



MINUTES OF THE 55th TAS SUSSEX AREA FORUM
FRIDAY 5th October 2018, held at
Boxgrove Village Hall, The Street, Boxgrove, Chichester P18 0EF

1) **WELCOME:** Rhoda Sheppard, Chairman of The Arts Society Chichester (the host Society), welcomed everyone to the meeting. David Bignell welcomed The Arts Society Trustee, Jaqui Varley and welcomed Chairmen who were attending an Area meeting for the first time in their new role.

2) **ATTENDING:**

Area Chairman	David Bignell
Area Treasurer	Alan Bowden
Area Secretary (Admin)	Lois Cope
Area Secretary (Minutes)	Diane Fuell
Young Arts	Gillian Baker

3) **APOLOGIES** were received from:

Angela Magness, Area Coordinators for Education, Sheila Ryan, Church Recorders, Penny Hill, Heritage Volunteers TAS Steyning, Leonard Warner, TAS Uckfield, Lewes and Newick, Annette Shalford, Turners Hill, Nigel Emery.

4) **MINUTES** The minutes of the 54th Area meeting, 23rd October 2018, which had been circulated and taken as read, were approved.

5) **MATTERS ARISING:** None, as any matters will be dealt with on the agenda.

6) **SUSSEX AREA REPORTS AND UPDATES** (Reports are previously circulated and taken as read)

a) **Area Chairman: David Bignell**

David has had a busy start to his time as chairman. He has been on a number of training courses which have focussed on the decline in and aging of the membership, and formation of new societies.

He thanked the four Area Team members, Phil Down, Pat McChesney, Penny Hill and Jane Hopkin, who have stepped down this year and acknowledged the sad death of Susi Beale. He welcomed the new members to the Team; Gill Baker Young Art representative, Lois Cope as administrative Secretary as well as Area Co-ordinator for Education and Diane Fuell as Minutes Secretary. A new Rep is required for Heritage Volunteering, Trails of Discovery and for Church Recording and local groups will be contacted to identify possible volunteers.

Sussex local societies, like many other in the country, do not report all their volunteering activities. This compromises Headquarters efforts to promote the role and significance of the Arts Society and local Reps will be encouraged to report all their activities.

Sussex membership has declined by 5.4%, higher than the national average of 3.6%. There is great variability across the local societies from a gain of 16% to a loss of 28%. David discussed the health of the Sussex area with Angela Payne, the Society Support Trustee at headquarters, who felt we were in a relatively good state. Newick has joined with Uckfield and Lewes and the group should be congratulated on this happy outcome. The Area has no direct role in the formation of new societies but there had been a taster meeting for a new group in Chichester and this initiative is moving ahead. Headquarters requires that any new society have a minimum of 170 members and a £50 annual subscription.

David has attended many Jubilee events this summer. He asked for details of any an event he has not attended so he can report the involvement of the Sussex Area to HQ. There had not been a specific Area event but a good contribution had been made by joining with a number of local societies to part-sponsor the

Young Craftsman of the Year Competition at the South of England Show, and the creation of a one off, second Area scholarship at West Dean. Sue Ng is continuing her relationship with the Young Craftsman initiative, which will in future be known as the Young Artisan of the Year and will be working with Gill and Local Societies to identify more candidates to enter the competition. The relationship with West Dean will continue and the level of support was discussed by the Team (see Treasurers Report below).

The decline in membership was discussed at the TAS national AGM, which David attended. The AGM in 2020 will be in Malaga due to the strength of TAS groups in Southern Spain. David has suggested Brighton as a future venue for the AGM

The Kirdford meeting and lunch was very successful and notes are available from the Area Chair by request.

West Dean College is keen to work with TAS and societies local to the college have strong links. West Sussex Music facilitates music and instrumental lessons in schools. There is a similar East Sussex organisation. West Dean College is on the far edge of the Area and many groups might rather support organisations that cover the whole county

Trails of Discovery (formally Church Trails then Children's Trails) now include adults with conditions such as dementia and can include any place of worship and other historic buildings or sites. Approval for these trails is being simplified

Because of the accessible training programmes from headquarters and the difficulty of finding volunteers in the Area, local training sessions will be suspended. The Area information day will go ahead on Friday 1st March 2019.

b) **Area Treasurer: Alan Bowden**

Alan wished to discuss the Area sponsorship and Area reserves.

- i) Most of the money paid for West Dean sponsorship is subscribed by local societies, who make their own decisions on the amount they can afford. This is 'topped up' by funds from Area and recently the scholarship contribution has been a minimum £3000. Last year Area, in recognition of the golden anniversary, contributed enough to support 2 students with a total grant of £6000. Given a profit has been made from study days in recent years it is proposed that the contribution should be increased to £4000. This was discussed during the Chairman's Forum. Any grants need to be sustainable and this would depend on future profits from study days.
- ii) The reserves currently at £11,000, higher than needed to meet any conceivable contingency. Consideration should be given to transfer up to £5000 excess to the Patricia Fay account where it could be used to support the Arts but would also be accessible to the Sussex Area should it be required. It is expected that headquarters will soon issue guidance about the level of funding in Area accounts

Alan is prepared to continue in office for one more year but volunteers for a successor would be welcome.

c) **Joint Area Co-ordinators for Education (ACE): Lois Cope/Angela Magness**

- i) **Information Day.** Lois reported that the next information day will take place 1st March 2019. Early booking forms for attendance will be sent out mid-November.
- ii) **Special Interest Days (SIDs).** Angela was not present but had submitted a list of diary dates. These meetings will all be at Turners Hill because of the very reasonable cost of the venue.

d) **Church Recorders Representative: Sheila Ryan**

Sheila had submitted a report, listing current projects. A new rep for Church Recorders is required.

e) **Heritage Volunteers Representative: Penny Hill**

Penny's report had been circulated. A successor for this role is required

f) **Young Arts Representative: Gill Baker**

Gill had taken over from Susi Beale but had not had a formal handover. The updated website Young Arts page includes the most current information of the various initiatives and a newsletter will be published every term.

7) **Chairman's Forum- pre-submitted questions**

a) **City of Chichester, Betty Smith and Horsham, Christine Denne**

Could the format of the current Arts Society Magazine contain more information pertinent to our Societies and

restored to its former style with less advertisements for travel? There was a feeling that the Magazine no longer focussed on the activities of local societies.

The size of magazine had increased from 12 to 35 pages. There were still interesting articles but too many advertisements. Sue Ing suggested there should be a members' letter page so opinions could be expressed. Jaqui Varley reported that The Arts Society magazine is now edited externally with the aim of increasing the circulation and potentially selling the magazine to the public and therefore reaching non-members. Advertisements were required to pay for the publication. An HQ poll indicated that there was a preference for the new format and it is unlikely to return to the previous layout.

b) Henfield – Janet Oswald

i) Could the CEO, Florian Schweizer, be invited to the Sussex Area?

As Sussex was a very large area it would be appropriate to invite him to an Area meeting. It was agreed that his Personal Assistant, Shivani Mahida, should be approached with an invitation to a Sussex Area meeting.

ii) Any update on speaker's fees would be welcome

It appears that new speakers are charging more than established lecturers. It is difficult to establish a table of fees as there is a 'market value' for speakers. Younger speakers are working to establish themselves, whereas older speakers have alternative sources of income.

iii) Any information about safeguarding when working with YA Groups?

Guidance on safeguarding is expected from headquarters shortly. It was stressed that certification by another organisation is not relevant when working with young people under the auspices of The Arts Society. The only safe way to engage with children is within a school where teachers are responsible for safeguarding.

c) Mid Sussex – Sue Ng

Plea for wider support for Young Craftsman of the Year at the South of England Show from of Societies and schools, colleges, etc. Members present were asked to support this initiative.

d) Society name withheld

Why is the 2020 TAS AGM being held in Malaga?

Southern Spain is a fast-growing area for the Arts Society which is now truly international. Flights to Malaga are available relatively cheaply from many UK airports. Venues and accommodation in Malaga has already been reserved. It is suggested that the national AGM and associated side-trips could be treated as a TAS overseas holiday by local societies.

e) Society name withheld

Why do we have the Autumn Area Forum at the extreme end of the County?

The Spring AGM is held in Haywards Heath which is roughly in the centre of the county, A recent Area meeting was held in Hastings which is in the far east. It should be noted there are disproportionately more local groups in West Sussex, especially in the Chichester vicinity, so some bias towards this location is inevitable.

8) Questions generated in the meeting

a) Area sponsorship

It was felt that given the current financial position we could afford to spend more than £3000 to sponsor West Dean students. More than £4000 is not sustainable. Members felt we should support 2 students with £2000 each

but Alan explained that the management of the college felt it better to support one student with £4000. There is still the question of what should be done with financial reserves. It was agreed that a report and proposal should be brought to the AGM.

b) **Gillian Baxter – Arun**

Raised the question about feedback from West Dean and the Student we sponsor. There is website coverage of the work done by our sponsored students and students are pleased to attend Area meetings if requested.

c) **Janet Oswald - Henfield**

Questioned the charge for Study Days given that considerable profits were being made. It was pointed out that the costs for the Turners Hill venue were low and this meant profits were higher than they might be at a more expensive venue and there was no need to decrease the price, given that the surplus was used to part-fund the West Dean scholarship.

d) **Victoria Joyce - Wealden**

Questioned whether accounts should be posted on websites along with AGM minutes. Alan did not feel it was necessary to make accounts public. It was agreed they could be posted on member only sections of the website. This this was endorsed by the meeting.

9) **THE ARTS SOCIETY TRUSTEE: Jaqui Varley :**

Jaqui said she was very pleased to come to the meeting as she used to live in Storrington and her daughter lived in Brighton.

She recognised that the Arts Society was a unique organisation that had been thriving for 50 years and needed to look to the future. The Society faced a number of challenges including an aging membership and difficulty in recruiting committee members. .

As the equipment was not available Jaqui was unable to show her PowerPoint presentation but she distributed hard copies of her slides. She reviewed the national results of the SWOT analysis that The Sussex Area had participated in last March. Julie Goldsmith, the new national Chair of the Arts Society is giving these results priority.

a) **Strengths**

The opportunities to hear great lectures, go on interesting trips with fantastic like-minded people are seen as considerable strengths. These will be enhanced by a support index, enhanced training and the volunteering impact review. The opportunity to organise a fantastic trip to the AGM in Malaga would embrace all the strengths

b) **Weaknesses**

Sussex identified difficulty recruiting committee members, and aging population and competition with U3A as some of the difficulties. Overall the most frequent comments also included London Centric, lack of a strong image and public awareness, and ineffective communication channels.

The headquarters response was to publish an external PR plan. It had been hoped the rebranding would have heightened The Arts Society profile but this had not happened. Local publicity is also important.

The internal communication plan will be strengthened and exchange of ideas is essential. It is estimated that the support The Arts Society provides to the arts is worth 9 million a year but this is not recognised by the general public. Further training of reps to ensure volunteering efforts are reported will be undertaken and this training will be taken outside of London.

All policies and procedures will be reviewed to improve governance and new policies on volunteering and safeguarding will be produced.

c) **Opportunities**

These were identified as being more flexible by engaging with new audiences in new settings, embracing social media and offering additional membership opportunities. It is planned to promote innovation and forge new

partnerships with museums and galleries. It is suggested we look for sponsors locally (auction houses, antique dealers?). Magazines and digital offerings will be made accessible. Membership may be declining in some areas but there are a number of societies with waiting lists. These societies should use the associate member facility to keep these potential members 'warm'.

d) **Threats**

The threats were similar to the weaknesses. They also included lack of public awareness and difficulties in finding suitable venues.

The headquarters response is to carry out a volunteering impact review, create an awareness campaign, produce PR-able content and product development.

Caroline Auden, a young digital expert, who created the RHS website will produce content to support the membership. It was noted that currently 17 staff support 90,000 members.

The product lines are being updated. The new AS badge costs just £15 but is ideal to wear when volunteering at NT site etc

This is a two year plan. A survey will be launched in the coming months and repeated 12 months later to measure the success of the initiatives. Each Area committee was given an official feedback form to be completed and sent back to head office after their next committee meeting .

10) Close of meeting

David thanked Jaqui and all the members for attending and Rhoda and team for organising the meeting. The next meeting will be the AGM on 5 April 2019, at Clair Hall in Haywards Heath.