

Notes on Group Leaders and Sec's meeting, 15th March

Opening remarks

Philip (chair) opened the meeting by thanking all group leaders, secretaries and helpers for the fantastic job they do.

He also mentioned the 'Fit for the Future' initiative, saying that we need to adapt to the changing world. Our average age is creeping up and we need to attract younger members – there is actually no lower age limit, anyone could join as long as they are not in full time work.

The social elements we've introduced, such as quizzes and Cupp-and-a-chat sessions have proved very popular with members, as have the various workshops. But the Groups are the mainstay of our u3a!

Information on changes

This year we are changing the way we do some things - these are outlined below.

Programme – there will be no printed programme for 2024/25. This is because producing one would cost around £7k due to increase printing and postage costs. Our payments to the Maltings will increase – the amount is not yet known – and it is possible that we will not be eligible for gift aid in the future because of changing tax regulations. Last year gift aid gave us around £8.5k. Thus, we need to economise!

The programme will be available on the website and it will be possible to print the whole programme or just the pages you are interested in. Phone numbers will no longer be included in the programme and we hope to move to generic emails rather than have personal emails on our website – there will be more details of this later. Members who do not have email (there are only 15 of them) will be sent a print-out of the groups and open meetings that they are interested in and will be asked to phone our secretary if they need any other information.

There will also be a calendar on the website showing which groups are available on which days, so that people can see easily what is on, on whichever morning or afternoon they have free.

Membership cards – these will not be sent out by post. Decisions on how to deal with membership cards are still to be finalised.

Registration morning/Open morning – we will not be having a registration morning in September. It has been very disappointing for new members who have joined at this stage and then found no vacancies in the classes they were interested in. Registration morning will be replaced by an Open Morning on Monday 15th July. The idea will be to showcase groups so that new members and members looking for new activities can talk to people and find out about the groups, social events and open meetings. To be a success this will require a lot

of publicity – Council notice boards, local newspapers and magazines, local social media. *If anyone has access to local notice boards, parish magazines, anywhere we could advertise please email secretary@farnhamu3a.org.uk and pass on the details to Val.*

Registration – members will have to register for groups by email. No registration will take place on the open morning.

Membership subscriptions – these may have to be increased because of increased costs. There may be a way for members who cannot afford an increase to be subsidised by a local charity.

Questions for attendees

Following some general discussion of the topics, attendees were asked have a round-the-table discussion, and to record the main points. There was then another general discussion collecting these. The questions and responses are given below

Groups

1. How do you welcome new members?

Name badges or names on the table.

Leaders, secretaries introducing themselves, a welcome at the first meeting

Tea/coffee breaks together during or after meetings (not easy for afternoon meetings)

Social sessions - at beginning of u3a year, a Christmas meal, a summer BBQ

Contact new members after the first meeting asking how it went for them

Use a buddy system

Send a pre attendance email saying how the group works, equipment needed, information pack...

Look out for and prevent cliqueness

Size matters – different methods work for different sorts of groups

2. How do you ensure group lists on Beacon stay up to date?

Put new members straight onto Beacon

Check Beacon is up do date at least once a term

Keep regular attendance registers, check up on no-shows

If there is a waiting list, inform no-shows they will be taken off the group register, if they haven't given a good reason

Comments -

GLs don't know if someone has died – committee need to find a way to notify them if told of a death (and vv)

A Beacon refresher course or good instructions would be appreciated – Alan Freeland offered to include this in the Speakers workshops

3. Would GLs like to meet in small groups over lunch?

Of 61 attendees 19 were not interested in meeting for lunch and 37 were interested.

4. What are your succession plans?

Many groups have others who could take over – some have a small group committee
For some groups finding help can be a big problem – 14 of the groups represented had no help

Open morning

5. Should there be a representative from each group or could one or two people represent multiple groups – eg French, Pilates, Cycling?

Ideally similar groups should combine so maybe two people could represent the 6 French groups, 1 or 2 people could represent the cycling groups etc.
Some groups, eg Architecture, have to be individually represented

6. Should groups known to be full be represented?

Yes - to identify demand so we can try and meet it. Could just provide information about the full groups and have a means of noting interest

7. How best could we showcase each group – programme for next year, photos from this year...

Dress in costume. Perform
Provide a programme for next year or examples of what the group did last year.
Show photos of activities, paintings from the painting

8. How can we try to ensure groups have spaces for new members?

Identify waiting lists/ demand requiring an extra group – though setting up new groups takes time
Letting new members apply same time as existing members – though many group leaders are reluctant to making existing members wait to apply for space at the same time as new members. Possibly have a short members only window prior to general registration.

9. Any other comments

Encourage more group leaders by offering a discounted membership fee
At next GL's meeting put group name on name tags