

Cotswold Link u3a network
Minutes of half yearly meeting held on 27 March 2025
at Ledbury Community Centre, Ledbury

Present:

Chris Hucker (Chair), Marion Collighan (Secretary), Ann Kelly (Treasurer), Jenny Harrison (committee member), Sue Russell (committee member + Network Link Chair), Marian Luck (South West council member, Rob Rowberry (West Midlands council member).
Valerie Hayward, Gillian Thompson & Sheelagh Autef (Bishops Cleeve), Anthea Whitehead (Bromsgrove), John Walton & Elinor Padfield (Cam, Dursley & District), Ken Inglis (Cheltenham), Paul Grierson (Churchdown), Chris Boydell, Mo Wheeler, Robert Hart & Reyn Hauff (Cirencester), Mike Bracey & Lesley Short (Droitwich Spa), Diane Nicholls (Evesham & District), John Lang (Fairford & District), Clive Harper (Gloucester), Alan Evans (Hereford), Alasdair Gibson, Erica Morland & Mike Townsend (Ledbury & District), Gisella Lehman & Hilary Tuite (Leominster), Aidan Lawrence (Malvern), Ingrid Cummings & Jules Everett (Newent), Elizabeth Reeves (North Cotswold), Sue Gee (Redditch), William Lyons & Mark Eardley (Ross-on-Wye), Dilys Warren & Peter Toon (Stroud), Mike Jones (Tewkesbury), Jean Robb & Christine Scott (Worcester), Ken Syme (Forest of Dean).

1) Apologies for absence

There were voting delegates representing 21 u3as out of the 27 Cotswold Link members, which is 78%, making the meeting quorate.

Apologies had been received from: Susan Parker (South West Regional Trustee), Jean Jackson (West Midlands Regional Trustee), Mike Byrne (Bromsgrove), Steve McHale (Bourton & District), Jeremy Furtado (Gloucester), Alan Torbet (Malvern), Lindis Dobson (Northleach), Sally Whyte (Persnore), Phil & Jane Hawthorne (Winchcombe), Roger Steer (Thornbury), Carmel Burton (committee member).

2) Acceptance of minutes of half yearly meeting held on 20 September 2024

No issues were raised with the minutes from the previous half yearly meeting in September 2024. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by Paul Grierson and seconded by Jenny Harrison. The minutes were approved.

3) Matters arising from the minutes

Marion noted that she still needs to send u3a contacts some ideas on getting to the Pavilion in Cheltenham on public transport, which she will look at in the next couple of weeks.

4) News from the committee

a) Special Interest Day 2025

This will be on the theme of “The Influence of Music on our Society and Culture” at the Pavilion in Cheltenham on Thursday 12th June 2025.

Information on the event was sent out to u3a contacts on 25th January 2025 and has been on our website since then. Chris talked through the 4 sessions that are planned as part of the day.

Lesley advised that she has already advertised to Droitwich members but wondered if she should readvertise. Chris advised that readvertising would be a good idea as there are still plenty of places available. The event is open to any u3a member, their u3a does not have to be a member of Cotswold link although Link members have priority. However, non-members cannot attend due to provisions of the u3a liability insurance.

Rob advised that Redditch have a "Music in our time" group that meets regularly and has grown from 10 to about 40 people.

b) Peer support groups

The Cotswold Link committee facilitate 4 successful peer support groups for role holders, which meet over Zoom every 2-3 months.

i) Business Secretaries

Marion facilitates the Business Secretaries' group, which now contains 11 people. Recent subjects discussed have included: Constitutions and policies, Storage of documents, Use of excess reserves and Obtaining new committee members.

ii) Groups Coordinators

Marion facilitates the Groups Coordinators' group, which now contains 13 people. Recent subjects discussed have included: Approaches to groups for members on their own, use of Beacon for group management, Dealing with full groups and waiting lists, Finding venues at reasonable costs and Finding group leaders.

iii) Membership Secretaries

Marion facilitates the Membership Secretaries' group, which now contains 10 people. Recent subjects discussed have included: Membership retention and reasons for leaving, Renewals in Beacon, Membership categories and reciprocal members, Scope of the role and Obtaining new members.

iv) Treasurers

Ann facilitates the Treasurers' group, which now contains all 27 treasurers of the Cotswold Link u3as. The group is lively and has a good range of discussions. It is good place for new treasurers to find help, both in using Beacon and with more general issues. There is also a national Treasurer's Forum, which is run by Network Link, that some members attend.

v) Chairs

Currently the Chairs' peer support group is on hold, as there is insufficient interest amongst the link u3as. Other groups are available for chairs, such

as the National Chairs Forum.

vi) Speakers' Secretaries

Mike Jones reminded the group that there is a peer support group of Speakers Secretaries in Gloucestershire coordinated by Anne Cox from Tetbury. Speakers' secretaries from more than half the u3as in Gloucestershire meet in-person occasionally and share information on good speakers. There is not enough interest currently to have a regular meeting for those in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

vii) Peer support for interest groups

Diane Nicholls asked if it would be possible to start peer support groups for interest group subjects, e.g. Family History. Marion advised that this would be possible but would have to be facilitated by somebody from the group, as the committee would not have the capacity. She is happy to help groups to get started. Marion also reminded delegates that the Cheltenham Genetic Genealogy Group advertise on the Cotswold Link website and are happy to offer advice to members of Cotswold Link u3as.

Aidan Lawrence volunteered to run a group to provide advice on general IT issues. This would not include Beacon or Siteworks, as Malvern do not use those.

Mike Jones advised that he contacted Evesham, as he saw they had a Birdwatching group and there were not enough members interested to allow Tewkesbury to form a group of their own. Some other delegates added that their u3as have Birdwatching groups.

Peter Toons advised that he had seen there is an Ancient History group in Worcester and wondered if other u3as have them.

viii) Finding interest groups in other u3as

It was asked if Cotswold Link could create a master list of all groups within member u3as on the website, to help people find groups in other u3as. Marion advised that when she had started on the Cotswold Link there was such a table on the website. However, it was very inaccurate because u3as did not remember to send updates when things changed. She did not think it was a viable option. However, she pointed out that the Cotswold Link website has a page of links to the websites of all the member u3as.

Sue added that she believes the SiteWorks team are working on a search option that would allow searching across all the u3a websites on Siteworks for a group.

5) Report from the West Midlands – Rob Rowberry

"I am currently a Public Governor at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital in

Birmingham. What I have learnt from that role is that with a great CEO, it follows that the Board will be pretty good as well, making the “foot soldiers” a unit that gives the Board total loyalty and respect, therefore channelling their efforts down the list. What have you got? Answer = a facility that WORKS LIKE A MACHINE. In the u3a we have a machine of people who are making it tick over. The Councillors are going to be the OIL that makes the machine purr and not just grind away.

What does AI stand for? In my world it stands for ALL INCLUSIVE ...ALWAYS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE .

The word for u3a is COMMUNICATION .

phonetically speaking

C= is what you get

O= is what you say when you can C what you get

M= me

as for the rest, I cannot work that out yet.

What you will get from me is information. If I know something from Board level, I will analyse it, dissect it, and then pass it on to Chairs or Secretaries who will filter it again to pass on a summary that will be helpful to everybody. Your job will be to let me know of anything that you feel can be done to help you as members.

What have we got?

COMMUNICATION AND TEAM WORK.

As an organisation u3a can and does exist. AS A TEAM WE CAN ACHIEVE MIRACLES.

Just look at my football team, the mighty Aston Villa.

Incidentally Villa Captain is Scotland's John McGinn.

Our CEO is Scotland's Iain Cassidy.”

6) Report from the South West – Marian Luck council representative

“Thank you very much for asking me to come along today. I really value meeting u3a members face to face and hearing their views, and how different networks and u3as do things. It all helps to broaden my knowledge of the region and any problems and successes there have been. I'm on a bit of a learning curve.

Since I was appointed to the u3a Council, I have visited Two Moors Network, West Dorset Network and now Cotswold Link. This is the first one I have attended on my own, the others have been with Susan Parker who is being very good about 'easing me' into my role.

I have been a member of the Pilot Council from the start and as others have said, it took a little while to settle down. By the time the last meeting was held last September we had all become very comfortable with each other and I think for the first time we ALL felt comfortable airing our views without feeling any embarrassment and that we weren't going to be made to feel out of place.

I sincerely hope that the members who were part of the Pilot Council will make the newly elected members feel welcome and not 'shut out' or not able to express their views. By the time this meeting is taking place we will know who is to be the

Chair of the Council and I look forward our first meeting with great enthusiasm.

Council will work best if you or any of your members bring to our attention areas that are of concern that they would like us to raise in the Council otherwise, we won't know what issues our members need us to raise.

Both Susan and I love to visit u3as, you never know, you might get one of us or both. I know that Susan would like me to repeat her plea for more people to join the Regional Support team, if anyone of you, or any of your members are interested please would you ask them to contact Susan or myself. We really do need someone to handle publicity and an events person but if you are able to support the region in any way at all then we would be very grateful.

Susan also wanted me to let you know that the regional website has been migrated to Site-works and we would love to have something fresh to put on it. Some pictures of anything your u3as have been up to, which you think would be of interest to other u3as in the region are always good, or any articles that might be of help or encourage others to have a go. Let's face it, a website with the same old stuff on it isn't going to get visited very often.

To close, if you have any questions, problems, or ideas, please let Susan or myself know. We will do our best to help. Equally, please let us know about your successes as well."

7) AOB

There was no other business.

8) Date and time of next meeting

This will be hosted by Cam, Dursley & District u3a on Thursday 11th September at Coaley Village Hall, The Street, Coaley, GL11 5EB.

Signed..... Date