

2026 Unapproved AGM Minutes

MINUTES OF GRANTHAM u3a ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, GRANTHAM 2 pm, 17th February 2026

Formal notice of the AGM had been given at least 21 days prior to the meeting and all joining details had been emailed/posted to members beforehand.

1. Welcome

Vice-Chairman, Linda Daniel, welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that Chairman John Foulkes-Jones was unable to be present, as he was indisposed.. With an attendance of 76 members and proxy voting from 24, she declared the meeting open and quorate.

Members had received the papers for this meeting either online or by post, and it was hoped they had had a chance to study them.

2. Apologies: were received from:

John Foulkes-Jones, Paul Lai, Carole Troops, Andy Antony, John Hayter, Stewart Munday, Barbara Meads, Anne Howes, June Boneham, Derek Cox, Julie Heslop, Chris Walsh, Irene Shorrock, Dave and Julia Higgins, Pete Hutchinson, Judith and Stuart Hadley, Janet and Barry Fisher, Jim Came, June and John Baker, Diane and Jerzy Szkoda, Christine Barraclough, Barbara Lawry, Jill Allen, Linda and Kevin Weston, Jean Pritchard, Fran Barker, Diana Anderson, Pamela Harrison, Phillipa Fisher, Christine Watkins, Pam Manterfield, Margaret Williams, Shirley Lane-Gillespy, Robert Watkins, Chris Butt, Christine Warby, Veronica Davis, Josephine Hewitt, Dianne Mapletoft, Jenny Lai, Angela And Clive Summers, Sara Thorpe, Joe And Jean White, Avril Leitch, Pauline Hodgson, Pamela Chapman, Mary Wood, Adrienne Taylor, Pauline Speed, Fran Barker, Heather Wright, Bernice Cullimore, Douglas Mithchell. Glenis O'Connor, Cora Townson, Janice Puttock, Jackie Pantling, Nigel Pantling, Tania Lambley, Bethan Gordon.

3. Approval of Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held 18th February 2025 (Resolution 1).

No comments, corrections or amendments had been received.

Proposed by Janet Hine

Seconded by Jean Braybrook

Carried: Unanimous, apart from five abstentions, four of them by proxy.
The Chairman of the meeting then signed the Minutes as a true record.

4. Chairman's Report

Linda Daniel said that she would read the report submitted by John Foulkes-Jones, which was as follows:

"I extend a warm welcome to all our loyal u3a Grantham members for their attendance at this important annual event in the life of Grantham u3a. As a registered charity, you will be aware of our legal obligation to hold a quorate meeting each year specifically to keep the membership informed of the operations, the finances and the activities of the group during the preceding twelve months. This brief report from the Chair, for your approval, attempts to do this.

Membership: Happily, the Covid pandemic is now something of a distant memory, and its effect on our membership, quite severe at the time, has ameliorated. Over the course of 2025, at least since the last AGM in February, we increased our membership from 555 over the last year by 127 members. At the end of January we had 618 enrolled members. It is worth saying that growth of membership *per se* is not a primary aim of our u3a, though we welcome newcomers and encourage eligible people to join us whenever the opportunity presents itself. It is, however, nice to know that our quite small town hosts an active u3a membership considerably larger than many cities and towns in the UK. We are the largest u3a within our region of South Lincolnshire, that includes Bourne, Spalding, Stamford, Sleaford, and Sutton Bridge.

Interest Groups: Most of our members are actively involved in several interest groups and a good number take on leadership responsibilities within those groups. The Committee are grateful for the work they do in maintaining enthusiasm, innovating, recruiting and keeping a lively programme going through the weeks and months. They, like all members of the u3a here and nationally, are volunteers who give their time and energy in pursuit of our common goal – expressed in our strapline of Learn, Live, Laugh. The **learning** is as always, peer to peer; that is to say, we learn from each other rather than professional or hired tutors, and the joy of learning with others and sharing knowledge and experiences and the friendship this brings is the reward (rather than qualifications, exams or certificates of merit). The **living** implies that additional meaning and purpose is given to our lives through working in groups and helping one another. It goes without saying that these very activities together give rise to fun, humour and sometimes uproarious **laughter**. Our strap line does indeed come alive in the day-to-day activities of interest groups.

The huge range and variety hosted by our u3a is probably the most attractive feature of our organisation and the reason most people join in the first place. We have 60 active groups, representing an astonishing breadth of academic, linguistic, cultural, sporting, musical, literary, scientific and leisure interests and activities imaginable. If it is some time since you looked at the menu, then be amazed anew by going onto Beacon and

checking it out. Some groups are small, with a handful of members and others (like Gardening, Local History and the quiz group boast memberships which rival the entire memberships of some u3as, with many scores of enthusiastic participants. Gardening has nearly 100, for example, and an exciting annual programme of activities.

New Groups this year include Model Railways, a small group with experienced members; *Exploring AI* a good example of some recent and popular short courses; *English Language*, a small group which hasn't met very often yet; *Writing Outdoors*: a fairly recent addition, offering fresh air, exercise and creative opportunity; *Beginners' and Improvers' Badminton* is a very recent suggestion from an experienced and enthusiastic Leader which has already generated a lot of interest, and I understand that Cuban Dancing is a short-course group which is about to be launched this month.

Sadly, some groups close if their members dwindle or their leader leaves. The *Gourmet* group was a short-lived cooking and supper group that encountered difficulties with a suitable venue. And *Watercolours* was a group that we tried to bring to life but despite many efforts, it was still-born. On the other hand, some old groups come back to life after a period of quiescence. *Golf* recently restarted with enthusiasm but its future has been compromised by illness.

Events: The **August Tea Party** was repeated again this year in the Garden Yard café, and around 120 members paid £5 for tea and coffee and scones with cream and jam. This venue seems ideal in that it is both outdoors yet sheltered from summer storms, but like all venues in Grantham, it has a limit on permitted accommodation. Sadly, it is extremely difficult to find, at a reasonable price, spaces for activities that could house our 600-plus membership, and if we did, not everyone would come.

The **Christmas Party** this year was held as usual here in the Ballroom and was enjoyed by over 100 people. Once again, there were more people wanting to come than the ballroom, set with tables, will hold within its regulations.

Other events at which the u3a had a walk-on part were the **Christmas Tree Festival**, where many interest groups contributed by adorning the tree with crafted ornaments and helping with the decoration.

Monthly Meetings & Coffee Mornings: Our Monthly meetings have once again been well-attended, with audiences over 70 generally, and we have offered a diverse range of topics, lectures, demonstrations and amusing talks on the third Tuesday afternoon of each month except February when we hold our AGM, August when we held for the first time a Summer Picnic, and December when we host a Christmas party. Whilst the Theatre space in the Guildhall is ideal for talks and presentations, it is not an especially social space and does not encourage social interaction on these occasions. During the year, the Committee examined in some depth this concern, looking at alternative venues, times and formats that would not impact existing Interest Group Meetings. Sadly, we have not yet cracked it but we will continue to search for a solution that could expand the scope and sociability of the monthly meeting.

However, in terms of social opportunities for the membership as a whole, the Coffee Mornings at St Wulfram's continue to be an important focus. Many new members have joined as a result of a friendly welcome extended to them at a Coffee Morning. There is no specific agenda, though sometimes we try to highlight the activities of one interest group or another. If you have not yet managed to come, you have a treat in store with Carole Troop's unsurpassable homemade biscuits included with the coffee.

Committee: The Committee normally comprises 12 members, although our Constitution allows it to vary between 9 and 15. It will not have escaped your notice that there are only seven names at the bottom of your agendas, representing the people who are volunteering for a position on the Committee this year. This is an inadequate number. Not only does it conflict with our constitutional obligations., it imposes an unreasonable level of responsibility and work on those seven people who will be trying to keep the organisation running smoothly and dutifully. I have kept the Membership informed of this situation now for many months, in messages, newsletters, talks and preambles to meetings, and sadly we have not had more than a couple of volunteers come forward. Another member, Joy Wilson, is expected to be co-opted onto the committee later this month.

Sadly, a number of the committee, many long-serving members, have come to the end of their legal term of office and must retire. They must be replaced, and that is difficult to do. I pay tribute to the longevity, commitment, loyalty and sheer hard work of Janet Hine who is our Group Coordinator & Pastoral Care officer, Tony Hine, our Minutes Secretary who for many years served as our Treasurer, Angela Rose who has been Membership Secretary for the last two years, Andrew Weston who has been the kingpin behind our information technology initiatives over recent years, and Nelson Porter, who served in previous committees as Secretary to the organisation. In the absence of these colleagues, we will struggle to work as efficiently as we have in the past. Whilst it is not existential yet, it is a critical situation which I would like to remedy as soon as possible, and that can only be done through volunteers from the membership who realise they have skills and abilities they could offer. Please come forward.

If re-elected, I will continue as Chair for another year, my term limit, and Fiona will continue as Treasurer. Linda Daniel will continue as Vice Chair, with a view to taking on the Chair role next year. Jenny Lewis will continue as Secretary, Carole Troops as Siteworks Manager, publicity coordinator and Press Officer, and Maggie Ambrose as Meetings coordinator, helped by Jenny. All these proposed positions are dependent on re-election at this meeting.

I am very grateful for the hard work and diligent attendance of each colleague on the committee. Together, this little cohort keeps the whole organisation ticking over, on an even keel and financially solvent. I must also mention Di Hale, who does not sit on the committee itself but as editor of the monthly newsletter, serves an invaluable role for which I am hugely grateful, quite apart from serving us coffee with her husband Doug in St Wulfrum's each fourth Tuesday morning.

Membership subscriptions: You will see from our Treasurer's Report, next, that good and careful management of our fiscal resources, and our inherited surplus, means that once again we are able to offer membership for the current year at £10 for ordinary members, £14 for those choosing to take the paper copy of Third Age Matters magazine, and £12 each for joint members who enjoy one copy of the magazine between them. Further, we again undertake to keep the basic fee at less than £15 into 2027, although realistically a small increase from the current £10 maybe required in 2027.

Third Age Trust: It is worth remembering, though, that we are part of a National Organization comprising over 403,000 individuals across some 1000 autonomous u3a groups like ours. The Third Age Trust office in London comprises a large number of volunteers, including 40 who work exclusively on the Beacon IT system, and 19 full-time-equivalent salaried staff. The national organisation last year launched a new devolved structure with a Council of regional representatives in which regional networks and local link groups have a greater say in the running of the Third Age Trust. There is a plethora of communications, newsletters, Friends Extra Newsletters, and invitations to such things as the York Festival in July this year, and the National u3a week, to be found on their website, and often in your email inbox.

In the end, though, the focus of most members of Grantham u3a, is the fellowship and friendliness of the activities we engage in, together, week-by-week, through which we fulfil our mission. We learn from each other, we live engaged and interesting lives and we laugh whenever we can. Thank you all for your continued support".

5. Treasurer's Report

Fiona Robbins reported that the accounts for the year to 31 December 2025 have been independently examined and circulated to members. The Statement of Financial Activities shows a deficit of £829 on general income and expenditure. This is part of a continuing programme to reduce our reserves to accepted levels. In recent years, members have reaped the benefit of "subsidised" subscriptions while the committee worked to reduce our bank balance. I must now report that we have almost reached our target, so all future activities must be funded by our total subscriptions. For this reason, we will soon have to set your subscriptions at a more realistic level. While the committee hopes to keep this rise as small as possible, to a large extent the sums involved are beyond our control.

Major items of our expenditure go directly to the Third Age Trust, where the capitation fee was £2304 and the Beacon support fee was £584. These fees have not been increased whilst TAT were also going through a process to reduce their level of savings. At some point, we expect to be advised of an increase in both fees, which has to be passed on to our membership.

Further costs for the year include: speakers £596, venue hire £1130, storage rental to Grantham Museum of £600, and social events £500 - which was shared almost equally between the August tea party and our traditional Christmas gathering.

The committee anticipates having reduced our reserves to an acceptable level, in accordance with charity advice, by the end of 2026. To this end, the annual subscription remains at £10 for 2026. The budget for the current year currently predicts an approximate deficit of £2395.

The accounts also show the income and expenditure of groups, which must be included as all such items constitute charitable funds. I would like to thank group leaders for taking care of group funds and accounting for them accurately. In fact, I would like to thank group leaders, generally, for looking after their groups: without proper records, the u3a could not exist. To this end, I would like to point out that there is a very simple ledger included in our Beacon software programme where you simply enter records of money coming in (i.e. subscriptions) and sums paid out (e.g. refreshments). The ledger does the rest and the treasurer can print out all the information required for the annual audit at the end of the year.

As most of you know, I took on the role of Treasurer in the absence of any volunteer stepping forward. Happily, my predecessor, Tony Hine, had created a system which was both easy to follow and virtually ran itself. With the closure of the banks, the financial transactions are dealt with online before being recorded in a spreadsheet which then does all the calculation for you. I am very grateful to Tony for his expertise in putting this in place. But I am telling you this because I have decided that I will be stepping down from the committee at the end of this year, so we again find ourselves in the position of needing a new Treasurer. Please give this some serious thought: if you can do Internet Banking and can enter figures in a spreadsheet, then you could do this job. You will not be left on your own as there is plenty of knowledge amongst colleagues. I have found it a worthwhile experience and am happy to pass over the accounts for your approval.

If there are any questions, I will be pleased to answer them.

There being no questions, the Chairman called for the following:

6. Approval and Acceptance of the 2025 Accounts (Resolution 2)

Proposed by Ed Bowman

Seconded by Steve Potts

Carried: Unanimous, apart from six abstentions by proxy.

7. Resolution 3

We thank Richard Claxton for again carrying out his independent examination of the accounts in a prompt and helpful manner and have no hesitation in proposing his reappointment for 2026.

Proposed by John Down

Seconded by Janet Hine

Carried: Unanimous, apart from two abstentions by proxy.

8. Resolution 4

To approve that the members' annual subscription (without the magazine) will not exceed £15.00, and at the Committee's discretion may be less than that, with effect from 1st January 2027.

Proposed by John Sheppard

Seconded by Nelson Porter

Carried: Unanimous, apart from one abstention by proxy.

9. Resolution 5. Election of Committee

To approve the election of the individuals named below, en bloc, to form the Committee for 2026 each candidate has been proposed and seconded by members of Grantham u3a who are not serving committee members(

Karen Ambrose, Maggie Ambrose, Linda Daniel, John Foulkes-Jones, Paul Lai, Jenny Lewis, Fiona Robbins, Carole Troops,

Proposed by Pam Down

Seconded by Chrissie Thomas

Carried: Unanimous, apart from one abstention by proxy.

10, Any Other Business (as advised to the Secretary prior to the meeting).

No Other Business had been received prior to the meeting.

11.Thanks and conclusion of the meeting

The Chairman closed the meeting at 2.30pm and thanked all for attending.

There then followed a performance from the Grantham u3a Guitar Group, during which members were offered tea and coffee.

Signed (Chair) Date

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