

Bourne U3A – Trustees' Report – 2019 -2020

On advice from the Third Age Trust we made a minor change to the wording of our Constitution in September 2019. As there was no material change to our objectives the Committee agreed that the change did not require the approval of a Special General Meeting.

We agreed, and introduced, a revised Grievance Procedure at the end of last year. Most unusually, it has had to be used twice since then which at least has proved it is fit for purpose.

Some members expressed concern at the size of our financial surplus at last year's AGM and this prompted the Committee to introduce grants up to a maximum of £150.00 available to groups for specific purposes. So far, the Committee has approved two grant applications although no money has been paid out at the time of writing.

I am pleased that two new groups were formed in 2019 – the Jigsaw Exchange and Let's Make Music Group. Both show signs of being successful, but, like all groups, their activities have been curtailed for the duration of the pandemic.

The Committee had been concerned that we were neglecting the groups and members to concentrate on developing the policies and procedures to satisfy Charity Commission requirements. To remedy that, we introduced a programme of Committee member visits to groups at the beginning of the year. The programme was working well and producing some interesting results before we had to shut down. As with several other things, it is something we may wish to reintroduce when restrictions are lifted.

Another initiative we introduced in February was a recent members' meeting to assess how well we welcomed new members to Bourne U3A. This was highly successful and generated several ideas that will be introduced in the future.

We wanted to introduce an event for the whole of Bourne U3A. Our solution was to have a U3A wide celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the Mayflower sailing, involving a tea party with guest speaker and entertainment. A guided visit to sites in Boston associated with the Mayflower was also being planned. A lot of that work had been completed when we had to shut down, but it is now doubtful that it will go ahead – a decision will be made later in the year.

It was with great sadness that we heard the news of Chris Searl's death in February. I alluded to the debt of gratitude we owe him for all the work he did for Bourne U3A in March's Newsletter. He left a large empty space on the Committee and we have had to work hard to re-configure and cover the roles he filled so efficiently. Margaret Smith has taken over as Secretary (pro tem), Martin Adkins has filled the Webmaster position and Phil Pavier is looking after the Beacon Administration as a non-Committee position. Paul Smith took the role of Newsletter Editor when Jackie Searl stepped down. I would like to record my thanks to all four for stepping in at a very difficult time.

The end of our year has been dominated by the Pandemic Crisis. In the end, we had no choice but to shut down all our usual activities after the General Meeting on 16th March. Bourne U3A held its inaugural meeting at Wake House on 27th March 2001 so we had operated without interruption for almost nineteen years. Although not unexpected, the closure still came as a shock and it has impacted on our numbers with fewer renewals for 2020-21. However, it has been a privilege to see just how resilient we can be.

The priority was staying in touch with members without physical meetings. Paul Smith has done an excellent job producing a slimmed down Newsletter, the Viral Times. It is only four sides to allow for

hand delivery to members without the internet but is being published every two weeks rather than monthly. Martin Adkins is adding pages to the website (<https://u3asites.org.uk/bourne/home>) to complement the Viral Times and provide links to helpful websites etc. and the Chairman is emailing members in the weeks when the Viral Times is not published.

Many of our members fall within the most vulnerable categories and a lot live on their own. There is a concern that they will not all be able to get the food, essential supplies, and medicines they need. Group leaders and members have been asked to let Penny Neal know of any members they are concerned about. We are unable to provide practical support but can help to get support from other agencies. I am pleased to say that almost all our members have coped with the crisis, often with the help of family, neighbours, and friends. It is one of the advantages of living in a smaller community like Bourne and the surrounding villages that these informal support networks work so well.

Members will make their own judgement, but I think we have responded well to the crisis and done all we can to keep Bourne U3A functioning. The next challenge will be to resume normal activities as soon as possible after the lockdown is lifted. The priority will be to hold the postponed AGM that this report addresses and approve the Committee's stewardship over the last year. Then, it will be getting all the groups up and running and adjusting back to a life where we can live, laugh, and learn together without concerns for social distancing and our health. In that respect I am pleased to say that all the permanent Committee members have expressed a willingness to serve another year should you chose to re-elect them at the AGM.

It seems fitting for me to end with a heartfelt thanks to all of you for all that you have done and are doing during the pandemic. There are too many for me to thank individually and many whose work I am only dimly aware of. All Committee members have worked tirelessly, in different ways, to keep the organisation going. Group leaders and their helpers have kept many groups going in some form or another, and all members seem to be looking out for each other and providing what help they can. It has been a privilege to witness our community rise to the greatest challenge we have faced in 75 years.

Achievements

We have continued to play our part in the local community and attended the Morton Street Fair and Classic Car Show while our Christmas tree was displayed in Wake House. We were proud to take part in the Remembrance Day Parade and Service. We have been asked to deliver a presentation on the U3A to the Baston Cameo Group, but this has been cancelled because of the pandemic. However, the presentation is complete and ready for us in the future and we are willing and able to deliver it to any local groups. The Drama Group's performances for several local organisations were very well received.

Many Groups are continuing to be active online and/or via telephone and internet. The Science and Technology Group are continuing to hold meetings via Zoom and have created a Face Book page while the Green Bowls group are issuing a weekly newsletter to their members. The Play Reading group are listening to the Radio 4 afternoon play and sharing comments by email. Painting and Drawing are producing a newsletter and continuing to provide tuition for their members while the Ladies Exercise and Dancing Group are following instructions provided by the Group Leader. The Gardening and Photography groups have been running competitions for the whole Bourne U3A and most groups have been keeping in touch with their more vulnerable members by telephone and email.

