FINANCE POLICY FOR DOWNE U3A

1. Introduction

This document sets out the financial internal controls for the running of Downe u3a. It documents the current written and unwritten procedures which will evolve over time.

The primary objective is to ensure that Downe u3a assets and money are safeguarded and used only for the benefit of Downe u3a membership as directed by the Trustees in accordance with the constitution of Downe u3a, values of the Third Age Trust, relevant legislation and guidance of the Charity Commissioners for Northern Ireland.

2. Trustees' financial responsibilities.

The Trustees of Downe 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)
- Ensuring that the funds of Downe u3a are managed in accordance with Paras 9, 10 and 11 of the constitution
- Preparing Annual Accounts in accordance with the governing document and relevant legislation, and showing a true and fair view of the state of affairs of Downe u3a.

3. Treasurer's Responsibilities

The Treasurer is responsible for

- Ensuring that the finances of Downe u3a are managed in accordance with this policy.
- Recording income and expenditure on the Beacon management system
- Reconciling, at the end of each month, the bank balance, cash held and cheques not lodged with the Beacon balance.
- Reporting quarterly for approval to the Finance sub-group.
- Managing and reporting on the use of any restricted funds obtained
- Managing Gift Aid claims
- Maintaining Downe u3a's details with the NI Charity Commission.

4. Banking

- The bank account in the name of Downe u3a is held in Danske Bank, Downpatrick Branch
- It is a charity account, which provides for lodgement of Bank Transfers, Cheque and cash deposits.
- It provides for payment by cash, cheque, debit card (£50 max) or bank transfer.
- Any changes to banking arrangements must be authorised by the Trustees and minuted.

4.1 Cards and Cheques

- Three authorised signatories may be the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer or another designated Trustee approved by Committee. This responsibility cannot be delegated.

- One bank card is held by the Treasurer, to be used when withdrawing petty cash up to £50 or making small payments up to £50.
- All cheques must be signed by two of the authorised signatories;
- The signatories are responsible for ensuring that the payments are supported by invoices.

4.3 Online Banking

- The treasurer, chairman and secretary have access to online banking.
- Other Trustees may have access to this, subject to committee approval, viewing only.

5. Gift Aid

- Downe u3a is registered with HMRC for Gift Aid.
- In case the Treasurer is incapacitated a note of the HMRC login details is held by the Secretary and Chairman
- The Treasurer is responsible for complying with HMRC regulations.
- The application form for new members includes a statement as to Gift Aid eligibility.
- Details of the Gift Aid status are included, along with date and initials of recipient, whenever membership details taken by phone.

6. Annual Accounts

- Draft accounts will be presented to the committee at the April meeting. Once approved by the trustees, these will be audited by an Independent Examiner, who will complete a report using the Charity Commission template. A copy of the draft accounts will be available for all members who attend the AGM. Members will be asked to approve those accounts at the AGM.
- The Treasurer will submit the accounts to the Charities Commission for Northern Ireland.

7. Establishing Fees

- At the February committee meeting the committee will decide the level of membership fees for the coming year.
- Members joining in January or February will be charged a reduced rate, to be agreed by the committee.
- Applications made in March will be held over till April.
- All members will be asked to pay the appropriate full amount irrespective of whether or not they are also a member of another u3a.

8. Group Finances

- 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.
- In exceptional circumstances, where the group leader has encountered unforeseen expenses, he/she can ask the finance group to agree on finding funds
- Group convenors are responsible for maintaining records of the income and expenditure associated with their groups.
- No more than £100 of group finances should be held personally by any group leader.
- They may, with the agreement of the Treasurer, store some of their funds in the general Beacon account where they are ring-fenced for the group's use.

- New Groups may claim up to £50 to cover start-up costs such as the venue for the first meeting.
- In the event of the closure of any group, its funds revert to the Downe u3a irrespective of whether they are held by the convenor or the treasurer.

9. Volunteer expenses

- 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. Expense claims will be authorised by the treasurer in consultation with the committee.
- 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

10. Payment to Other Charities

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

11. **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.

12. Reserves

- Downe u3a aims to keep a level of reserves that will cover 12 months of regular operating activity. This is considered by the committee a reasonable level for this type of charity.

Agreed by committee 23rd October 2024

To be reviewed 1st November 2025