

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY SCOUT COUNCIL

Minutes of the 111th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 18th June 2022 at Phasels Wood

PRESENT

President of Hertfordshire Scouts	Robert Voss CBE CStJ
Vice Presidents of Hertfordshire Scouts	Colin McIntyre MBE, Rikki Harrington, Ivor Thomas
The County Chairman	Michael Shurety
The County Commissioner	Liz Walker
County Treasurer	Frank Monnington
County Secretary	Claire Stevens
Chairman of HCC	Cllr Annie Brewster JP
Civic representatives from the following councils:	
Stevenage Borough Council	North Herts Council
Hertsmere Borough Council	Welwyn/Hatfield Borough Council
	Dacorum Borough Council
Buntingford, Elstree/Borehamwood Town Councils	

Other Guests:

Some 70+ Commissioners, Leaders and Friends of Hertfordshire Scouts.

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

2. GONE HOME

The meeting noted the death of:

Chris Pearce, a former DC in East Herts and a long-standing member of Tolmers Crew

Mike Aston, a life long Scout who held roles in Potters Bar district and was a member of the County International Team.

A minute's silence was observed.

3. APOLOGIES for absence were received from

Vice Presidents	Nicholas Halsey MBE DL, Paul Brenham MBE DL, Roger Sands
Regional Commissioner	Graham Woolley
TSA	Matt Hyde
Management Accountant	Paul West
County Treasurer	Frank Monnington
CC Bedfordshire	Martin Wesley
CC Norfolk	David Human
MP	Mike Penning
Borough/District Council Town Councils	Broxbourne Borough Council, East Herts District Council, Sawbridgeworth, Royston, Berkhamsted, Bishops Stortford, Harpenden and also 24 other Leaders and friends of Hertfordshire Scouts.

This was followed by Claire reading a message from Graham Woolley, the Regional Commissioner.

4. The MINUTES OF THE 110th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 26th June 2021, having been circulated, were taken as read, and approved by the meeting.

5. ANNUAL REVIEW for 2021/22 and ANNUAL ACCOUNTS TO 31st DECEMBER 2021

The County Chairman, Michael Shurety started by noting how nice it is to be standing before an audience of real people (some with smiling faces) after two years of looking into a camera, staring at a computer screen and getting absolutely no response to anything that was being said.

The intervening two years since our last 'face-to-face' AGM have been exceptionally challenging for us all, adults and young people alike. In fact, I would go so far as to venture that the last 24 months have been THE most challenging in the history of HCSC. I know that, in making that statement, I lay myself open to contradiction after the AGM from our knowledgeable County Historian but we have faced unprecedented, unanticipated and previously unencountered challenges affecting every aspect of our operational and financial activities. I will go into a little more detail about the impact of these in a moment but I would like to start this year's address where I would usually finish, by sincerely thanking all those whose dedication, innovation and determination have helped navigate us through these troubled times. In particular I would like to acknowledge 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. Thank you for all that you have done, it is very much appreciated, and I apologise if I have inadvertently missed anyone from the list.

It is now my pleasure to present to the AGM the Trustees' Report and Annual Accounts to 31 December 2021. You should all have on your seats abbreviated versions the Trustees' Report and Accounts for 2021. The full 31-page Trustees' Report and accounts are available on request by contacting our County Secretary, Claire Stevens. As most of you will be aware, the Charity relies substantially on funds generated from its activities, particularly those generated at its Activity Centres and, during non-pandemic years, this would normally deliver around 78% of our income. The closure of our Activity Centres for prolonged periods in 2020 and 2021 inevitably had an adverse effect on our income and our financial stability. As I explained last year, in March 2020 we immediately curtailed all non-critical expenditure, made full use of the Government Furlough scheme, claimed all available grants and took a number of other measures to enhance our liquidity and cover unanticipated contingencies. Our strategy from day one was to minimise expenditure while doing all we could to support our core charitable aim of delivering Scouting. I believe we have been successful and the result of these interventions are now reflected in the Account summary you have before you. I will briefly summarise the key headlines:

- Our income of £589k is broadly in line with the 2020 figure which reflects another year of the impact of the global pandemic and partial closure of our Activity Centres.
- By maintaining strict financial controls, we successfully restricted Expenditure to the bare minimum which you will see is £440k down on last year. This was limited to £700k compared to £1.1m the previous year. In effect, 2020 bore the cost of turning the tap off in that year whereas 2021 saw a gradual easing towards the year end. Nevertheless, expenditure is still to this day limited to essential spend only.
- Whilst the 2021 accounts show a deficit for the year of £110k it should be noted that this is after charging £155k for depreciation, so from a cash perspective we were £45k positive. We also received in January 2021 the Covid Business Interruption Scheme Loan of £250k, which I shall hereafter refer to as the CBILS Loan, which was shown last year as a Post Balance Sheet event, and which we commenced repaying in February this year.
- During 2021 there was minimal spending on Tangible Fixed Assets and what was spent was mainly from Restricted Funds or was in connection with security at our closed Activity Centres.
- The Trade Debtors figure of £123k reflects the fact that the Activity Centres had started opening towards the end of 2021 whereas they had been closed for the latter part of 2020.
- The increase in Cash at Bank reflects the receipt of the CBILS loan which also explains the corresponding increase in creditors falling due within and after 1 year.
- Whilst the money in our Restricted Funds may look healthy, currently standing at c£600k, now that building restrictions have been lifted in Scotland, we have been able to start work on our ambitious improvement plan at Lochearnhead Station utilising the Restricted Fund created by Maurice Baker's generous legacy.
- For a number of years, I have stated that our long-term aim has been to build our cash reserves and 2021 saw a rise in Free Reserves from £115k to £153k. However, as I have just mentioned, there has been minimal expenditure on Tangible Fixed Assets and in the coming months/years we will need to achieve a balance between further building our reserves and making a much-needed investment in our capital infrastructure.

Our financial priorities going forward, as set out in the full Trustees' Report, are to continue the return to economic stability, to repay the CBILS loan and to raise reserves to an appropriate level.

Throughout the year the Finance Committee have helped steer us through the pitfalls of the Coronavirus crisis and address new challenges as they arise. Additionally, we continue to work ever closer 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 2021. It is worth noting that during the audit no recommendations were raised requiring action, which reflects the hard work which has been put into refining our financial systems and reporting structure.

Accordingly, I would like to record my very sincere thanks to Paul West of PKW Accountancy Ltd, Sudhir and his team at MHA MacIntyre Hudson, Frank Monnington, our Treasurer, and Clare Gilden our Financial Controller all of whom have worked in a collaborative manner throughout the year to achieve this outcome. I must also acknowledge the valuable contribution of Mark Jefferson the Chair of our Activity Centres Management Committee who has contributed so much to our Finance Committee and Standing Committee discussions.

The accounts have been approved by the County Executive 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.

Turning briefly to the body of the Trustees' Report itself, the main headline relates to our annual census. Some of you will recall that we recorded a decrease in membership of 17% in 2021 due to the impact of the pandemic. I am pleased to report that, following the return to face-to-face Scouting, we have seen an increase of 1,188 and our overall membership now stands at 17,508. Whilst we have not quite reached our 2020 highpoint, our ambition this year is to move towards a new record membership 20,000.

It is a continued frustration that Waiting Lists are still high and there are currently 3,600 young people throughout Hertfordshire waiting to join. Whilst it is encouraging to note that there is a demand for our programme and that Scouting is still relevant in today's society it illustrates that the recruitment of additional adult leaders is of paramount importance in trying to reduce waiting list numbers. So, if anyone here has an extra couple of hours to spare Enough said!

The report also touches on the numerous activities that took place across the County during the year but I know Liz will be covering this in her County Commissioner's address so I will not steal her thunder. Liz will also, no doubt, touch on plans for the World Scout Jamboree due to take place in South Korea in 2023.

At Easter last year we started re-opening our Activity Centres with the initial focus being on Groups returning to face-to-face scouting. We supported this with a small core team of staff and volunteers and the intention was to build on this team as the number of bookings increased. The number of bookings has indeed increased but numerous unforeseen post-pandemic factors have intervened. Difficulties in recruiting key personnel such as Reception staff, catering personnel, qualified activity instructors and Assistant Managers together with supply chain uncertainties and delays in getting activity equipment re-certified have thwarted our plans to operate again at full capacity. In addition, energy price increases and spiralling fuel costs will inevitably have an adverse impact on our cash flow and finances. These are not challenges that are unique to Scouting and many businesses and organisations face exactly the same difficulties.

Twelve months ago we were all talking about the 'new normal'. I'm not sure how you envisaged your 'new normal' but this is not how I imagined mine would be. As I predicted at last year's AGM, we still face a number of tough years ahead.

At this point I would normally be extolling the virtues of our Annual Review but, one of the posts we have experienced difficulty in recruiting is a new Communications Manager to replace Emma Ball. Because of that the production of this year's Annual Review has been delayed but it will soon be available and once again we will be distributing it in electronic format.

In conclusion, I do not underestimate the extraordinary challenges that still lie ahead of us but with the enthusiasm and determination of our County Team, and the leaders throughout Hertfordshire, I have no doubt that we are in a position to resolve any obstacles that we encounter and take Scouting in Hertfordshire to new levels.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge 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.

I am so glad that you have taken the trouble to be with us today – you've made my AGM by your presence. Thank you all ever so much for your continued support and tireless efforts.

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

Mike started with thanks to Geoff Kavanagh who has stood down as a trustee following a move to Cornwall; Dave Pullen has also stood down; he has been a trustee for 18 years and is owed a real debt of gratitude for all he has done.

Geoff's resignation meant that there was a one year vacancy to fill, as well as the normal three year vacancies. Nigel Reed and Chris Searle were elected to serve for 3 years; Ashley Cordell to serve for one year.

7. 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 - following a tender process and a very difficult decision MHA MacIntyre Hudson were again nominated to continue as our Auditors for a further 2 years.

g. 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 and f.

8. THE COUNTY COMMISSIONER

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

Thank you for joining us and taking time out of your day to spend with us here at the AGM. 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.

Thinking back to last year with just 5 of us in this room a camera and a TV screen, we have made some progress – there's at least 45 of us here today.

However, I know that there are hundreds of others who 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.

It seems a bit repetitive to say that we've had another somewhat challenging year and it's tested us all. But it has.

I'm beginning to think that this is the new normal (a phrase I promised I would never use!). That we are tried and tested. However, the one thing that really is normal, is Scouting. And it's Scouting that has kept us going, well, me at least.

Whilst we've been challenged we have dug deep and used the skills for life that Scouting has given us over the years, and used them wisely. We have used them to deliver new things in innovative ways, created new pathways and given our young people what they have needed most – a place where they can learn new skills and find friends all the while learning by having fun, learning to help them succeed and learning to help them be more resilient whatever happens.

I am proud to say that we have seen young people coming back to Scouting after the pandemic. The census, which is our annual count of membership taken in January each year, showed that we are growing back to pre-pandemic numbers and these numbers are rising such that I am confident that, if we keep doing what we are doing (and look for even more ways to deliver exciting programmes) we will hit new highs. Mike has outlined the huge number of young people who are missing out.

However, it's not about just numbers. It's about sustainable growth. It's about delivering Scouting to more young people from more communities so that they can get to experience the magic of Scouting and develop skills for life for themselves. It's especially important after the past few years. Especially important that we reach into communities that don't have much affinity with Scouting, and especially important that we reach those young people and adults that feel they don't belong.

For us to be even more successful, it's about 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.

It's about building back better and empowering the covid generation when they need it most. It is about Explorers, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers. It's also about our newest section, Squirrels for 4 and 5 year olds. I'm delighted to say that we have opened several squirrel dreys across Hertfordshire and we will be supporting the opening of many more when the time is right in that location. Delivering skills for life to early years really will make a difference to them but we also need to make sure that they have sustainable scouting of the other sections to grow into when it's time to move up. So we'll ensure we work through our programme team to deliver what we can to support young people across the ages ranges.

When I was at Watford North AGM the other day I realised that for our youngest squirrel scout 50% of their lives have been impacted by Covid, for Beaver Scouts it's around a third... even for the oldest Explorers it's around 10% of their lives – and we need to support them, create opportunities for them to recover from the impacts of the pandemic by supporting their wellbeing and building the skills they need to succeed in life.

If you are already doing all of that, I thank you. I truly do.

If the idea of supporting those young people appeals to you- or you know someone who might like to give it a go, please direct them to me or to any one of us here; we know that volunteering for Scouting is good for communities, good for young people and, it's been shown, good for you!

It might be that you're looking for a new exciting challenge....

One person who has risen to a new challenge this year is Kayleigh Malone who has been appointed our first ever County Youth Commissioner. She will support me and the team to ensure that we are youth led. That we support our volunteers to embed young people's ideas and decisions into local scouting. That we help make sure that young people get regular opportunities to lead and we inspire and motivate young people throughout Hertfordshire and hear what they have to say.

Thank you Kayleigh for stepping up.

Other people that are stepping up are our brilliant Jamboree units. The pandemic curtailed our adventures abroad but now that they are back on we have 12 adult leaders that have taken on the challenge and 108 young people that will be travelling to South Korea next summer to attend the 25th World Scout Jamboree. We also have a number of adults in the County who will support the whole of the UK and the other Contingents from around the world. Those that are part of the International Service Team are training at Gilwell. Representatives of the leadership teams are in the room – STAND UP. An our young people are outside in the marquee where we will meet for tea and they can share their preparations Please do take every opportunity to meet and chat with them.

Before I finish I have some thank yous to make

I want to also thank those on the county team – . We have had to make some tough calls again this year and I'd like to make a special mention of Mike our brilliant County Chair who is amazing and so incredibly supportive, Claire without whom nothing would happen, Frank who has really kept us afloat and Mark chair of our activity centres management committee who really does go above and beyond on a daily basis, and Doug who runs our activity centres and who has had to pull out all the stops along with the amazing county support staff team at Phasels, Tolmers and Andy in Lochearnhead. I also want to make a shout out to the county executive and the county team. The Deputy County Commissioners Ian and Richard and Dan – having a team like you enables me to do much more and I thank you for your continued support. The District Commissioners – you guys have a really tough gig thank you for leading your teams. Thank you to our amazing staff, our district teams, our leaders, trustees, exec members and all our wonderful volunteers – again thank you. Thank you 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.

9. CLOSING REMARKS

Robert closed the meeting with a speech which was not written but was from the heart. This is his first opportunity to speak as president and he feels it is an honour to be here as president of Hertfordshire Scouts having been a cub and scout himself for a number of years. He can still tie knots!

He quoted from an article for the previous days Daily Telegraph saying how membership is growing at the fastest rate for 80 years. It is great to see Scouts learning skills and benefiting from what the movement has to offer. These benefits extend into adulthood – as Lord Lieutenant he was concerned about the effect of the pandemic on young people, he has visited a number of youth groups, many of whom flagged up missing being able to get outside, something he himself loved to do as a child. The outdoor experience Scouting gives young people is amazing!

Robert also provided information about Youth United, a group he has set up to bring youth organisations in Hertfordshire together. He mentioned the Queen's green canopy, approx. 30,000 trees have already been planted hope to reach 100,000 by the end of the year.

He finished by saying it was an honour to be here and looked forward to the post meeting tree planting and tea!

The formal meeting then closed, all moved outside where 3 trees were planted and awards presented – whilst enjoying tea and a chance to chat to a number of Jamboree participants.