



TOWCESTER u3a Registered Charity Number 1155428 Annual Report for period from AGM May 2023 to AGM May 2024

At our AGM at the end of May 2023, a committee was elected. The majority of the previous committee agreed to serve for another year.

The day to day running of the branch has returned to normal ie no longer via Zoom but we have continued with the digital voting for the purposes of the AGM.

Trustee Committee Members

The Trustee Committee Members re-elected at the 2023 AGM and responsible for managing Towcester u3a during the above period were:

Stephen Porter (Chairman)
Terry Goldfinch (Treasurer)
Deborah Heaphy (Business secretary)
Alison Foxtton (Publicity secretary)
Anne Parkes (Speaker Seeker)
Jill Stewart (Group Co-ordinator)
Alison Burnley (Membership secretary)
Jenny Rigby
Tricia Burningham (Minute secretary)
Marilyn Shone

The committee meet regularly on the first Monday of each month, except for January. Stephen Porter has decided to stand down as Chair at this AGM. The Committee are very grateful for his efforts over the last 2 years. The branch has progressed and this is reflected in the membership increasing. All other members of the committee are standing for re-election at the 2024 AGM.

Charitable Purpose, Structure and Governance

The u3as in the UK are autonomous, self-help organisations run by the voluntary efforts of their members. All u3as are members of the Third Age Trust (TAT), a registered charity, which is the national support and advisory body. Each u3a is operationally independent but as members of the Third Age Trust each agrees to follow the principles of the u3a movement. Being a self-help learning co-operative is what makes u3a unique.

Towcester u3a was formed in 2010 with the stated charitable purpose of the advancement of education of those who are retired from full time work, by activities conducive to learning and personal development, in Towcester and its surrounding area. Towcester u3a is a registered charity governed by our constitution which was amended in 2018, and then again in 2019, and again in 2021 to allow for virtual meetings. Our committee members are charity trustees and are elected by the membership at the AGM although new trustees may be co-opted in between AGMs and then stand for election at the next AGM.

Groups

We now have over 50 groups, ranging from “Alternative Poetry” to “Understanding the Stock Market”. This includes two “Art Appreciation” groups, two “Boys Toys” groups, three “Genealogy” groups, two “London Explorer” groups, and a number of walking groups - one “Nordic Walking”, two “Ramblers”, and one “Striders” - this year has seen the addition of “Strollers” and “Coffee and Cake”. A full list of the current groups is available on our website. Please contact the relevant group coordinator if you are interested in joining one of the groups.

Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings at Towcestrians have continued during the last year with some great speakers. We are noticing a steady increase in attendance and the variety of speakers is meaning a different audience at each meeting.

Membership

We have held a number of New Members Meetings at the Sawpits Centre at which new (and old) members had the opportunity to find out what interest groups are available and to meet some of the group coordinators. These continue to be well attended and more are planned this year. We have also started to bring the membership up to date by going fully digital. Our Membership Secretary Alison Burnley has been working very hard to get this system ready and it is hoped that renewals and new memberships will be digital going forward.

Publicity

Our main publicity vehicle is our website, at <https://www.towcesteru3a.co.uk/>, and we also publish regular items in the Towcester Town Crier and the Towcester Focus magazine.

For our members we issue a monthly Bulletin and we have a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TowcesterU3A> which members can join and post news items and photos.

Finance

Towcester u3a financial statement for the year ended 29th February 2024, as examined by Essendon Accounts & Tax Ltd., is the subject of a separate document. In summary, our income over the year was £12,089, whilst expenditure was less than anticipated at £8,817, leaving a surplus of £3,272 that has been added to our reserves. The expected rise in fuel costs and room hire has not yet materialised, and Anne Parkes has been extremely diligent in securing speakers for our monthly meetings at very reasonable rates. We expect income and expenditure in the coming year to be in the region of £12,000. We do not expect to need to increase the membership fee for the foreseeable future.

Chairman's Remarks

As chairman, I would like to express my thanks to all the members of the committee who have done an excellent job of working together to make all these things happen. I hope to see this continue for another year. I will be standing down as Chair and wish the Committee all the best for the coming year.

Thank you all.
Stephen Porter,
Chair