

Cottingham u3a AGM: 10 September 2026

CHAIR'S REPORT

Phew – I made it! My three years as Chair of Cottingham u3a have now come to an end. It has been an incredibly rewarding experience—certainly very busy at times, but always enjoyable. It has been a real pleasure to meet so many new members and to see the number of interest groups continue to grow and flourish.

Over the years, my involvement with u3a has also expanded beyond the local organisation to include regional activities and, through the Festival, opportunities at a national level.

I am grateful for the experiences, friendships, and opportunities these past three years have brought, and I look back on my time as Chair with great fondness. I now look forward to the role of vice chair (hopefully), particularly in supporting the new chair.

So much has happened over the past year, please read on for the details:

September 2025

- A working party was established and the domain name **cottinghamu3a.org.uk** secured in preparation for the introduction of online membership renewals and new member registrations.
- Committee meetings began to be held in the newly refurbished **Boardroom**.
- A successful application to the **Do It for East Yorkshire** Community Grant enabled the **purchase of a defibrillator** for the D&J Hall.
- The Annual General Meeting marked **25 years of Cottingham u3a**, with members celebrating the milestone with wine and cupcakes.
- An amendment to the **Cottingham u3a Constitution** was approved, allowing the roles of Secretary and Treasurer to be held for up to five years.

October 2025

- A new interest group, **Table Tennis**, was established.
- Cottingham u3a participated in the **Celebration of Older People's Event** at the Civic Hall, resulting in the recruitment of several new members.
- A grant of **£250** was awarded by the Yorkshire and Humber Region towards the **purchase of two new laptops for committee use**.

November 2025

- New **role-based email addresses** for committee members were introduced, and a PayPal account was established, supporting the move towards online membership applications and renewals.

December 2025

- The annual **Christmas Social Afternoon** was a great success, with 80 members attending. Places were fully booked very quickly, reflecting its popularity. Festively decorated tables created a wonderful atmosphere, while entertainment was provided by a magician.

January 2026

- The final stages of the online membership joining and renewal system were completed, bringing a lengthy but worthwhile project to a successful conclusion.
- A campaign was launched to encourage more members to **register for Gift Aid**, generating additional revenue.

February 2026

- **Kofi Smiles** from BBC Radio Humberside visited the Table Tennis Group, and several Cottingham u3a members were interviewed as part of a week-long feature on local radio.
- A highly successful **New Members' Meeting** was held, attracting an excellent turnout. New members and convenors contributed a wide range of ideas and suggestions for the future development of the organisation.

March 2026

- Two new interest groups were established: Backgammon and Talk Italian, continuing the growth and diversity of the group's activities.
- A presentation on the new online joining and membership renewal process was delivered at the monthly afternoon meeting, helping **members become familiar with the new system**.

April 2026

- **Kofi Smiles** visited the **Crafting Group**, giving Cottingham u3a another opportunity to be featured on BBC Radio Humberside.
- A new **Golf Croquet Group** was launched, further expanding the range of activities available to members.
- Two u3a members attended Executive Committee meetings as observers.

May 2026

- By this stage, approximately **20% of members** had successfully joined or renewed their membership online, marking encouraging progress in the transition to digital membership management.
- The committee began preparations for the forthcoming **Annual General Meeting**, scheduled for September.

June 2026

- Cottingham u3a participated in **Cottingham Day** on 28 June. The event proved highly successful, yet again raising the profile of the organisation.

July 2026

- Interest in a new **Pickleball Group** was exceptionally strong, with 27 members expressing an interest. Trial sessions were subsequently arranged at Haltemprice Sports Centre.

August 2026

- The committee approved all documentation required for the forthcoming AGM.
- A well-received **'Thank You' Event** was held in recognition of the valuable contributions made by committee members, convenors, and volunteers.
- Seven Cottingham u3a members attended the **YAHR Summer School** at The Hawkhill, Easingwold, enjoying a range of educational and social activities.

Finally...

Yet again, your u3a Executive Committee has embraced the **“by members, for members”** ethos, working tirelessly to support and enhance the experience of all our members. This year has seen some remarkable achievements, not least the continued growth in the number and variety of our interest groups. To sustain this success, however, we do need more members to step forward and take on the rewarding role of convenor and / or serve on the committee.

I make no apology for recognising the members of the 2025–2026 Executive Committee and the tremendous contributions they have made. Their dedication, enthusiasm and commitment ensure that Cottingham u3a continues to thrive:

- **Joan Lehain (Vice Chair), Jill Robson and Trish Phillips-Clarke** have worked together to oversee our interest groups and hospitality arrangements; their hard work often goes on quietly behind the scenes.
- **Pam Jackson (Secretary)** has kept our administration running smoothly, while also bringing a wealth of new ideas, encouragement and support.
- **Karen Hawtree (Treasurer)** has managed our finances with care and precision, while also taking on significant IT responsibilities – she has taken this role to the next level.
- **Jackie McAndrew**, our Speaker Finder, has ensured that our monthly meetings continue to offer an interesting and varied programme of speakers.

Three committee members are leaving the committee this year. These are:

Pat Collard. Pat has served on the committee for 9 years, during which time she has undertaken the roles of Treasurer, Chair, Vice Chair and Interest Groups Co-ordinator. Throughout that period she has been an extraordinary source of knowledge, support and wise counsel. For committee members, past and present, Pat has always been someone to turn to for help and advice. While her presence on the committee will be greatly missed, I am delighted that she will remain involved with Cottingham u3a through her regional and national roles. I have come to regard

Pat as a true friend who has supported me throughout my own u3a journey, and I thank her for her exceptional and invaluable contribution to Cottingham u3a.

Karen Baker. Karen has served on the committee for eight years, initially in the Hospitality role and more recently as Membership Secretary, an extremely demanding role. For many members, Karen has been the friendly face behind the registration and welcome desk, always ready to offer help and support. Karen has carried out these responsibilities with remarkable patience, dedication, and diligence, and we are extremely grateful for her commitment over the years.

Peter Glover. Peter has been a valued member of the committee for the past five years, first serving as Speaker Finder and later providing IT support, guidance and expertise, even during those moments when technology may have tested everyone's resolve! During that time, he has helped introduce new systems, particularly working towards online joining and renewal. We thank Peter for his contribution.

I ask you to join me in offering sincere thanks and appreciation to every one of these remarkable committee members for all they have done for Cottingham u3a. I would also like to acknowledge others who have contributed so much to Cottingham u3a:

- **Pat Windle**, Newsletter Editor;
- **David Groom**, Website Manager;
- **Paul Tempest**, Beacon Administrator;
- **The Events Team**, particularly Janet King and Wendy Douthwaite, together with those who assist behind the scenes with payments;
- **Interest group convenors**, who generously give their time, energy and expertise to lead and organise activities; and
- **The many members who volunteer at individual events and activities throughout the year.** Your help is invaluable. You know who you are!

And then there is me, with my oft-repeated mantra: *"My role is not to do everything, but to make sure everything is done!"* Any success I have achieved as Chair has been possible only because of the dedication, hard work, and encouragement of such an outstanding team. Their support has not only made my role much easier but has also made it a truly rewarding and enjoyable experience. To those members I say "thank you".

Lesley A Tempest