Stafford u3a Financial Policy

Trustees’ financial responsibilities

The Trustees of Stafford u3a are responsible for:

- Safeguarding the assets of the charity.
- Identifying and managing the risk of loss, waste, theft or fraud.
- Ensuring the financial reporting is robust and of sufficient quality.
- Keeping financial records in accordance with the governing document and relevant legislation (e.g. Charities Acts, Companies Acts etc).
- Preparing Annual Accounts in accordance with the governing document and relevant legislation.
- Ensuring that the accounts should show a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the u3a.

Trustees are jointly responsible for keeping full financial records. These include those of the u3a and all the interest groups, sub-groups etc., where appropriate.
To enable the Trustees to carry out these responsibilities, the financial procedures detailed below will be followed.

A copy of this policy will be given to all Trustees on their election/appointment to the committee and made available to members on the website.

The policy will be kept under review and revised as necessary.

Banking

Bank accounts

- All bank accounts are in the name of Stafford u3a and operated by the Trustees.
- New accounts may only be opened by a decision of the Trustees, which must be minuted.
- Changes to the bank mandate may only be made by a decision of the Trustees, which must be minuted.
- The authorised signatories are the Treasurer, Chairman and such other trustees as shall be agreed by the Committee.
- All cheques must be signed by two signatories.
- The signatories are responsible for examining any payment for accuracy and completeness.
- All bank statements must be sent to the Treasurer directly.

- Blank cheques will never be issued.

Online banking

Operation of the online banking service is under the control of the Treasurer who has full access rights and is responsible for assigning the appropriate delegate rights, as agreed by the committee and in accordance with the bank mandate. All payments are authorised in accordance with the bank mandate and must be authorised by two delegates. Access to the online accounts varies from bank to bank and may be via a card reader and personal access card or by logging on to the bank system with a personal password and access code.

Where online operation of the bank accounts is in place only Trustees approved by the Committee will have access to this facility. The security of the online system is in line with the arrangements offered by Lloyds Bank currently, and in accordance with the mandated approval limits.

Payment by bank cards

The issue of any bank debit or credit card in the name of Stafford u3a will be approved by the committee. There are currently no plans to use this facility, but Committee approval would be required for such a move to take place.

Purchases of equipment

Prior approval must be given by the Committee for expensive items of equipment and other items to be purchased for the use of Stafford u3a or specific interest groups. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate for a member to purchase the equipment themselves and then claim the cost as a personal expense claim. Certain regular expenses such as printing of Newsletters and publicity materials etc. may be given ongoing authorisation meaning that specific permission need not be requested on each occasion.

Group Finances

Interest groups are expected to collect the standard u3a session fee as directed by the Committee. These funds belong to the u3a. Group leaders may deduct any small expenses e.g. printing costs, from these group fees before submitting them to the Treasurer. Group leaders are required to send completed register forms with their group fees to the Treasurer as outlined in the Finance sheet for Group Leaders.
These systems

- Allow the Treasurer to keep accurate accounts for presentation to the AGM, for discussion with the trustees and to meet regulatory requirements.
- Maintain transparency and trust for all concerned.

Receipts

To manage the handover of cash and cheques to be paid into the Stafford u3a bank account the committee has decided that:

- Group leaders may pay sums due by issuing their own cheque or paying online through their own bank account.
- Where applicable receipts will need to be given to group leaders, or acknowledged by email.
- Where net sums are being paid over this needs to be fully demonstrated to the Treasurer by means of the register(s).

Payments

The Committee will inform relevant group leaders as to the approved process for payments

Outside speakers should be asked to state their fees and any travel costs to the Speaker Secretary at the time of booking and a cheque obtained from the Treasurer.

The Committee (via the Treasurer) will monitor the income and expenditure of the groups. Group leaders need to provide regular information, as agreed, to the Treasurer. Where groups do not comply, then the Committee will review as to whether the group is legitimately operating in line with the insurance and financial requirements.

Social Activities

Events such as theatre trips, visits or educational days out must be charged at cost and all participants pay appropriately. The costs paid by members must cover out-of-pocket expenses.
The organiser of an event must not benefit from any discount (e.g. a free place) offered by the organisation providing the event. The value of free places must be shared out among all participants to the event.

Out-of-pocket expenses can be paid to an organiser out of the money collected for the event. As all u3a members offer their services free to the movement, the organiser(s) must not get any pecuniary reward for organising an event.

Payments to Other Charities

In line with Charity law, a u3a cannot raise funds for another charity that does not have similar charitable objectives. Stafford u3a will make payments to speakers who have indicated that they intend to donate their fee to a specific charity but not direct to their nominated charity.

Expenses Policy

Out of pocket expenses incurred by the volunteers who are involved with running the u3a will be reimbursed. Expense claims for substantial purchases must be submitted with receipts. Small claims by group leaders for printing etc. need not provide receipts. Expense claims will be authorised by the Treasurer and a second authorised bank signatory. The Treasurer's own expenses should be authorised independently by the Chairman or another Executive member of the Committee. Expenses could include, with Committee approval, attendance at the Trust's AGM and Conference or national/regional workshops.

All claims need to be made on the appropriate form (copies available from the Treasurer) giving sufficient detail as to the nature of the expense.

Expense claims should reflect the cheapest travel option available. Travel by car will be reimbursed at the current HMRC approved rate for the actual mileage travelled. Car parking and congestion charges can be reclaimed (with receipts) but parking or other fines will not be allowed.

Overnight accommodation will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and will need the prior agreement of the executive committee.

Membership Fees and Membership of More Than One u3a

The membership fee is reviewed on an annual basis. Stafford u3a is committed to keeping the membership subscription as low as possible to ensure that the u3a remains accessible to all members.
For u3a members who can evidence membership of another u3a, Stafford u3a offers a reduced rate Associate membership class.

Asset Register

An asset register is maintained by the Treasurer which records all assets held including their initial purchase price, date of purchase, estimated nominal value and location.
It should be noted that under a receipts and payments reporting system, all assets are fully written off against receipts in the year of purchase. The register is reviewed annually.

Reserves

Stafford u3a aims to keep a level of reserves that will cover four months of regular operating activity. This is considered by the Committee to be a reasonable level for this type of charity.
Social account activities are excluded from this figure as these activities are inflated by high-cost activities such as theatre visits and days out and are entirely self-financing.

Investment of Funds

Any investment of reserve funds will be in a low-risk limited fund of limited duration with prior agreement from the Committee.

This policy was adopted on: 14th March 2025