

Thanet Astronomy Group

Astronomy for Everyone in Plain English

CONSTITUTION

April 2014

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1.) Name

The group shall be called “Thanet Astronomy Group” hereinafter referred to as ‘The Group’.

The Group web site will be www.thanetastronomygroup.com

The Group email address will be thanetastronomygroup@gmail.com

2.) Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the group is to provide a focal point for astronomy in the Thanet area and make astronomy available to people of all ages and ability in a plain and simple way to maximise their understanding and enjoyment of the subject.

Our motto says “*Astronomy for Everyone in plain English*”

- 2.1) We will attempt to achieve this by translating the more technical terms and aspects of astronomy into plain and simple English.
- 2.2) Wherever possible we will concentrate on practical demonstration and hands on experience of all aspects of astronomy.
- 2.3) We will encourage, where appropriate, members to get involved in The Group and especially in helping newer and less experienced members to gain the knowledge required to achieve their goals.
- 2.4) We will assist members to grow in confidence both personally and in their knowledge of astronomy. We will do this by supporting and encouraging them to share their knowledge and experiences with other members.
- 2.5) Over time, we aim to cover many aspects of astronomy from simple star gazing with no equipment, through basic astronomy using binoculars and small telescopes, to more advanced subjects including, but not limited to, astro photography and radio astronomy.
- 2.6) With the above support, we will encourage regular observational work by all members.
- 2.7) At every possible opportunity, we will encourage our junior members to excel in astronomy and be involved in the running and development of The Group, via a Junior Council.

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3.) Membership

3.1) Classes of Membership

The Group shall have three classes of membership:

3.1.1) Adult membership, for persons aged 18 years or over.

3.1.2) Junior membership for persons aged 5 - 17 years old.

3.1.3) Honorary Membership may be awarded by the Executive Committee to persons that, in their opinion, have contributed greatly to the group over a period of time. Honorary Membership may also be awarded by the Executive Committee when, in their opinion, this increases the status, or benefits The Group in some way.

3.2) Members Voting Rights

3.2.1) Members in categories 3.1.1 and 3.1.3 shall be known as 'Voting Members' and shall have full voting rights. Members in categories 3.1.2 will not be 'Voting Members' and will not have voting rights.

3.3) Membership Application

To gain membership, all applicants must satisfy the following conditions, unless specifically exempted by the Executive Committee:

3.3.1) Be nominated by a Voting Member of The Group.

3.3.2) Fully complete and sign a membership application form.

3.3.3) Be elected by the Executive Committee.

3.4) Removal of Membership

3.4.1) The Executive Committee shall have, at its absolute discretion, the power to remove from membership any person whose conduct at Group functions or elsewhere is objectionable or likely to bring the Group into disrepute. No such member shall have any claim on The Group for monies paid.

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4.) Meetings

The Executive Committee will organise meetings at its discretion.

4.1) Types of meetings

4.1.1) Free open public outreach meeting.

This meeting is for the benefit of astronomy, the community at large and the residents of Thanet.

It is intended to make the subject of astronomy and The Group openly available to the general public in an informal and friendly way, so as to encourage them to take up their interest in astronomy.

This will make it easy for The Group to be 'found' by new potential members and for such potential members to 'find' The Group.

When the necessary resources are available, it is intended to hold this free open public outreach meeting weekly.

4.1.2) Club Meetings

This meeting is for the benefit of astronomy and The Group members.

The Executive Committee intend to run half of the club meetings but in accordance with point 2.4 of our Objectives above, the members will be encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences with other members by running alternate meetings themselves. In the event that this is not possible, every second meeting will become a general discussion meeting.

The six meetings run by the Executive Committee are intended to cover a variety of astronomical subjects and practical help to support the needs of the members.

The alternate six meetings run by the members will be on any astronomical subject they feel able to present at the meeting.

When the necessary resources are available, it is intended to hold this club meeting monthly.

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5.) Equipment

The Group may provide loan equipment that members can use to develop their interest in astronomy.

- 5.1) The Group may make equipment available to members to develop their interest in astronomy.
- 5.2) The use of such equipment shall be at the discretion of the Executive Committee, who will arrange a timetable for use with the member(s) concerned.
- 5.3) Preference will be given to members who submit a written application to the Executive Committee, detailing their intended use.
- 5.4) In the event of loss or damage to equipment, either belonging to The Group or on loan to The Group, the member(s) responsible shall bear the cost of repair or replacement, unless exempted in part or whole by the Executive Committee.

6.) Affiliation

- 6.1) The Group may be affiliated to other astronomical societies such as the Federation of Astronomical Societies or the Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies as the Executive Committee sees fit.

7.) Administration

- 7.1) A position of 'President' may be filled or remain vacant at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
- 7.2) The Group shall be administered by an Executive Committee of three persons elected from and by the voting membership. This shall consist of: The Chairman, The Treasurer and The Secretary.

No person shall hold more than one Executive post at a time but Executive Officers may also hold other positions, such as heads of Sub-Sections such as solar, lunar, planetary, meteors and comets, stellar and deep sky, artificial satellites, astrophysics, radio astronomy, astro photography and dark skies.
- 7.3) The Executive Committee shall elect, co-opt or appoint from the membership additional non executive officers such as public relations, librarian, newsletter editor, website manager etc. for the efficient running and promotion of The Group.
- 7.4) The Executive Committee will appoint an Observatory sub-committee as soon as appropriate. It will be responsible for planning and development of The Group's forthcoming Observatory.
- 7.5) A non-executive member of The Group shall be appointed as auditor.
- 7.6) The Junior members will be encouraged to form their own council, based on the same structure as the Executive Committee. The Junior Council, will report to and submit their own recommendations to, the Executive Committee.

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8.) Elections

- 8.1) The posts of all Executive officers and non Executive officers shall be subject to annual re-election at the AGM. All are eligible for re-election indefinitely.
- 8.2) The non-executive auditor shall also be elected annually at the AGM.
- 8.3) Nominations must have the prior consent of the nominee in writing for the posts of Executive and non executive Office. These must be proposed and seconded by voting members. Nominations must be submitted to the Secretary at least 7 days prior to the AGM.

9.) Executive Meetings

- 9.1) An Annual General Meeting shall be held in March of each year.
- 9.2) The Secretary shall arrange for ordinary meetings to be held as required during the year.
- 9.3) The Secretary shall convene committee meetings as necessary for the efficient running of the Group.
- 9.4) Special General Meetings : At the request of the Executive Committee or at the written request of at least 33% of the voting membership of The Group, the Secretary shall convene a Special General Meeting of The Group. At least one month's notice will be given to members of the date and the nature of the business to be discussed, unless the nature of the issue requires a more urgent response.
- 9.5) Attendance at Executive Meetings : All members shall have the right to attend the AGM or SGM and all ordinary meetings of The Group.
- 9.6) At the discretion of the Executive Committee, non-members may be allowed to attend AGM or SGM or ordinary meetings of The Group.
- 9.7) All Executive Committee members shall have the right to attend all meetings and shall have full voting rights.

10.) Voting

- 10.1) The meeting shall be quorate if the full executive committee are present and at least 20% of the members are present.
- 10.2) A resolution shall be passed if supported by a simple majority of votes cast.
- 10.3) The Chairman shall have a deliberative vote and in the case of a draw a casting vote.

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11.) Finances

11.1) Administration of Finances

The Group's financial year shall run from April 5th to April 4th the following year.

The Treasurer shall maintain a suitable bank account into which all monies shall be deposited.

The account shall be administered by the Executive Committee, with the day to day running undertaken by the Treasurer.

The signatories to this account shall be the Treasurer and any one of the other 2 Executive Committee members nominated by the Executive Committee as signatories.

The Treasurer shall maintain proper accounting records of income and expenditure of the Society, which shall be subject to audit.

Final audited accounts shall be laid before members at the AGM and shall be adopted if accepted.

The Treasurer shall also make available to the members of the Executive Committee a copy of records and supporting bank statements at intervals not exceeding 3 months.

11.2) Subscriptions

The Executive Committee shall put forward a proposal for subscriptions for the forth coming year. Such a proposal shall be adopted if accepted.

Subscriptions must be paid by the end of April. Members in arrears after this date will be deemed to have resigned from The Group.

Such persons shall have the right to re-apply for membership of The Group if they so wish.

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12.) Records

12.1) Meetings

The minutes of the AGM, ordinary meetings, committee meetings and any special general meetings shall be held by the Secretary and be available to all members on written request.

12.2) Membership

A list of members shall be maintained by the Membership Secretary.

12.3) Potential Members

A contact list of all potential members shall be maintained by the Secretary.

13.) Dissolution of the group

13.1) The Group may be dissolved with the approval of not less than half of the membership of the Group at a special general meeting called for that purpose.

13.2) Following the dissolution of The Group, all outstanding debts will be paid.

13.3) At the absolute discretion of the Executive Committee, the remaining funds and effects of The Group shall be transferred, by gift to the Executive Committee, other members of The Group or to one or more groups or bodies having similar objectives to those of The Group.

14.) Public Liability Insurance

14.1) The Executive Committee shall be responsible for arranging suitable insurance to cover public liability.

15.) Alterations to the Constitution

15.1) The Secretary shall give at least one months notice to all members of the Group of any motion, proposed and seconded by members of The Group, which seeks to alter the Constitution.

15.2) Such a motion shall be carried if approved at an AGM or SGM of The Group.

16.) Constitution

16.1) All members shall be provided with a current copy of the Constitution by email where possible. In the event that a printed copy is required, one will be made available for the member to read. If a member requires their own hard copy, then the member will bear the cost of the printing of that copy.

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17.) Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

17.1) Definitions

- 17.1.1) 'Child' is defined as a person under 18 years of age.
- 17.1.2) 'Vulnerable Adult' is defined by the Government as 'a person aged 18 years or over, who is in receipt of or may be in need of community care services by reason of 'mental or other disability, age or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.
- 17.1.3) 'Abuse' is defined by the Government as 'violation of an individual's human or civil rights by any other person or persons'. This can include physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, or neglect.
- 17.1.4) For the purposes of this document, the term 'child' can also be read as 'children'. The term 'vulnerable adult' can also be read as 'vulnerable adults'. Unless otherwise stated, any mention of child or children shall automatically also apply to vulnerable adult/s, and vice-versa.

17.2) Principles

- 17.2.1) At no time will any member of The Group act 'in loco parentis'.
- 17.2.2) The Group will take all reasonable steps to provide a safe and secure environment for children and vulnerable adults when they take part in groups activities.

17.3) Group Activities

- 17.3.1) Children must be accompanied and supervised by a parent (or guardian) at all times when attending Group activities.
- 17.3.2) The parent (or guardian) remains responsible at all times for the safety, security, and actions of their child.
- 17.3.3) The Group requires a maximum of three children per adult whilst at day time group meetings. At dark site meetings, two children per adult is required as a higher level of supervision is required to ensure safety.
- 17.3.4) When other organisations involving children, partake in group activities, it is the responsibility of the visiting organisation to ensure that there are sufficient accompanying adults, provide their own written risk assessments for group activities, make all accompanying adults aware of the risks involved to safeguard the children in their care and that these adults have been vetted in accordance with the latest legislation as being suitable to work with children. The Group takes no responsibility for the vetting or supervision of third parties.
- 17.3.5) Any party or organisation not adhering to the above terms will not be admitted to group activities.
- 17.3.6) Revision : This policy will be reviewed annually, or more frequently in the light of any unforeseen circumstances, experience, legislative change or guidance issued.

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18.) Equal Opportunities Policy

- 18.1) The Group is fully committed to maintaining an environment in which the interest and science of astronomy is paramount.
- 18.2) We will ensure that no member (or applicant for membership) is treated less favourably on the grounds of colour, race, nationality or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, age, religion or belief, or any other condition which cannot be justified in membership terms.

19.) Safety

- 19.1) All Members of The Group shall be provided with a copy of the Risk assessment document and safety procedures of the group and are required to follow these at all times when at Group Meetings.

20.) Definition of Executive Committee Posts

- 20.1) The Chairman shall

Chair all meetings, keeping them running and make sure that the agenda is followed.

Front and Host all public meetings and is the 'Face' of The Group.

- 20.2) The Secretary shall

Be responsible for the day to day running of The Group, unless parts of the role are delegated to other officials. However the Secretary is still ultimately responsible.

Be responsible for the taking of minutes at all formal meetings, especially the AGM and any SGM.

Be responsible for dealing with all correspondence relating to The Group, communicating with its members (notification of meetings, especially AGM & SGM), bookings (rooms, facilities, speakers, etc), notifying committee members of meetings and publishing the agendas of meetings.

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20.3) The Treasurer shall

Ensure that adequate financial records are kept of The Groups business. Receipt of subscriptions and payment of bills. Draw up an annual statement of income and expenditure. (These are the legal requirements)

In accordance with standard practice the Treasurer will ensure that all purchases are agreed by the Treasurer and the Chairman and that adequate funds are available, before making the purchase.

Ensure that The Group does not take loans, make purchases on HP or any other actions that will place The Group in a position of debt.

As an unincorporated organisation The Group is not obliged to have its accounts formally audited unless it is a registered charity. The Treasurer shall ensure the accounts are independently vetted at least once a year.

The accounts, check books and receipt books shall be balanced and cross checked against the bank statements.

A profit and loss statement shall be drawn up showing the opening balance at the beginning of the year, plus/minus the profit/loss on the year and the closing balances (which should agree with the bank statements)

The account should be presented at the AGM and formally agreed.

Preform financial planning, looking ahead to the planned expenditure next year and ensuring that the subscription level is set at a level which covers the costs.

Be responsible for bringing these issues up at committee meetings.

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21.) Patron(s)

21.1) What is a Patron?

A Patron is usually a well known high profile person, someone who can be readily identified by the public. Such as, a Celebrity, Politician, Scientist, Business or an Establishment figure.

The role of a Patron is to promote and / or support The Group in any way that is appropriate.

This could be by lending their name to The Groups letterheads, websites and media coverage etc.

By providing financial or material support to the Group.

By any other appropriate means approved by the Executive Committee.

Like most organizations, Thanet Astronomy Group needs publicity to survive and grow, one way to achieve that is to engage the services of a Patron.

21.2) What are the types of Patron and what is their role within our group.

There are 5 types of Patron

21.2.1 A Celebrity Patron

A Celebrity can help raise The Group's public profile by getting media attention, and taking part in Fundraising, Publicity and other events etc.

21.2.2 A Political Patron

A Politician can help open doors and make The Group more credible to many people. Care is needed not to get involved with any particular political party.

21.2.3 A Scientist or Expert Patron

A Scientist or Expert in the field of Astronomy or an associated field, would lend credibility to The Group.

21.2.4 A Business

A Business could provide assistance to The Group in a wide range of ways. For Example a printing business could provide paper and printing services. A large company could make financial donations to help fund expensive purchases. A Cafe could provide us with an amazing club house :-)

21.2.5 An Establishment Patron

An Establishment figure (such as a Royal or Titled person) would do all of the above.

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21.3 Appointment of a Patron.

The Executive committee shall invite, at their discretion, any or all of the above types of Patron(s) to support The Group.

The Executive Committee shall make a formal written proposal detailing the role and responsibilities of that Patron to The Group.

If the Patron agrees to the proposal and to represent The Group, the Appointment must be brought before the members for approval.

21.4 Election of a Patron

Election of a Patron can be approved at an AGM, SGM or at an (Ordinary Members Meeting as long as at least 33% of the voting members are present).

The Election will require a voting member to make the Formal Proposal and a separate voting member to second the proposal.

The formal written proposal to the Patron will require the approval of the members present.

Then a majority vote by show of hands will Elect the Patron.

21.5 Responsibilities of a Patron

21.5.1 A Patron shall at all times act in such a way that they do not bring themselves or The Group into disrepute.

21.5.2 A Patron shall act only in accordance with the instructions of the Executive Committee.

21.6 Term of service of a Patron

The term of service can be for Life or until the Patron or The Group wish to end the Patronage.

21.7 Removal of a Patron

21.7.1 All Patrons are free to resign their patronage.

21.7.2 If a Patron wishes to resign The Executive Committee requires formal written notice of at least one month.

21.7.3 Dismissal due to incompatible conduct.

21.7.3 If The Group wishes to remove a Patron, The Executive Committee shall give formal written notice of at least one month.

21.7.4 In the event that the conduct of a Patron, in the opinion of the Executive Committee, warrants Immediate Dismissal, then The Executive Committee shall give formal written notice with Immediate Effect.

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22.) Amendments

Amendment Detail

22.1 Proposed March 2015

At the AGM

Amend Section 7. Administration

Change : 7.6) The junior members will be encouraged to form their own council, based on the same structure as the Executive Committee. The Junior Council, will report to and submit their own recommendations to, the Executive Committee.

To : 7.6) The Junior members will be encouraged to form their own council, based on the same structure as the Executive Committee. The Junior Council, will report to and submit their own recommendations to, the Executive Committee. .

Reason : Use Capital J

22.2 Proposed March 2015

At the AGM

Amend Section 12.2 Membership

Change : A list of members shall be maintained by the Secretary.

To : A list of members shall be maintained by the Membership Secretary.

Reason : We now have Membership Secretary

22.3 Proposed March 2015

At the AGM

Amend Section 9 Executive Meetings

Change : 9.1) An Annual General Meeting shall be held in May of each year.

To : 9.1) An Annual General Meeting shall be held in March of each year.

Reason : The financial year of The Group is the same of the TAX year and runs from 6th April to 5th April. It is a requirement to hold an AGM within each year of operation of The Group. May was entered in error and should have been March.

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22.4 **Proposed March 2015**

At the AGM

Added New Section 21 Patron(s)

22.5 **Proposed March 2015**

At the AGM

Move Amendments from section 21 to section 22 to allow for new section 21 Patron(s)

22.6 **Proposed March 2015**

At the AGM

Update page 2 Contents to reflect the above amendments 22.1 to 22.6