

Trustees Report 2020-21

Introduction:

The last 12 months has seen us all in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and under a UK lockdown to one degree or another at various times. This has meant that u3a face-to-face activities have been severely curtailed. Having said that, many u3as closed completely during the pandemic lockdown, but Cirencester u3a held monthly general meetings and many of the Group's meetings, albeit remotely, as well as issue a monthly newsletter. The committee would like to record their gratitude to all those in non-committee roles, to all Group Leaders, and indeed to all members, for their patience and perseverance during this very difficult last year.

Trustees:

Tony Natt, Chairman; Anne Vardy, Vice Chairman; Robert Lang, Treasurer; Andrew Williams, Business Secretary; Ian Harvey, Membership Secretary, and Cashy Smith, Groups Co-ordinator.

Committee:

During the year, committee meetings were held more frequently (monthly) to be able to respond more quickly to the changing situation. All discussions and decisions were minuted by Andrew Williams, Business Secretary.

The strategy developed and put in place during the previous 2 years was rather less relevant this year, although one important aspect, the appointment of a Communications Officer, took place in March when Ruth Kelly was co-opted onto the committee in the role.

Most of the committee work this year was to interpret the government and National Office guidelines as regards the pandemic and to advise Group Leaders on what could and could not be allowed in terms of running their groups.

Our finances are in very good order and, following assessment of various "what if" scenarios by Robert Lang, our Treasurer, it was decided to maintain our membership subscription at £10 for the next year.

Non-committee roles:

Specific non-committee roles which were still active during the year and deserve our sincere thanks include...

Judy Lloyd, Programme Secretary; Margot Wallis and Maureen Folliard, Newsletter Editors; Richard Green, Beacon Administrator; Peter Landless, Webmaster, Pam Thorne, New Members Champion; and Andrew McKechnie who initiated and led a group of IT specialist members to advise members on Zoom video-conferencing; this was to become the mainstay of our u3a activities during the year.

Membership

As of the end of March 2021, Cirencester U3A had 643 members which is a 15% drop over the last 12 months. Because of the pandemic and subsequent reduction in u3a activities

available, a number of members did not renew their subscription in 2020, and our recruitment of new members fell dramatically from the normal 100+ per year to just 10 in the last year.

Groups

Because all indoor groups have been locked down for the year, and outdoor groups have either been locked down or only allowed to meet under very restricted rules at various times, the Group Leaders have played an extremely important role in maintaining contact with our membership, whether by telephone, email, or video-conferencing. This has meant that some of the groups have managed to run almost normally except for not being face-to-face. Unfortunately, our large group meetings such as the Internet Café and Theatre group have not been able to meet at all.

However, there have been 2 new groups started during the year...China Chat, and a High Street Survey Group.

The Groups Co-ordinator, Cashy Smith, has been in close contact with all venues during lockdown to maintain our connection and to ensure we understand when they can re-open and what measures will be in place to keep our members safe.

General Meetings

Our monthly Tuesday meetings restarted on Zoom in July with the usual excellent selection of speakers organised by Judy Lloyd. They have been surprisingly well attended, averaging about 80% of the pre-pandemic live audience level.

Newsletter

Although initially cancelled due to lack of group news and replaced by a fortnightly bulletin update, the newsletter restarted in July and has been published monthly since then, achieving 12-page editions for the last 2 months. Many thanks to our editors, Maureen Folliard and Margo Wallis, for continuing through this period.

The Future

Three committee members (Chairman, Business Secretary and Membership Secretary) will be standing down from their current roles and the Chairman would like to record his immense gratitude to them and the whole committee for their help and guidance. A full complement of nominations for committee roles has been received for 2021/22.

The key activities of the coming year will be...

...to ensure the new committee members are integrated onto the committee in their new roles

...to re-open our u3a groups and meetings as quickly and as safely as possible, in line with government and National Office advice.

...to raise the profile of Cirencester u3a and mount a recruitment campaign to ensure our u3a grows again and continues to thrive into the future.