u3a Cowbridge

FINAL: Minutes and Action Points of Cowbridge u3a Committee Meeting Tuesday 2nd June 2026 at 2:00pm, Council Chamber, Cowbridge Town Hall

Present:

Peter Carter [PC] Chair
Elizabeth Eustace [EE] Vice Chair
Ian Fraser [IF] Treasurer
Anne Thomas [AT] Secretary
Roger Eustace [RJE] Groups Coordinator & Compliance
Tricia Hulse [PH] Publicity & Liaison
Rob Cumbes [RC] Talks Coordinator
Scylla Cumbes [SC] Membership Secretary
Liz Cornelius [LC] Deputy Secretary
Graham Couchman [GC] (Website Administrator) attended as a guest.

Item 1: Welcome

PC welcomed everyone to the meeting. He proposed that the business on the agenda should be completed within two hours, with a vote to continue for a further 30 minutes if needed. This was agreed by everyone present. PC warmly welcomed Graham Couchman (GC), Cowbridge u3a website Administrator, to the meeting.

Item 2: Apologies for Absence

None.

Item 3: Website and Beacon Update (GC)

Beacon
GC hadn't received any reports of issues with the Beacon system. RC raised two comments. Some members are receiving emails addressed "Dear [name]" as recommended by the Third Age Trust (TAT), but some members prefer a group description such as "Dear [Stroller]" or "Dear Committee Member". GC confirmed that the recommendation is to address Beacon emails using individual names, however using a group description or role title is also acceptable, especially for group emails.

Website: an Online Calendar
AT had previously asked GC whether an online calendar on the website was feasible. GC has worked on this and demonstrated, on the Test website, how a calendar might work.
Users can click on Events in the calendar to display further information about the event, a link to the website and a location map. Events in the calendar can be viewed by week or by month. GC also demonstrated a new "Forthcoming Events" page, which has descriptions of upcoming events. Short videos can be embedded via YouTube, if the videos have first been saved to the Committee Google Account. The calendar currently works less well on mobile phones. GC will check what it looks like on a Tablet. The Committee were very impressed.
Website analytical statistics: The website is receiving a good volume of visits. Website traffic spikes often occur after each Bulletin and after some Facebook posts. GC has produced some AI-generated illustrations for the website. Some groups feed content for the website to GC regularly; others less so. The Committee thanked GC warmly for his excellent online calendar and work on the website.

Action Point: GC to proceed with making the online calendar "live" on the website as soon as possible. [GC]

Action Point: GC and AT to explore using Google Drive as an archive for the Secretary in a separate meeting. Archived documents should be retained for 6 years. [GC and AT]

Action Point: PC to remind members, in the next Bulletin, that group leaders can be contacted through the website. [PC]

Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th April 2026 (Accuracy)

The draft minutes of the previous meeting were circulated by AT on Sunday 10th May 2026. Two minor amendments were agreed: on Page 3 (item 6), the words "and visitors" to be deleted; and on Page 5 (item 13: Diary Dates), "coffee" to be deleted.
Subject to these amendments, the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Item 5: Matters Arising and Progress on Action Points (not addressed elsewhere)

AT had compiled a summary table of action points, circulated by PC on 26th May 2026. All actions were reported as either completed or would be dealt with later in the Agenda.
Two Matters Arising were noted:
Page 2, Financial Report (Computer Equipment and Sundries): IF was asked to provide more information on the cost of computer licences and other computer expenses by using sub-headings for this category.
Action Point: IF to provide more information on expenditure on "Computer Equipment and Sundries" by showing an analysis of expenditure in sub-headings. [IF]

Page 2, Membership (mid-year subscriptions): SC reported that some lapsed members had paid a £7.50 mid-year subscription charge. SC confirmed that this was an anomaly arising from the Beacon system "bedding-in" process and will not occur again next year.

Item 6: Financial Report (IF)

IF reported that the Cowbridge u3a May Fayre raffle raised £44. This has been donated to the Mayor's chosen charity (Motor Neurone Disease). This was publicised by PC in the Bulletin.
Instead of a fee, some speakers suggest a donation to a charity. RJE asked whether these payments are recorded under the financial heading of "Speakers" or "Donations" in the accounts. Historically these have been recorded as Donations but IF said that this can be changed under future financial guidance.
RJE noted that the Day Member Fee total is still recorded as £2. This needs to be reconciled with Petty Cash and an accurate total shown. This is important for Day Member's insurance.
IF reported a balance of £1,539 in the Virgin Account and £4,000 in the 60 Day Account. £1,000 is currently being transferred from the 60 Day Account to the Virgin Account. Cowbridge u3a therefore has total funds of £5,539. IF confirmed that 30th June 2026 is the last day of the current financial year: 1st July 2026 is the first day of the new financial year. The Committee thanked IF for his report.

Action Point: IF and SC to reconcile the Petty Cash accounts before 1st July 2026. [IF and SC]

Action Point: IF to send group leaders, via the Beacon email system, the Financial Return form that they have to complete at the end of the financial year. [IF]

Item 7: Meet and Greet: Progress Report and Future Plans

EE reported that the Meet and Greet Team held their first team meeting on 1st June 2026. There are currently 9 members. It would be helpful to have at least one more volunteer. A rota is currently being agreed and provides for at least 3 "Meet and Greeters" at each General Meeting: one near the membership desk to deal with detailed enquiries; one at the Meet and Greet table, and one roving in the hall.

Two issues were discussed. Firstly, how to identify new members on arrival: some experienced Meet and Greet volunteers can recognise existing/new members, but PC will make an announcement at General Meetings asking new members to identify themselves.

Secondly, how should we follow up a new member who may have become disaffected and is no longer attending General Meetings or groups, and who should do this? This is outside the scope of the Meet and Greet remit. It was noted that taking registers of attendees and cross-checking with group leaders would be a substantial undertaking. SC said that lapsed members are identified and contacted each December. PH suggested that new members could be emailed after three months to ask how they are getting on and whether they have joined any groups. This will be considered further at a future date.

EE had emailed all new members (up to April 2026) inviting them to one of the following new members meetings. EE then sent one follow-up email to those who hadn't responded.

7 married couples had not responded. 12 individual members had not responded.

20 accepted an invite to 4 June meeting, 10 accepted an invite on 15 June with possibly more, with some group leaders also attending. 4 new members have requested to attend meeting in August. EE was happy with the response.

The New Members Meetings will include: a welcome from PC; handing out the new members' leaflet, a name badge and their green membership card; as well as a demonstration of the website and Beacon; information about TAT; a talk on groups by RJE; and informal sessions to find out which groups new members have joined and to answer any questions. Refreshments will be provided.

Some of our groups have waiting lists. RJE is working on setting up new groups.

Action Point: Group Leaders to be asked to send details of the members on their group's waiting lists (if they have one) to RJE, so that new groups can be set up if appropriate. [RJE]

SC has received feedback that a small number of members prefer not to meet in people's homes. Groups are free to choose their own venues, however the Committee's role is to encourage the use of neutral venues. This may involve a small cost to group members.

The Committee agreed with EE that the Meet and Greet remit will not be extended at present.

Item 8: Cowbridge u3a Constitution sub-committee (Report on Progress)

EE reported that the constitution sub-committee meeting, held on 11th May 2026, was very productive. AT has produced detailed notes for the sub-committee. The group compared the TAT model constitution 2023 with the current Cowbridge u3a constitution. Using TAT's list of constitution FAQs, the group examined the differences in detail.

Some new issues identified for consideration include: proxy voting at the AGM; and the holding of meetings by Zoom. There could be changes to the maximum length of service for Trustees and the introduction of annual elections, but there will be a three year transition period for these changes.

RC raised an objection to the inclusion of proxy voting and this was noted.

Each u3a will be able to make bylaws to address local policy decisions, as long as they don't contradict the constitution. Torfaen u3a's practice of listing and publishing all their policy decisions was noted as something to consider: https://torfaen.u3asite.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/policydecisions.pdf.
We will need to carry out further research on different types of Resolutions and the exact meaning of some of the formal language.
TAT and Regional Representatives will assist us with the process of drawing up a new constitution. EE has spoken to Nicky Lee (Wales Representative on the Council). A Zoom meeting with Nicky Lee and the constitution sub-committee will be arranged. Kate Cowan, TAT Governance adviser, will also advise the sub-committee.
The new constitution will need to be considered and approved by the full committee, then by TAT and the Charity Commission, before hopefully being presented to Cowbridge u3a members for a vote in the AGM in 2027.

Action Point: EE to contact Nicky Lee for suitable dates for a Zoom Meeting with the constitution sub-Committee.

Item 9: National and Regional u3a Matters (EE)

EE reported that the Regional Meeting and 2026 AGM (13th May 2026) discussed the constitution; the new 2026 model constitution will have only minor differences to the 2023 version. The All Wales Meeting will be held on 2nd November 2026, with Kate Cowan leading a Q&A session on governance.
Membership cards are a current issue for many u3as. Decisions vary for example Chepstow u3a stopped printing membership cards and have not missed them but other u3as still use them.
The Secretaries' Group meeting, 7th May 2026, was not well attended. IF said that the Treasurers' Forum, run by John Alexander (who also runs a Facebook group for Treasurers), has been postponed.
Chepstow u3a had a very interesting visit to Lydney and recommended it to other u3as.
Nicky Lee has asked for feedback on the Mid Wales Opera talk by Bridget Wallbank (the speaker at our next General Meeting).
EE was asked, by Nicky Lee, to remind group leaders to conduct a fire drill.
The Committee thanked EE for her report.

Action Point: As a courtesy, Cowbridge u3a should notify local u3as when visiting their areas. [All]

Action Point: EE to provide feedback to Nicky Lee on the Mid Wales Opera presentation. [EE]

Item 10: May Fayre - Review

PC reported that the Cowbridge u3a stall at the May Fayre was very successful. The gazebo worked well. The raffle raised £44 for the Mayor's Charity. New members were recruited. It was noted that future May Fayres are likely to return to the Bear Field, Cowbridge.

Item 11: Policy on Group Finances (RJE)

RJE read out relevant paragraphs from sections 3 and 4.4 of the u3a Financial Matters – Guidance (https://www.u3a.org.uk/members-area/support/advice-and-guidance which was circulated to all committee members on 29th April 2026).

RJE proposed that groups should be permitted to hold up to £100 locally but that any funds above that level should be transferred to the Cowbridge u3a central account. This would affect approximately 5 or 6 Cowbridge u3a groups. IF confirmed that Cowbridge u3a central accounts and group accounts will need to be accounted for separately. Group funds can be sent to IF at the end of the financial year. However, it was recognised that this will involve significantly more work for IF in keeping accurate accounts. At present, group leaders send details of their group accounts to IF on a standard form at the end of each financial year.
PC said that the financial guidance should be followed, although the £100 threshold allows some flexibility. Working with group leaders to introduce this, will need to be dealt with sensitively. It was also noted that paragraph 4.6 of the Financial Matters - Guidance, says that hall hire costs should be routed through central accounts.
Cowbridge u3a's financial year starts on 1st July, but some groups work to different financial years. This may be a problem. RC commented that there may be some flexibility in the wording of the guidance for example using the word "should" not "shall".
The Committee will need to monitor this regularly.

Action Point: IF and RJE to meet to agree how to implement the financial guidance on group funds and hall hire costs; and how to work with the Group Leaders sensitively to implement the changes. [IF and RJE]

Item 12: Membership Cards (SC)

SC presented three options for membership cards: (a) the current green cards (printed locally); (b) cards downloaded from the TAT website and personalised for Cowbridge u3a; and (c) sharing a card design and production with other local u3as. SC agreed that a credit card size format would work well. The model membership card on the TAT website can be edited to include "Cowbridge u3a" on it. Members could be emailed a version to print at home, to keep on their mobile phone or to screenshot.
SC also suggested that we print a smaller list of General Meetings on a separate leaflet. Putting printed programmes around Cowbridge was discussed; PH felt the main target audience gets their information from Facebook and our website, although others felt that printed programmes remain useful.

Action Point: SC and PH to proceed with a new style membership card, to be ready for distribution at the September AGM. Progress to be reported at the next Committee meeting. SC and PH also to arrange a printed list of the Programme. [SC and PH]

Item 13: Diary Dates

The following forthcoming events were noted:

Wednesday 10th June, 2:00pm	General Meeting - 'Behind the Curtain' Mid Wales Opera: Bridget Wallbank [NB: a change to advertised programme]
Monday 29th June, 11:00am	Meeting in 96 Degrees Coffee House, Cowbridge
Wednesday 8th July, 2:00pm	General Meeting - 'Bristol Channel Paddle Steamers': Lindsay Bryant

Wednesday 9th September, 2:00pm	Cowbridge u3a AGM (Advance Notice)

Item 14: AGM - Plans and Preparations

The AGM is scheduled for Wednesday 9th September 2026, at 2pm. Members will be notified in accordance with the 28-day notice requirement, although advance notice has already been included in the monthly Bulletin.

Committee vacancies and continuity planning
There was a detailed discussion about nominations for the new Committee members. Some existing Committee members are willing to be nominated again for the 2026/27 Committee, but there will be some posts which will become vacant.
PC reminded the Committee that all committee members are Trustees. IF updates the list of Cowbridge u3a committee members/Trustees on the Charity Commission website.
SC suggested that Trustee status should be made clear to anyone considering joining the Committee.
AT suggested that TAT guidance on the role of a Trustee should be given to anyone considering becoming a Trustee. The guidance addresses any concerns they may have.
The call for nominees should include a link to the updated TAT role descriptions; and information about the role and safeguards for Trustees. The Trips Co-ordinator and the Talks Co-ordinator do not need necessarily to be Committee members. It may be useful to have a Meet and Greet organiser as new Committee member.

AGM Entertainment and Refreshments

RC has booked the "Porthcawl Ukele Bandits" to provide entertainment at the 2026 AGM.

Action Point: PC and AT to prepare a timetable for the AGM papers. [PC and AT]

Action Point: Committee Members to give feedback on the speakers and presentation to RC after every General Meeting. [Committee members present at General Meetings]

Action Point: PC agreed to include information about the nominations in the July Bulletin. [PC]

Action Point: PC will buy the wine for the AGM. Mags and her team will be asked by PC to provide the catering as usual. [PC]

The meeting adjourned at 3:52pm for a short break and reconvened to complete the remaining business.

Item 15: Additional Updates from Committee Members

PC asked that any Additional Updates from Committee Members are submitted in writing to AT.

15(a) Chair (PC): PC asked for any updates for the monthly Bulletin and/or the slideshow.

15(b) Secretary (AT): AT had joined the Regional Secretaries’ Meeting (7th May 2026) although there were only 6 secretaries in the meeting. Derek Shottin opened the meeting with a demonstration of useful documents on the u3a website, including the new model role descriptions. u3as, especially small u3as are encouraged to apply for u3a grants whenever appropriate, for example for open days. Derek Shottin also recommended creating a local year planner with useful advice and dates for Secretaries. Nicky Lee said that she is setting up a Wales u3a AI user group.

There were no other Additional Updates.

Item 16: Any Other Business

U3a Incident Forms

RJE reported that copies of all completed Incident Forms must now be sent to TAT, who will share them with the u3a Insurers.

General Meeting - Clashes with Group Events

The Committee discussed whether group leaders should be asked to avoid scheduling events that clash with General Meetings. The Committee agreed this is good practice and supports contingency planning.

Action Point: PC to draft a message to group leaders asking them to avoid conflicts, as far as possible, with General Meetings. RJE to send the message to group leaders via Beacon. [PC and RJE]

Cycling Group Hi-Vis Jackets

It was agreed that the Cycling Group can buy Hi-Vis jackets with "Cowbridge u3a" on the back.

Family History Group - Room Hire

RJE reported that the Family History Group has requested funds for a three-month rental of a room at the Old Hall. This was approved by the Committee.

Draft Minutes of 30th Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 10th September 2025

The Draft Minutes had been sent to Committee members by AT on 10th June 2026. There is one amendment: Page 2 (11) delete: "raised a Point of Order" and insert "proposed". Following this amendment, the Draft Minutes will be published on the website and sent to Members as part of the papers for AGM (9th September 2026).

Action Point: Subject to this amendment, AT to send the Draft Minutes of the 30th AGM (September 2025) to GC for publication on our website with an explanatory note that they are still subject to a vote of the full membership. [AT]

Item 17: Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 15th July 2026 at 10:30am, Room 12, Old Hall, Cowbridge.

The meeting closed at 4:30pm.