

Funding sub-group report summary

15 March 2025

The funding sub-group was set up to address concerns expressed by members regarding the financial security of the single annual subscription scheme and its fairness to all members.

The sub-group viewed the final accounts for the past 12 years up to the year ending 31 January 2025. The income and expenditure had been generally balanced until there were significant deficits in 2019 and 2022. For 2019 the deficit was caused by a sudden increase in venue costs. For 2022 it was due to the covid restrictions; first there was a drop in both membership and venue costs but then group activity recovered before the membership rose. Resulting in venue costs rising while subscription income was still down. Recent years have seen a return to balanced accounts but only through careful management and the success of the fundraising events.

A range of alternative funding schemes were considered, initially by seeing what systems a number of other u3as employed for membership fees and for venue funding. Overall the most usual system was to have a basic subscription plus a contribution to part or all of the venue costs. Members of the sub-group made further suggestions and considered pros and cons for each.

Through discussion and the results of the Group Leaders' Questionnaire it was clear that there was a preference for remaining with the current subscription only scheme.

For the subscription only scheme to work it will be necessary to increase the cost of membership each year by an amount depending on anticipated changes in membership numbers, venue charges and fundraising. To safely forecast each of these factors it will be necessary to have a robust information flow between the groups, the venues and the committee.

The Group Leaders' Information Pack will be updated with clear guidance on starting and running a group. The group leaders are the key to the operation of the u3a's activities, with that role comes responsibilities. It is the committee's position to help with those responsibilities, through the provision of information about group management, how to find suitable venues and effective ways of passing information back to the Treasurer, the Membership Secretary and the Committee Chair.

It would be helpful to group leaders if there was a register of venues, maintained with as much information as possible regarding costs, accessibility, transportation options and their terms and conditions.

To address the question of the fairness of the current system the monthly accounts in the Newsletter show the main areas of income and expenditure but more information regarding venue costs should be made easily available to all members.

In conclusion the sub-group recommends that u3aCarrick continues with the single basic subscription scheme. In addition there should be further information sources to assist group leaders in making the best use of the available venues. The group leaders should provide the committee with sufficient information to manage the allocation of resources across all groups.

Recommendations

1. Continue with the basic single subscription scheme, with clear controls.
2. Priority given to the role of group leaders, recognising their importance and responsibilities, and providing support.
3. Review the Group Leader's Information Pack.
4. Establish a system for collection and submission of attendance register information. For groups with a venue that has a charge, provision of the attendance information should be a condition of funding.
5. Set up a venue register and a coordinator
6. Ensure transparency of group venue costs to the full membership
7. Publish to the members the itemised predicted future costs used to set the next years subscription
8. Consider an upper limit on venue cost per group member.
9. Establish a group to organise fundraising separate from the Committee.