

Charnwood u3a

Chair's Report 2021 – 2022

Overview

It would be nice not to have to mention it, but Covid is still with us and has impacted on all aspects of our daily lives – including u3a activities. Fortunately, our members have shown fortitude and resilience and, as lockdown restrictions were eased, started getting back to business as usual.

A large number of our indoor groups had already embraced meetings via Zoom but now, as conditions allow and confidence levels grow, more and more are meeting face-to-face. As shown by the group calendar, just about all of our groups have now emerged from the enforced dormancy.

Sadly, however, some of our groups have closed, and we say goodbye to Gym Fit, Mah Jong 1, Lunch Club 2, Singing Pop, Calligraphy, Sunday Lunch Club 2, History 1 and Table Tennis 8. My thanks to the leaders of these groups for their service over (in some cases very) many years.

Technically, we have also lost English Parish Churches 1 (EPC1) however this group has now merged with EPC 2. To accommodate the 'comfort' levels of the members, the Group Leader, Roger Willson, is currently hosting two meetings on the same day: in the morning via Zoom, then face-to-face in the afternoon!

On a positive note, I am happy to report that Sustaining the Planet, led by Brian Waters, is now up and running and, in March 2022, Sue Ronald's new Scottish Dancing group will convene its inaugural meeting.

In October 2021 we returned to face-to-face Monthly Meetings, at Emmanuel Church. This was approached with some trepidation – would members attend? Thankfully, we need not have worried as, so far, all meetings have been well attended. Recognising that some of our members are still nervous of social gatherings, these meetings are also being offered via Zoom. My thanks to Andrew Rick and Garry Rigby for facilitating this. These arrangements will continue for the foreseeable future.

By remaining active throughout this difficult period, we have managed to retain the majority of our membership. We currently have just over 900 members which, although down on our peak, is roughly the same as at this time last year.

Committee initiatives

Documentation:

- * Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy – new document.
- * Complaints Policy and Procedure – new document.
- * Local Policies – updated document.
- * Group Management – revised document.

All the above are available to view on our website.

Recruitment and Retention:

* Members were invited to complete a survey – “How have things gone over the past year, and how can we move forward”? Some members reported technical difficulties regarding adding their responses, however we did receive 99 replies. These indicated that generally we were on the right track, but also identified areas where we could do things better.

Overall, this was a useful exercise.

* In October we occupied a stall in Loughborough Market – to increase public awareness of Charnwood u3a and, hopefully, attract new members. We applied for, and received, a £200 grant from The Third Age Trust to cover associated costs, which was used to offset the purchase of marketing materials.

35 members helped out during the day, and we positively interacted with around 150 people. There was a significant increase in New Member applications, indicating that the event was worthwhile.

Charnwood u3a Website.

For many years our website has been provided courtesy of Laws Hosting. This company gave notice that they would be closing down at the end of 2021, so a replacement was sought. The chosen replacement is Krystal Hosting – which, by all accounts, makes the website much easier to manage. My thanks to Tony Westaway for all his hard work in ensuring a smooth transition. Tony is also making changes to the appearance of the website – to make it easier to navigate, and also make it (and us) more inviting to prospective new members.

Committee Members.

Nearly all Committee Members will either be continuing in office, or standing for election/re-election. Details can be found on the Nomination Form sent out with these papers. The exception is Phil Bass, who has decided to Resign. He will however continue as Beacon Administration.

Back in November 2021 we also said goodbye to Hilary Knowles, who resigned from the Committee due to personal health issues. She was a hard act to follow, but Bev Gillman bravely (or rashly!) offered to take over the roll of Groups Coordinator.

Both Phil and Hilary were valuable members of the Committee. I am sorry to see them go, but am sure they will both continue supporting Charnwood u3a in any way they can.

Summary

Despite a second difficult year I am pleased to say that Charnwood u3a continues in good heart, thanks to the steadfast efforts of all of our members. I would like to think that the worst of these difficulties are now behind us, and that we can look forward with a sense of positivity.

You will all be aware that 2022 marks the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. What you may not be aware of is that this year also brings up two further anniversaries: 40 years since the start of the u3a in Great Britain, and 25 years since the launch of Charnwood u3a.

You can be sure that we will be arranging a suitable celebratory event!

Mike Hood
Chair – Charnwood u3a