



Dacorum U3A

Minutes of the 31st Annual General Meeting held on Monday 2nd August 2021 via Zoom video conferencing

1 Welcome

Tina Howard (Chair) welcomed members to the 31st AGM of the U3A Dacorum and welcomed the Mayor, Stewart Riddick, who previously attended the 2019 AGM as Deputy Mayor. She said that it was wonderful to see so many faces and hoped that they would have an interesting and enjoyable meeting. She said that one advantage of meeting on Zoom was that there was no need to park but on the other hand there were no coffee and biscuits!

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from the following:

Tim Thompson
Gwen Scott
Chris Watson
Brenda Rance

3 Address by the Mayor, Councillor Stewart Riddick

Councillor Stewart Riddick thanked Tina Howard for the invitation to the AGM. Dacorum U3A was founded 31 years ago and he said that it was good to know that it had continued to thrive. He spoke of the opportunity the organisation gave for like minded people to share their experiences and to continue their learning. He mentioned the interesting and wide-ranging subjects provided by Groups, such as Literature, Singing, Gardening, Sewing and Russian. He applauded those who were prepared to host groups in their own homes. He also said that the virtual meetings had been vital to so many people during the challenging times we have experienced and that social interaction was an important part of meetings.

Councillor Riddick ended by wishing Dacorum u3a every success in the future.

4 Explanation of Proxy voting

Mike Sapsard said that he had set up proxy voting using Lime Survey. This allowed members to vote individually either prior to the AGM or during it. This replaced the "hands up" voting on Zoom used last year as it was difficult to manage. Mike said that he had received 228 responses, which all counted as members present. This meant that the quorum had been met.

5 Approval of the minutes of the 30th AGM held on 3rd August 2020

There were no comments on the previous minutes.

The following votes were registered:

Postal votes: 14 in favour of approval of the minutes.

Online votes: 172 in favour, 17 abstentions and 16 no reply.

The minutes were therefore approved by a majority vote.

6 Chairman's Report – Tina Howard

It doesn't feel as though it has been a year since I put together my thoughts for the 2019-20 AGM and now 2020-21 has been perhaps stranger than we could ever have imagined in our lifetime.

The sole topic of conversation has been vaccinations and when and where we have received them and should there be a vaccine passport for everyone. Holidays have been on hold and grandchildren have grown up without our seeing their growth spurt; new babies born and as yet unmet by our members who are desperate for that first brilliant cuddle or the first tooth, first steps and the other milestones of childhood. I can admit that one month has seamlessly passed into the next without my noticing it. June 25th arrived and I had a text telling me that it was only 6 months to Christmas.

Nearly everyone is now more confident using the on-line facilities of zoom, teams, WhatsApp. As I reported at the last AGM the u3a conference had suggested that u3a's needed to change and to do things differently. I believe that our u3a has managed to do this successfully for there have been 31,914 hits had been made to our website, which you will agree, I am certain, give a multitudinous amount of information. More groups are meeting with zoom and more members accessing different groups.

Friendships have developed and others have lapsed as it became too difficult for some of us to hold firmly onto our mental health and stability and to answer a telephone call or to return a message. We hope that lost friendships can be reignited in the hopefully settled months to come.

From 1990 u3a Dacorum, has been in an entrenched position in the life of Dacorum. Initially with only 60 members, and I think just three groups, but even with the Pandemic putting on hold, face to face meetings, we have retained a membership of approximately 1400 and have had several new members.

The committee have continued to meet monthly by zoom and a subcommittee continued and known as DUR which I think originally stood for Dacorum U3a

Restarting. We have continued to meet generally three weekly and more often if needed, and I must thank Lesley for chairing and keeping the group to task, and Jean, Tim and Alan and Mike and Margaret (hope I haven't missed anyone) for all their consistent work on Risk Assessments, hall liaisons and keeping in close contact with the Third Age Trust whose advice we adhere to comply with the Insurance Liabilities.

Meetings have been held by the subgroup, with coordinators to assess coordinators' fears and worries especially about the suggested need for groups to clean the halls, and toilets (with which we do not agree). There have been meetings with the outside group coordinators to outline risk assessment needs and with coordinators regarding speakers and the necessary funding of them.

Strategies for restarting groups are on the website and explanatory notes for coordinators finalised so that they can begin to think about the future of their groups.

This difficult time has focused the committee on tightening up and simplifying some procedures and processes and I believe it has encouraged more people to offer the coordinators assistance, whether by organising the zoom time or contacting members.

Lesley is stepping down as Treasurer, and both Alan and I have completed our term of office.

Time and tide stop for no-one and although my association started with the U3a when I retired some 11 years ago. I joined several groups and did take over one group as a coordinator.

I now have to say a very big thank you to all the committee (and you the members) for not only the support they and you have given me as joint Vice Chair, then as Vice Chair and then in my 4 years as Chair. We have laughed and learnt together, which is just what the u3a expects, but I admit I shall miss my Friday morning meetings, and especially my run around the playhouse when we can meet to say hello and to find out how everyone is.

Thank you everyone.

7 Treasurer's Report and Acceptance

The accounts which had been distributed covered the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. As the 20/21 financial year began it was apparent that in the previous year, we had made an unplanned loss of approximately £4,000 which took our reserves to a level not much above the minimum we had set.

In late March 2020 meetings were suspended as the country went into lockdown; we were part way through the membership renewal period and didn't know how many

more members would renew; no one knew how 2020 would unfold around Covid. The start of the financial year was a period of great uncertainty.

Since we had unavoidable costs such as Third Age Trust affiliation fees, website facilities, rental of accounting and membership systems etc., the Committee reviewed all our expenditure to see where we could make economies and therefore increase our reserves. This would ensure that, even if no more members renewed, we not only had enough money in the bank to pay our bills for at least the rest of the 20/21 financial year but also, should groups restart, we had money to finance potential group losses due to reluctance of members to attend. We also had objectives of freezing the annual membership fees and purchasing Zoom channels so that as many groups could meet online as possible, including continuation of Monthly meetings.

We were successful in our aim of building a buffer of reserves since the total funds rose from £11,020 to £18,376 during the year.

Regarding membership – in fact we lost only about 10% of our members which we are grateful for.

Part way through the current financial year the outlook is still quite uncertain. Although we have started a small number of Home, Outdoor and Hall groups, we continue to nurture our reserves against losses as in- person groups restart, as well as having enough money in the bank to pay our bills this year and next.

Lesley ended her report by saying that she wished the Committee every success in the future. Tina Howard and Anne Menzies both thanked Lesley for the phenomenal amount of work she has put into her role as Treasurer.

Acceptance of the Treasurer's Report was passed unanimously.

8 Appointment of Book Examiner

Appointment of Jane Seymour as Book Examiner was passed with the following votes:

Postal votes: 14 in favour

Online votes: 184 in favour, 6 abstentions and 17 no answer.

9 Group Secretary's Report and Restarting Groups

Again, this year the Group Secretary had an unusual report to present. Due to Covid, one day there were around 130 active groups, the next day we were in lockdown and all meetings were by Zoom. But there is light at the end of what has been a very long tunnel. We are on our way to resurrecting our U3A.

Alan Osborn has held the GLO job since 1997 and for many years at the AGM reported almost exactly what he said the year before. The numbers changed and things were said in a different order.

Members may have wondered what the committee were doing for all this time. Think of a swan swimming, it looks calm on the top but out of sight we were paddling furiously, and not sure if we were going to get anywhere – it was all new to us, new to the Third Age Trust and new to the government – all fumbling along in the dark doing our best.

We are now in a position of restarting the groups, it's a bit like starting from scratch with the added complication of having to follow the Third Age Trust's advice on everything and produce Risk Assessments.

Now we are working on getting Hall and outside groups running again. All of the necessary instructions and forms have been put on our web and Tim Thompson, the new Group Secretary, together with the committee are available to help.

Coordinators have been asked to check with their group members when they are ready to meet face to face again and follow the restarting instructions on our website. Most of the halls we use have produced information to help keep groups safe. Home meeting groups are simpler, the coordinators just need to let us know a restart date.

Roughly now we have 51 hall meeting groups and 20 outside groups. So far, we have received and approved 22 group risk assessment and group plans to restart – so a long way to go.

Over the past few weeks 14 Coordinators have said they will not be restarting their groups and Alan expressed his thanks to them on the behalf of members,

Alan was standing down as a Trustee by the end of this meeting and there would be a new GLO. It gave him great pleasure to know that our U3A is in safe hands, his friends on the committee would be guiding members through the new procedures. One thing unchanged was that we are among friends who appreciate the efforts that are made on their behalf.

The committee had agreed that Alan would continue to send Group News so members would continue to receive humorous (or otherwise) and informative emails.

Alan thanked Coordinators for their support and efforts both before and since lock down and a special mention to the committee members who had worked so hard during this difficult past year.

10 Adoption of New Constitution

Mike Sapsard outlined the changes to the Constitution which was based on the model Constitution provided by the Third Age Trust. Currently our Constitution could be interpreted as meaning that we serve the whole community, not just our members. This had now been amended. There was also the power to make purchases of property (unlikely to be used), a requirement that there should be a two third majority for any major changes, and a change from 10% to 5% for the quorum at General Meetings. The change to the quorum might not have been necessary as meetings held online are better attended.

The period of Committee Members holding office has been changed. Members can serve for a total of 9 years in blocks of 3 years with a gap of a year.

Financial control is now in one section and there has been a change to allow control of fees to be by the Committee alone.

The Constitution also allows for meetings to be held virtually. Currently, such meetings are covered under special powers given by the Charity Commission due to the Covid pandemic.

Generally, there are stricter rules due to malpractice in other charities.

Tina Howard said that the Constitution had been well considered by the Committee and recommended its adoption. The proposal was that u3adacorum adopts the proposed changes to the constitution proposed by the Third Age Trust in the February 2021 Model Constitution with appropriate changes to meet u3adacorum requirements.

The following votes were registered:

Online votes: 175 in favour, 4 against, 6 abstentions and 1 no reply.

Adoption of the new Constitution was carried by a majority.

11 Election of new Committee Members 2021-2022

The following were elected:

Pam Stonebrook (Chair) 14 Postal votes in favour, 174 online votes in favour, 10 abstentions.

Peter Marshall (Treasurer) 13 Postal votes in favour, 177 online votes in favour, one vote against and 6 abstentions.

Barbara Eggesfield (Trustee) 14 Postal votes in favour, 176 online votes in favour, 5 abstentions.

Tim Thompson (Group Secretary) 13 Postal votes in favour, 178 online votes in favour, 3 abstentions.

12 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13 End of Official Business

The AGM was formally ended. Thanks were given to those members of the Committee who were retiring.

The meeting closed at 12 noon.