

## Wem u3a Chairs Report 2023

### *Introduction*

As I approach my third and final year as chair of Wem u3a, I am very conscious of how much commitment, dedication and effort goes into ensuring that our organisation grows and flourishes. We have increased our membership over the past year and my thanks go to committee member Carol Hamilton-Foyn our Membership Secretary, for her wonderful organisational skills and attention to detail, making sure we are all informed about what's going on and of course that our membership subs are paid. The interest groups (currently 23) are varied and well supported, with committee member Jackie Mirehouse working tirelessly this year managing her additional role of Group Coordinator. I must also thank Joyce Parr, who although she ended her period of time as Secretary last year, has been 'holding the fort' with minutes and agendas when necessary and doing a splendid job too.

It is heart-warming that so many people are willing to give up their time to making sure our Wem u3a branch is a welcoming place to come and meet people with shared or quite different interests. I'm amazed and very grateful at how much some members are involved in Wem u3a, often beaver away in the background or sometimes leading or participating in one or several interest groups. Have you ever thought of starting a new group, something you are interested in but isn't currently provided? All you have to do is get a couple of other people to join you, talk to Jackie then off you go!

### *Membership*

At the last count we had 164 paid up members of Wem u3a and it's great to also see new people coming along as visitors to our general meetings, most of whom go on to join as a member. A recent Open Meeting event held in August was lively and well attended, by committee, other members and lots of interested people from the community wanting to find out more. 21 interest groups were represented and people were able to circulate and ask questions to get information about Wem u3a and what's on offer.

### *Wem u3a Committee*

There are so many positives about being a member of Wem u3a, but there is also the situation these days where we have lots of other commitments in our lives, meaning it's not always easy for us to take on other things. In particular, specific roles such as joining the committee, without which of course we are not constitutionally allowed to operate. How can we deal with this situation for 2024 and going forward? Some of our present committee members have served on the committee in various roles since the organisation began. This year we have three committee members standing down. So from a potential committee total of twelve, we will only

have eight people remaining unless new volunteers come forward. There are two essential officer role vacancies as Chris Fraser (Vice Chair) and Hazel Adkins (Business Secretary), two of our longest-standing committee members and officers are standing down this year. One or two of the remaining committee members may decide to stand for these positions at the AGM and my hope is that other Wem u3a members might agree to join the committee or if not as a committee member, help in others ways. Could that be YOU? Could you possibly consider taking on a specific role at some time in the future? It is not always as onerous as you may think! To make it less daunting, there is always someone who can help if you're not sure about something. New helpers or members on the committee can always ask for some mentoring/shadowing time or seek advice and support from others who have previously held a particular role.

### *Finance*

Wem u3a manages its currently healthy budget extremely well, thanks to our brilliant and multi-talented Treasurer Derek Sparkes. He has held this post for five years now and does an excellent job for us. As well as his financial skills, Derek will step in to entertain us after the formal business of the AGM is finished with often hilarious renditions of his various topics of interest. He also leads the Walking group and is a member of several other interest groups. But we are aware that Derek's six year 'stint' as treasurer ends next year so we will be on the look out for someone to step into his shoes! Any budding treasurers out there?

### *General Meetings*

I'm sure you will all agree that our speakers this year have been top class and this is down to one person - Paul Young, who is our Speaker Coordinator and has the job of searching out and booking a variety of speakers on different topics of interest. Although Paul is not a committee member, he does attend some meetings to update us on his programme planning and other Speaker matters. I know 2024 is looking pretty good already, so we must say a big thank you to Paul for his continuing commitment. Numbers have increased this year, we now have an average of 62 members and 6 guests attending general meetings.

### *General Meeting Venue – Wem Town Hall (WTH)*

What a great facility we have in WTH especially with its large room space, ample seating arrangements and good cafe facilities. Being centrally located in Wem with ample car parking close by, makes it an excellent venue for us. We have had some technical difficulties lately with the hearing loop and speaker systems, but WTH are doing all they can to identify where the problems are coming from and we sincerely hope they can be rectified in the near future.

I must thank the small staff team who are very helpful and do their best to provide for our needs

at our monthly general meetings. Those of you who have come to our Xmas Parties & Quiz events I'm sure will echo my sentiments that WTH cafe also puts on excellent, tasty and plentiful spreads for us.

### *Newsletter*

Another mention I would like to make is for our wonderful Newsletter Editor (of 5yrs), Peta Smith. I can't wait to read the next instalment and find out more about what's been happening with our groups and other things during the summer. Anyone can contribute to the newsletter so please put pen to paper, or however you communicate these days...and send something you would like to share. Like Paul Young, Peta is not a committee member, but her continued support for Wem u3a through the production of its regular Newsletter keeping us all in touch is very much appreciated – thank you Peta, I hope you can keep up this great work for us.

### *And Finally*

As you know, Wem is also part of the wider National u3a Network, having access to their website and National Newsletters. Our own Shropshire Network is an opportunity for Branch's to share good practice and ideas as well as getting support with issues via the chairs Zoom meetings. An upcoming event in Shrewsbury promises to be a great opportunity to meet and share with other u3a's from the county. I am willing to continue as Chair until the next AGM in 2024 unless anyone else fancies stepping in! I hope you have found me to be approachable and fairly competent in my role, but I'm always open to ideas from others on how I/we as a Branch can improve. I am hoping that for many years to come, Wem u3a will continue to provide a facility for all to take part in and enjoy. To those who I have not already mentioned by name, I want to say a huge thank you - members of the committee, group leaders, helpers and general membership - as without you all Wem u3a would not exist.

\*Thank you to all for your continuing support, it is very much appreciated. *Enid Smith Chair 21/9/23*