

**MINUTES OF THE 12th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF STOKE-ON-TRENT SOUTH u3a
HELD IN LONGTON CENTRAL HALL AT 2pm ON THURSDAY 22nd MAY 2025.**

Committee members present

Andrew Devin
Keith Ward
Kevin Ford
Phil Rowley

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Deputy Treasurer
Secretary

Alan Stevenson
Beverley Maher
Diane Ellis

Membership Officer
Entertainments' Co-ordinator
Catering Officer

1. WELCOME

The chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the 12th Annual General Meeting of the branch, and thanked them for their attendance. He introduced himself by name, and explained that he had been the elected branch chairman for the preceding three years. He confirmed that the meeting attendance (37 members) had exceeded the quorum requirement of 18 (i.e. 5% of the total persons in membership). This enabled the meeting to be legally valid.

The chairman explained that the AGM procedures would be conducted in accordance with the Standing Orders adopted in May 2019. A general request was then made for apologies.

2. APOLOGIES

The following were submitted prior to the meeting: Lynne Stevenson (Treasurer), Pauline Williams (committee member), and Pat Winfield (Facebook operator).

There were no apologies from the floor.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 23rd MAY 2024

A batch of the minutes of the previous AGM held on the above date were made available for members' perusal prior to the meeting. The Chairman asked if anyone had any issues with their accuracy, to which there was no response. He then asked that they be approved for accuracy. Lynette Bell proposed their acceptance, and Josie Peirson 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 our 12th Annual General Meeting.

I am now in the second year of my two-year tenure, but in the fourth year as your chairman.

This last year has again passed very quickly, and one which I have enjoyed very much.

I would like to start by expressing a number of thanks. Firstly, I would like to thank all of the venues that offer their rooms for hire to our u3a, particularly Longton Methodist Church where more than half of our activities take place.

I would like to thank the branch committee for all of their hard work over the last 12 months. We have operated with ten members. I thank them sincerely for their support throughout the year.

As at the end of March 2025, we had 447 members, which compared favourably to 431 members as at the end of the previous year. Although the figures indicate little change year on year, further examination of the statistics reveal underlying differences that are

potentially a worry. During 2024/25, we accepted 82 new membership applications, similarly during 2023/24 there were 81 new memberships. This means that during the last two financial years, in excess of 80 previous year members did not renew their memberships. The committee therefore remains very mindful of the need to maintain recruitment levels. Constant effort is expended in publicising the branch, via placement of advertising material on local council noticeboards and at a number of busy locations, e.g. Tesco and GP practices. Good relations with the local Primary Care Network have proved fruitful in attracting a number of new members. Although we attempt to carry out a range of publicity activity, once again we consider social media, via Facebook, to be the main source of recruitment.

On behalf of the branch, I thank Pat Winfield for maintaining a comprehensive and constantly up to date branch Facebook Page. This requires much time and effort from Pat, who operates as a non-committee member. The latest statistics for the Page record 588 "Likes" and 680 "Followers," these being obvious indicators of a successful site.

In the previous two years, I reported that low attendances at monthly meetings were a concern. Consequently the views of the membership were sought to determine what would make the meetings more attractive. The overall view, though not specific, was that was a need for change. Accordingly, Entertainments Co-ordinator, Beverley, and other members of the committee devised a number of events that showcased our activities. The new events included; Crafternoon Tea; Line Dancing with a Western theme; the Ukulele group providing the Christmas entertainment; and Chocolate Bingo at Easter. All of these new events thankfully proved to be very popular, and I thank all concerned for being so innovative.

The branch remains financially strong, so the committee's policy is to continue with all current groups. Presently, we have twenty-six groups operating. We were disappointed that the longstanding walking group ceased in November 2024 due to low attendances, and similarly the computer group ceased in January 2025. We were, however, delighted to take over the former Age UK weekly Gentle Exercise class, which has proved to be very popular. The committee will continue to encourage the start-up of new groups.

May I thank all members who regularly attend group meetings, it is your attendance and friendships that are the very ethos of the u3a. I would like to express special thanks to all group leaders. We are fully aware of your input during group meetings, and for many, much preparation time at home. We fully recognise that without you, we couldn't operate.

Other matters of note during 2024/25 were:

The launching of a new website titled SiteWorks in July 2024 was the culmination of much hard work locally. SiteWorks uses the extensively used web content management system called "Wordpress", which enabled the branch to design the layout of its own site. This new system provides the advantage of more control and creativity over text layout and photographs. The former SiteBuilder system was turned off nationally in December 2024. Last year, all group leaders were issued with a copy of a new "Guide" prepared by the committee. A situation arose during July 2024 which necessitated extra guidance being issued in respect of fire safety issues.

Finally, the aim of the branch officers is for all committee roles to be spread fairly amongst the committee. We again operated during 2024/25 with a shortfall of two members, resulting in some members taking on more than one role. Prior to this meeting, no applications have been submitted from other than current committee members. We may therefore need to operate again over the next year with a shortfall of two members.

Ladies and gentlemen, that concludes my report covering the last twelve months."

5. **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Treasurer had presented an apology due to a domestic obligation, consequently the Deputy Treasurer delivered the report on her behalf. The report is presented in its entirety as follows:

“Once again, I am pleased to bring you the financial report for S-o-T South U3A. This report covers the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. You should all have sight of a copy of the accounts and can see that they have been examined and found to be correct. I would like to thank Steve Browne for doing this, not just this year, but since our u3a first started.

We continue to be a registered charity – No 1148741, and our accounts are entered each year on the Charity Commission website and can be viewed on that site. All members of the committee are CC Trustees. Last year, I reported that we had received a donation from one of our former members, the balance of which is £441, and is included in our carried forward figure and is therefore ringfenced until it is used.

This year our income exceeded our expenditure to the sum of £770. I am therefore, happy to report that we continue to maintain our comfortable financial position. Once again we have seen a small deficit in the amount of money raised by groups and the amount paid for room hire. 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 continues to be the priority. At this point I would once again like to thank all the venues that we use for allowing us to continue at what is, in the main, 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 taxpayer 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, even though the amount we pay to the Third Age Trust for membership and magazine distribution has increased.”

The Deputy Treasurer asked if there were any questions from the audience, to which there was no response. He then requested that the accounts for year ending 31st March 2025 be formally accepted. Angela Ward proposed and Carol Simpson seconded acceptance. A formal vote indicated all attendees were in favour, with no votes against or abstentions.

The Treasurer's report concluded that, “She sincerely hoped that all of 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 and Deputy Treasurer on behalf of the membership for all their hard work during the year. Also, for keeping the accounts in good order, and providing the committee with sound financial advice.

6. **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION**

The Chairman read out the current narrative of Clause 7 (iii) of the Constitution, and then the proposed amended clause. He then explained the rationale for the amendment as follows:

(a) Six senior and very experienced members of the committee have informed the Chairman that they will not apply for re-election at the May 2026 AGM. Four of these members have served continuously since the formation of the branch, and have been key to its success. There is nothing sinister about their intentions, over time domestic obligations change.

(b) An added complication is that the Chairman also reaches the end of his four-year tenure in May 2026, and by observing Clause 7 (iii) above, he will be debarred from holding that position again for at least one year. He opined that the overall situation is of great concern, because it could result in a new committee not having the necessary experience to manage a registered charity. This outcome would likely threaten the viability of the branch.

(c) The Chairman confirmed that there is no regulatory requirement within the Charity Governance Code regarding tenure of officials. He also noted that restrictions within the branch Constitution applied to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman only. Also, tenure for officers was two years, but was three years for general committee members. The proposed amendment would therefore bring parity to both officers and general committee members regarding election rules.

(d) The Chairman concluded that the proposed amendment does not affect the election process, and democracy would still prevail. He then asked for amended clause 7 (iii) to be formally accepted.

(e) Janet Wilding proposed, and Graham Hawkesworth seconded acceptance. A show of hands indicated all attendees were in favour, therefore according with the two thirds majority as required by the Constitution. The Chairman thanked members for their support.

Amended Clause 7 (iii) of the Constitution will now read:

Officers and Committee members will serve for a period of 3 years. All retiring officials may stand for re-election with no restrictions applying.

7. **ELECTION OF SECRETARY AND SEVEN GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Chairman presided over the election process, and explained that applications had been received from current committee members only, i.e. the Secretary and five of the seven general committee positions available. Two committee positions would again remain vacant.

a **Election of Secretary**

Phil Rowley was proposed by Doreen Roberts and seconded by John Wilding. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.

b Committee Members

Five applications were received as follows:

1. Alan Stevenson was proposed by David Darby and seconded by Phil McLaughlan. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.
2. Kevin Ford was proposed by Margaret Parton and seconded by Janet Wilding. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.
3. Beverley Maher was proposed by Mark Parton and seconded by Steve Browne. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.
4. Diane Ellis was proposed by Eileen Owen and seconded by Linda Hill. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.
5. Joseph Neilson was proposed by Beverley Maher and seconded by Pauline Williams. A show of hands confirmed acceptance by all.

No member of the audience wished to be considered for the two vacant committee positions.

8. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR**

No written questions were submitted prior to the meeting.

No questions were asked by attendees.

9. **THANKS AND CLOSE OF BUSINESS**

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

The formal part of the meeting closed at 2:33pm, and was followed by musical entertainment, provided by Rebecca Done.

Chairman:

Date