

## **Chairman's Report November 2023**

I would like to express thanks to all the Committee for the time and effort they have put in on your behalf to ensure that our u3a has remained successful as some u3as in these difficult times have not fared so well and have been forced to close. I would also like to thank the Committee Members for the continued support they have given me as Chairman; I have really appreciated it.

Next I would like to give our thanks on behalf of all our members to our Group Convenors, for their commitment, enthusiasm and more importantly, their time. They all work very hard to make Epping Forest u3a the success it is today. We currently have 47 groups available to members compared to 46 last year. Unfortunately, three groups were unable to continue and closed during the year but we also welcomed four new groups, a second wine tasting group, board games and two discussion groups; one about football and the other cricket. We have at least one more still at the planning stage. Other local u3as have also opened up a few of their groups to our members. During the year we also established an IT Support Group that provides basic-level support to members with limited IT skills. This team has helped members to use basic computer functions and smartphone applications. It does not provide computer repairs or advise about which products or brands to buy. This support has proved very helpful to those members who have used it.

I and the rest of the Committee would like to give a huge thank you to the Group Convenors who have stayed committed to keeping their groups going as well as those who have come forward and set up new groups. Hopefully with the support of new members joining us we will achieve our on-going objective of having more groups in the future. However, it is up to you our members, to be active and help to initiate the development of new groups. I can assure you that your Committee will give you, new Group Convenors and members alike, all the support they can.

We held our annual Group Convenors Conference in the summer, when we focused on day to day issues involved in running groups, developing new ones and outlining the kind of support that the committee is able to provide. A key focus of the Conference was Contingency Planning, looking at ways in which a group or activity may continue if a Group Convenor cannot run it any more or if the current venue is no longer available. My thanks to Barrie Gunter (our Groups Co-ordinator) for leading on the Conference. An up to date list of groups is always available; it can be accessed in the members area of the website or I am happy for you to contact me if you would like a copy.

Moving on, I would like to thank everyone who has helped out at our Monday meetings, not just the Committee but also others who lend a hand each month.

In particular, John Carnera on reception, ably assisted on an ad hoc basis by Stephen Cowan, Mark Lockyer and Doug Pratt; Sheila Shulton, and Anne Pratt who help out on the newsletter desk, Terry and Val Eagles for their charity cards and Julia and Paul Wilson who run the book and jigsaw swap. And last but not least, the team who provide the tea and coffee service.

Our Welcome Team also has a noticeable presence at our monthly meetings, showing new members where everything is and helping them to find out more about the opportunities and activities on offer. My thanks to Mary Terry, Judith Pattison and Beverly Swift, a recent addition to the team.

We have just completed our membership subscription renewal so my thanks go to Gill Postlethwaite for handling this task so efficiently and patiently and to Nick Andrews, our new Treasurer for dealing with the financial side of the renewal process.

Although our reserves have fallen to the level agreed in our Constitution, our costs have increased and our outgoings remain slightly higher than our income. This means that we can no longer continue to run at a slight loss each year. As a Committee we have analysed our finances and have looked for ways to cut costs rather than put up the overall subscription for everyone.

The fee we pay to the Third Age Trust for each of our members now accounts for just over 20% of our subscription income and it is likely that this fee set by the Third Age Trust may well increase in the near future. At the same time our other costs such as postage and stationery go up every year. As a consequence, one of our biggest expenses is the monthly newsletter, of which postage is the major part. As you know, members were asked to complete a survey a few weeks ago asking about their willingness to receive the newsletter, where possible, by email in future, thereby making a considerable saving in our overall budget. The results of the survey which are detailed in this month's newsletter indicated that of those of you with email, the majority would be willing to receive it electronically or would be willing to collect a hard copy from the Village Hall at the monthly meeting. However of those who responded and have an email address, 106 members (comprising 78 households) would still prefer to have a copy posted to them.

We discussed the preliminary survey results at Committee and also inspected our finalised accounts for the year 2022 to 2023 and came to the decision that to continue with a postal service to all members at no additional cost was no longer viable.

We have therefore decided that from January 2024, **all** members with an email address will have a Newsletter emailed to them each month; hard copies of the Newsletter will still be available for collection at the main meeting, on the first Monday of each month, irrespective of whether an electronic copy has been mailed out. However, for those of you with an email and who still want a copy posted to you, we have decided that we have no alternative except to charge you at a cost of £1.00 per month. This charge will be payable in advance, starting in January 2024.

Many of you may find the electronic copy far easier to read as it will be in a much larger font and any pictures will be in colour. I appreciate that some of you may find these changes difficult but the alternative is to raise our annual subscription quite significantly for all members. The Committee was unanimous in deciding that the above was the best way forward at this time. Thank you again for responding to the survey which has helped us when making our decision.

Our hall hire costs are also due to increase, albeit only slightly, so we will still need to keep our annual fees under review.

Groups that use hired premises are also required to keep their costs under review. The recommended charge for each member attending an activity in hired premises, such as here in the Village hall is £1.50 per member per meeting. However, if the numbers in the groups are not large enough to cover the cost of the hall hire, then members are asked to pay a higher charge such as £2.00 per meeting or even more. The requirement is that the cost of the hall should be met by the group using it, otherwise other members not attending the group are, in practice, subsidising the group. Nick, as part of his Treasurer's role will be monitoring hall hire costs during the year to try and ensure that they remain cost neutral.

We continued with a publicity drive earlier this year with the aim of increasing our membership. We held an Open Morning for new members as well as members of the public at the beginning of June and advertised this in local publications and on Council notice boards. However, our membership numbers are still lower than they were before the pandemic; currently they stand at 626; the comparative figure at this time last year was 645. Prior to renewal, we had a membership of

691. As reported last year, many u3as saw a significant decline in membership during the pandemic with some unable to continue as a result. At our peak, prior to the pandemic, we had just over 800 members.

Although we have had a steady stream of applications from people wishing to join us, there are always some members who do not renew their membership when the time comes. Some members leave due to a change in personal circumstances but a few decide not to renew because they have determined that what we have to offer is not for them.

This means that we do need to ensure that we have a wide range of groups and activities to offer members; if we don't have enough to interest new people, then we cannot expect to maintain a healthy membership. It is also important that new members as well as existing members realise that we are a volunteer organisation and that the availability of a wide range of groups and activities is only possible if members come forward and volunteer their services to help run them.

Members of our events team have been very active in the past few months having organised several art and museum trips and days out, including a trip to Canterbury, a behind the scenes look at Wimbledon as well as a short stay at a Warners Adult Hotel in the Cotswolds. This proved very popular with our members, and Elizabeth Price who has organised this trip has now organised another break at a Warners venue for next Spring. This is already sold out.

My thanks to all of those members of the Events Team who have been pro-active in arranging and supporting these outings especially Heather Carnera, Chrystine Hobbs, Trish Lockyer, Jackie Pam, Anne Pratt, Elizabeth Price and Beverley Swift.

As a Committee, we also 'did our bit' by running our Afternoon Tea last month which, if you attended, I am sure you will agree, was a great success. The Elvis impersonator who entertained us at the event proved to be a great hit. We are hoping that you will also enjoy our Fun Quiz Night which is taking place at the end of this month.

We have also enjoyed some joint trips with other local u3as and expect this trend to continue. The price of outings, particularly if coach hire is involved has inevitably increased so it is important that trips of this nature are fully supported and sharing places with other u3as is one way of keeping the costs down. I hope that you try to support these events as much as you can and don't forget that we are always open to new ideas for activities and events.

I would now like to take this opportunity to thank the remainder of the committee for their hard work, much of it carried out diligently behind the scenes, week in and week out, throughout the year.

Thanks to **Steve Baker** who is responsible for booking our wide and varied range of guest speakers and ensures that each talk runs efficiently on the day. We certainly have had an eclectic mix of excellent speakers which I am sure will be proven today.

I would also like to thank **Linda Cohen**, our Vice Chair; she has been a general support to myself and the rest of the Committee. The same is true for **Trish Lockyer**, our Secretary who deals with a range of admin as well as making sense of our discussions at Committee and somehow translating them into coherent minutes. **Janine Navarro** who took over the Newsletter last year and has done a sterling job in ensuring its successful continuation. My particular thanks go to **Nick Andrews** who stepped into the breach when our Treasurer stood down unexpectedly due to health problems. This proved a life saver to me as initially I took on the temporary role of Treasurer as well as continuing as Chairman, albeit only for a relatively short period. I would also like to thank **Heather**

**Carnera**, who is very much our “Jill” of all trades, helping to organise events, stuffing newsletters into envelopes each month as well as distributing them, running her own groups and so much more. I would have found it very difficult to manage without her. And then we have **Doug Pratt**, whose knowledge, expertise and common-sense approach has ensured that I along with the rest of the Committee work within the legal framework.

My final thanks as well as that of the Committee go to all of you who volunteer your help in so many other different ways. Thank you all.

Jill Gunter

**EPPING FOREST UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE**  
**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST AUGUST 2023**


| INCOME                    | 2023         | 2022         |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Annual Subscriptions      | 13145        | 13399        |
| Hall Hire Charges         |              |              |
| TBVH                      | 5131         | 4977         |
| TBY & C Centre            | 1241         | 1615         |
| Gift Aid Recoverable 2022 |              | 0            |
| Gift Aid Recoverable 2023 | 3879         |              |
| Other Income              | 89           | 105          |
| Social Events/Outings     | 28296        | 15216        |
| <b>Total Income</b>       | <b>51781</b> | <b>35312</b> |

**EXPENDITURE**

|                               |              |              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Third Age Trust               | 2732         | 2828         |
| Monthly Meetings              |              |              |
| Hall Hire                     | 4962         | 4684         |
| Speaker                       | 1426         | 1268         |
| Group Accommodation           |              |              |
| TBVH                          | 5849         | 5312         |
| TBY & C Centre                | 1350         | 1410         |
| Newsletter                    | 5917         | 5728         |
| Group Leader's Conference     | 1369         | 1435         |
| Coffee Mornings (new members) | 84           | 0            |
| Administrative Expenses       | 354          | 91           |
| Miscellaneous Expenses        | 516          | 1126         |
| Social Events/Outings         | 24846        | 14939        |
| <b>Total expenditure</b>      | <b>49406</b> | <b>38821</b> |
| <b>Surplus/Deficit</b>        | <b>2375</b>  | <b>-3509</b> |


|   |      |                     |      |
|---|------|---------------------|------|
| Main account balance at 31st August 2023  | 5182 | at 31st August 2022 | 6706 |
| Membership a/c balance at 31st August 2023  | 40   | at 31st August 2022 | 161  |
| Social account balance at 31st August 2023  | 5461 | at 31st August 2022 | 2472 |
| Accruals - member payments held in Social A/C against events up to April 2024 at 31st August 2023 | 1450 | at 31st August 2022 | 0    |

Approved by the Executive Committee and signed on its behalf by

Jill Gunter  Chairman  
Date 20-10-23

Nick Andrews  Treasurer  
Date 20-10-23

Examiner's Report: I have examined these accounts and have found them to be in accordance with the accounting records and explanations given me.

Raj Koria   
Date 18/10/23