

Farnham u3a Annual Review 2023/4

This has been a year of change. Having established that we were facing some potential challenges in the coming years, most notably an aging membership and some potential financial challenges, we put the situation to an Advisory Panel comprised of members, old and new, and of group leaders. Informed by their thoughts and by the experience of other u3a's, we have embarked on a series of changes. Firstly we have sought to improve the membership experience by means of occasional workshops (e.g. first aid and dementia), occasional talks, some of which turn into new groups (Artificial Intelligence). We have also negotiated offers from local businesses (The Castle pub, the Reel Cinema, Nuffield Health). The quizzes have gone from strength to strength and we now regularly get ten teams or more competing. There is more to come on all these activities in the coming months as they do seem to be working.

Secondly, we have sought, under the banner of 'Farnham's Best Kept Secret' to raise the profile of the u3a locally, using the local press, the Bourne Show and the Farnham Carnival to attract a new potential members.

Finally, financially, we have managed to hold subscriptions at £45 though this will not last forever. We have done this by moving more of our activities online, notably our programme and the membership functions. Inevitably this has not proved universally popular but we are addressing the needs of those members unable to use these facilities by a variety of means.

Our finances are now in good health though we remain cautious in our outlook and are, consequently, steadily building our reserves.

All of this activity sits on the bedrock of the u3a which is the members and the volunteers. One hundred and fourteen groups do not run themselves and we owe all of our volunteers, including those behind the scenes, a huge vote of thanks.

Finally on your behalf and my own, I want to thank the committee; all volunteers, without them none of this would happen. This year we have lost Malcolm Ellis to illness. Malcolm was at the core of the groups programme and he is sadly missed. Val Atkinson has served as the committee secretary for even longer, and is stepping down from the committee after eight years. One of our unsung heroes, luckily for us she will still be active in supporting our operations. My thanks to them all.

Philip Oliver – Chair Farnham u3a