

Financial Policy

Each u3a is required to set down its financial policies and procedures. This document defines the processes that Watford & District u3a will use for its financial matters. The policy will be kept under review (at least every 3 years) and revised as necessary. A copy of this document will be given to all Trustees on their election/appointment to the Executive Committee.

This policy is part of the governance arrangements. It sets out the financial framework and principles within which the Trustees of Watford & District u3a will manage all the organisations financial affairs. The Trustees are accountable to the Membership for any non-compliance with this policy.

1. Trustees' Financial Responsibilities

2.1 Trustees

The Trustees of Watford & District u3a are financially accountable for:

- Safeguarding the assets of the charity.
- Identifying and managing the financial 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 (eg Constitution) and relevant legislation (e.g. Charities Acts, Companies Acts etc).
- Ensuring Annual Accounts are prepared in accordance with the governing document and relevant legislation and reflect a clear view of the financial affairs of the u3a.

To enable the Trustees to carry out these responsibilities, the financial procedures below will be followed.

2.2 The Treasurer's Role

The Treasurer's role for a Watford & District u3a includes:

- Maintaining the financial records in accordance with the u3as's published financial policies
- Maintaining the financial records in accordance with the applicable charity law and statute
- Managing the bank accounts in accordance with the financial policies
- Preparation of accounts and budgets
- Preparation of the annual accounts for the AGM, publication and filing
- Ensuring that an Asset Register is maintained

1. Banking

3.1 Bank Mandate

A bank mandate is held by the Treasurer listing authorised signatories.

3.2 Bank Accounts

- All bank accounts (including Group bank accounts, where applicable) are in the name of Watford & District 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.
- All payments must be approved by two signatories (one normally being the Treasurer).
- The authorised signatories shall be Trustees. This responsibility may be delegated where circumstances dictate.
- The signatories are responsible for examining the payment request for accuracy and completeness and for examining supportive documentation (purchase invoice etc.) prior to approval (signing the cheque or authorising an internet transfer).
- All bank statements must be available for the Treasurer.
- Blank cheques will never be issued.
- Blank cheques will never be signed by one signatory for a second to complete later.
- Cash receipts should be avoided.
- Whenever practical two people should be involved in counting any cash receipts.

3.3 Online Banking

Where online operation of the bank accounts is in place only Trustees approved by the Committee will have access to this facility (as above, at least two). The security of the online system is in line with the arrangements offered by our bank and in accordance with the mandated approval limits.

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 Executive Committee and in accordance with the bank mandate. All payments are authorised in accordance with the bank mandate.

3.4 Payment by Bank Cards

The issue of any bank debit or credit card in the name of Watford & District u3a will not be approved by the Executive Committee.

3.5 Personal Debit or Credit Cards

The use of personal bank cards overrides the dual control aspect of the payment authorisation process, but is permitted, where agreed in advance if an online purchases

for certain goods and services represents the most effective, and in some cases, the only method of completing the purchase (e.g. theatre tickets).

If a member must use their own credit or debit card when arranging activities on behalf of the u3a the transaction should be agreed in writing with the Treasurer before the member incurs the expense. These transactions (or expenses) will be reimbursed on receipt of an expense claim, supported by some form of order confirmation or an invoice or receipt.

The use of personal debit or credit cards for interest group activities will be closely managed. Permission must be sought from the Executive Committee or Treasurer where a group feels that there is no other viable way to make payments.

Prior approval must be given by the Executive Committee for equipment and other items to be purchased for the use of Watford & District 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. However, this process is discouraged and should be avoided if possible or minimised at least.

2. Accounts

4.1 Group Finances

While this section is titled Groups' Finances the following policies will apply to activities that are organised for a u3a's wider membership, for example regarding Outings or Speakers. Therefore, the term Group Leader shall cover, for example, Trip Organiser or similar.

The Executive 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 Executive Committee will review as to whether the group is legitimately operating in line with the insurance and financial requirements.

4.2 Group Finance Records and Reporting

Interest groups are expected to be self-financing and can collect such sums of money as the group members and leadership deem to be necessary to undertake their activities. The funds of these groups belong to the u3a. Groups are permitted to make any expenditure deemed necessary by the group members and the group leadership and can withdraw money on request from the ringfenced funds held by the u3a on their behalf, as appropriate. The Treasurer, Group Co-ordinator and relevant Group Leader/s need to agree what records they need to keep of the groups' transactions to:

- Allow the Treasurer to keep accurate accounts for presentation to the AGM, for discussion with the Trustees and to meet regulatory requirements
- Allow the group members to understand how their monies are being managed
- Maintain transparency and trust for all concerned
- Minimise the risk of error and potential loss of funds
- Allow group leaders to maintain cash floats. Such cash floats should not exceed £100

Items that may be excluded from Group finance reporting include:

- a) Expenditure on light refreshments e.g. tea, coffee, does not need to be reported if paid for separately.
- b) Any lunches or meals out, which are not part of the core group activity do not need to be reported, as they are not deemed to be u3a activities.
- c) Holidays booked directly through a travel agent/tour company/hotel with individual members paying the provider direct. If it is easier, the organiser can collate and post the individual cheques to the provider.

4.3 Receipts

To manage the handover of cash and cheques to be paid into the Watford & District u3a bank account the Executive Committee has decided that:

- Bank paying in slips may be given to Group Leaders for this purpose
- 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 a receipts and payments statement
- Cash held back for cash flow purposes will be within the u3a's approved limits (they may vary by activity)

4.4 Payments

The Executive Committee will inform relevant Group Leaders in writing the approval process for payments relating to:

- When a trip or event is organised by and paid through the u3a
- Trips and holidays involving more than 24 hours must be booked and paid for by members through a registered tour operator which can be the local u3a
- When payments may be deducted from activity revenue
- When payment for venues, coaches, tutors, speakers etc must be paid by the u3a (the Treasurer)

The Executive Committee should agree or otherwise to the use of any paid tutors or speakers for Groups. If approved the proposed tutor or speaker must provide evidence of their self-employed status (if applicable), state their fees and any travel costs at the time of booking, and invoice appropriately after the activity. Where a paid tutor is hired for activity classes they need to provide evidence of holding Public Liability Insurance.

4.5 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.

3. Statutory Reporting

Every charity needs to keep accounting records and produce annual accounts. The Statutory Authority for Watford & District u3a is the Charity Commission for England & Wales. Further information can be found on the Trust website in Finance Matters – Guidance (see References).

4. General Reporting

The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining financial records and will submit regular accounts to the Executive Committee. Accounts will be kept on a payments and receipt basis.

All financial records and receipts shall be kept for a minimum of six years. This includes Gift Aid declaration data.

5. Reserves

See reserves policy document.

6. Other Points

8.1 Payments to Other Charities

In line with charity law, a u3a cannot raise funds for another charity that does not have similar charitable objectives.

Watford & District u3a can 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.

8.2 Expenses Policy

Out of pocket expenses incurred by the volunteers who are involved with running the u3a will be reimbursed. Expense claims must be submitted with receipts. Authorised signatories are stated in Section 3.1 . No committee member should authorise their own claim.

All claims need to be made by the agreed procedure giving sufficient detail as to the nature of the expense.

8.3 Membership Fees and Membership of More Than One u3a

Membership fees will be reviewed annually.

Watford & District u3a is committed to keeping the membership subscription as low as possible to ensure that the u3a remains accessible to all members. The subscription covers basic membership but does not include other payments such as room hire for Groups and the cost of outings and social events like meals. Groups must be self-financing.

U3a members who can provide evidence of membership of another u3a, and who would like to attend one of our study groups, are given free Beacon membership as “Other u3a Members” so that Group Leaders can contact them easily. This is to support Groups who might not be viable if membership was restricted just Watford & District u3a members.

8.4 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. The register will be reviewed annually.

Our accounts use a simple Receipts and Payments system, so assets will be written off in their first year.

8.5 Gift Aid

Gift Aid means charities and community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) can claim an extra 25p for every £1 given. Gift Aid can be claimed on our basic membership fee, which is treated as a donation, but not on payments to Study Groups etc which provide a specific benefit. Gift Aid is claimable providing:

1. The member pays enough income or capital gains tax to cover the tax claimed.
2. They have completed a valid Gift Aid Declaration.

Note: It's the member's duty to tell the u3a if they stop paying enough tax for the Gift Aid to be valid, and the member would have to repay HMRC.

Gift Aid Declarations should be kept for as long as the person remains a member.

8.6 Card Readers & Card Apps

Watford & District u3a uses a PayPal Point of Sale (formerly Zettle) card reader and its suitably configured smartphone app to take payments by credit & debit card at our events. This is configured to pay directly into our No 2 bank account (for Social and Groups).

8.7 Procurement Process

For any procurement of a large value (above £1,000) item there must be a documented competitive tender process in place. This is applicable for any capital item or service. If a service, then the above value refers to either a one-off charge or an annual charge. The EC must agree to the tendering process for the particular contract or purchase order, and this must be agreed before the actual activity is started. If there is required to be any change to the agreed process during the process, the reasons must be explained to the EC and accepted by them. Prior to the final actual commitment the EC must approve the proposed conclusion.

Any commitment below the figure above can be single sourced but the EC should still approve the award recommendation.

3. Investments

This section has been left for future reference, although it is unlikely that we will ever have investments.

- 3.1 The u3a has as its prime consideration that it is merely holding money on behalf of its members. While the u3a should seek to obtain the best investment returns available, the security of funds takes precedence over returns on investment.
- 3.2 Investment of funds will be with main banks or building societies and the Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF).
- 3.3 These are chosen as they have the funds to withstand economic pressures. The Banks and Building Societies should offer cover by the FSCS guarantee (limited to £85,000 per institution).
- 3.4 The COIF is not covered by the FSCS guarantee, however, has the strength of working primarily in the charitable sector and offers no risk cash-based accounts.
- 3.5 No investments will be made into stocks, shares, gilts, or bonds as the risk level would be too high.
- 3.6 All individual investments must be approved by the Committee.
- 3.7 The investments should be reviewed annually by the Committee, as part of the fee setting process to take account of changing economic conditions.

4. References

Watford & District u3a has other financial documents in place. These are:

Finance Matters – refer to latest version on <https://www.u3a.org.uk/>
Bank Mandate – held by Treasurer
National website link - [Gift Aid Guidance](#)
Reserves Policy

This policy was adopted on: 08/01/2026

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