Minutes of Petersfield u3a Management Committee Meeting

Wednesday 26 November 2025 at 1400
The Old Pump House, Liss

Present: Jenny Thwaites(Chair), Rose Noonan (Secretary), Peter Lake, Tim Willans, Bernice O'Reilly, Sandy Stephens, Doreen Challen, Peter Clist, Greg Cumming (part), Gary Butler, Jenny Stevinson (guest), Susie Reynolds

NOTE: * indicates pre-circulated paper

1. **Apologies:** Titian Fleming
2. **Declarations of interest:** None
3. **Co-option of Gary Butler**
   GB was co-opted as a trustee and member of the Management Committee. His appointment was proposed by PL, seconded by TW and unanimously agreed. He will succeed GC as Treasurer.
4. **Chair's Opening Remarks**
   JT thanked colleagues for travelling to the venue.
5. **Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October ***
   DC noted that the final Minutes incorporate two corrections. The Minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair.
6. **Matters Arising**
   Item (2ii): In relation to the agreed amendment to the Byelaws, DC suggested that a review of the Byelaws would be timely, to be prepared by the Secretarial Team with a view to presenting to MC for approval in spring 2026. This was **AGREED. ACTION: DC** to organise; **PL/TW** to forward original Byelaws text in editable form to DC.
7. **Interest Hubs Initiative (JS*)**
   Jenny Stevinson expanded on key points from her paper and invited comment. Following the early Convenor Listening Group meetings, Jenny's original report made five recommendations, the overall theme being the need for greater communication. Since then, meetings have continued and in general have been regarded positively. For example, they have enabled convenors to talk together and help each another.

Interest Hubs: The Listening Groups have been reorganised as five Interest Hubs, which meet three times a year and are intended to serve as an important two-way channel of communication between members, convenors and MC. As noted in JS's paper, Hub leaders will continue to meet regularly to agree and standardise plans and activities, and Hub meetings will have a core agenda to enable routine exchange of information between convenors and MC. Over time, these should become accepted as an integral part of how Petersfield u3a works, although the potential value to convenors may need to be more clearly communicated. JS is keen to develop her own role within MC in relation to the Interest Hubs, alongside Bo'R, and would welcome further support. She urged all MC to encourage members to become more involved. JT noted that the Interest Hubs initiative looks to have good potential, but will require strong MC support. RN plans to add the Interest Hubs as a standing item to the MC agenda.

Other: Beyond the Interest Hubs, JS sees the need for a subtle, multi-pronged approach, which gradually familiarises members with u3a values and processes and encourages them to become more involved, starting with the Welcome meetings and new 6-month follow-up. She observed that MC needs to develop other, visible ways of communicating with members after that point to help them understand how u3a operates as well as their own role as members. RN suggested starting with simple ideas, such as including MC photos in *Connect*, and posting the Third Age Trust principles explicitly on the website for new members to read at the point of joining.

Some other points that arose during discussion:

- PC plans to visit all groups if possible, and is exploring the set up at Alton u3a.
- JT suggested that the term 'faculties' on Beacon might be substituted by 'Interest Hubs' in due course.
- Bo'R noted that more information about forming new groups would be helpful.
- JT suggested working with Bo'R on a policy for new convenors.
- PL suggested maintaining a list of initiatives, recording how and by whom they are developed, with timelines for new activities.
- DC suggested that open meetings might provide an opportunity for members to learn about how u3a operates, but this was thought less likely to reach younger members.

8. **Members' reports**

Reports were received as follows: Membership* (SS); Groups (Bo'R)*; Finance* (GC); Languages Hub* (PC).

Finance* (GC): The Cash account currently holds £10,952.05 and the Gold account £29,953.29. Bo'R suggested including in the report a brief explanation of month-to-month changes to the cash account.
GB confirmed that plans are underway to appoint a new Independent Examiner. GC reported that the final accounts from the current Examiner have not yet been received. Following an accident during a group activity, it was suggested that it would be wise for the Treasurer to check our insurance coverage in due course.

9. GiftAid and funding of Open Meetings*

JT, referring to previous correspondence, explained that central u3a has not been able to produce definitive guidance in relation to subsidising certain activities, such as paying for speakers and supporting the proposed Grants Scheme, and noted that there appears to be

a degree of risk involved, albeit small. GiftAid currently raises about £1700 per annum, and is not unduly onerous to claim.

PL, referring to his paper circulated before the last MC meeting[1], explained that the risk entailed in complying with HMRC's (unclear) GiftAid requirements appears significantly higher than that entailed in meeting Charity Commission obligations. Without GiftAid, both complexity and risk are reduced, and, although interest group activities should remain self-funded, we should be able to spend funds on adding value to members' experience as long as this serves our charitable object. Suspending GiftAid, given that we have already agreed to reduce our surplus funds, would enable us to claim it again once clearer guidance becomes available. Following discussion, the Committee made the following decisions:

- **AGREED**: to suspend GiftAid
- **AGREED**: to classify the Arts & Heritage, Health Matters and Science & Technology meetings as Special Interest Open Meetings, on the same basis as General Interest Open Meetings – i.e. open to all members at no charge
- **AGREED**: where necessary, to subsidise **all** the above meetings **to a maximum of £250 per meeting** (fee and expenses)[2]
- **AGREED**: to fund the proposed Grants Scheme (if approved)

10. **Proposed Pilot Grants Scheme***(PL/DC)

Referring to the pre-circulated paper, PL explained that the recommendation is to put the pilot scheme into effect during the next calendar year, so that by the end of 2026 it can be reviewed and modified. It will be important to develop the scheme in consultation with the Interest Hubs. Further information will be available in January before a decision is made. DC emphasised that the primary rationale must relate to our charitable object, i.e. enhancing learning and personal development. Permission to proceed was **AGREED**.

Bo'R noted the application form as it stands looks over-complicated for members. DC explained that documents will be made more accessible, and hopes that feedback from the Interest Hubs will help with this. JS suggested that developing the scheme with the assistance of the Interest Hubs may help the Hubs take off.

11. **AGM**

The Committee discussed issues relating to the AGM, in particular whether or not this should be coupled with a speaker presentation or should become a purely social event. DC suggested that a short presentation by one or more interest groups might be possible. **AGREED**: a working group (RN, Bo'R, DC) to review arrangements, with a view to no longer having an outside speaker.

JT raised the question of a second microphone, which must be compatible with the PCC system. **ACTION: GB** to ask PCC to provide this if possible, but if necessary to offer funding towards the purchase. It was noted that PCC's wifi has been upgraded.

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[1] 'Gift Aid – is it worth it?' Paper circulated by PL for MC meeting on 2025-10-22 (see Dropbox)

[2] **For reference only, added post-meeting to clarify the agreed change: 2023-06-27 MC Minutes, Item 9:** The MC confirmed the £250 fee and expenses limit for Speakers at the General Interest Open Meetings. Special Interest Open Meetings would usually be expected to recover Speaker costs from attendees. If in exceptional circumstances, should they apply to the treasurer for a subsidy then an absolute maximum of £150 per occasion would apply.

12. **Connect**
    JT pointed out that members who want more advance notice of events than is available in *Connect* should follow the link to the website.

13. **AOB**
    (i) **Associate members:** SS recently became aware of members of another local u3a branch attending meetings without taking out associate membership. PL suggested that this may relate to a historic reciprocal arrangement between u3as which no longer holds. The people concerned have been spoken to.
    (ii) **Website Review Group**: PL reported that the group's first meeting has taken place. He, Kate Napier and Russ Stevens plan an update for late January.
    (iii) **Labels:** There are plans to obtain improved name labels for MC members.
    (iv) **Volunteers**: SR reported that a working group comprising SR, SS, Marion Flett, Sue Besant and Sue Read is developing a framework for moving forward. From January onwards, *Connect* will carry an 'advertisement' for volunteers, outlining current vacancies along with details of the roles; vacancies can also be communicated via the Interest Hubs. Additionally, the New Member form will include more information about volunteering opportunities.
    (v) **Christmas Celebration**: Currently 56 people have booked. RN asked colleagues to arrive around 12.30. The timetable (approximate) is as follows:
        2.00 guests arrive, fun Christmas quiz on the tables
        2.30 singer
        3.00 canapes, wine, background music
        Spanish-style fun activity organised by PC (chimes to be organised by TW)
        4.00 close
    (vi) **Presentation to GC**: JT thanked GC on behalf of Petersfield u3a for his hard work as Treasurer and presented a card and gift.

The meeting closed at 16.10.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 14 January, 2026 at 1400.

Venue: United Reform Church

DC 2/12/25

Chair's signature:

Date: