

Melton Mowbray u3a- Membership Secretary Report 2025/26

1. Membership Overview

At the end of 2025, Melton Mowbray u3a had a total membership of 771, of which 151 were new members who joined during the year. For the 2026 membership year, the renewal period has been exceptionally busy. We currently have 809 members registered as Current (paid-up members).

From the final 2025 membership total: 55 members have resigned or lapsed.

All outstanding renewals have now been processed and formally lapsed in accordance with our renewal procedures.

We have already welcomed 77 new members for 2026.

We extend our sincere thanks to all members who have supported and engaged with the renewal procedures during this period.

2. Membership Cards Distribution

For 2026, we continued with the two-tier approach to distributing membership cards: 200 renewing members received printed cards, either: at a monthly meeting, or by post (with a stamped addressed envelope provided).

609 members received their membership cards electronically via email.

This blended approach continues to support members who prefer or require printed materials, while encouraging digital distribution where possible.

3. Feedback and Process Review

We recognise that change can create challenges, and member feedback remains extremely important to us. Your comments have already informed an ongoing review of:

- The joining process for prospective members
- Communication methods
- The renewal process
- We remain committed to improving our offer and ensuring an efficient and member-friendly system.
- Issues Identified During Renewal
- During the most recent renewal cycle, several recurring issues were identified:
- Some members paid subscriptions but did not submit renewal forms, questioning the need for a form if payment was made via BACS.
- Some members submitted renewal forms but did not make payment.
- Queries were raised regarding methods of payment, particularly the inability to accept debit/credit card payments at monthly meetings.
- In some cases, prospective members paid via BACS but did not submit an application form, making it impossible to process their application or contact them.
- On rare occasions, information was successfully obtained.
- In other cases, this proved impossible, meaning payments were received but no services could be provided.

These issues highlight the need for a more integrated and streamlined system.

4. Proposed Developments – Online Application & Renewal

The Committee has begun investigating the introduction of a fully integrated online application and renewal process, utilising additional features available through Beacon, in line with many other u3as.

Potential Benefits

An online system would:

- Allow payment by debit/credit card or PayPal
- Enable members to claim Gift Aid
- Provide access to the Members Portal, allowing members to manage their own membership details
- Reduce the need for paper forms
- Save time for members
- Reduce stationery and postage costs
- Improve accessibility, particularly for members with mobility challenges

The system will remain optional, with a continued manual process available where required.

Training & Support

To support implementation, training and support sessions may be offered in 2026, including:

Guidance sessions on using the online system

Access to personal IT equipment (laptops, tablets, phones etc.) where needed to complete renewals and payments

5. Card Payment Facilities

We are also investigating the introduction of a SumUp card reader to enable payment by debit/credit card at meetings.

This initiative aims to:

- Reduce the amount of cash and cheques handled
- Lower bank processing charges

To date, bank charges for processing cash and cheques total £174.17, a significant cost to the Branch.

6. Committee Support & Future Efficiency

Encouraging members to join the Committee remains a priority. The adoption of Beacon's online functionality is expected to result in significant time savings for future Membership Secretaries and Committee members, helping to ensure sustainability and continuity of roles.

7. New Member Engagement

In 2025, two informal new member meetings were held in April and October, where new members were invited to a coffee morning.

In October, the format was adjusted to encourage greater interaction and allow more time for members to get to know one another. These sessions provided valuable opportunities for:

- Meeting fellow new members

- Learning how u3a operates
- Asking questions in an informal setting

The meetings were hosted by the Chair and Committee members.

2026 Plans

For 2026, we have increased the number of new member meetings to three per year, scheduled for: March , July , October

This expansion reflects our commitment to strengthening member engagement and supporting new members as they settle into Branch life.

8. Conclusion

The 2026 renewal period has demonstrated strong member commitment, with membership numbers increasing despite resignations and lapses.

While the process has highlighted some administrative challenges, it has also provided valuable insight into how we can improve. The Committee is actively exploring enhancements to streamline applications, renewals, and payment methods, while maintaining inclusive options for all members.

We thank all members for their continued support and look forward to another successful and engaging year at Melton Mowbray u3a.