Minutes of Saltash u3a AGM 09.11.2023

The AGM held in the Wesley Church, Saltash commenced at 1410.

Present: All members of the Executive Committee were present.

Chair's Welcome: The Chair Amanda Smith welcomed all present in accordance with the Saltash u3a Constitution and the Charities Commission regulations.

Apologies had been received from the following members: Marion Bye, Penny Brown, Pennie Hagan, Penny Hooper, Mel Dixon, Mo Kent, Bill Pym. Audrey Miller's name was offered but it was noted that she was in attendance prior to the voting.

Minutes of AGM 10.11.2022. The Chair read out the minutes from the previous AGM and asked if there were any questions from members. As there were none, their acceptance as accurate was proposed by Denise Watkins and seconded by Jean Milton. The Chair signed them as accepted.

Chair's Report for period September 2022 – August 2023.

After the difficult Pandemic period, this year had been one of optimism and enthusiasm with a steady increase in new members bringing the total membership close to pre pandemic levels. With membership on the rise Saltash u3a was fairing better than many other u3as around the country.

A positive start to the year had been the change in the Showcase month from March to October giving potential new members an opportunity early in the membership year to see what was on offer and meet Group Leaders who had worked very hard to promote the many and varied groups.

A good many trips had been undertaken by various groups including the increasingly popular and successful Discovery and Dine outings. Many of these outings had been possible due to the hiring of the Hopper Bus from Community Enterprise, a partnership which benefits both parties and which is hoped will continue.

The successful funding bid to Cornwall Glass enabled the hugely successful 'Royal Connections' Day Trip to be held in May. The trip in celebration of the Coronation of King Charles 111 following the passing of the late Queen in 2022 was open to all members. 80 took up the opportunity to travel from Saltash by coach to Paignton then steam train to Kingswear followed by the ferry across to Dartmouth and a river cruise on the River Dart and repeat return, a most enjoyable day out.

As with other u3as we have seen the sad demise of some groups which is always disappointing but we have welcomed a number of new groups including Art, Architecture, History, Spanish and Doorstep Discovery, all with a healthy number of member and most importantly members stepping forward to lead them. I hope that these will go from strength to strength.

This year I have enrolled on the new TAT Zoom Chairs' Forum with 400 Chairs from across the UK already signed up and between 120 and 150 signing in at any one session. The forum discusses a wide range of issues from communication with TAT to the management of branch u3as. I am pleased to report that Saltash u3a has already adopted or considered many of the ideas put forward and that we are making good progress on many fronts.

I am sorry to report that despite there being an increase in membership this year it was disappointing that Saltash u3a finances were now beginning to struggle largely due to rising costs and an increase in payments to TAT. The Treasurer is aiming to address this issue.

Another concern was that there continues to be a lack of volunteers coming forward to join the Executive Committee. Saltash u3a along with other u3as and organisations across the country was not alone in facing this problem but unless resolved, Saltash u3a faced possible closure. The current Executive Committee continues to seek ways to keep Saltash u3a afloat and secure its future as since its conception, so many people have put in so much time and effort to make Saltash u3a the success it is today.

In conclusion, I remain positive and hope that these issues are simply hiccups and that Saltash u3a will continue to flourish and grow in the spirit of the TAT motto LEARN LAUGH LIVE, providing Saltash and the surrounding area with a varied, lively and welcoming u3a growing from strength to strength with the support of existing members and new members yet to see what we are ALL ABOUT.

Acceptance of the report was proposed by Claire Crowther and seconded by Jean Buckingham.

Resolutions. Before the proposals and voting could commence the Chair reminded those present of the Standing Orders with regard to the conduct of such matters. The Proposal would be read out, any member wishing to speak must stand, clearly stating their name and had 3 minutes to speak. Individuals had a limit of 4 opportunities to speak. On voting, hands must be clearly raised to enable tellers to see them clearly.

Resolutions 1 and 2 - Changes to the Constitution. Proposed by Peter Payne Hanlon. Members were reminded that the proposed changes had been forwarded to them all in advance in accordance with the rules.

1. To extend the maximum time that can be served on the Executive Committee from six to nine years.
2. To increase the number of members of the Executive Committee from a maximum of twelve to fifteen.

In order that members understood why these changes were being proposed Peter outlined the background of the Executive Committee which currently has ten members two of whom were standing down by choice. As applies to all u3as, without a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary Saltash u3a would have to cease operating. The current Constitution paragraph 7 (vi) (a) (b) (c) allows the Treasurer to serve for six years and all others to serve for three years. Due to the Pandemic, paragraph7(vi) (d) was used for the first time as this allowed in extremis for all members to serve for six years. However, under this six year rule three further members must now stand down leaving only five, two of whom have only been coopted in the last seven months. **Resolution 1** to extend tenure to nine years will immediately restore numbers to eight and retain valuable experience whilst providing breathing space for further recruitment. **Resolution 2** to increase numbers from twelve to fifteen would hopefully attract new members to join as observers and familiarise themselves with the workings of the committee before taking on the responsibilities of a dedicated post holder.

Peter commended these proposals to the members and they were seconded by Gill Higgins who stressed the importance of continuity as the work achieved so far by the current committee was invaluable to Saltash u3a. As there were no questions from the floor the vote was taken. **Both resolutions were passed with 112 in favour, none against and no abstensions.**

Financial Report. The Treasurer Barry Olver reminded members that his Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement for 2022-23 had been sent to them well in advance of the AGM. No questions had been forthcoming so he had nothing further to report. One member Pat Fitzsimmonds stated that she had not received this, for which she received an apology. There was one question from the floor, Sue Potter queried why the total income from Group Rents did not cover the expenditure. Barry explained that this was due to some groups being in credit the previous year and therefore had had income carried forward. The Beacon model unfortunately does not allow for this to be apparent. Sue Pym suggested that this was clear if the 2021-22 column was compared with the 2022-23 column. Barry agreed to provide further data to clarify this and reminded members that this was the very reason queries needed to be raised in advance so that he had time to prepare a detailed response.

As there were no further questions acceptance of the Report and Accounts was proposed by Liz Hill and seconded by Denise Bell.

Barry went on to explain that the current Independent Accounts Examiner (previously referred to as the Auditor) was retiring and as a new one had yet to be found, members would be unable to vote in a new Accounts Examiner at this stage. Members would be notified once this post has been filled. Members agreed to accept this decision.

Resolution 3 – Increase in Annual Membership Fee by £5.00 per head. This resolution was proposed by Barry Olver who explained why the increase was proposed. There had been no increase in fees for fourteen years and prudent financial management had ensured that a healthy contingency had been retained. However, this was now being eaten into year on year with rapidly rising all round costs and could no longer be maintained. Further increases mainly in rent and speaker fees were anticipated. The proposal was seconded by Lesley Brunskill. Numerous questions were then raised from the floor.

Denise Watkins stated that a £5 increase amounted to 30% of the current fee and suggested that a vote for a 15% increase was more acceptable. Barry pointed out that as she had not within the legal timescale required made a formal motion for this to be considered, her proposal could not now be voted on.

Roy Potter felt that as the deficit had occurred during the pandemic period and the national financial situation was now stabilizing it would be better to wait before bringing in an increase.

Chris Jenkins asked if there was a uniformity amongst fees charged by each u3a. Barry stated there was not and that each u3a set their own fees. Some u3as had low membership fees but charged members for attendance at the monthly meetings so you could not compare like with like.

Sonia Aldworth was concerned that there would be an excess build up.

Patricia Paris suggested removing the reduction for couples would bring in some extra income.

Sonia Aldworth stated that this had been introduced to try and encourage more male members to join.

Pat Fitzsimmons thought that the reduced couples fee had been introduced because one household received one not two copies of the newsletter 'All About' and as this is now received on line by all but a small number of members it was time to reconsider.

Brenda Garner felt that it was discriminatory to set fees specifically to encourage men to join.

Peter Payne-Hanlon drew attention to the fact that the increase in the RPI (Retail Price Index) year on year since the last increase in 2014 was also around 30%.

Denise Watkins felt that the RPI was not relevant.

Jane Hoad a new member wondered if a cheaper venue could be found for the meetings.

Sue Potter suggested that expenses for the Christmas Social and Group Leaders' Social could be considerably reduced if those attending were asked to contribute towards the cost. It was pointed out that for this year the Committee had already decided to issue free tickets to the Christmas Social in order that catering was targeted at numbers attending.

As there were no further points raised the Chair called for the vote to commence. The resolution to raise the membership fee by £5 was passed 54 For and 52 Against with 1 Abstension. Despite this being a majority decision Jeanne Milton suggested that the subject should be raised again and an EGM called.

The Chair Amanda Smith aware of the mood amongst members then took the decision to overrule the vote and stated that the Executive Committee would meet again to carefully consider all the points raised and that an EGM would be announced in the new year with another Resolution for members to consider. She thanked everyone for their contribution to the debate.

Election of Executive Committee

Standing for re-election for one further year were: Amanda Smith, Gill Higgins, Barry Olver, Rose Olver, Peter Payne-Hanlon, Marilyn Read, Jason Lamb, Sue Pym. Members voted on block to support their election.

Three members had put their names forward to join the Committee, they were: Dee de Beaufort, Mo Kent and Rob Jenkins. All three were elected by the members.

Two Committee members, Jennifer Gegg and Lesley Brunskill were standing down and the Chair thanked them for all their support throughout their tenure.

Closure of AGM

On completion of the voting the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the AGM was closed at 1515.