



Report of the Chair of Warrington u3a to the 32nd AGM in June 2026

Our 2026 AGM takes place in the Chinese Year of the Fire Horse, a rare event occurring every sixty years, so this is the first occasion that your Warrington u3a has felt its influence. Chinese astrologers have predicted that it ushers in a challenging period, bringing fast-paced change on a personal and global level.

Since our last AGM our u3a has enjoyed a stable period, with membership levels remaining at 1,000 and thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of our group leaders providing a wide range of activities from meetings to enjoyable excursions in a wide field of interests...all fulfilling the u3a mantra of *Learn, Laugh, Live*. Belonging to the u3a keeps our minds active, improves our mental well-being and allows us to socialise with like-minded people.

It is hard to describe a typical Warrington u3a member or even their reasons for joining. Some join to take part in one specific activity group or even to attend our sociable monthly get-together with friends. Others join as many groups as they can to keep busy. Many of our members join after retirement from active careers or changing to working from home instead of in a busy workplace. Many find they actually miss the pressure of deadlines or interaction with work colleagues and clients which helped to shape their identity. Volunteering as a group leader, helping out at meetings or even joining the Executive Committee can help bridge the transition from work to a new reality and gives Warrington u3a a unique identity amongst other local organisations.

I would like to thank on your behalf all those who currently volunteer their time to make this organisation work, including the key membership services of Registrar, or creating our improved monthly letter, maintaining our IT equipment or as webmaster. My personal thanks are due to our Executive Committee who ensure that we operate in accordance with national u3a objectives and satisfy the Charities Commission's requirements.

Whatever your reason for becoming a member it is important to you that Warrington u3a not only continues to survive but is also a sustainable organisation in these times of global political and economic uncertainty. Last year at the AGM you supported the Executive Committee's recommendation to raise subscription rates for the 2025-6 membership year. That has proved to be a wise decision which provided the organisation with a small cushion against expected increased costs at our venues and core administrative functions. However, your Executive Committee faced new challenges in setting a balanced budget for the upcoming 2026-7 year. Members of the Executive Committee have additional responsibilities to group leaders and the wider membership as trustees of the organisation, most importantly by ensuring that as a Charity we remain solvent and to act fairly in the interests of all members, rather than specific groups.

Apart from the continuing economic pressures which affect room hire costs at all our venues we are also faced with the significant loss of at least two thirds of the rebate on Gift Aid which HMRC had previously allowed charities like ours to claim from participating members'

subscriptions. You will therefore find that when you pay your 2026-7 membership fee it is now listed as two elements, one covering allowable administrative costs and a larger separate sum to provide the benefits you obtain from joining groups and learning from each other.

To recoup the expected loss of income and to mitigate the currently unknown risks Warrington u3a would experience from a worsening global political and economic situation Committee had to introduce two cost savings.

1. Our individual groups will no longer be able to claim an annual speaker's allowance. This decision was taken to reflect parity across the groups as many already do not claim this grant and also in accordance with the national u3a ethos that we learn from each other rather than paid external tutors/speakers. This does not mean that there is a ban on having guest speakers merely that each group must recoup any costs from within its membership.
2. That following a review across all of our groups' activities some changes have been introduced to standardise meeting frequencies in the interests of the overall Warrington u3a organisation.

We appreciate that these changes will prove unpopular with some of our membership but they have enabled us to avoid recommending raising membership subscriptions again. Committee must also reserve the right to make/propose any further necessary adjustments to ensure that our organisation remains viable.

As well as ensuring the financial viability of Warrington u3a we need to ensure that we maintain a core of people to take on the organisation of our groups and to take on the roles of Executive Committee members. This is increasingly important as from June 2027 we will need at least a new Chair and Treasurer as the current officers reach the end of their allowable period in office. We are currently seeking someone to assist with the role of Accommodation Officer from September, and others to help with the monthly Wednesday get-togethers and other duties involving our IT, publicity and membership support. If you are interested you can shadow the existing officers to gain an insight into the role, which may seem challenging at first but is also personally rewarding.

You can also make an important contribution by recruiting new members from amongst your local networks to ensure even more people are aware of the value you get from joining Warrington u3a ...and increase our income too!

I'm looking forward to welcoming you all again in September at the start of another membership year and to reporting at our 2027 AGM that we have enjoyed another successful year, despite the challenges brought by the Fire Horse!

Janice Hayes

Warrington u3a Chair