

## **CHAIRMANS REPORT - AGM 2017**

### **The State of the Nation:**

Over the last 12 months, Thrapston & District U3A has continued to thrive and develop. Our membership has grown to around 270 and our finances are in good health as the Treasurer will report in detail later.

Our finances remain healthy despite:

Dropping the £1 charge for members at monthly meetings.

Putting on a free Christmas Social and Open Day.

Significant capital outlay on new equipment, such as a high definition projector, new laptop, display boards, secure storage cupboard for our equipment and much more.

Keeping our membership fees the same as previous years.

My best attempts to spend money, which were expertly thwarted by the Treasurer.

Tricia James is to be commended on her expert handling of our finances.

Our activity groups have grown considerably and we now have around 40 groups offering everything from the physical to the academic. This is a ratio of approximately 1 group for every 6 members; an extraordinary achievement and a testament to the willingness of people to step forward and lead new groups.

Our monthly meetings continue to attract 40% - 50% of our membership, which is far higher than many of our neighbourhood U3As.

So we are clearly doing something right.

### **Achievements in 2016/17:**

The last year has been enormously successful.

#### **Socials.**

The Summer Social at the Sailing Club, was probably the best to date and the Christmas Social was almost a victim of its own success, such was the attendance and demand for seats.

We introduced New Members lunches, which followed the Group Leaders meetings, where new members can meet the group leaders and committee members over a sandwich and a drink. These have helped new members quickly integrate into our U3A community.

**Publicity:** Thanks to Ann Carter, our publicity Officer and others, we have produced:

The beautiful U3A Banners which welcome you in at the entrance and which drew much attention at the Charter Fair and Open Day. They really are a work of art.

New Leaflets. These send a message - not of a dusty retreat for old folk - but of a vibrant U3A that is young at heart and a wonderful place to live, laugh and learn with friends.

In addition our Website has been regularly updated and refreshed. Thanks to all of you who have sent in photos and information and to Neil Busby for integrating it onto the website.

In the Plaza, the notice board has been artistically developed to show aspects of our U3A groups.

Finally, our very first Open Day was a roaring success which attracted 93 visitors. As a consequence, up to today, 20 new members have signed up, with the likelihood of many more in the coming weeks. A surprise bonus was the large number of U3A members that also came and enjoyed the Open Day, finding out about other groups and meeting up for a chat and coffee. Hence the buzzing party atmosphere that visitors picked up on.

### **Policy:**

We have established a new policy for the procurement of equipment for Groups from central funds and agreed a £25 startup grant for new groups forming. In fact, it was a request from the Photographic Group that led to the procurement of our new high definition projector.

The job descriptions for committee members have been reviewed and revised which will help guide and inform our new members standing today.

Subject to your agreement, at the end of this AGM, we will have a new Constitution to guide the whole committee on the running of our U3A for many years.

### **The greatest achievement of all?**

My personal favourite is the award from the Town Council to Thrapston & District U3A, for our Contribution to the Community. This award by outsiders recognises the positive impact that our U3A has had on this community. This is something we can all take pride in.

### **A Vote of Thanks.**

Sadly, my 2 years as Chairman are now up and its time for me to stand aside for a new incumbent, full of enthusiasm and drive, to continue the forward march of our U3A.

Whilst everyone assumes the retiring Chairman holds a celebratory party and gets very drunk, it is with some sadness that I hand over the reins. I came from the floor, with no experience of working on the committee and a very limited knowledge of the U3A structure and procedures. Without exception, everyone has helped and supported me throughout my time and worked tirelessly for the good of our organisation. I have never worked with a more professional and dedicated team. However, the success of any U3A depends on much more than just a great committee. It needs great Group Leaders and volunteers who do so many, often unrecognised and unthanked jobs, from serving refreshments, or putting out chairs, greeting members at the door, to organising social events. I thank every one of them and all of you for your support and hard work.

With our U3A in such good shape and such a professional and enthusiastic team taking us forward, we can all look forward another great year ahead.