

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO AGM THURSDAY, 25TH JANUARY 2021 – Julie Beattie

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our first online virtual AGM. Thank you all for making the effort to join us. None of us has done this before so please bear with us! We have our amazing technical team, Justin and Roger, to thank for setting this up and keeping it together. When I became chairman in November 2019 we knew we had financial problems because of sudden, steep and unforeseen increases in venue hire charges. What we did not know was that the worst pandemic for 100 years was just around the corner. We were going to have to change the way we lived for a whole year, imposing restrictions on every aspect of our daily lives.

I have been hugely impressed by the way our members have risen to this challenge. Hundreds of us have learnt to Zoom. We have looked out for friends and neighbours and shown heartening levels of mutual support. I have resuscitated my missed vocation as a journalist and have written interim newsletters to keep all our members up to date with events. A team has hand delivered to our offline members, getting their exercise and keeping us all in touch at the same time.

I am extraordinarily grateful to all our Group Leaders and members who have gone the extra mile this year to organise their meetings online and offer us all the stimulating interaction that is essential to the u3a. One interesting side-effect of the pandemic has been to highlight the importance of the social dimension of our activities; we all appreciate a cuppa and a chat with like-minded people quite as much as the main body of the meeting.

The committee has worked very hard this year, meeting at first fortnightly and latterly monthly instead of the usual 5 times a year. I pay tribute to them for their support in this my difficult first year. It would be invidious to single out particular people but I must mention Roger Philo and Jackie Ring who have worked indefatigably in a huge range of areas to keep gu3a a going concern. I also thank specially Moira MacQuaide who has worked tirelessly at keeping open the channels of communication between committees, Group Leaders and members. We are saying goodbye to Mary Korndorffer, our Prospectus Secretary. We thank her for all her work in the most efficient preparation and publication of our prospectus. She will be replaced by Margaret Clements whom we welcome to the committee.

This is the time when I would usually tell you of the success of our Annual Lecture, Group Enrolment Day and other special events in our calendar. However we all hope that they will take place as planned during the coming year.

Many of you were most generous in your voluntary donations when you renewed your membership this year and we thank you for them. We enormously appreciate your vote of confidence and support.

TREASURER'S COMMENTARY ON 2019-2020 ACCOUNTS - Michael Brooks

For the year to 31 August 2020, Guildford U3A made a surplus of £15,502 compared with a deficit of £5,918 in the previous year.

Income was up by £6,897 due principally to an increase in subscription income which reflected the increase from £22 to £25, together with the associated Gift Aid rebate. In addition, we received an increased level of donations including £350 from Shell and a number of individual private donations, for which we are extremely grateful.

At the same time, our expenditure was £14,523 lower than the previous year. This reflected a reduction of £8,837 in the cost of hiring venues due the curtailment of our programme as a

result of the Covid-19 pandemic as well as the cancellation of the Annual Lecture and the Group Leaders' lunch, (shown under 'Honoraria in Kind'). In addition, Outings and Concerts produced a surplus of some £3,000 which was twice the surplus in the previous year.

At the year end, we are carrying forward some £8,000 in deposits received from members in respect of Outings and Concerts that were postponed or cancelled due to Covid-19. We expect to apply these amounts to the replacement events when these are able to be re-scheduled.

At 31 August 2020, our reserves were £40,708 which, while larger than we had planned, will provide us with a useful buffer against the uncertainties we face going forward. These include a substantial reduction in membership renewals in 2020-2021 and the need to plan for and commit to a full programme in 2021-22 in the hope that our membership numbers will return to pre-pandemic levels.

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES' REPORT TO AGM – Moira MacQuaide

The 2019/2020 year had started well and we completed almost seven months of our publicised programme before the restrictions of lockdown hit us.

However, the last ten months have proved that you can teach an old dog new tricks! One year ago very few of us had even heard of Zoom, but now many of us are joining in meetings with families, friends and organisations. Amongst other things we can watch talks, join in quizzes, practise languages, see demonstrations, meet up with new friends, listen to music, or do exercise classes. I am delighted that so many of our Group Leaders have been able to move their group meetings online, with Zoom, websites or finding other ways to keep in touch, such as emailing information. Some find it easier than others, but we are all learning, all the time.

As we went through 2020 it felt rather like playing Musical Chairs, but never being sure whether chairs were being removed or added to the game. Some groups did restart for a while, complying with social distancing rules – with some very creative ways of getting together - but then they had to stop. Some groups were able to continue throughout the summer months, when meetings would not normally be held. I have the greatest sympathy for all those groups who haven't been able to meet in any format, either due to the restrictions put on us, or because the members were not able, or did not wish, to use virtual methods. So many of our members join U3A for the social element as well as the learning opportunities of their groups. People are social animals and we need to interact with other people, to share thoughts, swap ideas, drink tea, eat biscuits and so on. Our new Facebook group provides another opportunity to do this. I hope that the members that are not able to join in with the digital world have had some contact with others to keep in touch during these difficult times.

When I took on the role of Director of Studies at the last AGM, I knew that I would need to get to know all of our Group Leaders, and one of the benefits of the restrictions is that I've had the opportunity to talk to most of them, email others, meet some in person, and talk to others over Zoom. It is our Group Leaders who make Guildford U3A a success, and I am proud to be one of them. Let's all hope that it is not too long before we can return to some semblance of normality and again do what we're good at doing – providing both social and learning opportunities for our members.