

Chairman's Report for year 2025/26 presented at Hale and District u3a AGM on 3rd June 2026

Finance

Although there is not a Treasurer's Report on the Agenda, Eileen has emailed me the following "In 2025/26, we made a small loss in the year of £1,299 as we had reduced the annual subscription to £10 and removed the entry fee to the monthly meetings. In addition, we had some increased costs, and invested in major events such as the Altrincham festival. However, the loss was lower than expected in part due to the increase in membership during the year.

The net result is that the overall reserves remain high at £79,771, compared to £81,070 in last year's accounts.

Hence, the annual subscription will remain fixed for now as we continue to absorb the additional costs expected in the coming year."

Chairman's Report

The general theme is of healthy growth, reflected in membership growing by 14% year on year, with total membership today of 1169.

This is also reflected in increased numbers attending our monthly meetings, our outings, our holidays, our social events, and our growing number of groups. We have achieved our growth through a combination of Open Days, New Members afternoon teas, participation in public events like the Altrincham 10k, and our float in the Altrincham Festival Parade. And our lively and informative newsletter and revamped website. But most of all – word of mouth. You are our ambassadors, and I plead with you to spread the word about how u3a benefits your physical and mental health

And a key aspect of mental health is the opportunity to socialise.

To that end, we held our first Nightclub Night in March, attended by 85 members. We intend to hold these 3-4 times a year.

We also held our first Xmas Coffee Morning, which was well attended, and another at Easter. These were so successful, that we are running one a month for three months and assessing demand.

A new initiative will be Friday Night Suppers, to complement the successful MOTO (Members on their own) coffee mornings.

Our two Luncheon Clubs are thriving as well.

We have now opened to all members, our very successful monthly talks by the Science, Historians, and Local History Groups.

All of these events provide opportunities for our Members to socialise, so important as we age.

We continue to build our relationships with partners in the local authority network, in particular participating in the Older People's Network, which brings together the Local Authority, Health, Faith and Charity Sectors.

Through this, we develop strong relationships with social prescribers, who work with surgeries to provide social solutions to combat loneliness, isolation and consequent mental health issues

We continue to have the benefit of free entry for groups to Dunham Massey, free concerts through the Bridgewater Hall Community Members Scheme, and also discounted tickets for the Stoller Hall concerts. Added to this is our new Local Traders Discount Scheme, where Ewan Smith is negotiating discounts with local businesses for our members.

We continue to have the comfort of a healthy bank balance, thanks to the legacy from the late Norma Holt's estate. This gives us the freedom to provide seed money for new initiatives, and one-off grants to groups needing help.

So what of the future?

There are two truths which I hear constantly, 1 - almost nobody has heard of u3a, and 2 – new members really enjoy what we offer, and in some cases that is almost life-saving. If we wish to continue to be a power for good in our communities, we do need to spread the news about u3a, and to attract more members,but at the same time, we have to address the challenges of growth

You may question why we want to grow. The answer is that U3a **can be a life-saver**. I have heard so many inspirational stories of the impact we have made in people's lives. Spouses who have lost partners, parents whose children have moved away, members recovering from ill health or meeting other life challenges. The Hale u3a Family provides a sanctuary in a difficult and increasing lonely world.

So, having been given a place on this wonderful lifeboat of companions, it would be selfish of us now to draw up the gangplank, and leave others to sink. If you will help me, we can grow without compromising the services we provide.

Those services are provided through the commitment of your management committee and by our group leaders, and our organisers.

I particularly want to mention Paul Luton who is retiring from the committee, and has served us so well for many years, and as my vice-chair over the last three years. And also David Morris, who has provided invaluable technical IT support and developed our website during his tenure and is standing down due to health challenges. We wish him a full and speedy recovery. And Eileen Keddie, who has managed our finances in such a capable manner, and often provided me with wise words of advice. I would also like to thank Chris Mason who, after many years of service, is standing down as Monthly Meeting Speaker organiser.

I've deliberately not named any more of the many volunteers who make Hale u3a so successful. There are so many I fear I might miss someone out! But they know who they are, and being the selfless, community-minded people they are, I know that their success will, in itself, be reward for the wonderful work that they do.

Hale u3a has grown to what it is today by the dedication of members like Paul, who committed their time and effort from its earliest years.

But many of those members are now in their late 70s, 80s and 90s.

There is an unspoken contract between those who built our charity to the vibrant organisation it is today, and those who have since joined, and enjoy the ensuing benefits. When our early pioneers can no longer carry the weights of office, we rely on those who follow, to take on the mantle and carry on the wonderful work the pioneers have done.

Volunteering and a pride in, and love of, community lie at the heart of our success, and without these, we founder.

And volunteering brings with it friendships and a tremendous sense of purpose and fulfilment.

I remind you that we can only deliver programmes if you volunteer.

So, if you're not already volunteering, NOW is the time, particularly if you are in your energetic 50s, 60s and 70s. There is a role for everyone.

And knowing that my speech will have motivated and inspired you, each of you will have received our Volunteer Appeal to be completed.

No doubt you have been poring over this, and have now completed the form. If not, please do. We have pens available, and ask you to hand the forms back to Joyce on the membership table.

In conclusion, firstly thank you for letting me lead this fantastic charity. It has been an honour and a privilege to do so.

I have completed my most enjoyable and fulfilling three year stint, but to smooth the path of succession, I have agreed to continue for another year while our new vice-chairman Frank Atkinson, eases himself into the role of Chair.

Finally thanks go to my hard-working Management Committee for making this such a successful year, and we look forward to building on that success.

David Zucker, Chairman