

Code of Conduct for Southport U3A Trustees

INTRODUCTION

Charity trustees are responsible for controlling the management and administration of the charity and have collective responsibility.

This code of conduct is an agreement between the organisation and the individual committee member and sets out the expected standards of behaviour.

Current trustees are asked to accept the code and new trustees should be advised of the code and formally asked to accept. On all occasions, the acceptance should be minuted.

GENERAL

- Trustees should read the Charity Commission leaflets on the responsibilities of Charity Trustees CC3, CC3a and 'Being a Trustee', which can be downloaded from the Charity Commission website.
- Trustees are expected to know, follow and promote the Aims and Guiding Principles of Southport U3A at every opportunity.
- Trustees must always act in the best interests of Southport U3A and the U3A Movement.
- Trustees are expected to reflect the current organisational policy of Southport U3A, regardless of whether it conflicts with their personal views.
- Trustees are expected to abide by Southport U3A's governance procedures and practices.
- Trustees must never derive any pecuniary benefit from being a trustee and must notify the Chairman of any gifts received.
- Trustees are expected to use Southport U3A's resources responsibly.
- Trustees should inform the Chairman before accepting an invitation to speak on behalf of the U3A.
- Trustees are expected to treat fellow committee members courteously and maintain a respectful attitude towards the opinions of others.
- Trustees are expected to respect Group Leaders' autonomy in organising activity groups and events and should not involve themselves in the running of a group or activity without invitation from Group Leaders. Concerns about how a group or activity is run will be addressed through the Trustee Board with the involvement of the Group Leaders.
- Organisational, committee and individual confidentiality must be respected at all times.

SPECIFIC – COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- **Preparation for and attendance**

Trustees are expected to study the agenda and all supporting papers prior to the meeting and should strive to attend.

- **Conflict of Interest**

Trustees must declare any conflict or possible conflict of interest at the start of the committee meeting or at the earliest possible opportunity. The Chairman will then decide whether to exclude the trustee from a particular item or from the whole meeting. In the event that the Chairman has a conflict of interest, then the Vice Chairman should rule on the matter.

Examples of conflicts of interest include:

- A committee member who is also a user group member and who has to decide whether a grant is given to that user group
- A committee member who is also on the committee of another organisation that is competing for the same funding
- A committee member who has shares in a business that may be awarded a contract to do work or provide services for the organisation
- A committee member who may have indirect financial interest in a decision, for example the award of a contract to a close relative

Procedure to be followed in the case of any Breach of this Code of Conduct

In the event of a report of any trustee allegedly breaching the code of conduct or if a breach becomes apparent, the Chairman will immediately appoint two trustees to establish the facts and report back. The result of these investigations must not be disclosed to any other trustees.

For minor breaches of the code, the Chairman shall use his/her best endeavours to resolve the problem amicably and quickly, through an informal chat with the trustee in question. However, even an informal discussion should not be vague. The problem or issue needs to be identified, the views of the trustee should be heard and the Chairman should make clear the change required and the consequences of repeating the behaviour in question. A written record of the informal discussion should be kept on file and a copy given to the trustee in question, but it should be stressed that this is not part of any formal disciplinary procedure.

N.B. If the complaint concerns the Chairman, then the Officers acting as a group should take responsibility.

If this process is not effective or the breach is serious enough to require formal disciplinary action, the following procedure should be applied however if the offence is considered by the Chairman to be of a very serious nature he/she may ask the committee to invoke Step 4 with immediate effect.

Level 1

A verbal warning from the Chairman making clear the nature of what was unacceptable and warning about future conduct. This should be recorded with a date and kept on file.

Level 2

A confidential letter from the chairman clearly itemising the unacceptable behaviour, stating the improvement required with immediate effect.

Level 3

A final written warning which states that if the behaviour is repeated again the trustee will be asked to leave the committee with immediate effect. At this stage the committee will be fully informed and copied in to all correspondence.

Level 4

The trustee is asked to leave.

Right of Appeal

At each stage of the formal disciplinary procedure there is a right of appeal providing it is in writing and done within 7 days.

Hearing an Appeal

If a decision is appealed and the trustee wished to appear before the committee, the trustee should be invited to attend a specially arranged meeting, with a friend if so desired, who may also speak. The Chairman should summarise the issue and invite the trustee to state his/her case.

The trustee will then be informed when he will be told of the decision.

The matter should be fully discussed, taking into account any mitigating circumstances.

Once a decision is reached the trustee should be informed in writing.

N.B. The Committee's decision following any appeal is final.

Adopted by the Committee on 27 April 2017

Reviewed in April 2018

For review in April 2019