

SUSS-EX CLUB

Steering Group Meeting no. 7

Minutes - Friday 18th January 2008
Development & Alumni Relations Office, Bramber House

Present:

Sir Gordon Conway (<i>Chairman</i>)	Charles Goldie
Yvette Ashby	Willie Lamont
Bob Benewick	Jennifer Platt
David Betts	Mike Tribe
Jackie Fuller	David Smith
Mike English	Ken Wheeler
Adrian Peasgood	Steve Pavey
Valerie Cromwell	

In attendance:

Gill Blake (DARO)
Dominic Tickell (DARO)

Apologies for absence:

Christine Glasson

1. Approval of minutes of 28 September 2007 meeting

Approved – with matters arising covered below.

Mailing List

Following correspondence with the Academic Registrar, there was a meeting held in October with Jennifer, Charles, Gill and Mark Lennon who manages the Development and Alumni office database (of which the Suss-Ex constituents form part). It was agreed that a retrospective 'clean-up' of the data would take place, and the Development Office agreed to meet the cost of this work. All those who had attended a Suss-Ex event, or who had responded in some positive way, or been put forward by members would be counted as opting in to receiving communications from the group (expected to be the vast majority). The remainder would be contacted and offered the opportunity to opt-in.

There was some discussion about future members – should those staff leaving the University be asked to opt-in, or be automatically be counted 'in' and therefore have to opt-out of receiving communications? As this forms part of the discussion on membership and structure, it was suggested that the sub-group could look into the complications of this and come up with a recommendation. GB to look into annual staff leaving numbers.

Action - sub-committee

Action - GB

2. Club structure and administration

The sub-committee's report from their December meeting with the Registrar (Dr Phil Harvey) was circulated ahead of the meeting. The Registrar had been positive about the Suss-Ex group and its activities. The group noted that the future structure also

impacts on whether the group is constituted or not, is democratically elected, has a subscription, and the opt-in/out debate.

Dominic Tickell (Head of Development and Alumni Relations) was able to update the group from his more recent meeting with Dr Harvey. DT reported that the Registrar's views had now been discussed and approved by the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group, and the senior managers were very supportive of Suss-Ex. However the University's Executive will not be providing a cash grant to the Suss-Ex club, and future support will be provided in other ways.

To help give a definitive response, Dr Harvey needs a clear list of what Suss-Ex would require, in three areas:

1. Administration work – group to identify what support is required, the University can then look at where this work could best be allocated. Minute taking and newsletter collating/editing might be jobs for the Steering Group.
2. Room hire/catering – how much time and space would be required by Suss-Ex over the course of a year? The Registrar and Finance Director can then discuss subsidy options
3. Data work – the Suss-Ex data will be held and updated on the DARO database, and is straightforward to extract for mailings etc. However DARO will need to allocated time for someone for undertaking this extraction, keeping the database updated, printing off labels/letters etc

GC noted this sounded like a generous offer from the University – though concerned it may not cover Suss-ex's full costs. There was a discussion around subscriptions – should there be a charge on initial entry, or some 'internal' fundraising, or charge a little extra per event to boost the kitty (AP suggested 5%)?

There was also discussion around creating a more democratic membership of the Steering Group. Although this works well now, should a structure be in place to allow others to 'step-up'? Perhaps holding an annual meeting would help with this, holding something both useful and entertaining to attract people along (noting that holding an actual election is a big piece of work).

GC requested that the sub-committee add these two aspects to their next report – recommendations on finances/subscriptions, and any views on how Suss-Ex might become more democratic (and the pros and cons of what might be involved).

As a timeline, it was agreed that the sub-committee would produce a draft response to the three areas that the Registrar has requested in the next 2-3 weeks. GB will circulate these to the Steering Group by e-mail/letter and following approval these will be sent to the Registrar. A response will be sought by the Registrar for consideration at the next Steering Group meeting, on Friday 14th March. GB noted that communicating with the Registrar through DARO (in particular DT's regular meetings with him) could help speed up the process.

Action & Suggested Timeline

- Sub-committee to produce draft response by Friday 8th February
- GB to circulate to the Steering Group, responses/approval by Friday 15th February
- Sub-committee/DARO to send to Registrar Friday 15th February
- Response from Registrar and Finance Director by Friday 7th March, circulated to Steering Group
- Steering Group considers at next meeting on Friday 14th March.

Please note the Registrar's capacity to respond by Friday 7th March is tbc.

3. Events & Activities

Christmas Party 2007

JP's report was circulated – the format of the party was deemed very successful, and is a good model for future.

Talks Programme

BB had organised the Jan Thole talk for that evening. IDS did not charge for the room – but hire depends on catering and minimum for the buffet is 12. There will be another 'Life After Sussex' talk in Summer - suggestions for speakers:

Sir Richard Attenborough (stands down as Chancellor in July)

Lord Lieutenant Phyllida Stewart-Roberts (on Court)

Possibly this might be a good time to hold the annual meeting? Or in September when there is a new intake of former staff.

Action – ALL to give suggestions to BB soon

Walks

David Streeter's walk was excellent last year; KW will ask him if he will do another.

Action - KW

Theatre trips

JP has promoted some upcoming plays. The lead time is short in terms of promoting, getting responses and booking tickets – especially as c 40% of the Suss-Ex club are not on e-mail. So far there has been best response for 'Uncle Vanya' - hopefully there will be tickets available.

Action - JP

Farley Farm House, Chiddingly

Sue Bullock is organising this outing, for Wednesday 4th June, 2.30-5.30pm. The tour is limited to 15 people, and will cost £25 including refreshments. This will be promoted in the next newsletter. As there is no public transport, Sue will try to arrange car shares.

Action – GB to promote in newsletter

Other suggestions:

- Ardingly Working Museum – GC knows the Director

- Marchants Nursery – for gardeners
- Tour of St Paul's – through Roger Walkinton
- Queen's Gallery – exhibitions of paintings
- Finchcocks, Kent: tour and demonstration of historic keyboard instruments
- Quiz nights
- The Dog Racing
- Ask one of the Art Historians to guide a tour somewhere
- Glyndebourne
- A Town Walk (there is one around the Old Ship Hotel)
- Lewes Railway Land Local Nature Reserve (JP notes perhaps similar to forthcoming June 08 walk)
- Local volunteer bureau to give a talk about opportunities
- It was agreed that the House of Lords was a very successful event, but could not be reprised for some time. Alternative dinner venues were proposed, below:
 - The Royal Society, with talk by Sussex Fellows
 - Royal Geographic Society
 - Lords Cricket Ground do dinners
 - JF's suggestion of dinner at City College by the catering students was well received – it would work well with an after-dinner speaker

Action – ALL – members to volunteer to run specific events, which can be discussed at the next meeting

4. Steering Group Membership

YA had spoken with Nancy Holmes, who would consider an official invitation. GB to draft a letter from GC.

Action – GB

6. Items for Newsletter

'Constitution' update
 Forthcoming activities
 Obituaries

It was noted that JP's brief obituaries and references work well. Surviving partners should be asked if they wish to join the club.

7. AOB

The next meeting date was agreed – Friday 14th March 2008. GC will be absent; Chair tbc on the day.