

**MINUTES OF THE 13th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF STOKE-ON-TRENT SOUTH u3a
HELD IN LONGTON CENTRAL HALL AT 2pm ON THURSDAY 21st MAY 2026.**

Committee members present

Andrew Devin
Keith Ward
Lynne Stevenson
Alan Stevenson
Beverley Maher
Kevin Ford
Diane Ellis

Chairman
Vice-Chairman
Treasurer
Membership Officer
Entertainments' Co-ordinator
Deputy Treasurer
Catering Officer

1. WELCOME

The chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the 13th 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 four years. He confirmed that the meeting attendance (29 members) had exceeded the quorum requirement of 19 (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.

2. APOLOGIES

A general request was made for apologies.

Only one apology had been received prior to the meeting, that of Pat Winfield (Facebook operator).

There was one apology from the floor, viz. Angela Ward.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22nd MAY 2025

A batch of the minutes of the previous AGM held on the above date were made available for members to peruse 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 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 read out his report to the audience, and is presented in its entirety as follows:

"It is with pleasure that I present my report at this our 13th Annual General Meeting.

I have now completed my second two-year tenure as your chairman. The committee year 2025/26 again passed without any issues, consequently it was one both the committee and myself 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 commenced with ten members, but this reduced to eight members during the year. I do however thank all ten members sincerely for their support throughout the year.

As at the end of March 2026, the branch membership was 434, which was some 13 less than the membership of 447 recorded at the end of March 2025. Although the figures indicate only a small change year-on-year, they do not represent the wider picture that does remain a concern. During each of the previous two subscription years, the branch accepted just over 80 new memberships, therefore with a fairly static total membership number this means that some 80 members did not renew each year. This pattern appears to be continuing, because as at today's date some seventy-seven members have not renewed for the current year.

The committee remains very mindful of the importance of branch publicity, however for a lengthy period last year, the branch did not have a publicity officer. Nonetheless, advertising material is placed at busy locations and on Council noticeboards. The local Primary Care Network run a series of events each year, and we endeavour to have a representation at each to showcase branch activities.

Nationally, it is recognised that social media is an excellent means of reaching out to potential new members. Similar to most other branches, we consider Facebook to be our main source of recruitment. We do of course also recognise that member contact with friends and relatives is an important element of our recruitment drive.

I must therefore thank Pat Winfield, who is not a member of the committee, for maintaining a comprehensive and up to date branch Facebook Page. Pat is a longstanding and fully committed member of the branch. The committee recognises that Pat puts in a huge amount of time and effort on our behalf. The Page currently has in excess of 750 followers, and there is no doubt that many of our new members joined as a result of Facebook contact. I am pleased to report that attendances at monthly meetings have been consistently close to 40, which is a welcome improvement on the previous two years. Entertainments Co-ordinator, Beverley, together with other members of the committee, devised a programme of presentations that were a mixture of talks and interactive involvement. Popular entertainment provided in-house, included a craft session, a Spring quiz and bingo session, and the Ukulele group providing the Christmas entertainment. I thank everyone for their attendance and involvement.

It is now an appropriate time to mention that Beverley has decided that she wishes to relinquish her tenure on the committee at the conclusion of this AGM. Appeals to members have been placed in the last three Newsletters regarding the necessity of filling the important role of Entertainments Co-ordinator, but unfortunately there has been no response. On behalf of the branch, I thank Beverley sincerely for carrying out her role over the last four years so diligently and professionally, together with her innovation in regularly preparing an interesting mix of presentations. The matter of a new co-ordinator remains a thorny issue for the new committee.

The branch remains financially strong therefore the committee's policy is to continue with all current groups. Presently, we have twenty-five groups operating. Both the longstanding Family History and Mexican Train Dominoes groups are currently suspended due to the lack of a group leader. On a brighter note, a second Badminton group commenced in February, and we have six groups that operate at maximum capacity which necessitates the maintenance of a Waiting List.

The committee always encourages the start-up of new groups. During the year much publicity was given to two potential new groups, namely, Board Games and a Ukulele Beginners group. Despite having eager leaders for both groups, there was very little interest from the membership and so the proposals were shelved.

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 at group meetings, and for many, much preparation time is expended at home. We fully recognise that without you, we couldn't operate.

In addition to Beverley leaving the committee today, Vice-Chairman Keith Ward has also decided not to seek re-election. Keith has been a stalwart of the branch since its inception. Keith attended the inaugural meeting of the branch Steering Group on 7th July 2011, and has been a committee member continuously since that date. He became the Branch Chairman in November 2015 and served in that role for 6 1/2 years until May 2022, leading us unscathed through the choppy waters of COVID. Keith has served as Vice-Chairman for the past 4 years. May I express the gratitude of myself and that of the branch to Keith for his long service, friendship and wise counsel.

Finally, the aim of the branch officers is for all committee roles to be fairly allocated amongst the committee. We operated during 2025/26 with a shortfall of four 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, which is of course a real concern regarding the future of the branch.

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

The chairman sought a proposer and seconder for acceptance of the report. Shiela Chadwick proposed and John Wilding seconded. A show of hands indicated unanimous acceptance.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Report presented by Lynne Stevenson, Branch Treasurer.

“Once again, I am pleased to bring you the financial report for S-o-T South U3A. This report covers the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. You should all have sight of a copy of the accounts and can see that the accounts have been examined and found to be correct. I would like to thank Steve Browne for auditing the accounts, 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 onto the Charity Commission website and can be viewed on that site. All members of the committee are CC trustees. Last year I reported that the carried-forward figure included the balance of a donation we had received from one of our former members. The balance was £441, we have now used a further £300 of this towards the cost of uniforms for our Ukulele Group, therefore the balance to ring fence is now £141.

This year our income exceeded our expenditure to the sum of £504. 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 relative to the amount paid for room hire. The cost of venue hire is however now beginning to rise. 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. Again, 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.

Part way through this financial year, Lloyds Bank informed us that we would need to start paying bank charges. To slightly offset this, we transferred £10K to an account which would

generate interest. The committee will monitor this as the year progresses and the full impact of the changes can be evaluated.

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.”

The Treasurer then asked for questions from the audience regarding the accounts, and none were forthcoming.

The Treasurer then asked the audience to formally accept the accounts of S-o-T South u3a for the year ending 31st March 2026.

Diane Ellis proposed acceptance and Graham Hawksworth seconded acceptance. A show of hands from the members present provided unanimous acceptance of the accounts.

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 monies 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 CHAIRMAN, VICE CHAIRMAN, TREASURER, SECRETARY AND FOUR GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Vice-Chairman presided over the election process for the branch Chairman, and following the election handed back the responsibility for the remainder of the elections to the newly elected Chairman. It was noted that applications had been received from current committee members only.

a Election of Officers:

Chairman: Andrew Devin: Proposed by Janet Wilding - Seconded by Gail Seadon.

Vice-Chairman: Kevin Ford: Proposed by Stephen Browne - Seconded by Glenys Browne.

Treasurer: Lynne Stevenson: Proposed by Geoff Baddeley - Seconded by Peter Boulton.

Secretary: Alan Stevenson: Proposed by David Darby – Seconded by Jenny Walker.

A show of hands for each election confirmed acceptance by all.

b General Committee Members.

No applications had been received from the membership in respect of the four vacant general committee positions. Additionally, no member of the audience wished to be considered for these vacancies.

7. WRITTEN QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

No written questions were submitted prior to the meeting.

No questions were asked by attendees.

8. **THANKS AND CLOSE OF BUSINESS**

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.

The formal part of the meeting closed at 2:23pm, and was followed by musical entertainment, provided by the branch Ukulele group.

Chairman:

Date