

Attendees

Kevin Stock	SCN Manager	
Sally Ingledew (part)	Council Rep	
Jackie Wiggins	Council Rep	
Warner Baker	Webmaster	Botley HE & District
Geoffrey Piper	Publicity	Gosport
Phil Tarling	Media & Sec	IOW
Rob Stansbury	Chair	Waterlooville
Angela Chapman	Web, Bulletin	Waterlooville

Apologies from: Emsworth, Guernsey, Havant, Horndean, Locks Heath, Solent

- 1. Welcome** by Kevin Stock, SCN Manager
Permission was received to record the meeting for the purpose of producing this report.
- 2. Introductions** All attendees introduced themselves and said which role(s) they performed.

For this meeting I turned on Zoom's AI Transcribing facility, and this is the report that it produced (after minor corrections by myself).

Meeting summary

Quick recap

The meeting focused on media and PR activities across several U3As in the South Central network, with participants sharing experiences and challenges related to membership growth, public relations, and communication strategies. Sally announced her stepping down as council rep and encouraged others to join a new regional PR team. Attendees discussed various PR methods, including newsletters, social media, open days, and public events, and compared how different U3As manage membership fees, group funding, and venue costs. There was a discussion on the impact of GDPR regulations and data storage, with Warner Baker providing context from his professional experience. The group exchanged ideas on attracting new members, the pros and cons of U3A size, and the importance of adapting

organizational structures as membership grows. They also shared insights on the use of Facebook, websites, and posters for outreach, and considered the value of exchanging newsletters between regions. The meeting highlighted the diversity of approaches to PR and membership management, with participants learning from each other's successes and challenges.

Next steps

Geoff

- To follow up with Phil (Isle of Wight) after the meeting to discuss how their U3A manages membership fees and group funding.
- To consider opening the planned Gosport U3A group display event in December to the public, not just members.

Jackie

- To discuss with Sally the direction and potential for a newsletter editors' study day or exchange of newsletters between regions.

Kevin

- To act as a contact point for anyone interested in joining the regional PR team.

Summary

U3A Council and PR Updates

Sally announced her stepping down as council and asked for volunteers for a regional PR team. The group discussed various PR activities across different U3As, including participation in local fairs, newsletter distribution, and online joining processes. Warner provided clarification on GDPR requirements, explaining that while data storage regulations have evolved, they are primarily intended for corporate use rather than small organizations. The discussion concluded with members sharing insights about their U3A growth patterns and membership challenges, particularly around venue capacity and recruitment needs.

Venue Costs and Membership Fees

Geoff said that the Gosport membership fee included room hire for their groups, and discussed challenges with venue costs for large groups, noting that hiring halls costs £250-£300 annually and expressed concerns about implementing membership fees that could exceed £100 per year. Jackie suggested using pubs as free venues, which works well for some groups but isn't suitable for all activities requiring private spaces. Phil and Kevin offered to share their experience with self-funding groups and

room hire, with Phil explaining their Isle of Wight U3A's successful growth to 443 members through Facebook promotion and community partnerships.

U3A Growth and Challenges Discussion

Phil discussed the growth and challenges of their U3A on the Isle of Wight, highlighting issues with member retention, volunteer recruitment, and committee formation. He shared successful outreach efforts, including coffee mornings at local pubs and partnerships with NHS social workers, and noted that they are working toward becoming a separate charity. Phil emphasized the potential for growth, citing that approximately 2,000 people on the island could be U3A members, and discussed using various platforms like local radio and Facebook to increase visibility. The group also discussed the importance of accessible locations for members who do not drive, with Geoff noting the advantage of Gosport's compact area and good bus routes.

U3A Membership Structures Discussion

The group discussed membership structures and fees across different U3A organizations. Phil shared that Wokingham U3A with 2,000 members charges £6 annually, while his organization is considering reducing their fee due to the flexible activity-based pricing model they offer. The discussion revealed that Waterloooville U3A has 117 groups serving over 1,000 members (target ratio of one group per 10 members), while Portsmouth charges a flat £35 annual fee without additional group charges. Geoff expressed concerns about implementing changes in Gosport's U3A, which currently has 43 groups serving over 400 members, and Rob suggested he should reach out to Phil for more information on how larger organizations manage their operations.

U3A Branch Management Discussion

The group discussed various aspects of running U3A branches, including membership costs, group activities, and promotional events. Phil shared his experience starting a "Not Golf Group" (Crazy Golf) inspired by his mother's enjoyment of the activity, while Geoff inquired about pickleball groups, noting their popularity. The discussion covered annual open days, with Kevin from Waterloooville describing their successful event that attracted new members and featured local dignitaries. The group also discussed U3A week activities, with Jackie mentioning an upcoming event at Milton Keynes, and Warner Baker sharing details about his U3A's Facebook presence and financial management, including their recent transition to charity status.

U3A Membership and Funding Strategies

The group discussed membership fees and funding approaches across different U3A branches. Warner Baker shared that their group charges £63 per head for coach

trips and has a policy of refunding excess funds to participants, while Jackie explained her U3A's treasurer restrictions on refunding educational event overcharges. The discussion also covered marketing efforts, with Warner Baker noting their effective use of community notice boards and parish council websites, while Jackie suggested regional newsletter exchanges and raised questions about the national website platform requirements.