

**MINUTES OF THE 10th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF STOKE-ON-TRENT SOUTH u3a
HELD IN LONGTON CENTRAL HALL AT 2pm ON THURSDAY, 18th MAY 2023.**

Committee members present

Andrew Devin
Keith Ward
Lynne Stevenson

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Treasurer

Alan Stevenson
Kevin Ford
Beverley Maher
Phil Rowley
Diane Ellis

Membership Officer
Deputy Treasurer
Entertainments' Co-ordinator
Publicity Officer
Catering Officer

1. WELCOME

The Chairman introduced himself by name, explaining that he had been elected as Branch Chairman at last Year's AGM. He opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the 10th Annual General Meeting of the Branch, and confirmed that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders adopted in May 2019. A general request was then made for apologies.

2. APOLOGIES

Josie Peirson, and Carole Arrowsmith.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 5th MAY 2022

The Minutes of previous AGM held on 5th May 2022 were available to all members prior to the meeting. The Chairman requested that they be approved for accuracy. Jeff Baddeley proposed their acceptance, and Phil Rowley seconded the proposal. A show of hands indicated all were in favour. Accordingly, the chairman signed and dated the minutes as a true and accurate record.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The chairman's report is presented in its entirety as follows:

It is with pleasure that I present my report at this Annual General Meeting. I have now completed my first year as your chairman, a year I have enjoyed very much. An obvious indication being that time has passed very quickly.

I would like to start by expressing a number of thanks. Firstly, I would like to thank the Longton Methodist church committee and their volunteers for readily making their rooms available to the u3a. It would otherwise be very difficult for us to operate. The u3a has an excellent relationship with the church committee, and long may it continue.

Early in January 2023, we were all shocked and saddened by the passing of our long-standing Business Secretary, Fay Howell. Also at the same time, long-standing Groups' Co-ordinator, Val Greatbatch tendered her resignation due to health issues. It has not been possible to fill either position to date, and this inevitably resulted in committee members taking on extra responsibility. May I thank the committee for all of their hard work over the last 12 months, when there has been a need to go beyond normal duty. I thank them sincerely for their support and input as we endeavoured to get back to normal post-Covid.

Another person who I would like to thank is Pat Winfield. Pat is not a member of the committee, but she does put in a lot of time and effort in managing the branch Facebook Page. The Page currently has in excess of 400 followers, and I am sure many new members have joined because of this contact.

This time last year, many were still Covid cautious, and our main concern was that attendance figures would be very low. We did have a financial cushion, so the committee decided to continue with all previously operating groups, and would also encourage the start-up of new groups.

May I thank all members who regularly attend group meetings. It is your attendance and social interaction that demonstrates the very ethos of the u3a. Also, special thanks are offered to group leaders. We fully recognise the effort that you put in, both during group meetings, and your preparatory time at home. Without you we couldn't operate.

Presently, twenty-eight groups are operating, but room hire costs do exceed attendance income for many of these groups. Monthly meetings resumed in June 2022, and similar to group meetings, attendances are such that losses continue to be incurred. Nonetheless, the committee takes the view that no compensating action will be taken until it becomes absolutely necessary.

The committee has recently prepared an updated Group Leaders Guide, with all accompanying documents containing the new u3a logo. The Guide will be issued when the newly appointed Groups' Co-ordinator has had time to examine the pack.

Following a change in legislation in respect of food handling, and the provision of information about food allergy and intolerance, there was a need for a branch policy to be prepared. Accordingly, this was completed, and implemented at the January 2023 monthly meeting.

Due to an issue between the u3a Trust and its website hosting company, no branches nationally were able to access their websites for some 6 weeks prior to the New Year. No agreement could be reached between the two parties, consequently all branch websites had to be again populated from a skeleton site, this entailed considerable effort. Much more work will be required over the next 12 months when the website will move to a new web content system called WordPress.

As at the end of March 2023 we had 431 members, which was an increase of 26 relative to last year, but this was still short of the pre-Covid number of over 500. Although the increase in membership has been modest, I do believe that the shackles of Covid have now been removed, and we can all look forward to a bright future.

Finally, we do need to have a strong vibrant committee with a full complement. I have received only one additional application for the three advertised committee vacancies. we must therefore operate over the next year with a shortfall of two members. The committee can, however, co-opt up to two members during the year, who will have full voting rights.

This concludes my report covering the last twelve months.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer introduced herself by name, and her report is presented in its entirety as follows:

Stoke-on-Trent South u3a Financial Report for 2021/2022 & 2022/2023
Registered Charity No. 1148741

Once again, I am pleased to bring you the financial report for Stoke-on-Trent South u3a. This report covers the periods 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022, and 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. We have two years to authorise as the year 21/22, although brought to the meeting last year, had not been examined. You should all have sight of a copy of the accounts and can see that both years have been examined and found to be correct. We continue to be a Registered Charity - No. 1148741, and our accounts are entered each year onto the Charity Commission website, and can be viewed on that site. All members of the committee are CC Trustees.

I am happy to report that we have maintained our comfortable financial position despite all the ups and downs that our groups have faced since coming out of lockdown. If you compare the two years, you will see a considerable difference in the amounts of income and expenditure, that of course reflects the reduction in membership fee in the first year, and the slow return of both membership and groups. This year, for the first time in a few years, we have seen a deficit in the amount of money raised by groups and the amount paid in room hire, this is due to a slight increase in room hire costs and small group sizes. However, for now it continues to be the committee's policy to allow small groups to continue even if their income does not cover the cost of their room hire. The enjoyment and interest of our members is the priority, not the size of the group. At this point I would like to thank all the venues that we use for allowing us to continue at what is a very nominal amount.

I was able to claim Gift Aid on some of our membership subscriptions and I would urge you to complete this section of the membership form if you are a UK tax payer and feel happy to do so.

Because of our comfortable financial situation, there are no plans to increase either the membership fee or group attendance fees in the coming year.

The Treasurer then invited questions from attendees regarding the accounts. No questions were posed, consequently the Treasurer invited members to formally accept the accounts of S-o-T South u3a for the two years ending 31st March 2023. Lynette Bell proposed acceptance, and Diane Ellis seconded the proposal. Accordingly, a show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.

Similarly, the Treasurer invited members to formally accept "no change to the annual subscription fee". Angela Ward proposed acceptance and Michael Hulme seconded the proposal. Again, a show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.

The Treasurer continued:

I sincerely hope that all our members are enjoying the activities of our u3a, and feel that the fees are being used to good effect. As always, the committee will endeavour to continue to do this for the coming year. May I personally thank all those who collect the money at the various groups, and those who endeavour to get it to me, thus enabling a smooth, efficient and up to date financial system - it is greatly appreciated.

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer on behalf of the membership for all her hard work during the year. Also, for keeping the accounts in good order, and providing the committee with sound financial advice.

6. ELECTION OF (a) BUSINESS SECRETARY AND (b) COMMITTEE MEMBER

a Business Secretary

The chairman explained that the post of Business Secretary had provided the committee with a dilemma. The Charities Commission no longer require a charity to appoint a secretary, however, should a charity's constitution contain such a requirement, then the Commission insist on the post being filled. The branch is in this very position, and no applications for the post had been received.

In order to resolve the issue, committee member and publicity lead, Phil Rowley, has offered to take on the role together with publicity. The Chairman confirmed that a valid application had been received, and invited members to formally accept the nomination of Phil Rowley. Brian King proposed acceptance and John Wilding seconded the proposal. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.

b Committee Member

Only one application had been received, viz. from Pauline Williams. The Chairman stated that he was delighted that Pauline again wished to join the committee after a short break. Additionally, Pauline is willing to accept the vacant and important role of Groups' Co-ordinator. The Chairman confirmed that a valid application had been received and invited members to formally accept the nomination of Pauline Williams. Beverley Maher proposed acceptance and Anne Bloore seconded the proposal. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.

7. WRITTEN QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

No written questions were submitted prior to the meeting. Two questions were asked by attendees.

a Richard Hales asked whether the committee were planning to have a publicity event in the near future. The Chairman replied in the negative, explaining that much work was needed to plan such an event. He did however accept the point and the committee would bear his question in mind.

b Donna Bayliss questioned whether u3a publicity literature could be placed in the Book Exchange in Longton Shopping Precinct. There was some uncertainty whether action had already been taken, but the matter will be raised at the June committee meeting.

8. THANKS AND CLOSE OF BUSINESS

The Chairman formally thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

The formal part of the meeting closed at 2:20pm, and was followed by musical entertainment from the Mel Baines Trio (minus one).

Chairman:

Date