

## Fleet and District U3A

### Chair's report for 2021 AGM

Good morning, thank you for attending our AGM. This is the opportunity for your committee to tell you what we have been doing in your interests over the last year. Sadly, it is my last Chair's report. I have had a great time as chair of Fleet U3A for the last four years. I have been fortunate to work with some very hardworking and committed volunteers on the committee and elsewhere in this super organisation. Thank you all for your support and encouragement over my time in office. It has made the difference between what could have been an onerous responsibility and what has been a busy and gratifying honour. As your chair I set out to make our U3A even more open, friendly and inclusive but I couldn't do any of that on my own. It is your backing and acceptance of change that has made any improvements possible.

We began our U3A year in the second national lockdown when everything we did was online or out of doors. The committee tried to steer a course through the crazy times of confusing and often contradictory messages about Covid rules in late 2020 and the 'shall we/ shan't we?' be able to start up our group meetings again in the spring of 2021 leading to the 'four tier system' of covid restrictions and yet another postponement of our plans. The committee met at least once every month during this time and everyone was in constant touch with each other as rules and advice changed with alarming speed. We attempted to keep you informed at every stage and are very grateful for your understanding and support especially as we had to go back on some decisions because the ground unexpectedly shifted under us at the last minute.

One important decision made by the committee this year has been to increase what used to be termed 'Attendance Fee' but is better described as 'Venue Contribution' and also to collect the contribution at the start of each term where possible. We made this tough choice when we realised that we had maintained the same number of groups, post pandemic but our venue costs were about to rise and our membership had shrunk. Our financial security was at risk. We are all very appreciative of your understanding of and compliance with this new way of managing our finances.

We would like to thank, again, all our excellent volunteers, especially our Group Leaders (GLs), who have ensured that Fleet U3A has survived the pandemic reasonably intact. They all reacted as quickly as possible whenever there was a change in government advice and adapted their working practices rapidly to guarantee that we would continue to meet our promises to you, our members.

We have to say thank you and farewell to several Group Leaders at this AGM. They have all been thanked personally but this is an opportunity for a public note of appreciation for all that they have done to encourage new learning and just having fun in their groups over many years. They are:

- Peter Lucas from Art 2, Acrylics
- Evelyn Dansey, John Dansey and Michael Spicer all from Art 10, Painting

- Craig Handyside from Indoor Bowls
- Helen Newman from Italian
- David Pinder and Marion Simpson from Philosophy
- Sheila Arthur from Scrabble
- Lyn Hodges from Tai Chi
- Ann Bauer from Talking Poetry
- Renny Skelton from Walking C
- Alan Hayward from Wine Appreciation and
- Barrie England from Philosophy

We wish them much pleasure in their newfound free time.

Brian Robinson, who stepped down before the SGM and who led Financial Affairs for more than 20 years, was nominated to become a Life Member of Fleet U3A. This nomination was discussed in committee and I am delighted to report was agreed unanimously. Brian was delighted to be offered this accolade and was very gracious about Fleet U3A in his acceptance of it.

Sadly, we have lost members to Covid 19 and, where we were informed, we sent condolences to family members and, if possible, representatives of Fleet U3A lined the route as the funeral party left their home. This mark of respect was much appreciated and strangely comforting as we all reverted back to customs that I am sure we remember from our own youth. The pandemic has certainly given us cause to rethink some aspects of behaviour from our past that we may want to revive. We have to hope that a more respectful, inclusive and caring society emerges as we move back to normality.

We have managed to keep a full-strength committee throughout the various lockdowns and are inviting you to approve the appointment of 12 elected members as set out in the AGM papers you received recently. We also have one co-opted member. There are no new faces on our committee this year but we are always keen to welcome new volunteers. We are a hard-working team, helping each other to manage the various elements of the work we do while enjoying the fun and friendships that have emerged from our time together.

Fiona, our Membership Secretary, reports that membership has continued to fall for this second renewal period of the pandemic and we currently stand at 1,694 members. On a more positive note, the number of new members we are enrolling is currently at 231% of last year's total and we hope that this number will increase over the next six months. Last year at this time we had enrolled 42 new members and to date this year we have enrolled 97. Please do all you can to encourage your friends and family to join our U3A. Remember, there is no age or status restriction, you just have to be available to attend group meetings during the working day.

During the membership renewal round this year there was a mix-up at the post office and some 'couple' members were asked to pay extra postage to claim their printed programmes from the collection office in Fleet. The committee and I apologise for any inconvenience this caused and did offer to reimburse members affected by this fiasco. On investigation it transpired that the dispatching post office accepted the envelopes with the customary postage without demur. But unknown to us they were actually too heavy by a small amount for a second-class stamp as the printer had used heavier paper. The receiving post office spotted this shortfall and proceeded to hold up delivery of the programmes until extra postage was paid. I can assure you we will be super vigilant next year to make sure we put the correct postage on each envelope. At the time some members suggested sending only an e-copy of the programme to all members thereby saving postage altogether but far more members said they wanted to continue to receive a paper copy as they used it for reference and to scribble on during the year! From next year we will re-introduce hard copies of your membership cards, also due to popular demand.

Adrian, our Publicity Secretary, tells me that much of his year has been spent preparing for reopening after lockdown and thinking of ways to attract new members. The biggest event was U3A Day in June of this year where we had a well-visited stand in the Hart Centre, walkabouts by committee members, displays by different interest groups in shop windows around Fleet and lots of members dressed in U3A blue and yellow to advertise our charity. We did sign up some new members on the day and posters and leaflets around the town will have contributed to our healthy tally of new members. Adrian has also had articles published in a number of free magazines locally. Online the Facebook members' page has steadily grown during the year and now has almost 300 members, do sign up if you're a Facebook user as we use the page to advertise our events even before they appear in the newsletter. Adrian's plans for next year include trying to secure a booking at Fleet's Pop-Up shop so that we can advertise our U3A and offer a coffee and a chat to anyone who calls in. He also plans more local advertising in local magazines and taking part in the second national U3A Day which is going to be in September 2022.

Talking of the newsletter, Sandy, our Editor, writes that over the past year she has tried to keep you all informed and entertained with the Newsletter and our interim publication, Between Times. Some members were very generous with sharing reports of meetings or writing stories and memoirs. She is very grateful to all the contributors so far and hopes they will continue to submit regular articles. She also hopes that in future more members will feel able to submit articles so that she is able to continue the rich array that is our monthly newsletter.

Alan, our secretary, has kept us on the straight and narrow all year, ensuring we meet all legal requirements as a charity. He has also set up and managed our two Zoom accounts uploading Zoom recordings, where available, to our YouTube account. He is our point of contact with the Third Age Trust and forwards newsletters etc. to all members. (Please remember that you can subscribe directly to TAT newsletters, details are in our programme booklet.) Alan is also our Beacon guru. Beacon being our financial and membership management IT system. Alan is stepping down as Secretary at this AGM but will remain on the committee as our Beacon and Programme Secretary. I know you will all join with me in thanking Alan for all he has done to manage the business of our U3A. Personally, I owe him

an enormous debt of gratitude for all the support and encouragement he has given to me. He is handing the Secretary's role over to Jan and I know we all wish her well in this new post.

Stephen, our Group Leaders' Liaison Secretary reports that he is just completing his second year in the role and so has spent most of his time in post during the pandemic. He says that during the last year it has been wonderful to see so many group leaders keeping their groups going, whether through the use of zoom or in person where possible. He also celebrates all the new groups that started up and is pleased that only a few groups decided to close due to Covid. We currently have about 110 groups running, and Stephen is hopeful that this total will continue to grow in the next few years as we return to a post-pandemic world. Stephen spent most of 2021 talking to Group Leaders and others on the phone and via email. Sadly, he had to miss the annual Group Leaders' meeting due being in self-isolation. Hopefully, the 2021/22 year will allow him to meet many more members in person, starting with this AGM!

Jenny, our Outreach Secretary, says her role is to "reach out" to all our GLs and members to ensure everyone is included as much as possible in activities, groups, venues, gatherings and outings. At National level the U3A is working to encourage every local U3A to seek greater diversity within their membership. In the next year Jenny is planning to "reach out" to local communities who are under-represented within our current membership. She will begin by establishing a link with the local Gurkha Community. She asks that you contact her with your suggestions for future planning. Jenny is also taking up the role of Enquiries Secretary and is hoping the overlap between her two jobs will be beneficial to everyone.

Chris, our Webmaster, reminds us that our website provides information on our U3A's activities for members and the public. It is our shop window, showing those who are not yet members the benefits they will gain from joining us. It needs to reflect the range of U3A experience, and to do that depends on input from members. He is always on the lookout for new content especially any helpful advice for new members, especially those who may be concerned about joining already established groups. Photos of members enjoying their activities are particularly needed - remember that picture is worth a thousand words.

Chris is in the gradual process of altering the layout of the website to make it more succinct and also easier to view on smaller screens e.g., tablets and smart phones. As a result, some menu items will change their positions, but they will still all be there.

Barbara is not only our Minutes Secretary but is also our Venues Secretary, a very hardworking lady! She says that the last year has been challenging, the Covid pandemic resulting in ever changing rules being implemented by venues. Many of our venues are staffed by volunteers who have often been working from home so difficult to contact, therefore it has been hard for her to answer questions from GLs in a timely manner. In spite of the challenges, venues have been very helpful trying to get all groups to restart in September in a safe environment. Perhaps due to the lack of revenue over the last 18 months some venues are raising their hire costs and imposing stricter conditions. Barbara and her deputy Venues Sec, Anna White, continue to look for new venues as new groups

start up and in order to swap venues around if groups require larger spaces due to Covid concerns.

Thanks and appreciation must go to Carol Howlett who had to step down from being Events Secretary for family reasons and to Sue Dee who stepped into the breach to organise such a successful quiz afternoon in October.

Andy, previously our Programme Secretary, has taken on the Events role and his baptism of fire is fast approaching; the Christmas Lunch. I am pleased to say it is proving very popular and the last few tickets are on sale today. Andy has a good team to support him in his role, especially Peter Murray our Catering Team Leader. I look forward to seeing you at the Christmas lunch soon.

Jan is our Enquires Secretary, the first contact anyone has with our U3A. She tells me she has had a particularly busy time recently with the increase in interest from people wanting to join our gang. Jan is stepping down from Enquiries and stepping up to the important role as Secretary of our U3A. I know she will be her usual hard-working and conscientious self in her new job.

Neil, our hardworking and very accommodating Treasurer will be delivering his own report to you very soon.

Last but by no means least, I come to John. He has been our top-notch Monthly Meetings Secretary and is about to become Chair, if you vote for him! He describes how the constraints of the pandemic obliged us to investigate technology that could enable us to proceed with a programme of monthly meetings online. We began by seeking inspiration from our own members starting with the history of cinema in Fleet by local expert Maurice Kent. Maurice still holds the record for the number of viewings on YouTube of any Fleet U3A recording! Two other members, Yvonne Hockey and Dr Ann Bauer re-started our in-person programme this autumn. Yvonne revealed how very few of us could recognise Chanel No 5 given a chance to smell it! Ann Bauer's passionate championing of youngsters with additional needs was inspiring to hear. John is passing the Monthly Meeting role to me so I am delighted that he has planned the 2022 programme, again inviting our own members to display their expertise. Beginning in January we will be addressed by broadcaster, Alan Grace. He will be telling the story of the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) and the well-known presenters who started their careers there.

The past 18 months have been difficult for all of us as we have found ourselves living in ways we never expected. As U3A members, we have benefitted enormously from our membership of Fleet U3A. Without the enormous amount of voluntary effort by so many people, our U3A might not have survived. As U3A members, we belong to a movement built on principles of mutual aid and self-help. Although we may join in the first place to learn a new skill or to enjoy meeting new people, we also join a movement where we are all volunteers with something to contribute. Now is the time to make that contribution. We need new Group Leaders to take over existing groups and to set up new ones. We need innovative ideas on the committee. We need you to step up to the mark if we are to continue to live, laugh and learn together post Covid 19.

As John F. Kennedy said, 'Every person can make a difference, and every person should try.'

Good bye and thank you,

Paddy Powell



**Balance Sheet**

6405 CAF	£ 13,213.45	£ 6,376.81
Gold CAF	£ 35,001.21	£ 42,440.08
HSBC	£ 8,209.04	£ 136.87
PayPal	£ 225.62	£ 284.18
Petty Cash	£ 12.97	£ 7.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 56,662.29</b>	<b>£ 49,245.91</b>
Visits CAF	£ 5,421.55	£ 3,915.05

**Notes to the Accounts**

Gift aid is outstanding whilst a software error in Beacon is resolved

Sonning Mill refund relates to Covid 19 cancellation

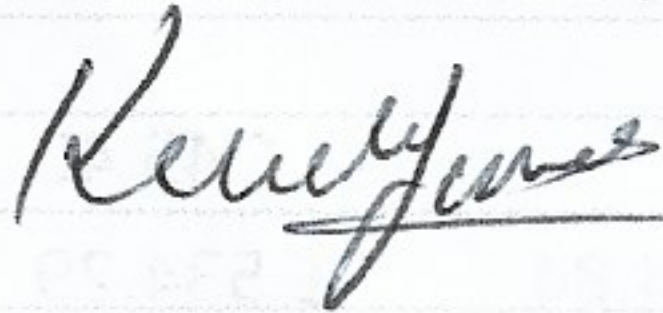
1. As a Registered Charity, the accounts have been prepared in accordance with the recommended practices issued by the Charity Commission
2. The reserves carried forward include a Reserves Policy sum of .  
20% of Expenditure - £30,000

The Statement of Income and Expenditure has been prepared from the Fleet and District U3A Computerised accounting records, which I have examined in conjunction with the necessary Bank Statements, relevant invoices and other supporting data.

I have reviewed all the data presented to me, and consider the income and expenditure account to be a true record of the financial situation of the Fleet and District U3A as of the 31st August 2021

**Kenneth James Account Examiner**

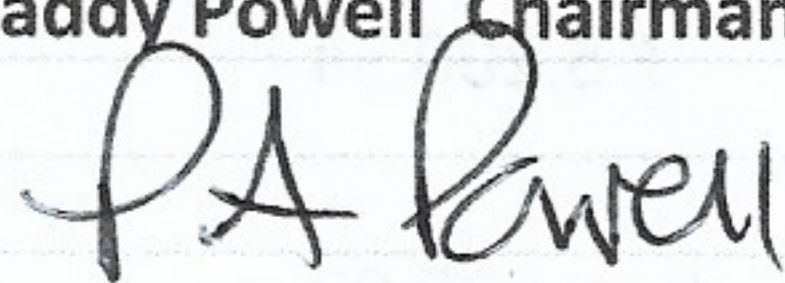
**Date:** 01/11/21



**Signed on behalf of the Management Committee**

**Date:**

**Paddy Powell Chairman**



November 3rd 2021

**Neil Morley Treasurer**

**Date:**



3/11/21



24 Primrose Walk, Stockton Park, Stockton Avenue, Fleet, Hampshire, GU51 4SS

1st November, 2021

**REPORT TO:** Trustees/Committee of the Fleet University of the Third Age.

**SUBJECT:** Independent examination of the accounts for 2020/2021 (academic year)

1. I have completed my examination of your accounts in respect of the year 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2021.

2. I am pleased to report that I have found no significant matters in connection with the examination which give me cause to believe that the accounts have not been produced within the requirements laid down by the Charity Commission or that the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

3. The year under review was a very different year from those previous and, indeed, a number of temporary arrangements were put in place which deviated somewhat from traditional recording methods. I understand that most of those arrangements have now ceased (or are now ceasing). However, if any need to become more permanent some thought would need to be given to aligning the recording systems more in line with traditional principles.

4. I did make one firm suggestion (in relation to reflecting the gift aid position in the balance sheet) and I did raise a number of queries with the Treasurer and the Chairman which were all resolved for me.

5. I have no specific recommendations to make following the examination of the accounts.

6. On a general note I believe (for no other reason than that it ought to be done) that it would be appropriate for someone independent of the visits team to select -at random - one visit and conduct an audit of all aspects of the financing associated with that visit.

Kenneth James