

CHAIR'S REPORT 2023-4

My first year as Cu3a Chair has been challenging, fun and nerve-wracking in equal parts. I've really enjoyed getting to know members and visiting groups. Even addressing the members at monthly meetings is not quite as terrifying as it was!

It isn't possible to meet everyone, of course, when our membership is over 1000 and we have close to 100 groups. There is some duplication in that number: it includes five Walking groups, seven Table Tennis, and four groups for both Scrabble and Canasta - ample proof that our u3a exercises both mind and body. But we're always looking to expand our offer, so it's been great to see new groups starting, including Pickleball, Laughter (Yoga) Club, Reading and Recorder groups. We have lost a few groups this year, for a variety of reasons. When a group leader steps down, it can be hard to find someone to take over. But organising a group doesn't have to be onerous and more groups this year have been sharing the responsibility. Group activities are the life-blood of our u3a and some excellent ideas for keeping them going came out of the October Group Leaders meeting. There's also plenty of help and advice available for any member thinking about starting a new group. For example, at least one of this year's new groups has taken advantage of our start-up loan to help with initial expenditure. So please keep the ideas coming!

As a registered charity we have to maintain a number of documents. During the year, the Committee approved a new Finance Policy, revised the Privacy Policy, and updated our Complaints Procedure, Disciplinary Policy and Group Management Guide. An updated List of Potential Venues will soon be available and The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team have been working on an Accessibility Audit, to help ensure that our activities are, as far as possible, open to everyone.

All documents are developed in line with Third Age Trust guidelines and once completed they are uploaded onto our new website. For the past few years we have had to rely on two online systems: our website for content and Beacon for managing membership data. Our new system, called Simple Membership, brings everything together on one website and gives members and potential members all the information they need, while enabling group leaders to manage their groups more effectively. Thanks go to Phil Bass and his team for a smooth transition to the new system. Over the past few weeks a series of workshops have been held in to familiarise group leaders with the system, along with a regular advice column for members in News and Views. Work will continue in 2024 on the website layout, the Events function, Group Finance, as well as Accessibility, to ensure that our website fully reflects our diverse and welcoming organisation.

My warmest thanks go to all our group leaders and Committee members, not forgetting the non-Committee members with important support roles, like the Welcome and Refreshment teams at monthly meetings and the team of organisers for the Speaker Programme. Special thanks must go to our retiring Treasurer, Bob Pyatt, and Tony Westaway, our Web Manager, who has left us for the sunnier South West. Both have made a massive contribution to Charnwood u3a and we wish them all the best for the future. Finally, thanks to you, our members, for your continuing support.

Pam Upton, Chair
Charnwood u3a