

Chair's Report

This is my first AGM as Chair and I'd like to take the opportunity to thank Stuart and his fellow committee members for the work they did to ensure that our u3a is on a sound footing from both the financial and governance perspectives.

Thanks are also due to all our Group Leaders – they are the key to our organisation - without them we simply wouldn't have a u3a! One of my aims as Chair is to make sure our group leaders get the recognition and support they deserve. We are working with them to help them make the most of their groups and to make their workload as enjoyable as possible.

Due to the work of our Group leaders and Committee members we have seen an increase in membership and the number of groups that we have. The downside of that increase is that many of our groups are full which can be frustrating, particularly for new members. We can never have too many groups so if you are interested in setting up a new group do contact our groups Co-ordinator.

Our finances are well managed and we continue to review financial policies and arrangements each year in order to ensure that members get maximum benefit for their contributions. Following the precautionary measures taken during Covid we find ourselves in the enviable position of running a larger than necessary surplus and the Committee are looking to find a fair and equitable way to reduce this.

Keith Saywell has made the decision to retire as our treasurer and I would like, on behalf of myself and the trustee committee, to thank him very much for his hard and dedicated work over the years. Over the last few months he has graciously worked with Gillian Curtis, who is currently co-opted to the committee to prepare her to take over the role.

Our Events programme continues apace with thanks to Alice Holmes for the full and varied programme she manages for us. In May we held our 21st birthday celebration of all that our u3a has achieved over the past 21 years. Particular thanks go to Kate Ashcroft and her committee for organising this event - a two-day programme of exhibitions, workshops and performances which were enjoyed by all those who took part. I'm delighted to report that our new arrangement of continuing the programme of Member meetings over the summer of 2024 was well received and will continue in 2025.

In Autumn this year a website review group was formed and the eagle eyed amongst you will already have spotted some small changes on our website. The review group will continue to meet in 2025 with a view to updating the whole website – no easy task!

We are fortunate to have a large group of volunteers who are committed to working in the best interests of members. These include the 'meet and greet' team, the refreshment team, our library volunteers, our postal service team and lots of others who help with events when necessary. These volunteers now have their own group – the Really Useful Group! If you'd like to join them contact Ken Talbot our Vice Chair for more information.

The ethos of U3A is based on the principles of "self-help, lifelong learning, and mutual aid" - all of which are visible on a daily basis amongst our volunteers, whether in a formal role or not. On your behalf I thank them all.

Linda Bilsborrow
Chair Sandbach and District u3a