

CATERHAM AND DISTRICT U3A. BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

These are the minutes of the branch AGM held on Monday 24th November 2025 at 2.30pm.
Meeting held at the United Reform Church, Harestone Hill, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 6SX.

1. Welcome from the Chair.

Paul Knight welcomed everyone attending the meeting, and thanked them for coming. Those at the meeting were advised where the two fire escapes were located and where to assemble in the unlikely event of a fire. Those present were asked to ensure that they were “Signed In” to ensure that we had a check list of those present.

Apologies for Absence.

There were 51 apologies for absence, of which 6 had given their vote by proxy to the Chair.

Meeting Attendance.

There were 62 Members present, including Committee Members. Sufficient for a Quorum.

Approval of the Minutes of last year’s AGM 2024.

Paul asked the meeting for approval of the minutes. This was passed with no objections.

Ray Jessop (Secretary), asked if there were any matters arising. There were none.

2. Committee Reports.

The Committee Members Reports were displayed on a screen at the meeting.

The written reports are included within the reports of these minutes.

A brief verbal addition to these reports was given by the relevant Committee Member.

Chair’s Report.

Paul Knight (Chair), I have thoroughly enjoyed my second year as I have become acquainted with the role. Our Membership is now over 900 with no active publicity.

We had a highly successful Open Morning targeted at existing members, and the groups, events and activities available to them. This was well supported.

The Groups Have developed successfully with about 80 in number.

The new format website is running well. Please make use of it if you can.

Our talks programme and coach trips are currently augmented with funds from the Community Foundation. We have made a donation to URC for a larger screen for our talks

As last year we had a full Social Programme. In the new year, the Social Committee is to look at alternative methods for advising members of event bookings, where possible.

(This is following an AGM question, raised by a member unable to attend the meeting.)

We developed a Reserves Policy and new payment system using bank cards, in a serious effort to phase out cheques.

Over the year, membership fees were held constant.

A very busy regional study days programme. (See Alan Speed’s Report).

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On a lighter note, I was personally involved in last year's Quiz and a cookery class.

The Branch Going Forward.

We must continue to reduce administrative burden for the Membership Secretary, Treasurer and Event Organisers.

There are still too many cheques sent to us, to be paid into the bank. If you can please pay by BACS and use the new payment portal on membership renewals, it will be appreciated.

The u3a five-year rule means Group Coordinator, Secretary and Treasurer will step down at this AGM after dedicated service to our organisation. The Social Secretary will also be stepping down. I would like to thank them all for their hard work and successful results.

I would also like to thank our new volunteers who are stepping into the roles.

Paul added verbally that he wished everyone to join him in thanking our "Branch Helpers", who have been important to the running of the Branch. Sheila Frost (Welfare Officer), Lyn Robinson-Jones (Talks Events), Andrew Harper (Our Beacon System), Margaret Smith (New Members Assistance) and Deb Skinner (Newsletter Editor). A round of applause given to all the helpers.

Treasurer's Report. Presentation of Accounts.

Paul Knight (Chair), had agreed to present the Treasurer's Report and take any questions arising. The following is Ken Johnson's (Treasurer) written report.

(The accounts are shown at the end of these Minutes.)

This is my final year as your Treasurer and once again I'm very grateful to Keith Lawrance for reviewing the accounts and for his guidance so they can be signed off as an accurate record. The accounts are in a similar format to previous years.

As a Registered Charity, we claimed Gift Aid from HMRC on the full amount of the Annual Subscriptions for all tax-paying members who have given us permission. Again, this is a valuable means of increasing our funds to promote events.

Beacon Licence - We pay a licence fee per member for using the Beacon Membership Database, which was developed by u3a, and have paid for usage up to March 2026.

Capitation – We also pay to u3a Head Quarters an amount for each member – unless they pay it through another u3a Branch, where they are full members.

TAM – The u3a Magazine is delivered to all members who have asked for a copy and is paid for by us – although any member who does not wish to receive a copy should contact Rita Dael our membership secretary as this is an extra expense we have to absorb.

General Meetings & Talks - We have made excellent use of the URC Hall for meetings and events again including yet another successful Open Day - many groups successfully recruited new members.

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Social Events - Thanks to the very active Social Committee we were able to organise many events including a Festive Lunch, Summer Lunch, Skittles, Beetle Drive, Quiz Night to name but a few.

Our u3a accounts are still in a healthy position with adequate funds.

For this reason, I am proposing that the membership subscriptions remain unchanged again at £12.00 for the year, commencing 1st January 2026.

From the floor, Karen Fossett questioned the amount shown in the accounts for Membership Dues. Did this reflect our current membership of 900 + . Will we receive less money next year ?? Paul answered, stating that the figures represent the end of year (September 2025) , before our numbers reached 900, and not the present status. Next years accounts will reflect the current membership. This was accepted, and the meeting proceeded to a vote.

Vote. Paul asked for the meeting for a vote to accept the Adoption of the Accounts. Acceptance of the accounts was carried unanimously.

Vote. A vote was then taken on keeping the annual membership fee at the proposed £12.00. (The annual fee for Dual Membership will remain at £9.00. This is where a u3a member of another branch joins Caterham and District branch as well.) This proposal was accepted unanimously by the meeting.

Vote. Keith Lawrence is standing down from the position of Branch Accounts Examiner. Tony Hamilton has agreed to accept the position for the next year's Accounts. Paul proposed Tony Hamilton for the position, and the meeting accepted the proposal, voting in favour with no votes against.

Administrative Secretary's Report.

Ray Jessop (Secretary), This is my fifth and final AGM as the Branch Secretary.

There have been 5 Committee Meetings within the year, plus other meetings on specific subjects such as Open Day and this AGM. Lots and lots of emails.

As with previous years, I have brought the Asset Register up to date. Something that has become an annual task as we continue to expand and increase in numbers and groups. If anyone has recently acquired something on behalf of this u3a branch, or something is no longer a branch asset, please let me know.

I believe that, as with previous years, we have kept up with documents that the Third Age Trust (Head Office) has required us to form as our own branch copy. With assistance from our committee, we have done this, and these documents are available to read on our website. Some of these items may be of use to Group Leaders in organizing and safeguarding their groups, such as Health & Safety and Risk Assessment.

As required, I have kept the u3a Committee Minutes Book up to date, and signed off minutes when approved by the committee at our meetings.

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I hope that I have performed my duties as Secretary to the satisfaction of my fellow committee members and the branch membership.

I would like to welcome Barbara Campbell, who is taking over my position of Administrative Secretary, and wish her the very best in her new position. I am sure that the committee will give her every assistance.

Ray added verbally that he would like to thank Paul Knight, our Chair, and the whole of the committee and all the helpers for all their help, support and guidance.

Membership Secretary's Report.

Rita Dael (Membership Secretary),

This report relates to the period of 1st October 2024 to the 30th September 2025.

We have again had a very successful year in terms of recruitment with 141 new members, which brings our total membership up to 881. Sadly, we have had five members pass away.

We are trying to encourage as many people as possible to renew their annual membership using a very simple online payment system which will automatically update Beacon.

(This will become effective when the necessary links between card payment and Beacon have been set up). I will be sending out detailed instructions on how to do this with my reminder letter in December.

As there is likely to be nearly 900 renewals in January, this will save the Treasurer and myself a considerable amount of work.

In future we are going to try and avoid using cheques because of all the extra work involved in processing them. Alternative methods of payment will be:

- online internet banking;
- Telephone Banking, or using the Tyl Nat West system for bank cards where you can request our Chair to send you a time limited link. The Tyl system is not internet banking.
- through the link with our Beacon system. (When renewing membership.)

Rita advised that since the end of September, there have been an increase on our membership of 35. Giving an up-to-date membership number of 916 members.

Rita added verbally the strong request to eliminate payments by cheque. Instructions for renewing membership by other methods will be sent out with your membership renewal reminder.

Paul and Rita will also give guidance over the phone, if this will help.

Philip is currently working on the membership form so that it can be filled in on line.

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From the floor, Mike Brigden asked, “for membership renewal, can we pay by Standing Order?”

Rita answered, Yes. This can be set up in the same way as any other bank regular payments.

Group Co-Ordinators Report.

Liz Whittaker (Group Co-Ordinator). I’m delighted to tell you that our Groups are in a very buoyant state. We have over 80 active groups; This is wonderful achievement.

Several new groups have started in the last 12 months - we now have Bird Watching, Bus Pass Explorers, Canasta 2, Italian for Beginners, Natty Needles, Card Making, Wild Flower walks, Sketching, Tai Chi 2 and Ukulele 2.

I hope you are as impressed as I am and that you ready for new adventures.

Hopefully you are now all familiar with our website. Every group has a website page.

Group leaders can be contacted via the link on the relevant page of the website.

Some groups are full but many are actively seeking members.

If a subject group is full, we try to set up another (second or third) group.

Every successful group has a hard-working Group Leader or Administrator driving it forward. I hope all members appreciate their effort and commitment. I extend to them a massive thank you to the Group Leaders and Administrators. You are magnificent!

Membership of our u3a continues to increase. We have the ongoing challenge of finding new groups for the increased demand. We need your ideas. For groups to start and to thrive we need your help – as participants, as Administrators or Group Leaders.

Please consider what you can do.

I have been Groups Co-Ordinator for the past 5 years, so it is time for me to step down from the position. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in that role and thank the many people who have worked with me. I’m delighted that Sue Seymour has volunteered to take over the role. She comes with boundless enthusiasm. I wish her well.

Liz then asked for the group leaders present to stand, and accept a round of applause from the members. Suitable applause was dutifully provided for **all** group leaders.

Social Secretary’s Report.

Joyce Jessop (Social Secretary). Your Social Committee have worked hard since the last AGM organising and arranging a variety of events both educational and social.

Since the last AGM there have been numerous events and visits.

December saw a visit to Winchester Christmas Market.

January there was our usual Festive Lunch at Bletchingley Golf Club.

February brought another Beetle Drive and we all that attended enjoyed Skittles and a Lunch at Limpsfield British Legion. As the first Skittle Lunch was very successful and we had a long waiting list for the first one another was put on in March.

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In April we had a Cookery Glass at Mayfair Lavender Café where a demonstration was given by the chef. In May there was a coach trip to Whitstable.

In June we held our annual Summer Lunch at Bletchingley Golf Club.

June also saw a very successful visit to Blenheim Palace Flower Festival.

July saw a visit to Oxford arranged which included an historic guided tour.

August there was a visit to Tiptree Farm which included a tour of the farm on a tractor and trailer. There were also a museum and shop, and the afternoon finished with a cream tea.

In September a visit to Chatham Docks was arranged including a Call the Midwife Tour.

September also saw a Greyhound Race Night kindly arranged by Martin Hogbin.

In October there was a coach trip to Portsmouth which is becoming an annual event!

Earlier this November brought our annual Quiz, with a fish and chip supper.

The Social Committee have already planned to go to the Christmas Music Hall at Brick Lane Theatre in December and a New Year Lunch has been arranged in January 2026.

The committee are working hard to provide a varied programme for 2026.

Joyce added verbally that, as Social Secretary I would like to thank all the members of the Social Committee for their continuing help in organising events and activities with such willingness and enthusiasm.

I shall be standing down from the position of Secretary at the end of this meeting, but will continue to serve on the Social Committee. Many thanks to Penny Kingsmill, who is taking over the position of Secretary. Wishing you the Best of Luck.

Surrey u3a Network Liaison Report.

Alan Speed (Surrey u3a Network Liaison). Alan opened his report by advising the meeting that Caterham and District u3a Branch sends the largest number of members to the network talks/study day of all the branches, some 15 to 20 members.

There are forms and leaflets on the entrance table, please take one.

The u3a Surrey Network provides advice & support to 27 Surrey U3A Branches.

It organises “Study / Exploration Days” 8 times a year at Yehudi Menuhin Concert Hall, in Stoke d’Abernon. “Door-to-Door” Car Share Lifts are usually available. (Contact Alan.)

They also provide Zoom Talks & On-Line Interest Groups for those not wishing to travel.

The Surrey Network are part of u3a South East Forum, which organises an Annual 4-Day “Summer School” at Chichester University every September. The Cost is £400 Residential or £200 Non-Residential. 2025 saw the first Caterham Attendee at a Summer School.

The next Summer School will be advertised at around Easter 2026, for September.

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These Study/Exploration days are like being back at University however, there is much more interesting & better prepared and delivered lectures & demonstrations.

The cost is only £12 per day. This is compared to the £65 per day charged by most UK Universities (Based on £9,500 annual fees).

They take place in a luxurious & comfy venue, with unlimited free tea & coffee.

Typically, 80 to 120 people attend each Study Day

Caterham U3A is now the largest branch attender (15 Members attended October 2025 Study Day on Vulcan & Concorde)

Web Administrator and Publicity Officers Report.

Philip Lawson (Web Administrator and Publicity Officer).

Note. Philip was not able to attend the meeting. His written report was presented by Paul Knight in his absence.

Publicity.

This is an easy to manage portfolio, as membership growth has been so strong that we want to do the bare minimum of publicity to attract new members. In short, not much publicity required. If only my time in sales had been so simple!

We hosted an Open Morning focused on matching existing members to groups with vacancies. This took place on the 22nd October between 10am and 12 noon. 2 hours was enough time to run this effectively. Great support from table hosts and coffee and tea makers, plus committee members on the welcome table, all contributed to an enjoyable morning.

We had 17 tables (the URC has 18 and one is broken so we were at capacity) and 28 groups were represented, most of which had vacancies. Even though we didn't advertise it to non-members, the word had got out and a few attended who plan to sign up.

Our two Facebook pages, (one for members and one for all Facebook users), always get some regular visitors. Our website is an effective and up to date publicity tool, as is our Newsletter (thanks to Deb Skinner for the regular production of that) although emails remain the main form of communication between members.

Website.

This was my fifth year supporting our website and the first full year on Wordpress Siteworks following the migration from Suitebuilder in 2024. The site has performed well and we have had nearly 10,000 visitors during the year, making 60,000 visits with each visit lasting an average of 5 minutes.

It is still the case that a lot of our members and group leaders think that Beacon (our software for managing our member database and emailing them) and the website are somehow interlinked or are the same thing. They are two different platforms with no links between

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them and Andrew Harper maintains and supports the Beacon system, while I do the same for the website.

Thanks to Liz Whittaker, whose copy on the u3a structure now improves the site and her constant updating of group information. And to all our other regular authors.

Our next project is to get an online membership form which can be completed and forwarded to our Membership Secretary.

3. Election of Officers and Committee Members.

As Paul Knight was still standing from the last committee report, he kindly agreed to conduct the next item. Election of Officers and Committee Members.

There were no duplicate volunteers nominated for the now 10 positions on our committee.

The nominations are therefore as below.

Please Note. Branch Officers on the Committee are: Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Administrative Secretary.

The following members of committee, Paul Knight – Chair, Liz Whittaker – Vice Chair, Rita Dael – Membership Secretary. Alan Speed - Network Co-ordinator, and Philip Lawson – Web Administrator and Publicity Officer, are standing for re-election.

Paul asked for a show of hands in favour. These members were re-elected Unanimously.

Standing for election: Treasurer - Elaine Clark. Administrative Secretary – Barbara Campbell. Group Co-ordinator – Sue Seymour. Social Secretary – Penny Kingsmill and Sheila Frost - Welfare Officer.

Paul asked the above to stand so that the members could see who were proposed.

Paul then asked for a show of hands in favour. These members were elected Unanimously.

Our new Branch Committee for 2025 – 26

Paul Knight – Chair

Liz Whittaker – Vice Chair

Treasurer - Elaine Clark

Administrative Secretary – Barbara Campbell

Rita Dael – Membership Secretary

Group Co-ordinator – Sue Seymour

Social Secretary – Penny Kingsmill

Alan Speed - Network Co-ordinator

Philip Lawson – Web Administrator and Publicity Officer

Sheila Frost - Welfare Officer

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4. Any Other Business.

Paul Knight advised the meeting that we have received a question from a member (Moiria Smith) who was unable to attend the AGM. It related to the Social Committee and the booking of events. She felt that it is proving difficult to get on Coach Trips and Events, as they become fully booked very quickly once announced by the organiser. Barbara was concerned that a trip can become fully booked before many people are even aware that it is happening. Perhaps trips can be initially announced in a different way.

Paul Knight commented that he will refer this matter to the Social Committee for them to discuss, and report back to the main Committee regarding any points that could be adopted. Mike Brigden (Surrey u3a Network, Chair), commented that a number of branches in Surrey may stop running events such as outings etc. as they receive little support from members. Penny Kingsmill asked for members to organise “follow up” events where trips are over-subscribed. Branch members need not be on the Social Committee to organise events, although consultation will be required.

Mike Brigden proposed a vote of thanks for the Chair, Paul Knight, for a successful year. This was backed by the meeting with a round of applause.

There were no further points of business raised by the members attending the meeting.

With a final “Thank You”, and a request to stack the chairs when they are no longer needed, Paul Knight closed the meeting, and invited everyone to have a glass of Mulled Wine and also one or two Mince Pies.

The meeting was closed at 3.20pm.