

Meeting Notes u3a SWN July 31st 2024 at 6pm ZOOM

Attendees

Ken Syme (Forest of Dean, Chair), Derek Shottin (Chepstow), John Williams (Bridgend, Minutes Sec), Nicky Lee (Chepstow), Hugh Hutton (Chepstow), Mary Jones (Ebbw Vale), Derek Pope (Abergavenny), Jacqui Fowler (Pontardulais), Lyn Street (Newport), Frank McLean (Cardiff)

Meeting Summary

1. **Introductions and meeting setup @ 0:00**

John introduces himself as the minute secretary, using an AI transcription system called Fathom to generate the meeting notes. He explains that this allows him to focus on the discussion rather than typing. The group discusses the capabilities and limitations of the Fathom system, including its ability to handle accents and languages.

2. Meeting agreed to Zoom recoding to facilitate recording of minutes
3. Apologies:
Michael Young, David Townsend Jones [and any other names provided]
4. Notes from 22 May meeting were approved.
5. Matters arising not covered by the Agenda. None.

6. **Chair's Report:**
The Chair advised the meeting that Sally Head of Tenovus Cancer Care (Wales-based charity) had offered to provide talks to SWN u3a groups about support to individuals suffering from cancer as well as their families, friends, and carers. Her talk also covered the early signs of cancer. Any group interested should contact Sally Head sally.head@tenovuscancercare.org.uk

7. **Treasurer's Report:** apologies having been received from previous and new treasurers, the Chair reported that necessary details for new signatories to the SWN Lloyds Business Account had been passed to the previous Treasurer, Michael Young, who was now in the process of facilitating a transition to the new arrangements. Old and new signatories would run in parallel for a brief period until there was confidence for a full transition.

8. Summary of activities from participating U3as, sharing new ideas and best practice

9. **Challenges with volunteer roles @ 3:13**

Jacqui Fowler from Pontardulais and district was welcomed to the group and shared the wide range of activities available in her u3a, despite some resistance to innovation, and struggling to find volunteers to fill key roles like chair and treasurer: on the latter point. John recounted similar experiences in his own u3a. They discussed strategies like asking current volunteers to continue in a "caretaker" role until replacements could be found.

10. **Beacon membership management software @ 4:31**

The group discussed the pros and cons of using Beacon, a membership management system. Jacqui shared her difficulty in getting her committee to adopt Beacon due to privacy concerns, while John and Derek explained how

Beacon had been helpful for their groups, though it had some limitations.

11. There was also discussion of the growing popularity of pickle ball, with members comparing notes on how equipment might be secured.

12. **TAT AGM Resolution**

Nicky raised concerns about proposed changes to the Third Age Trust (TAT) governance structure, including the creation of a council with limited powers compared to the board. The group debated the merits of the proposal and agreed that the current plan did not provide enough accountability or representation for U3A members. No evidence had been presented to demonstrate that the Third Age Trust had listened to concerns previously expressed by members or had any substantive understanding of how individual U3As functioned or what they provided to members.

13. **Financial transparency and spending at Third Age Trust @ 1:04:24**

The group expressed frustration with the lack of financial transparency from TAT, including concerns about the high salaries of TAT staff and the lack of detailed budget information provided to U3As. They argued that as the funding source, U3As should have more visibility and input into TAT's financial decisions.

14. **Recap and next steps @ 1:15:06**

The group agreed to recommend that u3a's vote against the proposed TAT governance changes at the upcoming AGM, with the goal of forcing TAT to engage in more meaningful consultation with U3As. They also provisionally agreed the date for the next South Wales Network meeting, on Wednesday 3rd October at 6pm, two weeks before the TAT AGM.

Comments and clarifications

Financial transparency and spending at Third Age Trust @ 1:04:24

The group expressed frustration with the lack of financial transparency from TAT. The staff budget is high, but we do not know how many staff are employed and in what positions. The 24/25 budget for projects and development has quadrupled but without any detail about what this will be spent on. Concern is that budget is being allocated to projects for which TAT do not have a mandate. It was noted that the reserve budget now stands at over £2m.

They argued that as the funding source, U3As should have more visibility and input into TAT's financial decisions.

(Nicky Lee – Chair Chepstow u3a)