

Minutes of the AGM of Newbury and Thatcham UNAUK held on Friday 8th April in the Quaker Meeting House in Newbury

Marion Paterson, the President, opened the meeting at 19.45 hours having allowed time for late comers to arrive, however the meeting had to proceed as non-Quorate. It was decided that the Committee would need to discuss amending the Constitution so that those attending could be counted towards making up a Quorum for the AGM. Marion welcomed all those attending especially the Deputy Mayor Gary Norman and Carol Jackson-Doerge, the Deputy Lieutenant.

1. Richard Foster, Henry Moffatt, Sue Farrant, Jeanette Clifford, Tricia Davis, John Wallace, Dr Elizabeth Bell, Steve Rice, Maris and Andres Nemvalts, Melanie Pryor, Anita Whydell, Colin Stone all tendered their apologies.
2. Both Joyat Mitra and Helmut Gase were remembered with a moment's silence and they were both noted as having made contributions to the branch. It was also noted that the Society of Friends' representative Jackie Penny was unwell and therefore not able to continue as their representative.
3. The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Gary Norman gave apologies for the Mayor not attending. He said that the UN was more important than ever before with the situation in Ukraine, as it can act as the conscience of the world. Gary suggested now was a good time to try to recruit new members to the organisation, and he also offered to attend any of our future events.
4. Marion gave her President's address, summarising by saying the UN needs to hold the reins and encourage dialogue in the present difficult times. She informed the meeting of when the UN was formed, at a time when there was a sense of purpose and a feeling of optimism for the world – the ideals of liberal Western democracy were to be those of the future. Marion then summarised the period leading up to 1991 when all the former Republics of the USSR had become independent, and Ukraine was one of the largest. She asked whether now in 2022 President Putin is suffering from delusions of grandeur, harking back to the days of the former USSR. Putin is quoted as saying that the fall of the Berlin Wall was the worst day in Russian history.
5. Graeme then read the Minutes from 2019's AGM and mentioned follow-ups. There were no matters arising, except that Branch equipment is being held by both Graeme and Colin Stone.
6. Marion set the scene for those who did not know that, at a time when our branch and others, were near to closing down completely, HQ had suggested a small group of 4 or 5 people, always including a Treasurer, would be able to continue running the branch. It was noted that membership numbers had been declining even before COVID.
7. Graeme presented his Co-ordinators Report [copy below] which included mentions of the Holocaust Memorial Days held since the last AGM, and also his correspondence with our MP Laura Farris. He thanked a few people for their help throughout the pandemic and mentioned the branch taking part in the Sunday Remembrance parades in Thatcham. Father Peter Codd asked if, **as early as in the autumn this year**, the branch could ask the Jewish community (e.g., in Reading) so see what they would like to take place for January 2023 for the Holocaust Memorial Day? He also offered photographs for a relevant collage, to help set the context of the day. Carol Jackson-Doerge suggested contacting West Berkshire Council again to ask for their support for the Memorial Day. Gary Norman believed we ought to keep the service in the Market Square but try to avoid market days.
8. The Treasurer's Report was given by Marion in the absence of Melanie Pryor. Marion summarised the recent difficulties with the HSBC account and explained that Metro bank

had asked numerous questions. Carol J-D suggested contacting CCLA or Willie Hartley-Russell, the Lord Lieutenant, who oversees it. She also suggested the Unity Trust which holds some parish council accounts and said some banks have arrangements with the Post Office. Our worth is £124.48 in the form of a cheque from the old now closed account, which is in limbo until a new account is opened. Graeme also reminded the AGM that £200 had been given to the International Rescue Committee for Yemen. Stephanie read out a statement submitted by Richard Foster from the West Berkshire Green Exchange, stressing the importance of the IPCC major report published recently concerning Climate Change.

9. The election of officers followed:

- Elizabeth O'Keeffe was nominated, seconded, and voted in to be the new President of the branch.
- Graeme Panting was nominated, seconded, and voted in to be Co-ordinator.
- Melanie Pryor was nominated, seconded, and voted in to be Treasurer.
- It was proposed that the Committee include Marion Paterson, Anita Whydell and Colin Stone (if he agrees).

10. It was agreed that the Committee would decide about future events, including whether to host the rearranged Southern Region AGM.

11. It was agreed that Graeme should draft a statement as follows:

'In the light of the Russian Delegate to the UN's allegation that war crimes were committed by Ukraine and that proof could be produced, then the UK should press for the Human Rights Council to seek an independent investigation to substantiate any such evidence.'

It was also noted that the Mayor of Newbury can wave charges for the use of the Town Hall for coffee mornings as those charges are at his/her discretion.

The meeting was closed. Stephanie agreed to draft these Minutes and suggested they should be emailed to all those present and to the Committee, having been checked by Graeme.
