

Trustee Report 2020/21

What a pleasure it is to stand in front of you all this morning after so many months of isolation and inactivity. I missed my u3a interests so much and was delighted at the enterprise of the handful of leaders who adapted to Zooming and kept their groups going throughout all the lock-down periods. For me, the Creative Writing Group helped to keep me sane, with monthly on-line meetings and also regular writing together via WhatsApp. But to the Trustee Report.

The Trustees comprise the three main officers of the Management Committee and up to four other, non MC members, elected at an AGM. Our main responsibility is to ensure the financial security and probity of our u3a and to offer support and guidance to MC when needed. We were satisfied that our u3a had been managed properly and legally throughout the year and signed off the accounts, prepared by our excellent Treasurer. Our main activity during this twelve month period from April of 2020 to March of this year has been to take part in all MC meetings, by Zoom, or face to face when permitted, and work through the detailed planning that allowed the eventual partial resumption of activities at each stage of the Roadmap, after several frustrating but essential delays.

The Trustees are also concerned with adherence to our Constitution, the document adopted by every Charity to guide and regulate activities. The Constitution is approved by the Charity Commission. For the periods of lock-down, we were permitted by the Charity Commission to vary the section concerned with General Meetings by allowing on-line and postal meetings and decisions. Thus our last AGM was carried out this way. This permission will soon be withdrawn and we will return to the one option of in-person meetings. That is, unless we adopt a special clause that will allow us to hold meetings in a variety of formats, depending on circumstances at the time. There is a model clause, created by Third Age Trust, our parent body, that we can include, but some of the wording is at variance with our own Constitution. We are perhaps the only u3a in the UK that has a separate body of Trustees. The national model considers the Management Committee members to be the Trustees and their wording is geared around this concept.

So I'm giving you notice that at our 2022 AGM your Committee will almost certainly be recommending changes that will bring our Constitution up to date.

I'm beginning my fourth and final year as a Trustee and it's been a pleasure and privilege to take on this role. I'm member No. 317 and I've been involved in some capacity since I first joined u3a 18 years ago when I first retired. I've thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the production of the magazine, being on the Committee, being a group leader, being a group member. I've spread my wings, joined the North West Regional Committee and met members from so many other u3as, all being run by members with different skills and experiences to share. All u3as are run by members for members and we need a constant renewal of all our volunteers. If you haven't put your hand up yet, then do consider it, there are so many ways you can help.

And finally, on your behalf I would like to say thank-you to our Chairman, Alan Starkie, who has guided our u3a through these strange times. It's not been quite the task he expected when he agreed to become Chairman. Thanks too to all the members who have kept u3a functioning, my fellow Trustees, Committee and subcommittee members and the group leaders who tried and succeeded in keeping activities alive. And to you all, thank you for belonging to and supporting this incredible organisation and for coming along today to be part of our Annual General Meeting.

Susan Watkinson

Chair of Trustees, August 26th 2021