

Yate and Sodbury District Executive Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 1st April 2026 at The Ridgewood Community Centre room 8/9, 244 Station Road, Yate, BS37 4AF.

Present: John Wilkinson (Vice-Chair & Treasurer – chaired this meeting), Patrick Mills (Chair), Cat Riley (Secretary), Lutie Van der Park (Assistant Secretary), Rod Dewey (IT Administrator), Lesley Holman (Membership Secretary), Julie Spooner (Co-Group Coordinator), Wendy Morrison-Jones (Co-Group Coordinator, Brian Day (Meetings and Events planner), Paula Young (Publicity & Newsletter Editor), Ian Merriman (Group Liaison), Vasu Patel (Facebook Coordinator).

Observing: Janet Smith (future Co-Group Coordinator), Craig Hodges (future Meetings and Event Planning)

1 Apologies:

Robert Cole (Webmaster), Doug McLaren (Assistant Webmaster).

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th March 2026 were approved.

3 Review of Previous Actions.

| Month | serial | Who | Action | Status | Progress |
|-------|--------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|---|
| 2602 | 04 | All | Prepare a list of main responsibilities of your role, and forward it to John. | Ongoing | 02/02/26: Details received from Julie. Brian & Lesley. 01/04/26: most received - 4 outstanding. |
| 2602 | 05 | Ian | Set deadline for producing Website Strategy | Ongoing Closed | 04/03/26: Deadline set as next Executive Committee meeting - 1 Apr. 01/04/26: Strategy produced, and published for review. |
| 2603 | 01 | John & Cat | Review executive duties lists to establish whether we have the optimum structure or whether there is scope for improvement | New Ongoing | |
| 2603 | 02 | John | Provide Patrick with a statement of grants received, to go to the Charity Commission. | New Closed | 01/04/26: Complete - no grants were received. |
| 2603 | 03 | All | Consider alternatives to Publisher for producing Newsletter | New Closed | 01/04/26: Paula has reviewed a few alternatives, and selected Affinity as the best option. |
| 2603 | 04 | John Julie Janet Wendy | Review new Beacon Training prior to adding to website. | New Closed | 01/04/26: 2 levels of training have been produced - introductory and detailed. These |

| | | | | | |
|------|----|-----|--|----------------|---|
| | | | | | will be added to the website following completion of the GL Guidelines. |
| 2603 | 05 | All | Provide a couple of sentences as a statement about yourself, and send to Cat to collate for website. | New Ongoing | |
| 2603 | 06 | Ian | Explore options with Robert for making forms available on website. | New Ongoing | |

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Voting at AGM & Circulation of Minutes - Lutie

A previous committee member (Tony Sarafian) has requested that there be an option to Abstain on the voting process for the new Executive Committee. It is too late to achieve that for this year but it was agreed to implement it next year.

Tony also suggested that asking members to approve minutes from a year past is unreasonable as they cannot be expected to remember. It was agreed that although formal approval remains a requirement of the next meeting, and the next AGM is a year later, the minutes will be made available for comment much sooner, so that any objections/alterations can be dealt with in good time. Approval should therefore be straightforward.

New Action 260401 – Lutie: Update Executive voting process to add ‘Abstain’ for future use.

New Action 260402 – Cat: Notify Lutie once AGM minutes are cleared by the Executive, so that they can be made available for comment via the Noticeboard.

4.2 Stroke Awareness Month – Patrick

Patrick received an email from the Stroke Association asking us to inform members about their plans for Stroke Awareness Month, and inviting us to participate in their Make May Purple Campaign.

In line with our usual policy it was decided not to formally advertise on behalf of another organization, however if anyone chooses to follow up on this as an individual, a link to the website is [here](#), and a link to the fundraising sign-up page [here](#).

5 Chair’s report (Patrick Mills).

5.1 I shall be stepping down as chair at the AGM after 3 years in post, having taken over from Pauline Clark in May 2023. Many, many thanks to all who have worked hard supporting me during this time, and particularly to Brian and Wendy who are also stepping down. With 2000 members, we are now one of the larger u3as in the SW Region, and indeed the committee can be proud of the measures taken to address limitations of size. I have tried to set a consistent set of priorities and so reduce distraction from all the diverse calls on committee members’ time. I wish you all a smooth and prosperous u3a next year.

5.2 I attended the u3a Chair’s forum on 17th March 2026 on Zoom; the topic was “Introducing new payment methods”; about 80 chairs were present. Some chairs gave their experience of using combinations of PayPal, cheque, bank transfer and cash, with or without direct input to Beacon. Most u3as seem to be content with PayPal; several u3as report being charged 40-50p per cheque paid in; direct bank transfers are disliked due to security concerns. Having heard

views of other u3a chairs, I believe that we in Y&SD u3a have as good a payment arrangement as any.

5.3 Statistics for Yate&Sodbury District u3a - 19 March 2026

| | | |
|---|--|------|
| 1 | Number of u3a members | 2007 |
| 2 | Activity groups | 115 |
| 3 | Group leaders | 150 |
| 4 | Trustees | 9 |
| 5 | Committee members including non-voting | 15 |
| 6 | Volunteers (group leaders + committee members) | 158 |
| 7 | Venues in use | 32 |

5.4 u3a Health Check 19 March 2026

<https://www.u3a.org.uk/component/edocman/u3a-health-check>

| # | Health check question | result | comment |
|----|--|--------|--|
| 1 | Do at least 90% of new members renew their membership after their first year of membership? | no | 78% = $(100 \times 303 / 389)$ |
| 2 | Do you actively monitor your membership statistics each year? | yes | |
| 3 | Has your membership grown for 2 or more consecutive years? | yes | 1467(2023); 1616(2024) 1861(2025); 2007(2026) |
| 4 | Have you managed your u3a finances without any unplanned deficits for the last 2 consecutive years? | yes | |
| 5 | Does your committee membership change on a regular basis and in line with your constitution? | yes | |
| 6 | Do you have effective ways of communicating with all your members? | yes | Bulletin, newsletter |
| 7 | If you divide the total number of members by the number of your groups, is the ratio of your number of members to number of groups less than 12? | no | 17.4 = $(2007 / 115)$ |
| 8 | Has the number of your interest groups increased year on year? | yes | from 102 to 115 |
| 9 | Is your u3a open and welcoming to new members? | yes | New Members Forum |
| 10 | Does at least 20% of your membership volunteer? | no | 8% = $(100 \times 158 / 2007)$ |

I believe it is a good result, even though some targets were missed. We should consider whether the shortfall in items 1, 7 and 10 merits further attention.

The meeting discussed whether it would be valuable to find out why people who have left did not renew their membership. Lesley confirmed that the numbers who mistakenly rejoined instead of renewing were few, and insufficient to influence this statistic. It was agreed that this should be taken forward.

New Action 260403 – Janet: Investigate reasons for people not renewing membership.

6 Meetings and Event Planning (Brian Day)

Nothing to report on events and meetings.

Brian pointed out that the equipment list will need to be updated as necessary to show Craig instead of himself.

New Action 260404 – Lutie: Amend equipment list to substitute Craig Hodges in all references to Brian Day.

7 Group Coordinators' reports

7.1 A to J (Wendy Morrison-Jones)

Nothing to report this month that will not be covered by Julie.

However, since this is my final report before leaving, I would like to say how much I have enjoyed being a part of this enthusiastic, committed and hard working committee for the last 3 years. I have particularly enjoyed being a group coordinator for the last 2 years and am pleased to be able to say that on my watch I have helped to set up the following: AI, 3 Badminton groups, 2 Book groups, a second Creative Writing group, Crochet, a second Discovering Villages group, History of Language, 3 more Pickleball groups, Rock Appreciation and a third Table Tennis group. It obviously goes without saying, however, that none of these groups would exist without the enthusiasm of their members and in particular, that of the group leaders.

I wish Janet well in her time on the committee and would like it to be noted that I am available if you think I can be of help at any time.

7.2 K to Z (Julie Spooner)

7.2.1 Group Leaders' Forum

The invitation to this year's event went out to the group leaders list on the website. Janet, Ian, Rod and John are all available to speak and a draft agenda has been put together. Cakes have been ordered.

So far there have been 23 positive replies.

7.2.2 Group Leader Guidelines

Further adjustments are underway after consulting Ian and Robert. These will be ready shortly and form part of the Group Leaders' Forum meeting.

7.2.3 Paid Tutor Forms

Creative Writing 1 have just completed a form for their creative writing workshop.

7.2.4 Web Site Changes 9

Completed with Veterans' Breakfast photograph and table tennis group update. Change of leadership in Quilting and Patchwork have also been reflected on the website. Rock Appreciation Group's changed leadership has also been updated.

7.3 Groups Liaison (Ian Merriman)

Nothing to report.

8 Secretary/Admin Report (Cat Riley/Lute Van Der Park)

Nothing to report.

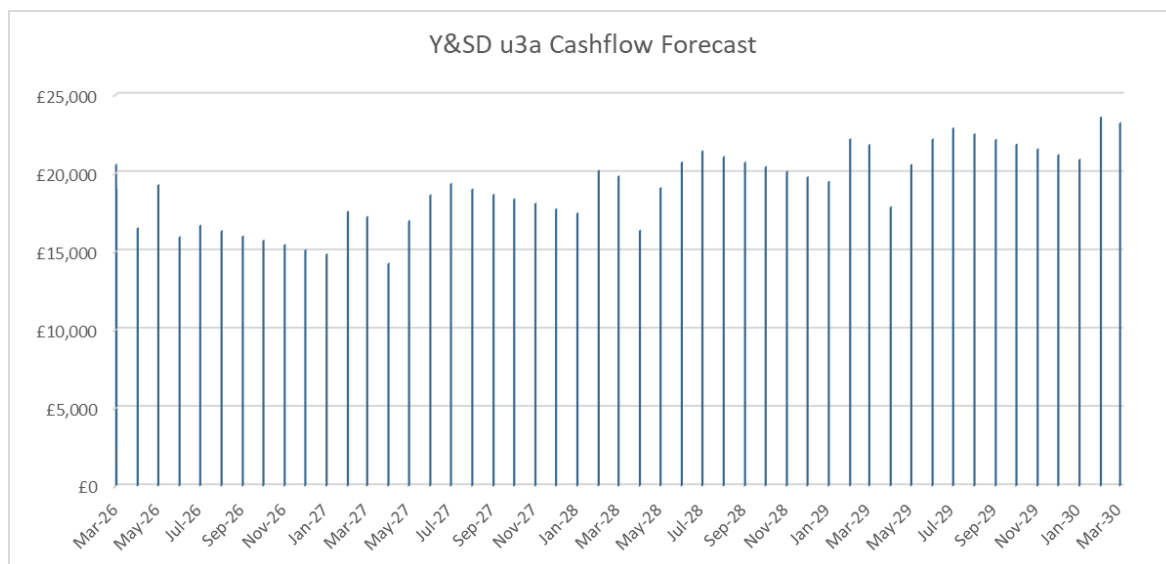
9 Treasurer's Report (John Wilkinson).

9.1 Funds

| | Bank Acct | Beacon | Delta | Reason(s) for Difference |
|-----------|------------|------------|--------|--|
| PayPal: | £2,906.20 | £2,886.68 | £19.52 | TBD |
| Nat West: | £16,050.27 | £16,070.27 | £20 | Membership fees to be paid into bank (TBC) |

| | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| Total: | £18,956.47 |
|---------------|-------------------|

9.2 Cash Flow Forecast – Mar 26 to Apr 30



Assumptions: *SGC Council MAF grant = £0 / year (they're no longer available); 3% inflation; No. of members ~ 2,000.*

Healthy balance with a slight upward trend.

£5k set aside for 20th anniversary celebration (June 2026).

9.3 Other items

9.3.1 Group Accounts End-of-Year Audit

Check of group accounts 26% complete.

9.3.2 Gift Aid

Claim for FY25/26 pending (an attempt failed because at last stage Government website service was not available).

9.3.3 Inactive Groups – Non-Zero Balances

Nine inactive groups show “non-zero” balances. Investigation in progress.

It was noted that Group Co-ords could notify the Treasurer when any groups close, which will allow action on remaining balances to be taken promptly before records are lost.

9.3.4 Handover to Rod Dewey

In progress, I've produced a comprehensive guidelines document which will be published for limited review imminently.

10 Membership Secretary's Report (Lesley Holman)

Renewal notices for those without email were sent out with the AGM voting papers to save postage. Renewal notices for those with email will be sent out at the end of this week as the “window” for joining opens on 3rd April.

We have 2007 current members with 10 joining in the last month.

11 Publicity and Newsletter Editor's Report (Paula Young).

Nothing to report for newsletter as next one not due until 1st June.

Nothing to report for publicity this month.

Patrick asked if we are reaching enough people, and whether we should put more money into it. With the Newsletter, Noticeboard, Boundary, Website and Facebook covering both members and public, it was felt that we are already providing a lot of information/publicity.

However additional ideas for consideration would be welcome.

We will continue to support initiatives like the Yate Ageing Better Festival.

11.1 Publisher update

Paula has reviewed a number of alternative software packages, and also watched a very helpful video on YouTube. Having assessed these options the free application called Affinity seems the most suitable.

Paula will download this app, and test it out in time for the next Newsletter in June.

12 Webmaster's Report. (Robert Cole by e-mail)

Robert provided the following warning:

Do not send a link obtained from a contact name on the U3A website in an email or use it on another website. This is usually a name, and would open a contact form. The link is unique each time and is time limited. This is to stop scamming and scaping email links from the website.

13 IT Administrator's Report (Rod Dewey)

- Venue names change to Venue list – updated file and website, Groups that use a member's home had that listed on Website
- Marketing your group with the u3a media outlets updated as links did not work. Uploaded to website
- Whisky Appreciation Group meeting day Website updated.
- Group leader shown on Website for The Lunch Bunch changed.
(It was noted that Rod needs to inform Group Co-ords when Group Leaders Change.)
- Member's Portal user guide updated and uploaded to website.
- Online renewal user guide compiled and uploaded to website.
- Online Joining user guide that was produced for open day updated and uploaded to the Website.

14 Beacon Database. (Rod Dewey)

Training – reference guide created showing all group leaders Beacon activities.

This will be used to help train a new Group Leader.

Copy sent to all Committee members with last month's report.

Venue name change to Venue list.

Membership Training course – was not useful as covered setting up online payments but only skimmed over use of online membership. Did give one tip about E-mail for renewal, Help file created and discussed with Lesley

Beacon updates for membership update to be done early April ready for renewals.

15 Ongoing Items for Discussion

15.1 Update on 20th Anniversary Planning (John Wilkinson)

15.1.1 Key Points (changes since last month in red)

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| ➤When / where: | Yate Leisure Centre; Saturday 6 th June 2026. |
| ➤No. of Attendees: | 360 max (u3a Members). Attendance is limited to members only (at least in the first place if low take-up). This is a change following recent discussions. It was considered unfair on members who may not have been able to get a ticket. |
| ➤Ticket Price: | £25/head. (subsidy from “central funds” ~ £10 to £14 per head). |
| ➤Band / DJ: | Selected – ‘You, Me and the Dancefloor’ (4-piece, covers band). |
| ➤Venue: | Deposit paid. |
| ➤Stage: | Deposit paid (Bluestone Audio). |
| ➤Food: | Selected (Bookers); quote received (buffet = £15/head). |
| ➤Bar: | To be provided by Bookers. |
| ➤Tables & chairs: | To be provided by Bookers. |
| ➤Crockery & cutlery: | To be provided by Bookers (paper plates & disposable cutlery). |
| ➤Ticket sales: | Payment to be by BACS, cheques or cash Tickets went on sale 28/02/26 – May be collected after Friday speaker meetings & Pop-Inn café on Thursdays between 11:45 and 13:45. Approx. 100 tickets sold so far. Need to “re-advertise” and decide if/when attendance is extended to partners. |
| ➤Raffle tickets: | To be sold on the night of the event (no gambling licence required) |

- Costs are expected to exceed revenue by ~£3,627.85, planned subsidy = £5k, risk exposure ~ £500; i.e. subsidy is just sufficient.

15.1.2 Accounts (revenue & spend to date)

| Date | Payer / Payee | Description | Reference | In | Out | Balance | Comments | Beacon Trans. No. |
|----------|-----------------------------|---|--|----|---------|-----------|---|-------------------|
| 11/08/25 | Sphere Leisure Centre | Deposit for hire of YLC main hall | Invoice 10541, 15/07/2025. | | £430.00 | -£430.00 | Balance of £1,735 payable 2 months prior to event | 12760 |
| 07/10/25 | Bluestone Audio | Deposit for hire of staging | Invoice 20250509, 07/10/2025 | | £159.72 | -£589.72 | Balance of £479.16 payable one week before hire | 12827 |
| 20/02/26 | Mr Benjamin K Byrne | Deposit for 'You, Me and the Dancefloor' band | E-mail, from Francis McParland, 19/02/2026 | | £80.00 | -£669.72 | Balance of £720 payable by 29/05/2026 | 12972 |
| 25/02/26 | Mimmy trading as the Little | Payment for ballons for event | Invoice INV2627-0148 | | £862.00 | £1,531.72 | Payment has been made "in full" | 12975 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------|--|-------------------------|--|---------|-----------|---|-------|
| | Balloon Company | entrance and tables | | | | | | |
| 27/02/26 | Deborah Payvey | Payment for stamps, envelopes & printing | Expense claim, 27-02-26 | | £158.44 | £1,690.16 | Stamps, etc. are for the postal invitations for the celebration | 12976 |

Spend to date = £4,911.32.

Will be looking for help on Saturday 6th (PM) and Sunday 7th (AM) to set-up / “set-down”, etc.

After some discussion regarding the number of tickets sold, and whether this is normal at this stage of planning it was felt that some action should be taken to raise awareness.

New Action 260405 – Ian: Arrange with Robert to add something to website to celebrate the 20th Anniversary. (NB: Not an ‘advert’ as the event is not open to non-members.)

New Action 260406 – Paula: Draft some advertising emails to GLs and to members promoting the celebration, and a poster to use at the AGM.

15.2 Website Working Group (Ian Merriman)

The first draft of the Strategy is complete, and with the working group for review.

The strategy has begun to identify potential improvements such as Drop-down menus, and a specific documents area to help with finding things, and generally to make the site more eye-catching.

Next steps will be to convene the Website Working Group to review and discuss the document and how it should evolve.

15.3 AGM 2026

Lutie reported that we have passed the quorum needed for voting, with 220 votes received as at end March. He reminded the Chair and Treasurer that reports are required.

Paula suggested that when the new committee is voted on, and volunteers are invited, it should include a request for someone to shadow the Publicity role, as Paula will stand down next year.

16 Any Other Business.

A few AOB items were raised:

- The group Curling 2 have had to but a mat. Can they claim the VAT back because we’re a charity. Answer is ‘No’
- From next year the Group Co-ordinators will split the alphabet differently to even up the balance between them. Janet will take A – O, and Julie will handle P – Z.

John concluded the meeting with a vote of thanks to Patrick for leading the Yate and Sodbury u3a so well for the last 3 years.

The meeting finished at 15.08 pm.

The next Executive Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 6th May 2026 between 2pm and 4pm at The Ridgewood Community Centre room 8/9, 244 Station Road, Yate, BS37 4AF.