

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY SCOUT COUNCIL

Minutes of the 112th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 24th June 2023 at Tolmers Activity Centre

PRESENT

President of Hertfordshire Scouts	Robert Voss CBE CStJ
Vice Presidents of Hertfordshire Scouts	Colin McIntyre MBE, Rikki Harrington
The County Chairman	Michael Shurety
The County Commissioner	Liz Walker
County Treasurer	Frank Monnington
County Secretary	Claire Stevens
Vice Chair of HCC	Cllr Lesley Greensmyth
TSA	Ian Newberry
Civic representatives from the following councils:	
Broxbourne Borough Council	East Herts District Council
Watford Borough Council	
Buntingford, Elstree/Borehamwood, Royston and Tring Town Councils	

Other Guests:

Some 50+ Commissioners, Leaders and Friends of Hertfordshire Scouts.

1. **WELCOME:** The County President, Robert Voss welcomed our guests to the meeting.

GONE HOME

The meeting noted that since the last AGM Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, patron of the Scout Association had sadly died.

The death of Paul Rathbone, a long-term leader who was part of the team who ran the cub county night hike was also noted.

A minute's silence was observed.

2. **APOLOGIES for absence were received from:**

Vice Presidents Nicholas Halsey MBE DL, Roger Sands, Ivor Thomas
High Sherriff Liz Green
Auditor Sudhir Singh
Management Accountant Paul West
The elected mayor of Watford
Borough/District Council Stevenage Borough Council, Hertsmere District Council, Welwyn/Hatfield Borough Council, 3 Rivers District Council, St Albans Borough Council.
Town Councils Sawbridgeworth, Berkhamsted, Bishops Stortford, Harpenden, Elstree and Borehamwood
Parish Council Northaw and Cuffley
and also 42 other Trustees, Leaders and friends of Hertfordshire Scouts.

3. **The MINUTES OF THE 111th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18th June 2022, having been circulated, were taken as read, and approved by the meeting.

4. **APPROVAL OF THE CHANGE IN NAME FROM COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO TRUSTEE BOARD**

In line with the updated version of POR the meeting approved the change of name.

5. APPROVALS AS NOW REQUIRED BY POR

Other amendments to POR require the annual approval of:

- a) The Constitution - the meeting approved the model constitution as set out in POR Chapter 5.
- b) The dates of the financial year – approved to continue as 1st January to 31st December.
- c) The number of elected trustees – approved to continue as 6.
- d) The Quorum for meetings of the Trustee Board and it's subcommittees – approved to continue as 75% of total membership.

6. TRUSTEE REPORT AND ANNUAL ACCOUNTS TO 31st DECEMBER 2022

The County Chair, Mike Shurety introduced this item by noting that this is the second year we have been able to hold a 'face-to-face' AGM following the exceptionally challenging pandemic years and it is so nice to see everyone enthusiastically networking in advance of the meeting and then being encouraged to take your seats. Seeing rows of smiling faces is so much better than viewing people on a Zoom call, although he does miss not being able to see the name printed below the face!

Last year he explained, in some detail, the impact the pandemic had had on our finances, our membership numbers and the Scouting Programme and how we had set about managing our recovery. That important work has continued through the year and if to describe progress in a single phrase, that phrase would be 'slow but steady', in every aspect of our operational and financial activities. BUT there has most certainly been progress.

SUMMARY OF THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS TO 31 DECEMBER 2022

The abbreviated versions the Trustees' Report and Accounts for 2022 are on your seats; the full

Trustees' Report and accounts are available on request by contacting our County Secretary, Claire Stevens.

As explained last year financial priorities were to continue the return to economic stability, to repay the Covid Business Interruption Scheme Loan (CBILS loan) and to raise reserves to an appropriate level. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to continue to maintain tight controls on our expenditure whilst a steadier income stream from our Activity Centres is generated. Pre-pandemic the charity relied substantially on funds from its Activity Centres, and this needed to be restored to enable us again to reinvest generated income for the future benefit of Hertfordshire Scouting. We have been fairly successful in this respect and the results are reflected in the Account Summary.

Key headlines are:

- Total income during 2022 amounted to £1,552k, a significant increase over the previous year and reflects the growing income generated by our Activity Centres.
- By continuing to maintain fairly strict financial controls, we successfully restricted Expenditure to substantially more than in 2021, representing the cost of turning the financial tap back on gradually and taking our activities out of mothballs.
- Overall, the 2022 accounts show a net surplus as opposed to last year's deficit. It should be noted that this is after charging for depreciation, and also starting to repay, from February 2022, the CBILS Loan.
- Spending on Tangible Fixed Assets increased which reflects our Activity Centres opening up with subsequent investment in the infrastructure.
- The Cash at Bank figure reflects the CBILS loan but also worthy of note is the decrease in creditors falling due within 1 year.
- Whilst the money in our Restricted Funds may look healthy, standing at c£600k at the end of 2022, we have now been able to progress our ambitious improvement plan at Lochearnhead Station utilising the Restricted Fund created by Maurice Baker's generous legacy.
- In light of our covid experience the Finance Committee and Trustees have radically reviewed our Reserves Policy. During the 2023 budget process it was determined that the central reserves should be a target of a minimum of £250k of unrestricted funds and the Activity Centres a minimum of £150k at year end. Splitting out our Reserve pots represents a move from the previous target overall 3-6 months revenue expenditure and, the trustees believe, presents a more realistic approach to managing operational risk. The policy will be reviewed annually by the trustees.

As described earlier, 'slow but steady' progress. Going forward the financial priorities remain maintaining economic stability, repayment of the CIBLS loan, which is on track to achieve, appropriate investment in the Activity Centres and maintaining reserves at an appropriate level.

This progress would not have been achieved without the diligent approach of the Finance Committee who have helped steer our financial recovery. Additionally, there is ever closer work with our management accountants, PKW Accountancy Ltd, who provide invaluable advice to our Centres and the Finance Committee, and with our Auditors, MHA MacIntyre Hudson, who have completed our annual audit and were content to sign off the accounts for the year ending 2022. It is every charity trustee's dream to receive an Audit Report with no recommendations requiring action. All trustees are pleased that this year we received such a report reflecting the hard work which continues to be put into refining our financial systems and reporting structure.

Accordingly, Mike would like to record very sincere thanks to Paul West of PKW Accountancy Ltd, Sudhir Singh and his team at MHA MacIntyre Hudson, Frank Monnington, our Treasurer and the valuable contribution of Mark Jefferson the Chair of our Activity Centres Management Committee, all of whom have contributed so much to our Finance Committee and Standing Committee discussions.

In addition, we owe a deep debt of gratitude to Clare Gilden, our Financial Controller, who keeps us all in line when it comes to our financial transactions. Special congratulations are also due to Clare as she is pregnant with twins. We wish her well for the future but do wonder how we are going to get by without her eagle eye and guiding hand. The accounts have been approved by the Board of Trustees who consider that the charity is able to fulfil its obligations and is a viable ongoing concern for the foreseeable future. In accordance with our constitution the accounts do not require the approval of the County Scout Council.

TRUSTEES' REPORT

Turning briefly to the body of the Trustees' Report itself, the main headline relates to our annual census. There was a decrease in membership of 17% due to the impact of the pandemic but following the return to face-to-face Scouting, there was an increase of 1,188 moving our overall membership last year to 17,508. Given that our newest Scouting Section called Squirrels, aimed at 4 to 6 year olds, has grown from 1 to 16 Dreys, and already has a waiting list of 1,441, a healthy increase in our overall youth membership was anticipated. Unfortunately, our youth membership grew by only 296 and when you consider that 141 were squirrels this leaves only 155 spread over our other four youth sections. When our census figures were published, it was more than a little disappointing.

Of greater concern is our struggle to achieve pre-pandemic adult leadership numbers and we now have 589 fewer adults than in 2020. Some of this can be put down to Groups and Districts pruning their records of occasional helpers who are no longer involved with Scouting, but this does not account for such a large discrepancy. If we are to guarantee the progression of our fledgling scouts, through all sections from Squirrels to Network, the recruitment of more adult leaders is essential and this must be one of our highest priorities. Delivering adult growth should be a core focus for us all.

It is a continued frustration that Waiting Lists are still high and there are currently around 3,000 young people of beaver age and above throughout Hertfordshire waiting to join. In many cases this also illustrates that the recruitment of additional adult leaders is of paramount importance in trying to reduce waiting list numbers. The Association's transformation project is looking to streamline the recruitment process to make it quicker and less bureaucratic for all so do try to encourage people to volunteer.

The Trustee Report also touches on the numerous Scouting activities that took place across the County during the year some of which will feature later.

For our Activity Centres 2022 was a year of recovery and consolidation at our in-County sites, with a focus on bringing our delivery teams up to strength. Difficulties in recruiting key personnel and skilled seasonal trainers as well as delays in getting some key activity equipment re-certified held us back in being able to operate again at full capacity. A difficult decision was to focus on our Scouting customers and so had to cancel a number of school bookings. This decision was taken early, giving plenty of notice to enable them to make alternative arrangements; now schools' bookings are returning to previous levels with no adverse long-term impact.

The displays available when you entered the marquee of our Lochearnhead Station show a major refurbishment project preparing the centre for the next generation of user. Apart from major works to the kitchen and other parts of the station construction has started on a building 7 twin rooms on the platform fully utilising Maurice Baker's generous legacy. All involved are sure that Maurice would be proud of the works that have been completed in his name. There are plans to improve the Station further, including furnishing the new accommodation block and repurposing the old subway, so will be appealing for further funds towards the next phase - building upon over £50,000 that has been generated by our County Lottery. Hopefully all will be able to support these endeavours by either participating in the lottery or supporting our other fundraising initiatives.

Daniel Mattes, our Communications & Marketing Manager is putting the finishing touches to our Annual Review which will, once again, be distributed in electronic format in about a weeks' time. It illustrates the many activities that have been taking place over the last year.

In conclusion Mike acknowledged those who have assisted in arranging the AGM today. Liz and I are grateful for the meticulous planning of Claire Stevens and the practical organisational ability of Doug Stack and Dan Nathan. Without them this event would not be taking place.

Finally, he acknowledged the tireless work of our County Commissioner, the board of trustees, Finance Committee, Activity Centre Management Committee, all of our staff, the volunteers who give up so much of their free time and, of course, our Scouting leaders and helpers in continuing to deliver Scouting to the young people of Hertfordshire.

7. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TRUSTEES ELECTED TO THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Mike started with thanks to Steve Lindsay who has stood down as a trustee after 14 years of service; Tony Hankin and Ashley Cordell were elected to fill the vacancies.

8. FOR THE COUNTY SCOUT COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

a. County Commissioner's Nomination of the County Chairman:

Michael Shurety was asked to continue in the role of County Chairman. Mike again accepted this with great pleasure.

b. Approval of County Commissioners Nominations to the County Executive:

The Deputy County Commissioner, Dan Nathan, Nick Neider, and Mark Jefferson (ACMC Chair) were nominated.

c. Election to the role of County Secretary – As allowed by POR this is now a salaried role so no election.

d. Election to the role of County Treasurer – Frank Monnington was again nominated.

e. To confirm the representatives to serve as Nominated Members of the Council of The Scout Association:

The following were nominated in 2020 and serve for 3 years.

Liz Walker County Commissioner (ex officio)

Michael Shurety Chairman of Hertfordshire County Scout Council

Dan Nathan Deputy County Commissioner.

Kayleigh Malone, Youth Commissioner is also an ex officio member.

f. Appointment of the County Auditor - MHA MacIntyre Hudson were appointed in 2022 for a period of 2 years.

g. Confirmation of Appointment of President/Vice Presidents – all currently in role were confirmed as continuing.

h. To seek candidates for nomination to the County Executive by the County Commissioner of the Young People representatives – This role remains vacant, if anyone has any suggestions Liz will be delighted to hear from you.

The meeting gave approval to items b,d,f, and g.

9. THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Lord Lieutenant, Vice Presidents, members of the County Scout Council, honoured guests, my fellow Scouts....

Thank you for joining us and taking time out of your day to spend with us here at the AGM. It is so great to be here at one of our activity centres so we can see, not what we do, but where and how we do it.

As Mike said, it's great to be back where we belong – outside (or at least sort of inside the outside) in this marquee.

As always, I'd like to start with a thank you.

Thank you to each and every one of you in whatever capacity you are involved in Hertfordshire Scouts. You really do make a difference for our young people – and each other - and the time, dedication and energy you give to young people across our County is so very much appreciated.

It's not just those of you here in this marquee – you, and about 4000 volunteers and a small number of staff up, down and across the County - make Hertfordshire Scouting what it is – an amazing County of adults who do their best to deliver skills for life to as many young people as they can.

This is my last year as County Commissioner – I have been proud to lead the County from a Scouting point of view for 9 years (after 10 years they let you go for good behaviour) - it's been amazing and I'm really excited by what we have achieved together, how we have achieved it and that, after the past few years of challenge, we are growing again. I'm sure that, with the amazing programmes and activities that I'm seeing right across Hertfordshire that we will not only surpass our pre-pandemic numbers but will exceed them and be well on our way to our targets for 2026 and beyond. I look forward to the next year and what's coming.

However, as I have said before, it's not about numbers it's about sustainable growth. Young people are our future, deserving the best opportunities to gain skills for life. Therefore, we need to ensure that we do everything we can to provide those particularly to those we don't yet reach – those from under-represented communities, those who are differently abled or those who face other challenges resulting in exclusion or feeling that they don't belong.

For us to be even more successful we need to continue to work hard, breaking down barriers and breaking new ground, making Scouting easier to join – for our young people and our volunteers.

It's about supporting young people with additional needs and giving all young people the confidence to lead.

If you are already doing all of that, I thank you. I truly do. However, we need more volunteers to help even more young people.

For those of you who don't know what we do – we deliver skills for life, to young people from our youngest and newest section, Squirrels, those aged 4-6 years old to Beavers from 6-8, Cubs from 8-10.5, Scouts from 10.5 to 14 and Explorers for those aged 14-18.

I'm excited that we have opened new Squirrel Dreys in 8 of our Districts across the County, with more to come.

Squirrels enjoy 1-hour sessions to take their first step into being part of Scouts. What young people learn in these sessions are vital skills that will help them when it matters most and when it is most needed.

We have Beavers in every district and pretty much every group - and I'm even more excited to tell you that, not far away, there are lots of Beavers getting ready to camp out tonight, some for their first ever foray under canvas.

Beavers have been in Dens, Burrows and Space over the last few years as we camped in bedrooms, living rooms and back gardens but now they're back in Tents at Well End this weekend, next weekend and at Wymondly Woods the weekend after that.

Not to be outdone, our Cubs have done some amazing things and will be coming together in September here at Tolmers to do climbing, orienteering and much more – and that's in addition to everything they do week in week out in their packs around the County.

Our Scouts get up to some amazing things conquering the small task of changing the world. This summer it's great to see the skills they're learning, camps they're going on and things they're doing. They have their own activity weekend here at Tolmers later in the year – usually when it's cold, extremely wet and muddy!

Finally, I want to talk about Explorers. These young people never cease to amaze. They continue their adventures but many of them also start their journey to leadership as they become young leaders at the younger sections. We are growing our Explorers in Hertfordshire and it's inspiring to see them take the lead, as it's these young people that truly are the next generation of teachers, industry leaders. It's a fact that research from Demos shows young people who take part in extracurricular activities, like Scouts, feel much more prepared for the world of work, and are gaining the skills that employers want right now. We, you, do that.

One other special thing I want to mention is Jamboree. In 39 days' time 108 young people and a number of adult volunteers from Hertfordshire Scouts will be taking part in the Opening Ceremony of the 25th World Scout Jamboree in Korea. It's massively exciting, and just a bit scary. I'm privileged to be not only the County Commissioner with these folks but am actually leading the whole UK Contingent of almost 4,500. We'll be joining around 43,000 others on the Jamboree site in Saemangeum in the South. The great thing is that you can join us and the others from around the world on Culture Day, the 6 August. We will be engaging the whole movement – and anyone who wants to join in and will be beaming direct from Korea with Dream:LIVE. There's more information on The Scouts website or see me or any of our Jamboree participants who I'm sure would love to tell you more.

All of these things are made possible by volunteers and it's there I want to return before I finish talking to you today. Please spread the word. We need more volunteers to deliver more skills for life to more young people. You don't have to be Bear Grylls and you don't have to volunteer every day. Micro volunteering – or just giving what you can – is a great place to start. Perhaps you have a skill, a hobby or an activity that you could share with our young people – either near where you live or anywhere in Hertfordshire. Flexible volunteering is the way to go and doing it in teams rather than taking it all on has to be the future. Over the next couple of years there are some amazing changes in the pipeline for the Scout Movement. These range from offering more in terms of flexible volunteering, making Adult Training easier for people, improving the processes that we use with new and existing volunteers and many other things to support keeping our Movement relevant to today's society. To those who haven't yet discovered volunteering with Scouts, it is not just about giving back, it improves wellbeing, gives skills for the future, and can help you make new friends and memories. It's a brilliant way to develop a new skill or hone an existing one. We have over 4,000 young people waiting to join us (that's over 4,000 young people missing out on what we do) so we'd love to encourage more volunteers to help us open new groups and sections to enable those young people to also enjoy what Scouting has to offer.

So, in closing, I want to return to the start - thank you. Thank you for delivering everything you do.

We have some Awards to thank people for their service and I'd love it if you can join us immediately afterwards so we can thank these fantastic folks together and show them how much they're appreciated by all of us.

Someone who is not here today but to whom I owe so much, is Graham Woolley our Regional Commissioner. I want to publicly thank him for all his incredible support of me and us – as Regional Commissioner and as Deputy County Commissioner before that.

A special thanks to Dan, Ian and Richard and all those on the County Team. Having you all on the team delivering Scouting and making it happen is amazing. This year, more than any other when I've had Jamboree and other personal matters to attend to, you have stepped up and taken on making things even better. Thank you to Mike for your guidance and incredible support. Claire, you have made an enormous difference. Thank you for your patience and fortitude and your incredible note taking – I know we don't make it easy! Frank for your financial acumen and Mark for your support of all things Activity Centre, Strategy, Safety and beyond and to the whole of the County Executive (or Trustee Board as it's now known) who ensure that we are governed well and kept safe. Thank you to the District Commissioners – who do such sterling work in all the Districts across the County which is where Scouting really happens. Thank you to our amazing staff, our district teams, our leaders, trustees, Trustee Board members and all our wonderful volunteers – again thank you.

Thank you all from me and thank you on behalf of the awesome young people who have gained so much from what you have to offer. It's inspiring and I truly thank you for all you do. We have some truly astonishing leaders and supporters in Hertfordshire providing a great deal of service to ensure that young people up and down the County benefit from Skills for Life. We are privileged to have you with us on this journey of ours.

You truly are amazing.

10. Ian Newbery TSA rep.

Ian started by saying he was pleased to be back at Tolmers, having bought scouts here for CTT. He thanked all in County, with especial mention to Liz who has worked so hard as County Commissioner and as Jamboree leader. We have come through a difficult time which has changed the world. We all need to understand youngsters need to learn to socialise and Scouting can contribute to this. We are facing challenges but will work to support our young people.

11. CLOSING REMARKS

Robert closed the meeting with a few remarks, firstly reminding all he was a cub and scout when young. He has met some of our Jamboree contingent and believes they are lucky to be visiting such an interesting country. He worked with Matt Hyde on setting up the Big Help out, and travelled around the County and met many scouts. He feels it is important to note the benefits of volunteering, both physically and mentally. He is happy to support Scouting throughout Hertfordshire and mentioned some of the interesting questions he was asked by Squirrels and Beavers during a recent group visit.

The formal meeting then closed, awards were presented and all enjoyed a cream tea.