approve the Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting -- Resolution 1.
- To receive and adopt the Trustees' Report and the Annual Report and Financial Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2022 – Resolution 2.
- To re-appoint Ravindra Patel ACCA as the Independent Examiner of the Financial Accounts – Resolution 3.
- To agree to increase the subscription rates for the subscription year beginning 1 September 2022 to the following levels:
 - For an individual member £35, and for two members living at the same address £60;
 - £2 supplement for cheques
 - Resolution 4.
- To re-elect Margaret Bendor and David Powers as Trustees, and to elect Judi John as Trustee – Resolution 5.

All resolutions were passed without objection.

Survey Results

David Powers summarised some of the interesting points that emerged from the March 2022 survey of members' views.

- Asked about their motivation for joining HGS U3A, respondents were able to give more than one answer: 70% said they had joined for mental stimulation and learning, and 42% to meet people, for friendship and companionship. As for the benefits gained, learning was cited by 72% and social benefit by 57%, which suggests that we are doing something that people like. Members also reported physical benefits and an increased sense of wellbeing.
- There was positive feedback, including from group leaders, many of whom obtained satisfaction from helping others. Members who participate in the Middlesex University mentoring programme reported an improvement in their mentoring skills.
- There was great interest in art and language groups and in outdoor activities, and a large number of requests for new groups, many of which already exist. We need to find out where the problem lies – do people simply not know that those groups exist, do the groups meet on the wrong days, do we need more groups on different days, or do existing groups have no space for additional members?
- Asked whether they would be willing to become a group leader, more than 80% said no. David pointed out that the U3A movement relies on the principle of mutual self-help, and all group leaders are volunteers. He appealed to group members to help the leader, even if they do not have the skills to run a group.
- The Newsletter is opened by about 70% of members. Some members say that they do not receive the Newsletter; David's advice to them was to check their spam trap.
- How long have people been members? 37% of respondents have been members for five years, since the start of HGS U3A, and 70% for more than three years – a fantastic level of support, especially during Covid. David pointed out that as we grow older, so the U3A grows older. We need more younger people coming in. The typical member is aged 71 to 75, and 75% of the membership is over 70. By word of mouth, and through advertising in *Suburb News* and *The Archer*, for example, younger people must be encouraged to join HGS U3A.

Richard thanked the Trustees for their role in organising the U3A's activities.

Members' Open Forum

The first part of the discussion focussed on groups and active participation. Betty Mason spoke about MOTO (members on their own), a group for members who live on their own and like socialising with each other. Betty temporarily leads the group, which has not

flourished in our U3A, despite encouragement from similar groups in neighbouring U3As. It needs new members and new leadership, and Betty appealed for volunteers.

The point about poor attendance at some groups was endorsed by Diana Brahams and also by Angela Stern. Gloria Smith highlighted the role of members' expectations. Richard Abramson pointed out that groups vary widely in size.

Tony Korn, who is stepping down as leader of the Hebrew discussion group, reported that he had got as much from leading the group as others get from taking part.

Richard added that he had taken on the Trustee role in grateful thanks for the learning and social benefit he got from leading his two Shakespeare groups.

Jenny Clark, speaking from her long experience in the U3A movement, suggested that a group leader should take on one of the group members as an assistant who can step in when necessary and who will be the natural successor as group leader. Jenny commented that unless people are asked to do a specific job, it will not be done.

Stephen Humphreys, who leads the Jazz Appreciation group, noted that although it was listed as a new group, he had taken it over from Jack and Daphne Berkovi.

Henrietta Promitzer asked whether the Topical Talks were recorded, as she had missed a few. Richard Abramson replied that up till now they have not been recorded, but that policy will be reviewed. David Powers added that In Conversation, in which Eleanor Levy interviews a member of HGS U3A, is recorded and will be available via a link on the website.

Malcolm Brahams thanked the volunteers who had helped on Open Day. He paid tribute to Myke Jacobs for his role in organising the volunteers and the publicity for Open Day, which had been a success in recruiting new members and in introducing existing members to new groups. Malcolm said that in future, more space would be provided to allow groups to display members' work. A Christmas party was planned, at which the Singing for Pleasure and The Musicals groups would be invited to sing; it may be possible for other groups to display their members' work. Malcolm paid tribute to his fellow Groups Organiser, Tina Stanton, for her efforts to find new leaders for the Yoga and Pilates groups.

Finally, a number of members asked about paying membership fees. The Membership Secretary, Margaret Bendor, assured them that all the information that new members needed was on the membership application form and on the website, and that anyone who cannot pay online can pay by cheque. David Powers added that HGS U3A was planning to go online for both renewals and new membership. The new system, using PayPal, will make renewals much simpler, although it will still be possible to pay by bank transfer. A reminder email about membership renewal will be sent in due course.

Meeting closed at 11.20 am.