

Minutes of Petersfield u3a Management Committee Meeting (Agreed)

Wednesday 14 January 2026 at 1400
at the United Reform Church Hall, Petersfield

Present: Jenny Thwaites(Chair), Rose Noonan (Secretary), Peter Lake, Tim Willans, Titian Fleming, Sandy Stephens, Doreen Challen, Peter Clist, Gary Butler

NOTE: * indicates pre-circulated paper

1. **Apologies:** Bernice O'Reilly, Susie Reynolds, Greg Cumming
2. **Declarations of interest:** None
3. **Chair's Opening Remarks**
JT thanked colleagues for attending.
4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November ***
The Minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair.
5. **Matters Arising**
 - **Item 13(v): Christmas Celebrations.** The 2025 event was agreed to have been successful. The catering and entertainment (a singer and a table quiz) were of high quality. Electronic ticketing generally worked well. The Committee welcomed RN's plans to write guidance for future events, including practical notes and suggestions for entertainment. JT thanked RN and all volunteers who contributed to the event's success.

6. Members' Reports

A Membership report* (SS) was circulated in advance. Three oral reports were presented:

Languages Interest Hub (PC): PC has visited 8 of 13 groups, and reported an overall positive experience. He has invited the convenors to a meeting on 30 January.

Finance (GB)*:

As of 13 January, the current account held £9,741.51 and the Gold Account £30,083.98. The Independent Examiner has yet to sign off the accounts. This delay has prevented GB moving forward with financial matters, but this should be resolved on GC's return. TW offered to support GC and GB in their work with the Independent Examiner. GB added that he has also experienced issues in dealing with the bank, which should be resolved shortly.

IT (TW):

- **IT arrangements during absence of RS/SS** (4 weeks from 17 February): IT-related emails should be sent to it.support@petersfieldu3a.org.uk Sue Besant has volunteered to check emails relating to membership. SS noted that application forms are now posted on Teams. In response to a request from JT, TW agreed to ensure that new forms are copied to her along with any others on the lookout for volunteers. He will also help SR access u3a documentation, including volunteer spreadsheets. **ACTION: TW**
- **IT volunteers:** TW has been working with SR on adverts for IT volunteers. He explained that there is a need for both interested members who can be offered training and people experienced with IT. Regarding website volunteers, he emphasised the distinction between volunteers who can take on routine website maintenance and those who can work on web

page design and content management; both are important, and this distinction must be made clear. JT noted that as well as checking new application forms to seek out potential volunteers, it can be useful to re-read older forms, and although SR has agreed to take this on, more help would be welcome.

- **Connect** – see item 11
- PL also reported that TW has agreed to take on various IT-related matters when capacity permits, but will ask PL should he require assistance.

7. Interest Hubs Initiative (standing item)

PL reported that the Discussion and Open Meetings Hub will first meet on 10 February. TF agreed to represent the General Interest Open Meeting as its 'owner'. PL emphasised the importance of MC addressing issues raised by the groups, notably: *the convenor handbook; the grants scheme; the questions for MC raised by convenors in their groups; and the current focus of the MC's activity*. He ran through a fuller list of points raised by the Listening Groups in September 2025¹, and noted that a list of questions with answers would be very helpful for Interest Hub meetings. It was agreed that JT and RN would respond to Jenny Stevinson's list of questions prior to the meeting on 23 January, when she will hold a meeting for the five Hub Coordinators to discuss the February hub meetings. The MC representative is likely to be BOR. TW's request for IT representation at Hub Coordinator meetings was noted.

ACTION: JT, RN; others as appropriate

JS suggested that new members could be identified at Welcome Meetings by wearing yellow badges (stored in PCC), but hopes to replace these with better quality badges.

8. Proposed Pilot Grants Scheme*² (PL, DC)

DC explained that the timetable had slowed down and may be further relaxed in order to secure good feedback and a scheme which is as 'right' as possible. She covered the feedback from Hub Coordinators and MC colleagues summarised on the report, and invited further comment.

Comments included:

- JT saw no problems with u3a owning equipment purchased by groups as this already happens;
- If only part funding should be provided, it would be prudent to require a guarantee that the project would go ahead before funds are released;
- PL explained the potential issue of reputational risk (e.g. if the scheme should be considered wasteful, unfair, un-inclusive etc);
- Documentation must be geared to its specific audience; there is a need to minimise bureaucracy, and ensure documentation for members is shorter and straightforward to read and understand;
- The Interest Hubs should not have a formal role in the grants scheme, although they could provide a useful opportunity for informal discussion.
- It is reasonable to expect some groups' proposed projects to cost over £500;
- The impact of VAT on costings needs to be factored in.

Agreed: £5000 may be set as a provisional overall ceiling, pending formal approval.

¹ MC to raise their profile, eg by wearing badges and posting info on the website; MC members to attend hub meetings; training for convenors; raising the AGM's profile (e.g. as a standalone event, more advance information); the need for group convenors to hold emergency contact details; the need for consistency; possibility of publishing a Helpers list in Connect; more information about speaker payments

² A slightly updated report has been posted on Dropbox, following final feedback from those consulted

PL circulated information about the Devizes u3a Enhancement Scheme, along with a document from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. The shortness and simplicity of the Devizes document was liked.

DC and PL will continue to work on the scheme, taking the feedback received into account, and will produce an applicant's pack to be considered by group convenors before final documents are drafted. PL asked all colleagues to read the documentation critically, routinely asking 'What could go wrong?' and encouraged them to continue to offer feedback.

9. **Convenors' Handbook – progress and plans**

PL understands that Kate Napier is working on this with BOR, who will be better placed to feed back. He explained that the original draft Petersfield u3a handbook, originally drafted by himself and Louise Fox, was rejected by the MC as being too long. He would ideally prefer the handbook to be published as a web document. In response from a question from JT, PL confirmed the convenors' handbook on the Petersfield u3a website was the generic national version.

10. **'Thank you' event for convenors**

JT suggested exploring the option of inviting convenors to a fully-catered buffet lunch at Petersfield Golf Club in early autumn, as was done two years ago. **AGREED.**

11. **Connect (standing item)**

JT will meet the new editorial team following the Coffee Morning on 28 January to discuss the way forward regarding the content and format of *Connect*, and invited PL to join the meeting. Her view is that members should be enabled to write to a template, rather than having their copy edited. A third member of the team is being sought. It was clarified that only short items, with a short shelf life, are suitable for *Connect*; other items should be posted on the website, with a link from *Connect*, and are available for longer. 'Stop Press' mailouts for one-off news items can be done using Beacon.

12. **AOB (raised during item 8)**

AV systems: An issue relating to the audio-visual systems in use at PCC was raised. JT observed that there is a need for greater communication with and within the team of AV helpers, so all involved in managing open meetings know who is involved and what needs to be done, in particular those organising the meetings. JT proposed a meeting with Paul Tracey, who runs the AV rota, to discuss the next steps, and requested that PL should be involved and possibly set up an informal meeting of AV volunteers in a congenial location. **ACTION: JT, PL**

The meeting closed at 16.00.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Wednesday 11 March 2026 at 1400.

Venue: United Reform Church

DC 14/01/26

Chair's signature:

Date: