

MKu3a Annual Report and Accounts

Year Ending 30th November 2023

Committee Members

Chair	Lesley Sparks
Vice Chair	Diana Sears
Treasurer	David Hall
Secretary	Deb Hodges
Membership Secretary	Tim Hadden
Groups Facilitators	Chris Costello Hazel Spencer
Communications	Martin Woodman
Webmaster/Datum	Dave Barratt,
Non trustees	Shirley Dewar Frank Parisi Julie Hadden

Team Support Members

Sue Giordano	Finance Administration
Janet Thompson	Finance Administration
Yvonne Ashmore	Membership Administration
Len Barrows	Assistant Webmaster
Eve Tigano	Newsletter Editor

PURPOSE, STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

u3as in the UK are autonomous, self-help organisations run by the voluntary efforts of their members. All u3a's are members of the Third Age Trust (a registered charity) which is our national support and advisory body.

MKu3a is here to encourage and enable people of Milton Keynes and its surrounding locality, who are no longer in full time paid employment, to help each other to share their knowledge, skills, interests, and experiences.

As MKu3a is a registered charity, the Committee members are Trustees of the Charity as set out in Section 2 of our Constitution.

Report from the Chair

The AGM 2023 was well supported, with departing Trustees thanked for their support and new nominated Trustees being appointed. We welcomed them all.

All Trustees and other members of the management committee were thanked for their time, knowledge and expertise in ensuring the smooth running and good order of MKu3a.

The Management Committee had three main areas of focus in the year, firstly to support our members and groups in all aspects of maintaining ongoing commitments, secondly to stabilise and grow our membership, thirdly to continue to celebrate u3a day. It is considered all three objectives were met.

We also took some tentative steps in publicising MKu3a by starting to be more active within social media forums, notices within parish newsletters, and participating again in the Milton Keynes over 55 fair which resulted in several new members and forged links with other Over 55 enterprises.

The u3a uk AGM was again held in Milton Keynes and the Management Committee members volunteered to support the smooth running of this event.

We have begun to explore contactless methods for group members to pay their attendance fees which will significantly reduce the workload in reconciling these payments and have opened two further current accounts and transferred a substantial amount to a 1-year fixed term, maturing in May 2024.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Numbers

We were encouraged by the interest in 2023. Our membership has increased steadily throughout 2023. At the end of 2023 our membership stood at 1284 (1222 at the end of 2022).

243 new members joined during the year (201 in 2022). This included several members who re-joined after a period of absence. During the same period, we lost around 180 members including those who moved away or did not renew.

In 2023 we had 40 Life Members; a further three members having been added in the first quarter of 2023, having been in membership for 25 years.

Online Renewals and Joining

We continue to reach most members electronically, allowing us to send out renewal invitations by email, although a small number have to be sent by post. Similarly, most new members continue to join online, but postal communication is still available to those few who do not use email. Subscription renewals were mostly paid through bank transfer and PayPal, although a significant number of renewals are made by post using cheques (usually between 2 and 10 each week), including a number who have email addresses. The processing of these cheque payments takes longer due to the lag between posting and banking usually being 1-2 weeks. Electronic communication and payment are much appreciated as they considerably reduce administrative workload and bank transfers can usually be processed within 24 hours.

Welcome Meetings

The name of the event to welcome and orient new members was changed from Induction Meetings to New Member Welcome Meetings in July 2023. A total of 6 meetings were held during the year, with the January meeting being held in Olney. All other meetings were held at the Great Linford Parish Council Offices. Attendance has varied from as low as 6 to as high as 30 with the average around 12. A backlog built up in the third and fourth quarters due to a relatively high number of new joiners, but this has reduced again, and the January 2024 meeting should bring us back up to date.

GROUP FACILITATORS TEAM

During this year we have been fortunate to be able to expand the group categories we offer, and open additional groups to accommodate our members on the waiting lists for some of our more popular groups.. We now have ninety-five groups. This year we are please to report that we have opened the following. Current Affairs 2, Poetry Lovers, Pilates 4, Book Club Evenings, Knitting, Backgammon (in Olney), Crafting (in Olney), Creative Crochet, Happy Drawers and Painters, Backgammon MK, French: Retour a François, Chess, Keep Fit 2 and 3 and Card Games.

Unfortunately, ten groups have ceased to operate for various reasons during the year. These are Keep Fit Zoom, German Conversation, Afternoon Amblers, Bridge for Beginners, Art Appreciation 1, Book Group 2, Poetry Lovers, Family History 3, Family History 1 and Videography.

Two of the barriers we have had to overcome when considering opening a new group is finding a member who is willing to take on the responsibility of running the group and helping to find a suitable venue for the meetings. These complications have led to our inability to open several new groups or enable other groups to continue to run when the current Group Coordinator wishes to retire from the role.

Our new Group Coordinators continue to be offered training on the website and the Guide to Being a Group Coordinator was updated earlier in the year giving a more comprehensive guide to contacting the group members and keeping financial records. In addition the trustees are always available to help in any way to ensure the smooth running of groups.

We held our Annual lunch for the Group Coordinators, which is to express our thanks for volunteering to run the groups. Without their expertise and willingness to volunteer mku3a would cease to exist We use the Gift Aid we claim from the Inland Revenue to fund this event. We are pleased that this event continues to be popular, with many of the Group Coordinators attending, sharing their experiences with others and enjoying the food and company.

Several changes have been made to the website including improving the wording on the Interest Group page to make it more welcoming and the introduction of a 'pop-up' warning to prevent Group Coordinators from accidentally denying access to their Group Coordinator facilities.

We have procured some display boards that are used at the AGM, Open Meetings and other events to advertise our new and existing groups. These displays include photos and wording to describe the new groups plus photos of existing ones to encourage members to consider trying out new groups.

DATUM/WEBMASTER

It is estimated that around 80% of all emails sent are spam, and that percentage is growing. The greatest IT challenges facing MKu3a are:

- Making sure that the emails we send out are not perceived as spam.
- Preventing incoming spam from reaching our members

Over the last year changes and improvements have been made and continue to be made to Datum. These include:

- A Help menu. This is accessed after login from the Help button at the top right of the Datum screen (next to the Control Panel and Logout buttons). The menus are developing over time.
- A warning message to Group Co-ordinators that, during changes to group member lists, they were in danger of deleting themselves. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction in calls to the IT team.

Communications:

We continue to monitor and respond to messages left within our answer phone system and via our website with positive feedback being received about the speed and efficiency of response.

Thames Valley Network (TVN):

TVN continued to provide a wide range of activities and interests for our members which were both well publicised and supported by MKu3a. During the year it was recognised that historically we had not been very pro-active in our membership of TVN with our new representative achieving significant improvements in this area.

Open Meetings

Talks are advertised on our website, in the diary section, within our newsletters and by email to members.

ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

u3a Day

This year we held a special 'Mad Hatters Tea Party' in August to celebrate the annual u3a Day. This event was well attended with members being asked to come suitable 'hatted' They were welcomed with a non-alcoholic aperitif which they enjoyed while they viewed displays from other groups and caught up with friends. This was followed by an afternoon tea. It was hard work for the organisers but we all felt the effort was well received and promoted a feeling we are all members of a special organisation.

Choir

Our mku3a choir continue to thrive and has held two concerts, one in December 2022 and the other in June 2023. These concerts have been advertised to both our members and the general public as fund raising events for local charities. They have been extremely well supported.

Short Breaks and Holidays

A trip to Bournemouth was organised through 'Just for Groups' in early October. One of our members, Chris Behrendt, a former Trustee organises the trip with the company, but all monies are made directly to them to negate the financial burden of collecting the payments. These trips will continue in the coming year.

Third Age Players

In September members of the Third Age Players produced, directed, and performed a unique play, written by one of their members entitled "36, Titty Ho Lane". It was extremely well attended and enjoyed by the audiences. The group continues to look for new members.

Music Lectures

We reviewed our Music Lectures this year and had 4 meetings in the Spring. These lectures were led by Adrian Boynton, the director of music at Milton Keynes City Church and ably organised by Tina Two, a former vice chair of our association.

Outings

We were pleased to reopen our Outings Group this year following the pandemic. The newly reformed committee began to plan outings at the beginning of the year and the first outing went ahead in April, followed by a monthly outing. These were very well supported and enjoyed and will continue next year. Unfortunately due to Insurance constraints we will not be able to offer places to non-members going forward, however each non member will be advised that for less than 30p a week they can join our organisation and participate in not only the outings but other interest groups as well.

FUTURE PLANS:

Exploring additional ways to collect group attendance fees.

The treasurer is considering different methods for Group Coordinators to collect attendance fees which will simplify the procedure for the members, the group coordinators and the finance team.

National u3a Day:

We will continue to celebrate u3a day later in the year. Planning will begin early in 2024

Datum

Further developments and enhancements to our management systems are planned for the coming year.

Volunteering within MKu3a

This year we will continue to actively seek further volunteers to help in all aspects of running MKu3a

Payment Methods for Group Returns

We will continue to explore the range of different payment methods to assist both members and the finance team.

Groups

Refresher training for existing Group Coordinators will be organised to ensure all practices and procedures are being followed. We will also endeavour to keep in touch with new and existing Group Coordinators on a regular basis to ensure that they are happy with all aspects of running the group and managing their responsibilities.

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES for 2022-2023 Annual Report

Overview.

The 2022-2023 accounts continue to reflect a financially strong and active u3a.

Income

Income is up from last year by £32,956 to £89,207 from the previous year of £56,252, this is over three times the increase of the previous year.

Members have continued to support MKu3a with their subscriptions to an increased level of £18,560, an increase from last year of £4,545.

Groups income has increased to £44,271 an increase of £3,403 showing that our groups are still strong and growing. The general fund income increased to £25,279 which was an increase of £7,713 this increase was mostly due to gift aid which had not been claimed during 2021-2022. The other big increase was due to the start up again of the Outings Group, which had an income this year of £17,465 which covered just 9 months worth of outings.

Income was derived from:

- Membership Fees – £18,560 an increase from 2021-2022 of £4,545
- Group Receipts – £44,271 an increase of £3,403
- Outings Receipts - £17,465 an increase of £17,465
- Gift Aid - £5,631

Expenditure

Groups expenditure has almost matched income at £43,838 whilst general fund expenditure has decreased only very slightly to £19,498, giving general fund an overall surplus of £5,780, which is due to gift aid.

We have used a small sum from the Sylvia Poole bequest fund this year to support our monthly Open meetings and the fund now stands at £32,442.

We continue to pay Third Age Trust Subscriptions and Third Age Matters costs from our membership fees along with all office and running cost and pay for required licences. Trustees have agreed not to increase membership fees but to absorb any increase to subscriptions utilising where necessary our reserves

Expenditure key aspects were:

- Group operating costs - £43,838

- Third Age Trust - £7,711 this covers subscription fees and Third Age Matters magazine levy.
- Communications - £3,102, this includes telephone and broadband, the maintenance of the web site, e-mail facilities and Datum management system.
- Administration/Office running costs - £3,764 this is a significant level of expenditure that includes office rent and service charges, consumables, postage and volunteers expenses.

Group Purchases

Although groups are intended to be self-funding there is a scheme whereby groups can request a contribution for special items. A budget of £2,000 was set aside for this purpose at the start of the year and only 10% of it was claimed by 2 groups during the year.

Other key financial events have been:

Events

With the start of Outings this year we have developed and opened up the 'Events' package within Datum to put all trips on as individual events. This also means that most of the income from Outings now goes through the Events package tightening our financial procedures and controls in dealing with the growing amounts of money going through Outings.

Ways of members making payments

We have also been trialling the use of different ways that members could pay their group fees.

- The Third Age Players (TAP) have been using a card reader that is attached to PayPal to collect not only their group fees but also ticket sales etc.
- We also have another group using a mobile phone app called 'Collective', which does not need the use of a card reader.
- We have also purchased a few 'Square' card readers which some Bridge groups and the Outings group will be using.

We do hope that members will be happy to make use of these ways of paying so that it might cut down on the number of transactions that now go through our bank accounts, which will also cut down on the number of hours the finance team have to spend to keep our accounts up-to-date.

Accounting and Control

The accounts are based on a Receipts and Payments principle with unrestricted and restricted funds to reflect the activities of a u3a. They are prepared in accordance with the Charity Commission requirements and they have been independently examined. MKu3a is one of the larger u3a's and the range of financial activity is now relatively complex. A certain level of skill, discipline and control is important with the need for on-going training of all users.

A form to apply for a grant can be found in the Administration area of the website. Such assets remain the property of MKu3a and may be borrowed by other groups, depending on availability.

Assets and Liabilities.

Our inventory of sundry equipment is less than £25,000 at replacement cost. Our principal assets are cash balances. There are no known significant liabilities.

Reserves

The General Fund £62,559.97 is an increase of £5,780 This is mainly due to the claiming of Gift Aid during the year. The overall level of reserve more than meets the 50% of anticipated expenditure that is the advised Charity Commission parameter. It should also be noted that MKu3a is not a high-risk organisation.

Prepared by – Diana Sears

Independent Examiner - Sarah Russell

Declaration:

*The Trustees declare that they approved the report and attached **accounts**.*

Signature..... **Chairman** Lesley Sparks

Signature..... **Secretary** Deborah Hodges

Date27th March 2024

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