

Trustees' Report for 2023 - 2024

Palmers Green & Southgate u3a - Charity no: 1165425

Presented to 10th AGM on 23rd October 2024

All u3as offer people no longer in full-time employment an opportunity for lifelong learning, friendship and fun. In Palmers Green and Southgate u3a our aim is to encourage and enable members to share their knowledge, skills, and experiences by meeting in interest groups, at monthly meetings and to enjoy themselves at regular social events.

Government changes have meant that charities now have to pay bank charges, which is why we urge all of you to embrace 21st century technology and make your membership renewal and other payments to us electronically where possible. This has made financial transactions so much swifter and easier for many groups and helped our treasurer a great deal. We now have a card machine which is available at Monthly Meetings and on other occasions to make paying even more convenient.

The website has been migrated to a new platform called Siteworks, which is supported by the national u3a. We were one of the first to be moved to the new site and it looks brighter and better than ever before, thanks to those of you who submit photos and information to Pat Bleach and Frances Halliday who do the regular updates.

Current Membership as at 22nd September 2024 stands at 517 and is increasing. We are very proud that so many of you stayed loyal over the last few years and around a hundred new members have joined us since last year. They have been able to learn about all the wonderful groups and events we have to offer by attending the Welcome Tea parties which have taken place every three months or so.

The new style of interest group introduced, called BiteSize, continues to prove popular. Interest groups are offered in a four-session cluster, which is reviewed at the end of the four sessions. Most of them continue beyond this and become groups advertised on the website. These have proved very successful and will continue to be offered as an alternative and to supplement the usual sort of activity. Currently we have 72 interest groups active. Our organisation relies on volunteers and we are grateful to all the members who contribute in any way to the running of our u3a.

As a result of the continued effort to raise the quality of our speakers, the monthly meetings have seen an increasing number of members attending. We hit triple figures at our meeting in February when Dave Cockle spoke on the Piccadilly line trains and the trams. We continue to search out speakers who hopefully appeal to you all, whatever your interests, and aim to continue to do so in the coming year.

Communication with members continues to be via monthly bulletins; contributions to the bulletin come mostly from the executive committee and convenors. This is a vital way to communicate with our members and you are encouraged to open all the links and read to the end, to make sure you don't miss all our exciting

opportunities! We have tried to ensure that members without email are kept up to date by being sent a hard copy version, provided and distributed by two Committee members, Coral Datta and Sarah Brandi.

We have produced our new look magazine, in hard copy and online, and pride ourselves on the range of articles written and the high quality of artwork and photographs submitted. George Howard has stepped in as technical adviser to Jennie Somerville, our Editor. We also give our thanks to the newly formed Magazine Distribution Team, Helen Hattersley, Pat Foulds and Cathy St John, who help your magazine get to you. We also have a pair of intrepid Roving Reporters who interview selected individuals and interest groups and provide quality copy for the magazine. Thank you, Helen Hattersley and Roger Hailey.

Social events, where members are encouraged to bring along non-members, were introduced for the first time in March 2022 and have become a regular feature on the calendar. The Outreach Team (created to increase membership) successfully runs large events roughly every three months. These have included a Barn Dance, a Bollywood Evening and a variety of Quiz Evenings. These events have all been incredibly well-supported and fully booked and have successfully increased our membership. Please continue to support us; come along and bring your friends.

A special event this year was our 10th Anniversary celebration in May, when we had a wonderfully successful afternoon tea at our new favourite venue, Christ the King church hall. It was so enjoyable and so well-supported that we have decided to make the Summer Tea Party an annual event. Several of the first Executive Committee joined Frances Halliday, the first Chair, at the event.

A strength of our u3a has been its outings and trips. These are all going ahead as usual, thanks to the dedication of the small band who research, plan, organise and lead these trips and holidays. Both the holiday trips to Dorset and the Lake District have, as ever, been successful and enjoyed by all who went. In addition, there have been several other Freedom Pass outings which have proved very popular. We welcome two new members to the team, Louise Woodford who is already proving her worth at planning and accompanying trips and Trish Talbot, who is producing and distributing the monthly Travel Bulletin. Thank you for stepping up.

Finally, as Chair of the Executive, I would like to extend a warm thank you to the Executive Committee for their stalwart work this year. We say goodbye to three members who have served their three-year term: Sarah Brandi, Caroline Davies and Jennie Somerville and to Yvonne Marr who was the Membership Secretary. We all thank you for your service and will miss you. We have been fortunate in that there are some willing volunteers to take their places on the Committee. I would also like to thank the Outreach Team for their hard work in arranging the social events this year, and all our group convenors for their dedication.

And last, but not least, I would like to thank all of you for remaining part of our u3a. Let us hope that 2025 will be a happy and hopeful year, filled with new interests, new people and plenty of laughter.

Val Girling

Chair