AGM Chair Report 2024

My 2nd year as Chair is a bit of a blur as so much has happened within the u3a association as well as my personal life.

This past year TVN has held 4 reps’ meetings at which we had good discussions, especially having Liz Thackeray visit us at 1 of the meetings. She informed us of the General Strategy u3a is implementing such as SiteWorks and the digital implementation of a one-source database. The Fit for the Future strategy seems to be acceptable to most u3as and will be voted for acceptance at the AGM in October. Susie will add to this in her report at the reps’ meeting.

An important fact that came out at 1 of the meetings was that any changes to your constitution must be approved by the Trust office,

A subject (or at least 1 of the subjects!) that comes up regularly is the subject of Groups leaders from the various u3as participating in group meetings to exchange ideas etc. I am also frequently asked if I know which u3a holds a certain group. I want to make you all aware that there is a list of groups within every u3a in the TVN on the TVN website. This is only as up to date as the info your u3a passes to me but it has proved very useful in the past. It may give your u3a ideas for new groups as well. Please invite your Group Convenors/Leaders to check it out.

Last year after the AGM and reps’ meetings we had a presentation on ‘Their Finest Hour’, set up by Oxford University project, delivered by a member from the Evesham u3a.

The TVN events team have done us proud with the varying subjects we have held, hopefully appealing to most members. We’ve had politics to music, science to history and the ever popular quiz. We have just held our 1st meeting of the year and already we are organising events for the summer and autumn! But more from Susie later.

There were 3 SERN (South East Region Network) meetings but for reasons of ill-health I could only attend 2 nor could I attend the SE Autumn gathering. At these meetings Susie gives a report from the Board but what I find most useful is the info each network brings about its work/events/queries. And here once again SiteWorks and peer groups were suggested for future meetings.

Network meetings are open to everyone. This cannot be stressed enough. In the past we’ve had Alan Walmsley to tell us about the Hadrian’s Wall project and, at the Network Link Spring meeting we had a presentation on Banking and Local governance. At most of the Network meetings, there is supposedly time set aside for ‘Air and Share’ but this doesn’t always happen. However, I do find these meetings interesting – we’ve even had a u3a member from New Zealand joining us!

Last year I told you I was joining the EDI committee. I attended only 2 meetings before I was advised to ‘slow’ down and choose my priorities. I therefore decided to try to go forward with my own groups within Abingdon u3a and then TVN. For this I must thank my committee who helped me so much ensuring I did not have to worry about TVN (not that anyone needs to, with this amazing committee!) I did contribute to EDI in my short life there which I hope would be useful to them. They are formulating a handbook which will be circulated to u3as when ready. (When I joined EDI and read up on the website, I was surprised at the no. of criteria that must now be abided by.

At last the Beacon installation has been finalised. I was hoping to be the Site Administrator but David, our Vice-Cahir took it over. Since then we’ve been going forward and David will now send out the information via Beacon as well Mike Price who looks after the Events Publicity list. (Just a small reminder – if you receive an email from the Thames Valley Network via Beacon, please do NOT press the reply button – our reply will be floating around in the Beacon ether somewhere and will never be received. Always use the email address at the bottom of the email or as per instruction within the body.)

And so I come to the end of my 2nd year and we are in quite a dire situation…I have repeatedly asked if there is anyone within the 49 u3as who make up the TVN who would help us and join the committee to take the minutes. We have sent out numerous requests but to no avail. I therefore have to tell you that after these AGM minutes, there will be no more minutes taken. By rights our Treasurer should also be retiring (he’s done 6 years) but due to the situation, Derek has agreed to stay on 1 more year. I know that you will all be thinking your u3as are in the same situation but without your TVN you will no longer be able to meet each other, to hold discussions and help each other. I can only ask you once again to put an article in your newsletters explaining what could happen to your TVN .

I apologise for ending on a negative note but your committee needs YOU.

Thank you