

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS U3A

Financial Policy

1. Document control

1.1. Approval

Date approved	18/09/2026
Approved by	South Woodham Ferrers u3a Committee

1.2. Version history

Version	Date	Author	Review Date
2.0	13/08/2026	Secretary and Treasurer of SWF u3a	September 2029

1.Policies

Each u3a is required to set down its financial policies and procedures. This document defines the processes that South Woodham Ferrers 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 Committee.

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

2. Trustees' Financial Responsibilities

2.1 Trustees

The Trustees of South Woodham Ferrers 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 (i.e. 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 state of 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 South Woodham Ferrers u3a includes:

- Maintaining the financial records in accordance with the u3a'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

3. Banking

3.1 Bank Mandate

South Woodham Ferrers u3a operates two current accounts with NatWest Bank.

1. The Main u3a Account, which is used for all transactions relating to the whole of the u3a
2. The Interest Groups Account, which is used for transactions made on behalf of Interest Groups that operate within the u3a. The extent to which individual Groups make use of this account will be determined by agreement between the Treasurer and individual Group Leaders.

South Woodham Ferrers u3a's Bank Mandate requires that authorised signatories are agreed by the Committee. These will usually be the Treasurer, Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. If any of these officers is unable/unwilling to act as a signatory the Committee may authorise additional signatories, if necessary.

Two authorised signatories are required to sign all cheques issued on behalf of South Woodham Ferrers u3a.

Changes to the Bank Mandate must be agreed by the Committee, and minuted. They must then be actioned with NatWest Bank by one of the signatories and authorised by an additional signatory.

3.2 Bank Accounts

- All bank accounts (including Group bank accounts, where applicable) are in the name of South Woodham Ferrers 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 at least two signatories (one normally being the Treasurer).

- The authorised signatories shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. This responsibility may not be delegated unless the Committee agrees, exceptionally, to authorise additional signatories
- The signatories are responsible for examining the payment request for accuracy and completeness and for examining supporting documentation (purchase invoice, etc.) prior to approval (signing the cheque or authorising a bank 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.
- Whenever practical two people should be involved in counting 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 NatWest 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 delegated rights, as agreed by the Committee and in accordance with the bank mandate. All payments are authorised in accordance with the bank mandate. 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.

3.4 Payment by Bank Cards

The issue of any bank debit or credit card in the name of South Woodham Ferrers u3a must be approved by the Committee. The use of these cards overrides the dual control aspect of the payment authorisation process, but is permitted, where agreed in advance in recognition that 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). The Committee will predetermine the spending limits for any card: the limit may be per transaction, per day or per month.

South Woodham Ferrers u3a currently holds no business debit/credit cards. Should this situation be changed by the Committee, any such cards will be held by Treasurer, Secretary and/or Chair as determined by the Committee at that time. All transactions made using these cards must appear on the appropriate bank account (subject to the timescales for electronic banking transactions) and are subject to review by the Committee. All such payments should be supported by some form of order confirmation, or an invoice, or receipt.

3.5 Personal Debit or Credit Cards

If the u3a has a credit or debit card its use should be set out in the Financial Policies document along with spending limits on their use. Only the authorised users should have access to the card; the card number and PIN or security code should never be disclosed to anyone else. If the u3a has its own credit card this should be used for payments rather than a personal card.

If, nevertheless, a member has to 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.

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

Prior approval must be given by the Committee for equipment and other items to be purchased for the use of South Woodham Ferrers 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 to be discouraged and should be avoided if possible, or minimised if it is essential.

4. Accounts

4.1 Group Finances

Whilst this section is titled Group Finances the following policies will apply to activities that are organised for the u3a's wider membership, for example regarding outings or speakers. Therefore, the term Group Leader shall also cover, for example, Trip Organiser or similar.

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 the Committee will carry out a review to ensure that 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. From these funds 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 ring-fenced funds held by the u3a on their behalf, as necessary. The Treasurer, Group Co-ordinator and relevant Group Leader/s need to agree what records they need to keep of the groups' transactions in order 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, provided that they are paid for by Group members, 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 South Woodham Ferrers u3a bank account the Committee has decided that:

- Bank paying in slips will not be given to Group Leaders for this purpose
- Group Leaders may not 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 will vary by activity)

4.4 Payments

The 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 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.

5. Statutory Reporting

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

6. General Reporting

The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining financial records and will submit regular, generally monthly, accounts to the 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.

7. Reserves

The Committee has determined that South Woodham Ferrers u3a should aim to keep a level of reserves that will cover approximately 12 months of regular operating activity, this is currently c£6,000. This is considered by the Committee a reasonable level for this type of charity.

8. 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.

South Woodham Ferrers 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

Each u3a will determine its own form of membership classes. The membership fees will be reviewed on an annual basis.

South Woodham Ferrers u3a is committed to keeping the membership subscription as low as possible to ensure that the u3a remains accessible to all members. South Woodham Ferrers u3a offers an 'Associate Membership' for u3a members who can provide evidence of membership of another u3a. South Woodham Ferrers u3a will reduce the cost of membership by the amount that is paid to the Trust in membership fees for each member (but not for Beacon).

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.

Assets will be written off in the year of purchase.

8.5 Gift Aid

South Woodham Ferrers u3a is committed to operating the Gift Aid scheme in accordance with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) regulations. This policy outlines the procedures for claiming Gift Aid on eligible donations to maximize the charity's income.

Gift Aid can be claimed on donations from individuals who are UK taxpayers. To qualify, the donor must pay enough UK Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the tax year to cover the amount of Gift Aid that all charities and CASCs will claim on their donations in that tax year.

Procedures for Claiming

Valid Declaration: A valid, up-to-date Gift Aid Declaration (GAD) must be obtained from the donor before a claim is submitted to HMRC.

Record Keeping: Clear records must be kept of all declarations, including the donor's name, home address, and postcode.

Submitting Claims: Claims will be submitted to HMRC either electronically or via official paper schedules by the Treasurer], or such other Committee member delegated to do so.

Donor Notification

The charity will provide donors with clear instructions on how to opt into Gift Aid and will remind them of their responsibility to notify the charity if their tax circumstances or address change.

8.6 Card Readers

South Woodham Ferrers u3a's does not use card readers. Members may pay annual subscriptions using cash, cheque, or by mobile or online banking direct into South Woodham Ferrers u3a's bank account. Account details will be provided on Membership Forms for this purpose.

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 Committee 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 Committee and accepted by them. Prior to the final actual commitment the Committee must approve the proposed conclusion.

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

9. Investments

9.1 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 returns available, the security of funds takes precedence over returns on investment.

9.2 Investment of funds will be with main banks or building societies and the Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF).

9.3 These are chosen as they have the funds to withstand economic pressures. The Banks and Building Societies should offer cover by the FSCS guarantee (currently limited to £120,000 per institution).

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.

9.4 No investments will be made into stocks, shares, gilts, or bonds as the risk level would be too high.

9.5 All individual investments must be approved by the Committee.

9.6 The investments should be reviewed annually by the Committee, as part of the fee setting process to take account of changing economic conditions.

10. References

South Woodham Ferrers u3a has other financial documents in place. These are:

Finance Matters – Guidance– <https://www.u3a.org.uk/component/edocman/finance-matters-guidance-2025-2?highlight=WyJmaW5hbmNlIiwZmluYW5jliwibWF0dGVycylslm1hdHRlcilslmd1aWRhbmNlIi0=>

National website link – [Gift Aid Guidance](#)