

Chairman's Statement Royston U3A AGM on 27th June 2023

After the past few difficult years, I very much hope that we have now come out on the other side from the terrible pandemic that affected all our lives. I hope that many of our members, despite finding the period isolating with some regrettably suffering bad health or even worse losing someone close to them, are now fully recovered and once again happy to be able to meet up and socialise with friends and family. We at Royston u3a remained contactable and continued to provide as much information and support as we possibly could to our entire membership throughout the entire pandemic period.

HOW DID WE DO?

The pandemic taught us how to use the technology available to us so that we could maintain contact with the majority of our members ensuring, we hoped, that members did not feel isolated. In this regard, using Zoom for our monthly meetings enabled us to extend our range of speakers from local to national and also to international. Since lockdown ended, gradually members have regained the confidence to cautiously meet up again in the Town Hall and numbers for doing this have been steadily increasing which has been most reassuring. The interest groups were obviously badly affected by the pandemic and the outdoor activity groups resumed as soon as it was felt safe to do so. Regrettably, some other groups have had to be suspended due to the group leaders deciding after a period of inactivity and in some cases illness to stand down after a number of years. A big thank you to those members for being such great group leaders. Appeals have constantly been made asking members to come forward to lead a group either on their own or jointly with others. Please remember that the u3a is run by members for other members

Regarding our ongoing groups, The Outings and Theatre groups re-started with immense success. The Solo Sundays group has also re-convened with a team of 3 people running it and it continues to be very popular with car sharing being offered to those members who do not drive. Many of our other interest groups such as French, History, Current Affairs, Classic Novels, Wine Appreciation, Strollers, Five Mile Walks, the Book groups, Art, Active Keep Fit &

Seated Exercise, Pétanque and Boules, Ukulele, Yarn & Chat, Golf Croquet, Clay Shooting and Golf have all resumed and are doing well. But I repeat, we need more members to start up some new interest groups or be willing to resurrect the groups that have sadly been suspended.

Our membership numbers were amazing at the end of the membership year but sadly we did lose some truly valued members. However, I am delighted to say that since the commencement of the new membership year our numbers have grown and continue to grow rapidly.

THANK YOU'S

A big thank you goes to all my committee members for their ongoing commitment and work to keep Royston u3a running. I won't mention all of the committee but big thanks must go to Marion Martin our Membership Secretary whose record keeping using Excel is unbelievable, especially at membership renewal time. The same goes for our Treasurer, Barbara Andrew for keeping track of our finances. Further thanks must go to Pam Dajda and Ralph Gellert for ensuring that our Royston u3a News and, during the pandemic, the Keeping in Touch publication continued to be issued with good and interesting articles despite quite a number of the group activities not happening throughout the year. We are extremely fortunate to have such talented individuals on our committee.

Due to our financial prowess, you will be aware that we have not had to increase the annual membership amount for the year 2023/2024 this is on top of having given members a free membership year for the year 2022/2023.

We have worked hard on behalf of members to find and secure some excellent speakers over the past year covering a range of topics. It is not always easy to provide speakers that appeal to everyone but we have tried our best.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Regarding the future of Royston u3a, finding members to join the committee continues to be a real struggle not only for us but for many other u3as in the UK. We have a membership of almost 500 people and it is sad that hardly anyone is willing to put themselves forward. Last year we were delighted to welcome one person onto the committee, namely David Edwards; David has proved to be a most welcome and valuable committee member. I am also advising that this year my Vice Chair, Sandra Walker is retiring and I would like

to thank her for her contribution over the past few years. Please be aware that as of the end of this year, ie June 2024, many of the committee will be standing down, so unless members come forward there is a risk that Royston u3a will not survive after that.

Finally, massive thanks go once again to my fellow committee members for their friendship, support and commitment as well as my indebtedness to all of them for everything they have done for Royston u3a and for me; without them we would have been sadly lacking.

On a personal note, what a great privilege it is for me being the Chair of Royston u3a, it has undoubtedly enriched my life and I would like to thank you all for your loyalty and support.

Jackie Gellert
Chair, Royston U3A
27th June 2023