Westbury and District u3a

Chair Report for AGM

11th July 2023

This will be my last Chair report before handing over to a new Chair.

Some of you may remember the AGM 5 years ago when I didn’t exactly fling my hand in the air when we were asked if anyone would like to stand for Chair but it has been a privilege for me to serve and for me the years have gone very quickly despite the challenges of lockdown and Zoom meetings on line which were a steep learning curve for me. I can’t thank Keith enough for all his expertise and support setting these up for all of the committee and I can honestly say that they were much easier to tackle than the SW network Zoom meetings where there were over 25 people trying to speak!

I have met so many lovely people and both enjoyed and witnessed self-supporting social groups (also known as Ladies & Gents who lunch) where long lasting friendships are made. I have also enjoyed the benefit of visiting many local hostelries – the frequency of some groups visiting so often that I wonder why we were never offered a discount!

We have gradually but very positively grown in membership numbers since lockdown thanks to promotion material, word of mouth and two events, our 2021 Open Day which was well attended despite the weather and more recently the Health and Wellbeing event which sadly, was not well attended by members (less than15), but crowds of people from the Westbury community and we all enjoyed wonderful weather. My thanks to the committee members who helped set up and clear away our stall. I think we may have attracted a few more members as we certainly didn’t allow anyone who looked a likely candidate pass by. Two of our founder members did come and sat at our stall which was delightful – thank-you all as you know who you are.

I would like to thanks lots of people and although there hasn’t been a game show I will mention them in no particular order.

Thank-you to all of you members who regularly join us at our monthly meetings – seeing familiar and smiling faces every month has been a huge boost for me personally. It is lovely too, to see new faces and those who attend for specific speakers too of course.

Thank-you to all of you who regularly help to set out the tables and chairs and clear them away afterwards, a boring but essential part of our meetings, it does not go unnoticed and is much appreciated by all members. More help is always appreciated and noted.

Thank-you to all of you who, without fail, offer to help with teas when group members are low – again it does not go unnoticed.

Now to thank the committee without whom none of us would be here. The support and friendship has been amazing and has made my role so much easier. Again no particular order

Joy, as Vice Chair, is always ready to help and I have found her back up very reassuring and her hospitality in hosting both committee meetings and group meetings is second to none. Both she and Roy are always ready to help and both have been particularly supportive to me personally.

Faith has been our Secretary for 4 plus years and her smiling face is such a joy during our committee meetings. I so admire her skill of being able to minute the important topics we discuss as we can, and do, go off at a tangent often – me more than most I think.

Jen, our Membership Secretary works relentlessly to keep all of you updated and informed of any news, dates of meetings etc. I so admire her using quite a lot of her own time to keep us all in touch and Jen never complains – just gets on with it. Jen and John are the couple who always welcome you to each meeting with such enthusiasm.

John O is also always cheerful and the first to offer to do all sorts of important tasks – the committee would be lost without him and he also supports Steve in his role as treasurer.

Chris is our publicity officer and has made such a difference to promoting our small u3a branch. Her skill with I.T. is also invaluable as is the production of our quarterly newsletter. Please remember to send your reports and photographs to Chris as it’s a thankless task to keep requesting news for every issue.

Steve, our Treasurer, took over this role from John last year and has dragged us into this century by introducing on-line banking. He is a wizard with I.T. too and produces graphs and charts to make life easier for us. He is scarily speedy at completing any tasks he volunteers for! Steve and Chris are also the first to offer to help with all the other jobs to keep the show on the road and their enthusiasm is hopefully catching!

Pauline has arranged for some fabulous speakers to entertain and educate us and has recently joined the SW Network where speaker secretaries can share details of good speakers which hopefully will prove fruitful.

Maggie, our previous Chair, is now our Group Coordinator and Social Secretary and has arranged some fantastic days out which many of you have enjoyed. The lunches we have in August and at Christmas are arranged by Maggie with help from Joy and Julie and they recently they set up a Travel Buddy group which is open to all so please see our website for details. Maggie is also our “go to” person for anything related to the URC Hall where she can help with storing our equipment. It is hard to imagine managing without her knowledge and input.

Talking of groups we must not forget to thank our Group Leaders who arrange meetings and often lunches for the groups they lead. We have had a few new groups since I took over as Chair including the Strollers, Something Snappy, Travel Buddies, a second Book Group and Creative Yarns. This is very encouraging and demonstrates that we must be doing something right!

Last but absolutely not least I would like to thank Carol and Mike Peacock who run our website and keep it, and us, updated regularly. They are able to monitor how many people visit the site and I would like to encourage more members to visit the site to see the hard work and commitment to our branch which Carol and Mike give.

I would also like to say a thank-you from us all to Christine who opens closes and most importantly cleans the hall for all users. We have delivered some flowers to her to show our appreciation (I say “we” but of course it was John who volunteered again)

I am looking forward to seeing you all every month and will still be sitting on the committee. In ending (I hear a Phew) I would like to encourage all members to attend some of our monthly meetings so that they can share their learning and meet others who may like to join their group.

Thank-you for your patience and friendly faces. Long may Westbury & District u3a continue and thrive.

Erica Watson

Chair

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