

Chairs report

I'm delighted to report that our u3a continues to thrive. Once again the number of members, now 1409 and groups, now 101 has grown. It's especially good to see an increase in the range of learning opportunities offered to members. That list now includes cribbage and croquet and also sees the return of the popular dancefit classes, but there is always room for more. Please talk to any of our committee if you have an interest that isn't on our current list.

As you know our u3a is entirely volunteer run. I don't usually like to single out individuals when so many people contribute but it would be wrong not to mention a couple of trustees who, after many years of service, have chosen to change the way they support our u3a. Many of you already know that Alice, although remaining as a trustee and trips organiser, has decided to cut back on much of her day to day commitment to our u3a. As a result we'll no longer see Alice behind the urn leading the team who provide refreshments at meetings like this or at our library information desk. Stepping slightly further away from the all the fun we have at Committee Meetings is Alan Casey who is resigning as a trustee having been on the Committee for 13 years serving as just about everything from Chair to chair mover as well as being instrumental in the development of our website and membership systems. Typically, although no longer continuing as a trustee, Alan has said that he will be around to support all things IT for which we're very thankful.

I'd also like to thank our Group Leaders on behalf of all our members – they are at the heart of our organisation and we'd be lost without them. The committee is keen to support them in whatever way they can and appreciate the work they do to keep our groups alive.

Some of our volunteers belong to our Really Useful Group who contribute in several different ways. One of their successes this year has been the introduction of the monthly Sunday afternoon Tea and cake meetings. Having identified that there is little provision for members at weekends they began this group earlier on the year and it is now a regular event on our u3a calendar. u3a principles are based on mutual support to promote lifelong learning and that's exactly what our volunteers achieve.

We remain in a strong position financially and continue to work to reduce our surplus funds. This is being done gradually so that our finances remain stable but means that we will be retaining the £5 membership fee for 26/27, though it is unlikely to remain at this reduced level beyond 2027!

This last year saw the demise of the cheque as a means of payment for membership and groups. The closure of local bank branches has made life increasingly difficult for Group Leaders who have to pay in group fees and the introduction of bank charges for all transactions had a significant impact on our outgoings. We're grateful to those members who had to make changes to their payment methods to help us reduce costs.

Our calendar of events for the coming year is as vibrant and varied as ever but we are always open to suggestions - for new speakers, trips or events. Do talk to a committee member or group leader if you have any ideas you think will be welcomed by members.

Finally I'd like to thank *all* our members for contributing in so many ways to another very successful year. We now look forward to the next twelve months.