



## North London U3A

### **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 9 October 2023 at St Margaret's Church, Finchley**

**Present:** 75 members, including from the committee:

Michael Johns – Chair

Edmond Cohen – Vice Chair

Roy Seger – Treasurer

Ruth Silver – Business and Acting Membership Secretary

Henrietta Cohen – Groups Organiser

Michael Lewin – Publicity

Susan Watt – Website Editor

plus 11 proxy votes.

29 apologies for absence received, including Marion Fitzpatrick, Events Organiser.

#### **1. Talk**

Stuart Maugham gave a talk about the musical *Showboat*, illustrated by slides and music.

#### **2. Minutes of previous AGM held on 10 October 2022**

The minutes were circulated to members prior to the meeting and no requests for amendments were received. A resolution to accept the minutes was put to the vote.

Proposer: Edmond Cohen                      Seconder: Michael Johns

Result: the motion was carried by a show of hands with no votes against and with 4 abstentions.

#### **3. Chair's report**

The Chair's report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Michael Johns invited questions but none were received.

#### **4. Treasurer's report**

The Treasurer's report and the accounts were circulated to members prior to the meeting. Roy Seger invited questions. David Lewis asked whether there



Chair – Michael Johns  
Proposer: Edmond Cohen                      Second: Ruth Silver  
Vice Chair – Edmond Cohen  
Proposer: Michael Johns                      Second: Ruth Silver  
Treasurer – Roy Seger  
Proposer: Michael Johns                      Second: Ruth Silver  
Business Secretary – Ruth Silver  
Proposer: Michael Johns                      Second: Edmond Cohen

Result: All the above committee members and officers were elected by a show of hands with no votes against and 2 abstentions.

**6. Proposal that membership fees for 2024 should be £40**

Roy Seger explained that the proposed fee of £40 was in line with many of the other u3as in the area and was affordable given the level of reserves. David Lewis asked whether it was high enough to break even. Roy said that there was likely to be a small continuing deficit, but it was hoped this would be eliminated over the next year or two by the committee's actions to restrict spending on venues. It was consistent with the agreed reserves policy outlined in his report of keeping reserves of two thirds of subscription income. Frank Fisher asked whether the reserves were shown on the accounts and whether the policy was to keep these to two thirds of turnover. Roy confirmed that the amount at the bank was the NLU3A's reserves, though when he was calculating the level against the reserves policy, he would exclude any subscriptions received for the next financial year. The target was two thirds of subscription income, not two thirds of total turnover. Some members asked if the subscription could afford to pay for better roving microphones. Roy explained that the microphones were part of the overall contract for use of the premises, but the committee would investigate whether any improvement was possible. One member suggested the problem was not any technical deficiency in the microphones but that speakers were not holding them correctly.

A resolution to set membership fees for 2024 at £40 was put to the vote.

Result: the motion was passed by a show of hands with 2 votes against and 4 abstentions.

**7. Proposal about honorary membership**

Mary Callaghan proposed the following resolution:

*NLU3A does not have any rule in the NLU3A constitution on Lifetime membership/Honorary Membership. Many u3as offer honorary memberships to individuals who have given exceptional service to the U3A. Even for example Barnsley u3a's new honorary member Dickie Bird.*

*Therefore we propose that NLU3A add to its constitution the provision to bestow honorary/Lifetime membership to individuals who have given exceptional contribution of service to the NLU3A.*

*Nominations for Honorary Membership, supported by at least two members, may be submitted to the Committee for its consideration (Constitution 4.3). In addition to the proposer the nomination must be supported by two other members. Nominations may only be submitted or supported by current members or Honorary Members of North London U3A.*

Mary said that many u3as had provision in their constitutions for giving honorary membership to members who had contributed exemplary service and she thought NLU3A should follow their example as a way of honouring members with particularly notable achievements. She proposed that any two members could make a nomination to the committee to consider. Miriam David, seconding the motion, agreed with Mary and clarified that only a small number of people should be honoured in this way, at the decision of the committee. Michael Johns, speaking on behalf of the committee, said that they agreed that there should be provision for honorary members, that any members could nominate and that the decision was for the committee. However, there was no need for an amendment to the constitution to achieve this. The committee and its predecessors had always interpreted the constitution as permitting honorary members and there were indeed four at the moment – Keith Richards, Patricia Isaacs, Mike Christie and Ruth Silver. Article 31 of the constitution gave powers to the committee to write rules about membership, which could be changed or removed at a general meeting of members and he suggested the position should be clarified by introducing rules on the lines proposed. A change in the constitution itself was unnecessary and would involve bureaucracy in seeking approval from the Third Age Trust and the Charity Commission. In response to a question, he promised to share the draft text of the rule with members and consider any comments before introducing it. On the strength of this assurance, Mary Callaghan withdrew the resolution.

#### **8. Proposal about membership year**

Jeff Duckett proposed the following resolution:

*NLU3A 'academic year' starts in September each year. Before classes resume NLU3A holds an open day to seek new members and to advertise its courses to both new and existing members. Since the Covid19 pandemic impacted on NLU3A finances, with closure of rented accommodation, acquisition of Zoom licences and fewer courses, the committee agreed to change the membership year to start in January. This has created an administrative problem which needs to be rectified. The membership year and the academic year are no longer the same.*

*We propose that the academic year and membership year run in parallel again. This should take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024 instead of January 2024.*

Jeff said that the membership year had been changed because of the pandemic, but it now meant that members who joined in the autumn had to pay a full year's subscription for only a term's benefit. He thought this was unfair and the membership year should be aligned with the academic year. Michael Johns said that this was not accurate as members who joined in the second half of the calendar year paid a reduced subscription of £24. [Note – there is also provision for someone who joins in the last two months of the year to pay a single year's subscription through to the end of the succeeding year.] Miriam David, seconding the motion said it was still unfair, because someone who joined at the main recruitment event of the Open Morning would have to pay the part year fee plus a whole year's subscription to get a single year in NLU3A. Michael Johns, speaking on behalf of the committee, accepted that the change of date was introduced when low expenditure because of Covid meant that a free period of membership was appropriate. However, the renewal period involved a lot of work for the membership secretary, which was easier to cope with in the winter than in the summer. No-one had come forward to share the work and it would be impracticable to go back to a September year end. Ruth Silver explained that if she had to administer renewals in the summer and early autumn, she would be unable to take any time off for herself at the peak holiday season. Henrietta Cohen said that the Open Morning was far from being the only recruitment occasion and new members joined all through the year. Michael Johns said the concept of an academic year had little meaning to most interest groups and it would be extremely rare for a member to join just for a year from September to September. Miriam David said that venues were booked from September to September; Henrietta explained that bookings were actually term by term, even if for simplicity she asked group co-ordinators their plans for a longer period.

The resolution was put to the vote. It was rejected by a show of hands with 9 votes in support and a small number of abstentions.

## **9. Any other business**

Michael Johns invited questions and comments on NLU3A's activities. Elsa Ramsey said that the catering team was desperately short of volunteers and we would not be able to continue with events involving catering unless more members came forward ready to do some cooking. Michael Johns reinforced her plea and said that a request had been included in the latest newsletter.

David Jones thanked the committee for all that they did for members.

There being no other questions or comments, Michael Johns thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting at 12.45pm.