

WARRINGTON U3A

(Registered Charity No:1085069)

Minutes of the 31st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Winmarleigh House on Wednesday 4th June 2025 at 2.00pm

1. **Welcome.** The meeting was hosted by the Chair, Janice Hayes, who welcomed members to the AGM. All those present who were not members of the Warrington U3A were reminded not to vote and for everyone to switch off their mobile phones. Emergency exits were identified. The meeting was declared quorate.
2. **Minutes of the 2024 AGM were presented.** No questions were raised and the minutes confirmed unanimously. (Proposer: Stuart Miller, Seconded: Joan Purvis)
3. **Chairmans statement for 2024/25 was presented.** Our AGM this year takes place amidst two events which have influenced the contents of my report. It seems especially appropriate that we are meeting in National Volunteers Week which celebrates the contribution volunteers make to their community and accords with the ethos of the u3a. I would like to begin by thanking on your behalf all the group leaders and their helpers for all their hard work in organising our varied activities. My personal thanks are due to all the members of our Executive Committee who ensure that we operate in accordance with national u3a objectives and satisfy the Charities Commission's requirements.

Our organisation could not function without the contribution made by the members who are willing to volunteer their time in this way, and we especially thank those who have served the maximum time allowed in their role and are stepping down at this AGM. However, I am pleased to say that a number will still continue to help support our activities outside an elected role. Whilst membership of the u3a is not limited to those beyond official retirement age our members demographic is still largely reflective of this. Whilst it is understandably tempting to want to relinquish all the pressures of the workplace, for some, including myself, adjusting to the new reality can be difficult! Volunteering to help deliver our activities can act as a useful bridge and I would urge more of you to come forward in this way and also ensure the Warrington u3a we all value has a sustained future.

Our membership number has remained fairly constant at just over 1000. However, this is largely because of renewals rather than increase in new memberships. Recruitment seems largely to have resulted from recommendations from friends and family rather than from our website

presence so I would ask you all to use your external networks to promote the benefits of joining our association as membership fees are our chief income source.

That brings me to the second event which helped to shape my remarks as our AGM falls during the national commemoration of the ending of the Second World War which marked a period of global political and economic uncertainty. Sadly 2025 has also seen growing fears of a further world war as new political conflicts emerge, destabilising the world economy. Individually I am sure we have all experienced a variety of price rises and pressures on our budgets but the biggest threat to our u3a finances stem from the increased staffing and utility costs increasingly faced by our venues. Your committee has made every effort to avoid a further rise in our annual subscription. We have begun consolidating groups into fewer venues as this gives us greater bargaining power and I am pleased to say our Accommodation officers have been able to negotiate mutually favourable terms to renew our agreement here at Winmarleigh House, fixed until June 2026.

However, as our 2024-25 financial year saw accommodation costs exceed the planned budget allowance by £3549 we took the prudent step of projecting the 2025/26 budget based on the current years subscription rate contrasted with an increased subscription rate of £45. This became especially crucial when one of our current venues announced without prior warning their room hire would increase by 110% from April, which is clearly not tenable from September. Both Fairfield Old School and Alford Hall are also predicted to increase their rates from September by at least £5 per session but this could prove to be an underestimation if the national economy deteriorates further.

Assuming our membership figures remain at 1035 if we maintain the annual subscription at £40 our projections show a deficit for the 2025/26 financial period of £4997. As a charity we are not allowed to run at a loss and our remaining reserves would be drained. If the annual subscription were raised to £45 there would be a modest surplus of £178 which can be increased if we all try to recruit more members and allow Gift Aid to be reclaimed on our subscriptions from the Government.

The committee is therefore presenting to the AGM a recommendation to increase the 2025/26 subscription rate to £45, with the option to pay in two instalments. We are not proposing any change in the cost of the Third Age Matters magazine (currently £5).

One additional financial pressure facing us was responding to the looming deadline for Microsoft to cease support for Windows 10 as our existing equipment could not be upgraded. However, I am pleased to report this problem has now been resolved by the donation of five laptops from the Bury branch of DJH Accountants who were upgrading their hardware. We are very grateful to

them for not only resolving our immediate issue but also providing extra equipment beyond what we could have hoped for through our own resources. It is increasingly obvious that more everyday services will be taken over by IT and our national u3a has recognised the problem of a growing digital divide experienced by many sectors of the community, including an older demographic. Your committee will be looking at how we can help support our membership with upcoming concerns.

As you will have heard from the u3a newsletters the national organisation is going through a period of internal restructure to ensure it can best serve its membership. New local representatives are being put in place and during the coming months we will doubtless hear more of how the organisation will evolve to respond to external challenges. Although the u3a does not take a political stance its nationwide support does give it an opportunity to contribute to the debate about issues of concern to our members. However, above all I am sure it will continue to provide the framework to allow us all to continue to “Live, Laugh, Learn” which is a mantra that I will also uphold during my tenure as your chair.

Janice Hayes Chair

No questions were raised re the report. Those attending the meeting demonstrated their thanks to DJH Accountants in the form of spontaneous applause upon learning of the generous donation to the group.

Chairs report was accepted unanimously. (Proposed by Stuart Miller. Seconded by Alan Osborne).

4. 2024/25 Accounts

The income and expenditure accounts for this financial period has been audited and agreed. The Main Account and deposit accounts show a combined surplus of £535, compared to a budgeted surplus of £1775. Membership fees were £855 higher than forecast. Accommodation charges were £3549 above budget, mainly because of higher than expected increases to room hire rates.

Budget 2025/2026

Again, in the forthcoming year we need to be prepared for room hire rate increases as our venues cope with increased employment and utility related costs. We have assumed that the number of members remains static at 1035. In setting the budget for 2025/2026, two scenarios are presented as follows:

<u>Annual Basic Subscription</u>	<u>Surplus / (Deficit)</u>
£40	(£4997)
£45	£178

The committee is recommending an increase in the subscription rate to £45. We are not proposing any change to the cost of the Third Age Matters magazine (currently £5).

The top up of subscriptions by claiming Gift Aid from the Government is an important part of our funding. If you pay sufficient income tax to cover the donation, please agree to Gift Aid your membership subscription. If you are unsure whether you have completed the Gift Aid Declaration, please contact me

Debbie Taylor, Treasurer

There were no questions and the treasurer's statement was approved unanimously. (Proposed by Dianne Rothwell and seconded by Ken Cockburn)

5. Proposal to increase membership subscriptions to £45 from September 2025.

It was stated the primary reason for a further increase in membership subscription being the anticipated increase in accommodation costs as a result of increased employment and utility charges.

The meeting was presented with two scenarios as shown in Section 4 above. The committee's recommendation to increase the subscription charge to £45 from September 2025 was agreed unanimously. (Proposed by Ken Cockburn and Seconded by Dianne Rothwell).

6. Mrs Pauline Thompson was then proposed as Auditor for the coming year.

The proposition was passed unanimously (Proposed by Steve Smith and Seconded by Alan Osborne).

7. Nominations of members to the Executive Committee

Janice Hayes – Chair

Janet Perry – Treasurer

Jennie Ruffley – Accommodation

Stuart Jamieson – Secretary

Debbie Taylor

All members were elected unanimously (Proposed by Sara Osborne and seconded by Barbara Richards)

8. There being no further business the formal part of the AGM meeting closed at 2:30pm.

9. The AGM was then treated to a musical presentation by the “Singing for Pleasure” group, introduced and subsequently thanked by Jennie Ruffley.