

Charnwood u3a Chair's Report 2022 – 2023

This is my final Chair's Report since my 3-year term of office ends with this AGM. Covid, thankfully, is now largely on the back-foot. I am aware that a few of you contracted it but, in the main, symptoms have been mild and not lasting more than a few days. We are clearly a tough lot!

As a result, we have enjoyed a full year of face-to-face meetings, at both Monthly and Group level. Zoom is all very well, but not a patch on meeting up with people.

Our membership number has remained solid and currently sits at just over 1000. This, in part, is thanks to the 80+ members who joined us from Loughborough u3a, which closed at the end of 2022. That sad event reminds us that we must not be complacent. For many of us, u3a is an important part of our lives. It will only continue to be so if we pull together and work to ensure its continuation.

This brings me to the AGM. As you will see there are, this year, a number of Committee vacancies including, potentially, Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. Lack of Committee members was contributory to Loughborough u3a's demise. We all must do what we can to ensure that Charnwood u3a does not suffer the same fate.

I am pleased to report the start up of two new interest groups, Current Affairs and French Improvers, and the re-launch of the Painting Group. We also gained 10 new groups from Loughborough, bringing the total to around the 100 mark!

Whilst no groups were lost completely, we did see the merger of Science and Technology 1 & 2, and we now have just one History group. Also, the Saturday Walking group has stopped meeting, temporarily, owing to lack of support. If you want it back, you know what to do!

This was a milestone year for the UK u3a movement, having reached its 40th year. We are a little younger. This was our 25th birthday, which was celebrated with a summer picnic in Queens Park - a joyous occasion, with well over 100 members in attendance.

Being a registered charity obliges us to have and maintain certain documentation. The following Policies and documents have been formulated and/or updated: Social Prescribing, Accessibility, Legitimate Interest (re. In Case of Emergency information), Complains (Policy and Procedure), and Disciplinary Procedure. All were done in line with Third Age Trust guidelines.

The Beacon Membership Management system has been problematic for many - including the Committee. The long promised upgrade, Beacon 2, now looks as if it will never happen, prompting the investigation of alternative packages.

The best candidate is Simple Membership which, like Beacon, has been created specifically for u3as. Change over is likely to take place during summer 2023.

As I step down, I want to thank all of our Trustees for their support and dedication over the last three difficult years, and I particularly thank Diana who is also leaving the Committee.

We have a great team, and I am reassured in the certain knowledge that those I leave behind will continue to support all members of Charnwood u3a to the best of their ability.

Mike Hood, Chair
Charnwood u3a