

Chairman's Report for the period from September 2021 to July 2022

As my second year as chairman comes to an end, it is a relief that concerns about Covid are now greatly reduced. U3As are once again able to focus on what they were set up to do. In saying this, I appreciate that some members are still wary about Covid – no-one is suggesting it has vanished altogether – so some meetings continue to be held online.

Committee meetings have been held more frequently as we endeavoured to be proactive in response to Covid. We wanted to keep as many activities as possible going for our members. So thank you to everyone on the committee for their hard work, and to the 50 or so members who have been involved in leading our groups during the year - you perform a truly invaluable role in our U3A.

More than 100 people attended our two *Picnics in the Park* last summer, and our *Meet and Greet Day* in September attracted more than 200 members and potential members. 140 new members have joined us in 2021/2022 (so far), and we are now just two away from having a membership of 750. This is enormously encouraging.

Increasing the number of members is not an end in itself however. We want to make what we offer as appealing as possible. Earlier this year the national organisation published a "U3A Healthcheck" list of 10 questions for U3As to ask themselves, and points that seemed particularly relevant to us included the following:

- How can we increase the number of new members who renew their membership after one year?
- How can we increase the number of groups that we offer?
- How can we increase the number of our members who volunteer?

Your committee will be addressing these issues as soon as possible.

We have now held a few meetings at Queen Mary's College and there has been no obvious downturn in the number of members attending. We plan to keep holding some of these as "hybrid" meetings, so that members who are unable to attend in person for whatever reason can enjoy the presentation online.

Some longstanding members of our committee will be standing down at the 2022 AGM, either through choice or because they are required to do so under the terms of our Constitution.

Margaret Hayes, my predecessor as chair. Margaret assumed the role of Group Facilitator, and I think we were fortunate to have someone with Margaret's experience in this role. Covid made the managing of our groups extremely challenging.

Liz Horner, our Systems Manager. For the last 10 years or so, Liz has been closely involved with Beacon, the management system designed for and used by many U3As. Liz will continue to be involved with Beacon at a national level.

Linda Wain, who for some time has been responsible for organising our monthly meetings while also being our Membership Secretary. After 10 years on the committee, Linda is fully entitled to a very well-earned rest.

Marie White, who has been seconded to the committee for the last two years, having originally joined the committee in 2008.

Audrey Bird, who has served one year on the committee.

Although not leaving the committee, two other members will be stepping down from their Officer roles. **Sue Seamour** has been our Treasurer for the last three years, while **Janet Field** has held the role of Business Secretary.

On behalf of all our members, I would like to say a huge thank you to them all for everything they have done to support our U3A over the years. Margaret, Liz, Linda and Marie have an enormous amount of experience between them, and although they will no longer be on the committee, I am confident they will continue to be active members of our U3A.

Here's to continued progress in the next 12 months.

Rod Marshall, Chairman