



## **CONSTITUTION FOR Brightlingsea u3a**

*(May 2017 as amended May 2018, May 2019 and September 2021)*

*Throughout this document the use of "he" shall be taken to include all genders*

### **1. NAME**

The name is

## **Brightlingsea University of the Third Age**

hereinafter referred to as 'The u3a'.

### **2. PROPERTY AND ASSETS**

Subject to the matters set out below, The u3a and its property and other assets shall be administered and managed in accordance with this constitution, by the members of the Executive Committee.

### **3. CHARITABLE PURPOSES**

The Charitable purposes of the u3a are:

"The advancement of education and, in particular, the education of older people and those who are retired from full time work by all means, including associated activities conducive to learning and personal development"

### **4. POWERS**

In furtherance of the charitable purposes but not otherwise, the Executive Committee may exercise the following powers to:

- i. raise funds and to invite and receive contributions for The u3a by any lawful means, provided that in doing so any applicable requirements of the law shall be met;
- ii. receive donations, gifts, endowments, sponsorship, grants, legacies and subscriptions from persons desiring to support The u3a and its charitable purposes and to hold and apply any funds so acquired for these charitable purposes (subject to any restricted funds being applied to the relevant restricted purposes);
- iii. buy, exchange or otherwise acquire, hold and make use of any property (real or personal);
- iv. sell, or otherwise dispose of all or any part of the property of The u3a, subject to any consents required by law;
- v. co-operate with other charities, voluntary bodies and statutory authorities;
- vi. support any charitable organisations with regard to the pursuit of The u3a's charitable purposes;
- vii. appoint and constitute such advisory committees as the Executive Committee may think fit;
- viii. organise, promote and participate in conferences, lectures, seminars, courses, educational and social events;
- ix. publish, supply and make available books, pamphlets, reports, leaflets, journals, instructional matter, educational materials and aids of all kinds, whether in printed, electronic or any other forms;
- x. associate and collaborate with other u3as and groupings of u3as (such as regional associations and networks) and The Third Age Trust in any way;
- xi. do all such other lawful things as are appropriate to the pursuit of the charitable purposes and the delivery of benefit to the public in accordance with the charitable purposes.
- xii. where necessary the Executive Committee may, through a simple majority vote of the existing members of the Executive Committee "co-opt" a member of The u3a to the Executive Committee. (see 6.ii, 6.viii and 9.iv)

## 5. MEMBERSHIP

- i. Membership of The u3a shall be open to individuals who are in their Third Age and are interested in participating in and furthering the work of The u3a, provided that they agree to abide by this constitution and any membership conditions properly imposed by the Executive Committee and to pay the annual subscription as determined by the Executive Committee and approved by the membership at an Annual or Special General Meeting. No individual may be admitted to membership if the Executive Committee considers that they do not meet these conditions.
- ii. Every individual member shall have one vote.
- iii. Members are bound by and shall observe any membership conditions and any disciplinary code of The u3a.
- iv. The Executive Committee may terminate the membership of any individual:
  - (a) if annual membership or other fees are unpaid by 31<sup>st</sup> May of that year  
or
  - (b) by way of expulsion at the end of a disciplinary procedure for breach of any membership condition or for breach of any disciplinary code of The u3a;
- v. Provided that in the case of proposed expulsion at the end of a disciplinary procedure, the individual concerned shall have the right to be heard by the Executive Committee, accompanied by a friend acting in their personal capacity, who may also speak, or make written representation before a final decision is made.

## 6. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS

- i. The management of The u3a shall be vested in the Executive Committee, which shall be the governing body of The u3a and its board of trustees for the purposes of charity law. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the strategy and policies of The u3a, may exercise all the powers of The u3a and shall deal with the administration, management and control of the affairs and property of The u3a.
- ii. There must be at least 5 and not more than 9 u3a members elected to the Executive Committee. No person may be proposed for appointment or serve as an Officer or as a non-Officer member of the Executive Committee if they are currently serving as an Officer or non-Officer member of the Executive Committee of any other u3a.

### iii. *Officers*

The Officers are the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. The Officers shall by virtue of holding their office be members of the Executive Committee. An individual may only serve in one Officer role at a time.

### iv. *Election of Officers*

At the Annual General Meeting of The u3a, all serving Officers shall retire from office and the members shall elect from amongst the membership individuals to serve as the Officers. The term of office is one year from the date of that meeting until the next Annual General Meeting. A retiring Officer may be re-appointed provided he remains a member of The u3a and subject to the limits on periods of service set out below.

### v. *Chairman – terms of office and limit on period of service*

The term of office of the Chairman is one year, from the Annual General Meeting at which he is appointed until the next Annual General Meeting. An individual may serve not more than three consecutive terms as Chairman.

### vi. *Limit on periods of service of the other Officers*

The following limits apply to periods of service as Officers:

An individual may serve not more than six consecutive years as Treasurer. He may not then be appointed to any other Officer role in the following (7<sup>th</sup>) year. If a Treasurer serves less than this period, he could then immediately stand for appointment as Chairman or for another Officer role.

An individual may serve not more than three consecutive years in any other Officer role.

An individual may serve not more than six consecutive years in various different Officer roles (subject to the provisions regarding the terms of office of the Treasurer). An individual who has served as a non-Officer member of the Executive Committee is permitted to then serve up to a six year period in various different Officer roles.

*vii. Nomination and election of candidates*

Prior written nomination of any candidate for appointment as an Officer or a non-Officer member of the Executive Committee at an Annual General Meeting shall be required, made by a proposer and seconder from amongst the membership of The u3a (not being themselves Officers or non-Officer members of the Executive Committee), to be in the hands of the Secretary of The u3a at least 7 days before the meeting. The decision about appointments shall be taken by secret ballot at the AGM.

If only one person has been nominated for a vacancy they will have to be confirmed by a simple majority vote of those present at the AGM. (By use of the secret ballot)

If more than one person has been nominated for a vacancy, the person with the most votes from those present at the AGM will be elected.

However, if there are insufficient candidates standing for the vacancies, the Chairman of the meeting may, as a last resort, appeal for any willing member present to agree to stand subject to a proposer and seconder. A vote must be taken and carried by a simple majority. In such a case a show of hands will suffice.

A list of those standing and a ballot form will be made available to those members attending the AGM

*viii. Co-options to Executive Committee*

The Executive Committee may in addition appoint not more than two co-opted u3a members to the Executive Committee, who shall have full voting rights and hold office until the next Annual General Meeting. At that meeting a retiring co-opted member could be proposed for appointment to a first full term on the Executive Committee in accordance with the relevant provisions of this constitution, provided always that an individual cannot be co-opted more than three times in succession. At least 5 members of the Executive Committee must be present at the meeting where the co-option is decided.

**7. DEFECTS IN APPOINTMENTS**

The proceedings of the Executive Committee shall not be invalidated by any vacancy among their number or by any failure to appoint, elect or co-opt a member, subject to there being at least 5 members of the Executive Committee present.

**8. CESSATION OF OFFICE – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

A member of the Executive Committee shall cease to hold office if he:

- i. is disqualified from acting as a member of the Executive Committee by virtue of charity law;
- ii. becomes incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury of managing and administering his/her own affairs;
- iii. is absent without the permission, having given due notice, of the Executive Committee from three consecutive meetings of the Executive Committee and the Executive Committee resolve that his/her office be vacated;
- iv. is removed by resolution of the Executive Committee for significant misconduct under the Trustee Code of Conduct, which may only be passed after the completion of the disciplinary procedure set out in that Code;
- v. notifies in writing to the Executive Committee a wish to resign;
- vi. ceases to be a member of The u3a;
- vii. becomes an Officer or non-Officer member of the Executive Committee of any other u3a.
- viii. if any of the above causes the number of members of the Executive Committee to fall below 5 the remaining members of the committee shall call a Special General Meeting of members of The u3a expressly to elect members to the Executive Committee.

## **9. MEETINGS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- i. The Executive Committee shall hold at least 6 meetings each year.
- ii. Additional meetings may be called at any time by the Secretary on behalf of the Chairman or by any two members of the Executive Committee, upon not less than seven days notice being given to other members of the Executive Committee of the matters to be discussed, unless it concerns the appointment of a co-opted member, in which case not less than twenty one days notice must be given.
- iii. The Chairman shall chair the meetings and in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman shall take over or, if the Vice-Chairman is not present, the Executive Committee shall choose one of their number to be Chairman of the meeting before any business is transacted.
- iv. There shall be a quorum when at least 5 members of the Executive Committee are present at the meeting.
- v. Every decision shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members of the Executive Committee present and voting on the question, but in the case of equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting shall have a casting vote in addition to his/her own vote.
- vi. The Executive Committee shall ensure that minutes are taken of all its meetings and those of any sub-committees and are available for inspection should a member request it.
- vii. The Executive Committee may from time to time make and alter rules for the conduct of their business, the summoning and conduct of their meetings and custody of documents (including, but not limited to, the use of electronic communications). No rule may be made which is inconsistent with this constitution.
- viii. The Executive Committee may appoint sub-committees including at least one member of the Executive Committee, for the purpose of performing any function or duty which in the opinion of the Executive Committee would be more conveniently and/or efficiently undertaken or carried out by a sub-committee, provided that all acts and proceedings of any sub-committees shall be fully and promptly reported to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall authorise the terms of reference of sub-committees and may alter them from time to time. Sub-committees may make proposals to the Executive Committee, but may not make decisions and they shall not have any expenditure authority.
- ix. No Executive Committee member shall be chargeable or responsible for loss caused by any act done or omitted to be done by him/her or by any other Executive Committee member or by reason of any mistake or omission made in good faith by any Executive Committee member or by reason of any other matter other than wilful and individual fraud or wrongdoing or actions knowingly beyond the scope of a specific authority or limit thereon on the part of the Executive Committee member in question.

## **10. FINANCE**

- i. The financial year of The u3a shall end on such date as the Executive Committee shall decide, provided always that the financial year must be in accordance with applicable charity law requirements and the annual accounts and trustees' report must be submitted to the Charity Commission (if required by law) within relevant statutory time limits.
- ii. The funds of The u3a shall be paid into such accounts as the Executive Committee may open in the name of The u3a. All transactions on such accounts shall be carried out in accordance with the terms of that account as agreed with the account provider and approved and accepted by the Executive Committee from time to time. Only members of the Executive Committee, authorised by the Executive Committee to do so, may arrange and authorise any transaction on any of The u3a's accounts and dual authorisation shall normally be required for all transactions.
- iii. The Executive Committee shall determine the financial controls and procedures to be followed by The u3a, including but not limited to, controls and procedures in relation to accounts and transactions on them, and those shall be observed at all times.
- iv. The funds belonging to The u3a shall be applied only in furthering the charitable purposes of The u3a.
- v. No funds shall be transferred in any way to Executive Committee members, provided that nothing herein shall prevent the payment in good faith of reasonable and proper out of pocket expenses incurred by a member of the Executive Committee in the discharge of his/her duties for The u3a.
- vi. All proper costs, charges and expenses incidental to the management of The u3a and membership subscriptions in respect of the Third Age Trust may be defrayed from the funds of The u3a.

## **11. PROPERTY**

- i. All property of and held on behalf of The u3a shall be applied in accordance with charity law.
- ii. Title to any property shall be held on behalf of The u3a in such manner as the Executive Committee thinks fit from time to time and in ways permitted by charity law.

## **12. ACCOUNTING AND REPORTING**

The Executive Committee shall comply with its obligations under charity law, and observe applicable time limits in the case of obligations to file items with the Charity Commission, with regard to:

- i. the keeping of accounting records for The u3a;
- ii. the preparation of annual statements of account and a trustees' report for The u3a;
- iii. the audit or independent examination of the statements of account of The u3a (if required by law);
- iv. the making of any charity annual return to the Charity Commission;
- v. the transmission of the statement of accounts and trustees' report of The u3a to the Charity Commission if required.

## **13. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

- i. There shall be an Annual General Meeting of The u3a which shall be held on such date as the Executive Committee may determine in each calendar year.
- ii. Every Annual General Meeting shall be called by the Executive Committee. Formal notice of at least 21 days notice of the Annual General Meeting shall be given to all the members of The u3a. The notice shall specify that the meeting is the Annual General Meeting and shall set out the business of the meeting, including resolutions to be proposed, and shall provide information about proposals for the election of Officers and non-Officer members of the Executive Committee to be made at that meeting. All members of The u3a shall be entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.
- iii. The Executive Committee shall present to each Annual General Meeting the trustees' report and annual accounts of The u3a for the preceding year.
- iv. The Executive Committee shall seek approval for the appointment of any independent examiner or auditor for the accounts from the membership at the Annual General Meeting, if permitted or required to do so by charity law.
- v. Any proposals to amend the constitution subject to clause 16 shall be considered at the Annual General Meeting as shall any other business as set out in the notice.

## **14. SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Executive Committee may call a Special General Meeting of The u3a at any time. If at least 20% of the members, who must be fully paid up members, request such a meeting in writing stating the business to be considered, the Secretary shall call such a meeting. In either case at least 21 days notice shall be given. The notice must state the business to be discussed.

## **15a. NOTICES, COMMUNICATIONS AND PROCEDURE AT GENERAL MEETINGS (AGM and SGM)**

- i. Notices of meetings, documents and other communications from The u3a to a member may be sent by electronic communication provided The u3a wishes to do so and the relevant member wishes to receive them in this way and provides an appropriate electronic address to The u3a. It is the responsibility of that member to notify The u3a of any change to that address and to comply with any security and other procedures determined by the Executive Committee for such communications. A member may opt to return to hard copy communications at any time.
- ii. Accidental omission to give notice to any member of any General Meeting shall not invalidate the proceedings.
- iii. The Secretary or other person specially appointed by the Executive Committee shall keep a full record of proceedings at every General Meeting of The u3a.
- iv. There shall be a quorum when at least 20% of the number of paid up members of The u3a, are present at any General Meeting.
- v. If within half an hour from the time appointed for the meeting a quorum is not present, the meeting if convened at the request of the members shall be dissolved. In any other case it shall be adjourned

to another day and time as the Executive Committee may direct provided 21 days notice is given to all members. If at the adjourned meeting a quorum is not present within half an hour of the time appointed for the meeting, the members present shall be a quorum.

- vi. The Chairman of The u3a shall be the Chairman of any General Meeting at which he is present. In the absence of the entitled Chairman, the Executive Committee members present shall have the power to elect a Chairman for the meeting.
- vii. If there is a tied vote the Chairman of the meeting has a single casting vote.

#### **15b SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

- i. If due to regulations, law or the situation pertaining at the time it is not possible or practical to hold a face to face AGM or SGM the Executive Committee shall have the power to decide to hold any such meeting virtually (eg via *zoom*). If circumstances allow, a meeting that is a hybrid of a virtual and a face to face meeting may also be held.
- ii. In such cases the membership must be notified in line with the above (15.i).
- iii. All motions and nominations, where appropriate, must be with the Executive Committee 10 days before the date set for the meeting.
- iv. Voting forms will be distributed to the membership at least 7 days before the meeting, again in line with 15.i
- v. Every member will have the opportunity to vote on motions and appointments, whether that be in person, via email, or via post (including delivery by hand). Votes not made in person will need to be received by the Chair, or other member of the Executive Committee prior to the start of the meeting and must be on the voting form provided, or an electronic copy of it.
- vi. The quorum for any such meeting shall be 20% of the membership and will be decided by the total number of votes cast.

#### **16. ALTERATIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

- i. Subject to the following provisions of this clause, the Constitution may be altered in any way by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present and voting at a General Meeting. The notice of the General Meeting must include notice of the resolution, setting out the details of the alterations proposed.
- ii. If The u3a is a registered charity, no amendment may be made to clause 3 (the charitable purposes) without the prior consent in writing of the Charity Commission.
- iii. No amendment may be made which would have the effect of making The u3a cease to be a charity at law.
- iv. The Executive Committee shall ensure a copy of any amendment made under this clause is promptly sent to the Charity Commission if The u3a is registered.

#### **17. DISSOLUTION**

If the Executive Committee decides that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve The u3a it shall call a Special General Meeting of all members of The u3a, of which not less than 21 days notice (stating the terms of the resolution to be proposed) shall be given. If the proposal is confirmed by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting, The Executive Committee shall have power to realise any assets held by or on behalf of The u3a. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to:

- (a) Any one or more local u3as, which are charities and have charitable purposes similar to those of The u3a, as determined by the members of The u3a; or
- (b) To the Third Age Trust (registered charity in England and Wales no. 288007).

A copy of the statement of accounts and relevant reports, for the final accounting period of The u3a, must be sent to the Charity Commission if The u3a is registered.

This constitution was adopted by the membership at the General Meeting held on:

5<sup>th</sup> May 2017

It was amended by the membership at General Meetings held on:

4<sup>th</sup> May 2018,

3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019

17<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**I certify that this is a true copy**

Signed

---

Office (Secretary or Chairman of the meeting) **Jean Gordon**

**Amendments : Mike Drake**

---

Dates of Certification

---