



TOWCESTER u3a Registered Charity Number 1155428 Annual Report for period from AGM May 2024 to AGM May 2025

At our AGM at the end of May 2024, a committee was elected. The majority of the previous committee agreed to serve for another year, apart from Stephen Porter who stood down as Chair and post he held for 2 years and for which the Committee are very grateful. Deborah Heaphy agreed to step up to the role of Chair and Tricia Burningham agreed to add Business Secretary to her existing role of Minute Secretary. Alison Foxtton agreed to be Vice-Chair.

The day to day running of the branch has returned to normal, but we have continued with the digital voting for the purposes of the AGM.

Trustee Committee Members

The Trustee Committee Members responsible for managing Towcester u3a during the above period were:

Deborah Heaphy (Chairman, elected May 2024)
Terry Goldfinch (Treasurer re-elected May 2024)
Tricia Burningham (Business secretary elected May 2024)
Alison Foxtton (Publicity secretary re-elected May 2024)
Anne Parkes (Speaker Seeker re-elected May 2024)
Jill Stewart (Group Co-ordinator – re-elected May 2024)
Alison Burnley (Membership secretary re-elected May 2024)
Jenny Rigby (Webmaster) re-elected May 2024
Marilyn Shone (re-elected May 2024)

The committee meet regularly on the first Monday of each month, except for January. The branch has progressed, and this is reflected in the membership increasing. All members of the committee are standing for re-election at the 2025 AGM.

Charitable Purpose, Structure and Governance

The u3as in the UK are autonomous, self-help organisations run by the voluntary efforts of their members. All u3as are members of the Third Age Trust (TAT), a registered charity, which is the national support and advisory body. Each u3a is operationally independent but as members of the Third Age Trust each agrees to follow the principles of the u3a movement. Being a self-help learning co-operative is what makes u3a unique.

Towcester u3a was formed in 2010 with the stated charitable purpose of the advancement of education of those who are retired from full time work, by activities conducive to learning and personal development, in Towcester and its surrounding area. Towcester u3a is a registered charity governed by our constitution which was amended in 2018, and then again in 2019, and again in 2021 to allow for virtual meetings. Our committee members are charity trustees and are elected by the membership at the AGM although new trustees may be co-opted in between AGMs and then stand for election at the next AGM.

Groups

We have seen a change in both group numbers and group subjects.

Overall, it has been a productive year with six new groups: Boys Toys 3, Strollers, Photography, Spirituality, Sunday Lunch group and Tennis.

A change of leaders for Ramblers 2 and Strollers – and with that process comes a degree of self-analysis within the group and new ideas appear. This has resulted in more group input from its members and more sharing of tasks. This process in turn leads to greater individual confidence and enjoyment of group meetings.

The loss of Coffee and Cake explorers occurred due to low numbers and a mismatch on group aims.

The general increase in leader interest in the Simple Membership software has been heartwarming! At last, the benefits of this system are being realised, and any leader change is now smooth from the group communications aspect.

The tuition continues.

Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings at Towcestrians have continued during the last year with some great speakers. We are noticing a steady increase in attendance and the variety of speakers is meaning a different audience at each meeting. We have invested funds in improving the audio-visual equipment used at these meetings which has benefitted all with better sound quality.

Membership

Our membership currently stands at 635 as of 28.2.2025. We have held a number of New Members' Meetings at the Sawpits Centre at which new (and old) members had the opportunity to find out what interest groups are available and to meet some of the group coordinators. These continue to be well quite well attended, and we plan to hold another one towards the end of this year. We have also started to bring the membership up to date by going fully digital. Our Membership Secretary Alison Burnley has been working very hard

to get Group Leaders to make use of our digital system “Simple Membership” to manage their groups as well as offering members the opportunity of renewing their memberships and booking events such as the monthly meetings. We are making progress with this and offer a regular opportunity for assistance at various events.

Publicity

Our main publicity vehicle is our website, at <https://www.towcesteru3a.co.uk/>, and we also publish regular items in the Towcester Town Crier and the Towcester Focus magazine.

For our members we issue a monthly Bulletin and we have a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TowcesterU3A> which members can join and post news items and photos.

Finance

Towcester u3a financial statement for the year ended 28th February 2025, as examined by Essendon Accounts & Tax Ltd., is the subject of a separate document. In summary, our income over the year was £13,808, whilst expenditure was less than anticipated at £10,460, leaving a surplus of £3,348. The committee authorised capital expenditure on audio visual equipment of £2,509, with the balance of the surplus being added to reserves. Inflationary pressures have not been as great as anticipated, and Anne Parkes has once again managed to secure speakers for our monthly meetings at very reasonable rates. We expect income and expenditure in the coming year to be in the region of £12,000. We do not expect to need to increase the membership fee for the foreseeable future.

Chairman’s Remarks

I agreed to take on the role of Chairman after Stephen Porter stood down at the 2024 AGM. Although I needed some persuasion, my main reason for accepting is that your Committee work so well as a team. I would like to express my thanks to all the members of the committee who have done an excellent job of working together so well to make the branch the success it is. I am hopeful that the membership will continue to grow in the coming year, that we will see more new groups being formed, providing all our members with new interests and friendships and hopefully some fun along the way.

Thank you all.

Deborah Heaphy

Chair.