



TOWCESTER u3a Registered Charity Number 1155428 Annual Report for period from AGM May 2025 to AGM May 2026

At our AGM at the end of May 2025, the existing committee was re-elected.

All members agreed to remain in their roles.

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 2025)
Terry Goldfinch (Treasurer re-elected May 2025)
Tricia Burningham (Business secretary elected May 2025)
Alison Foxton (Publicity secretary re-elected May 2025)
Anne Parkes (Speaker Seeker re-elected May 2025)
Jill Stewart (Group Co-ordinator – re-elected May 2025)
Alison Burnley (Membership secretary re-elected May 2025)
Jenny Rigby (Web-master re-elected May 2025)
Marilyn Shone (re-elected May 2025)

The committee meet regularly on the first Monday of each month, except for January. The branch has continued to progress and this is reflected in the membership increasing to 716 (as of 31 March 2026). All members of the committee are standing for re-election at the 2026 AGM. We are delighted to have a new member for election as detailed below. We have other members who have expressed interest in helping in some capacity.

Pauline Sweeney (for election May 2026)

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

The number of groups continues to grow and we currently have well over 50 groups.

We have been able to help a number of groups financially this year in order for them to update or improve their equipment. This has included replacement gravel for the Pétanque group and a mini sound system for Church Visits. Please contact us if we can assist your group in any way. All requests will be considered by the committee.

We have been pleased to start a new IT support group this year amongst other groups and some are in the process of expanding into second groups. Photography has new leaders and Understanding the Stock Market has re-started.

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

Our Membership Secretary is happy to provide tuition to group leaders.

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. The replacement equipment purchased is working well and we are currently exploring with Towcestrians installing a hearing loop at our venue to improve sound quality for those who need it. We have included some socials in the programme which have been very well received and these will continue going forward.

Membership

Our membership currently stands at 695 as of 28.2.2026 (an increase of 60 from 28.2.2025) We have held a number of New Members' Meetings at the Town Hall 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 attended and we plan to hold another one towards the end of this year. We have continued 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 hope to offer additional benefits during the coming year. Assistance is available at various events including monthly meetings and the coffee mornings.

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 along with other local publications.

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 2026, as examined by Essendon Accounts & Tax Ltd., is the subject of a separate document. In summary, our income over the year was £14,088 whilst expenditure was less than anticipated at £11,062, leaving a surplus of £3,026. The committee authorised capital expenditure of £182 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 £13,000. We do not expect to need to increase the membership fee for the foreseeable future.

Chairman’s Remarks

This will be my third year as Chair and I hope that many of you now recognise me and the other members of the Committee. We continue to work as a team and 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. There are plenty of options for members of Towcester U3A to assist the Committee, without necessarily joining the Committee; although this is also welcome. I would also like to express my thanks to all our valiant Group leaders who do a sterling job and I trust that they are appreciated by the membership. I am hopeful that the membership will continue to grow in the coming year, that we will continue to 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.