

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY SCOUT COUNCIL

Minutes of the 113th Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 8 June 2024 at Tolmers Activity Centre

PRESENT

President of Hertfordshire Scouts	Robert Voss CBE CStJ
Vice Presidents of Hertfordshire Scouts	Paul Brenham MBE DL, Colin McIntyre MBE, Rikki Harrington
The County Chairman	Michael Shurety
The County Lead Volunteer	Ian Tycer
The previous County Commissioner	Liz Walker
County Treasurer	Frank Monnington
County Secretary	Claire Stevens
The Lord High Sherrif of Hertfordshire	Annie Brewster
Chair of HCC	Cllr Terry Douris
Vice Chair of HCC	Cllr Lesley Greensmyth
Civic representatives from the following councils:	
Broxbourne Borough Council	Hertsmere Borough Council
Stevenage Borough Council	
Buntingford, Hatfield, and Tring Town Councils	

Other Guests:

Paul West, Management Accountant and some 40+ Commissioners, Leaders and Friends of Hertfordshire Scouts.

- 1. WELCOME:** The County President, Robert Voss welcomed all our guests to the meeting, saying how much he cherished this role and how pleased he was to see member numbers growing. He was delighted to visit Green Beret in November; the amount of mud reminded him of wet and muddy days and nights under canvas when he was a Scout. He had also visited beavers and squirrels, who showed an immense interest in his sword. The memories created as a youngster last for a lifetime. He thanked all adult volunteers, without whom nothing would happen; it is a huge honour to continue as President of Hertfordshire Scouts.

GONE HOME

The meeting noted the deaths of the following Hertfordshire Scouts:

Mark Jefferson, Chair of ACMC, Hertfordshire trustee since 2013, Member of event medical ASU; previous DCC and DC of Hemel district.

Dave Pullen, GSL, Deputy County Commissioner for 6 years, a County Trustee for many years, County lead for Safety and Safeguarding for over 10 years, DC in East Herts and previously in other areas

Alan Rand, an active Scouter in West Herts for many years and a long-term member of the County Sailing team.

Richard Cox, President of Hitchin Scouts for over 20 years

Kathy Overman, a Lochearnhead Committee member

Bill Shackell, Stevenage member and a member of Lochearnhead Committee

A minute's silence was observed.

2. APOLOGIES for absence were received from:

Vice Presidents	Roger Sands, Ivor Thomas
Civic Representative from	Dacorum Borough Council, East Herts District Council, North Herts District Council, and Welwyn/Hatfield Borough Council.
Town Councils	Bishops Stortford, Elstree and Borehamwood, Harpenden, Hertford, Royston, Sawbridgeworth
Parish Council	Northaw and Cuffley
DCC	Richard Haynes; Dan Nathan

and also 46 other Trustees, Leaders and friends of Hertfordshire Scouts.

3. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

a) The minutes of the 112th Annual General Meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on the 24 June 2023, having been circulated, were taken as read, and approved by the meeting.

b) Confirmation of Constitution.

The meeting confirmed that the Constitution of Hertfordshire Scouts is as POR 5.6

c) The County's financial year.

The meeting confirmed that the financial year runs from 1st January-31st December

d) Membership of Trustee board.

The board membership consists of the County Chair, County Treasurer, Lead Volunteer (ex-officio) Lead Youth Volunteer (ex-officio) and 8 appointed trustees; this will be reviewed again before the next AGM.

e) Quorum for meetings of Trustee Board, County Scout Council and sub committees.

Quorum for County Scout Council meetings was agreed at 50; for the trustee board and its subcommittees quorum for meetings is 50% of membership.

4. REVIEW OF 2023

a) The previous County Commissioner, Liz Walker

Liz reflected on both her years as County Commissioner and the previous year

She started by saying that she thought last year would have been her final address to the AGM but she finds herself standing before the meeting doing something that has always made the washing machine in her stomach start its spin cycle and this year it's on an extra fast spin as she tries to recap the last 10 years quickly, succinctly and make sure no one falls asleep!

'It's certainly been an eventful 10 years since I was privileged to be appointed the County Commissioner and, in looking back over that time, can reflect that it has been both a wonderful and sobering experience. I remember standing up on 23 June 2014 after having been transmogrified (I think that's what it is called) in true Dr Who style from Rikki to the new CC - by the wonders of what was then modern technology - the first woman to hold the post in 103 years... and probably an unknown quantity...

From looking back at notes for that evening, my dream was "that all Scouts in Hertfordshire, young people and adult volunteers will feel empowered, valued and proud" and she was sure that "we could all work together to make it a reality"

Work together we have. Across the County we have delivered more Scouting than ever before – through one of the most turbulent times in our recent history. We have more young people than ever who are enjoying learning Skills for Life and finding their own adventure supported by some amazing adults who volunteer in all sorts of ways.

The past year has been another eventful one. We've seen our activities continue to flourish and we are back with a vengeance! We have had camps, activities – all sorts.

The centres, Phasels Wood, Harmergreen and Well End have continued to offer amazing programmes and have continued to develop, refurbishing and moving forward. Peak Assault in the Brecon Beacons, South Wales, was excellent (and wet!) and we had our first mountaineering training for ages in Lochearnhead, our station in Scotland which continues to offer so much after its significant refurbishment.

We had an amazing Monopoly Run in London which was great fun and I thoroughly enjoyed my time as a marshal.

I was privileged to see our young people celebrating their Queen's and King's Scouts in Windsor. Especially poignant as so many had waited a long time to celebrate.

For our younger sections it was great to see Cubjam, ASAP and Green Beret at Phasels where, respectively, Cubs and Scouts engaged in amazing activities. There was lots of rain and lots of fun. Fire and Ice and Come to Tolmers were back and more brilliant fun was had by all. Continuing on the theme of youth – our Youth Commissioner, Kayleigh, held brilliant workshops at each of these County events – understanding what young people want and need from us across the County.

We had young people and adults participating in The Big Help Out (more of that this weekend!), I was privileged to attend, along with some of our Young People, the King's Coronation too.

One of the last events I attended – I was privileged to attend the National Service of Thanksgiving in Westminster Abbey where we were able to celebrate and give thanks to all the hard work of our volunteers and, I also attended the Founders Day Service the following day with young people from Mid Herts Explorers to commemorate our founder, Lord Baden Powell.

So that was last year....

Over the last 10 years there have been so many highlights and it's difficult to summarise but I'm going to have a go...

We celebrated 30 years of Beaver Scouts, 75 years of Air Scouts and 100 years of Cub Scouts. The latter was one of the highlights of my time as County Commissioner as I arrived at the arena on a big white tank – precariously balanced to stop myself falling into the main body of the tank metres below, to address a sea of Cubs. Thankfully the rain had ceased (it nearly had to be changed for an ark!) and my memories include a sunny afternoon with a great party atmosphere. We have had Beavers in tents, burrows, in dens and even in space – a particular highlight was managing to get so many Beavers and their families on zoom even in lockdown – showing that Scouting spirit of never giving up.

We've opened new sections so that more young people can enjoy Scouting and, importantly, we've embraced Squirrels so that 4- and 5-year-olds can take their first step into being part of Scouts, enjoying, like the older sections, outdoors activities, fun, games, badges, laughter, and so much more. Not only does it help our youngest members learn the skills they need for life it helps them get ready for school life too – a real need today and especially after the pandemic which impacted so much of their early development.

Colin McIntyre will no doubt have the statistics but, over the last 10 years, I've been honoured to present Silver Wolves (the most recent to my friend and colleague through those 10 years, Tony Hankin); Silver Acorns and Medals of Merit – and Bars; Commendations and other Awards - to those adults who have given such amazing service and have dedicated themselves to young people and their development - going above and beyond providing service that excels. There are many who deserve recognition who don't always get it but to all – thank you from me, the County but, most of all the young people that learn, develop and grow through what they do.

We had our first Scout of the World Award – with more coming. Empowering our Explorers and Network has always been a passion of mine and it's brilliant to see so many young people have flourished – woe betides anyone who moans to me about the youth of today – I'll give them chapter and verse on what our young people achieve through Scouting – and offer them to get involved and see for themselves.

Before I move on to some other highlights - the last 10 years have seen some tough times too. I don't want to dwell on them, but it wouldn't be a reflection without at least hinting at what some of them were. We've had to make some really tough choices to make sure that we are, as an organisation, fit for the future and that we remain relevant, safe and solvent for many more young people and adult to enjoy Scouting over the next 10 years, the 10 years after that and well beyond.

We had to make decisions with the best interests of the Charity – and whilst it was tough and required much soul-searching – we have ridden the storms of the past years and, I hope, set ourselves up for success during the current economic challenges and beyond. Closing sites, reducing activities isn't pleasant but sometimes necessary. I wish that everyone had been on board with the changes as that's one thing that has been a difficult thing to bear at times. Being tough on training, compliance and increasing safety requirements are all vital and that has been a significant challenge (at times) to get people on board with the movement and how we need to evolve to keep our young people safe.

We have lost some amazing colleagues over the last 10 years and I promise you I thought about each of them as I was thinking about what to write. Know that they were loved, respected and valued for everything they did and the support they gave to me and countless others during the time I was CC. I could not have done this without them.

Moving back to the positive it's been an incredible journey. Outside of the County, I've participated in the Moot in Iceland and 3 Jamborees - the last as Contingent Leader. I credit my ability to lead from the experiences I gained throughout my time as CC.

We've had Peak Assaults, Green Berets, Patrol Leader Camps, Bushcraft and many other brilliant events at our sites. I hope I've helped people challenge to see and do things differently – always moving forward to what our young people want and need – not just what we've always done.

I'm proud of the vision I had when I became CC to move our AGMs from a Monday night in a building to showcasing our sites in all their glory. Seeing what Scouting first hand is about – where it is done and what we have achieved together - it is food for the soul.

One memory that stands out for me with young people is the day that I sat on the ground in Harmergreen Wood helping a young Cub who was terrified of striking a match. He had, rightly, been told to keep away from matches and was really struggling. I sat on the ground with him until he managed it. We had a conversation about when fire was good, when it was bad and how to make sure it was respected. I like to think I have taken that approach on many things throughout the last 10 years and I continue to live by that philosophy.

I was asked to talk about what I had done over the last 10 years. All I could think about is the things I didn't get round to doing, not doing enough and not making some changes as best I could. However, it's a team game and what we did over the last 10 years we did together.

I couldn't have done any of it without the amazing people who have served on the County Executive – especially Mike – who has been there through thick and thin. Through my joys and my darkest moments – always with encouragement, good advice and huge support. Mike thank you for everything.

To the District Commissioners, thank you. You have been the driving force of what happens in Scouting on the ground. You have been amazing and continue to be.

To the County Team – I've not spent as much time with you as I could have done – and probably should have done – but you have been empowered to deliver and you have done so so well. Thank you, you have been amazing.

There are so many people to thank but I'd like to say a special thank you to Dan and Doug who have been there from the beginning and both of whom are probably the reason for me being CC in the first place! Thank you... I think!

Finally, thank you to Ian. Ian, you have already given so much - Thank you for your hard work as a DC, as a deputy CC and, more importantly thank you for taking on the role as our first County Lead Volunteer. You lead with skill, with a calmness and a great sense of humour. The County truly is in good hands. You will do so well and I wish you every success.

So what about the last 10 years?

I know that I felt, as I do today, passionate about ensuring that as many young people as possible across the County (indeed the UK) get to experience Scouting and that they continue to be supported by amazing adults, and we attract even more to deliver for those young people.

It truly has been a privilege to be County Commissioner and have led so many young people and adults to do their best. I have striven to do my best and I hope I have done.

b) The County Lead Volunteer

Ian started by asking 'how can you follow that?' He went on to thank everyone involved in the event and who has provided support over the year.

As this is a public record, he added his and the County Team's thanks and gratitude to all the adults who help deliver scouting, in whatever form, across the county and at camps (or overnight adventures) wherever they maybe, in county, in UK, or across the globe - thank you.

In the last couple of weeks, he has made a couple of surprise visits to such events, a cub camp from Leverstock Green, Hemel, who were away for half-term at Thorington campsite near Colchester. Having heard that was their destination he was curious to see if he could remember it from his days staying there as a Venture Scout (although memories are hazy...can't think why !! Perhaps the less said the better)

The other event was the annual county sailing week off Mersea island (another place dear to his heart as that was where he went on his first driving lessons, also a good few years ago). As always he came away from an extremely short visit in awe of the amazing array of kit, ie boats, that Hertfordshire own or have access to, and the remarkable dedication of the adults who give up their time, not only to run the sailing courses in all weathers, but also the time to keep their wonderful skills up to date.

Last night he popped into a couple of Group AGMs. 2nd Baldock who were also celebrating their 70th birthday - a fabulous event and turn out. Then Great Amwell's AGM. Again, an inspirational event. Ian was kindly shown significant recent works that had been done to improve the facilities, with roughly £100,000 spent. And the Group was also holding a camp in their phenomenally extensive grounds.

Ian went on to say he cannot start to explain how amazed, flattered, and fortunate he is to be taking on this role. Liz has left an incredibly large void following her outstanding period of leadership, and if he can achieve 10% of what she's done he'll be happy.

For those who nominated him, remember "be careful what you wish for, it may come true !!"

It was only after his successful appointment that our Chair, Mike Shurety, with a twinkle in his eye said "I've just worked out you're the county's 13th County Commissioner", which is very timely considering that today is the 113th AGM. Therefore, he's grateful to the national Transformation process that we're working towards, as that means he can in fact say he's the first County Lead Volunteer!

Liz has eloquently spoken about last year in her review of her tenure so just a few minutes on the future and a reminder

The safety of our young members is paramount and must always be the first consideration in everything we do.

We are the Scout Movement (a cliché) so we do change, and we will be doing so for the safety of our young people, and to bring Scouting in line with the volunteering expectations of today's adults.

c) Receive the Annual Report of the County Trustee Board, including the annual Statement of the Accounts

These were presented by the County Chair, Mike Shurety who started by covering the financial report. Copies of the abbreviated versions the Trustees' Report and Accounts for 2023 were on chairs. The full Report and accounts are available on request by contacting our County Secretary, Claire Stevens, via email and she will forward you a copy.

Our financial priorities remain the return to economic stability, to continue to repay the Covid Business Interruption Scheme Loan (the CBILS loan) and to build our reserves. Progress has been made against all these goals but there remains a need to continue to maintain tight controls on expenditure. The income stream from our Activity Centres has stabilised and continues to grow steadily. The main headlines in the Account Summary is below

- Our total income during 2023 amounted to £1,917k, an increase over the previous year's £1,571k and reflects the growing income generated by our Activity Centres.
- Expenditure amounted to £1,970k which represents an increase of £612k. Without the burden of having to fund additional unscheduled costs our expenditure would have represented a structured return to the pre-covid trading position.
- Overall, the 2023 accounts show a net deficit of £53k. This is because a tree survey carried out mid-year showed that ash dieback was hitting harder and sooner than anticipated; the trustees took the decision that it would be unsafe not to carry out the works identified and authorised the use of reserves for this purpose. Across the estate over £100k has been spent on this work, approximately twice the deficit figure. For this reason we continued to impose strict limits on expenditure. Despite this we have still been able to repay the CBILS Loan, taken out during the covid lockdown, which now stands at £133k and there was sufficient funds to meet liabilities as they arose.
- Spending on Tangible Fixed Assets decreased which reflects the completion of our refurbishment of Lochearnhead and Activity Centres opening up with subsequent investment in their infrastructure.
- The Cash at Bank figure, which decreased by £237k reflects the CBILS repayment, the unanticipated tree work and the decrease in creditors falling due within 1 year.
- The reduction of money in our Restricted Funds reflects the fact that 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.
- The unscheduled tree expenditure, illustrates perfectly the need for a robust reserves policy and, as reported last year, after reflecting on our experience during the Covid years we reviewed our policy in respect of central reserves. 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. The Finance Committee, endorsed by the Trustee Board, continue to believe that splitting out our Reserve pots represents a realistic approach to managing operational risk. The policy will continue to be reviewed regularly by the trustees who are also looking at different ways of recording reserves.

We were able to effectively manage our finances, due to the approach of the Finance Committee and a close working relationship with our management accountants, PKW Accountancy Ltd, who provide invaluable advice. We are also indebted to our Auditors, MHA, with whom we now hold quarterly strategic meetings which have proved invaluable.

Mike would like to record very sincere thanks to Paul West of PKW Accountancy Ltd, Sudhir and his team at MHA, Frank Monnington, our Treasurer, who is now ably supported by Tony Hankin, another of our trustees, all of whom have contributed so much to our Finance Committee discussions. Mark Jefferson's support and contributions to our budget planning and preparation work is, needless to say, sorely missed.

Last year Clare Gilden, our Financial Controller, was about to go on maternity leave and has since given birth to twins. We send sincere congratulations Clare and are pleased all three are healthy (and incidentally, hope that she re-joins us soon). Her absence left a gap that was difficult to fill despite the use of temporary and agency staff and that, combined with staff absences at MHA, means that whilst the annual accounts have been prepared they are yet to be formally signed off. Nevertheless, the audit feedback is that there have been no adverse findings and, accordingly, the Board of Trustees have approved the accounts subject to audit sign-off and consider that the charity is able to fulfil its obligations and that it 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. There was a decrease in membership of 17% due to the impact of the pandemic but numbers have been steadily following the return to face-to-face Scouting. As at 31 January 2024, our overall membership was 17,997 an increase of 313 over 2023. This represents an increase of approximately 2%. Youth numbers have increased, to 13,902, but not by as many as we had hoped. Adult leadership numbers have also grown but there are still long waiting lists; there are currently around 3,000 young people of beaver age and above throughout Hertfordshire waiting to join, so additional leader recruitment remains a priority. The Association's transformation project is looking to streamline the recruitment process to make it quicker and less bureaucratic for all so if anyone can be encouraged to volunteer, it should be possible to get them working for us quicker in future.

On a very positive note, the number of Squirrel dreys, our youngest youth group, have increased and now numbers 353, up from 17 two years ago. Hopefully this trend will continue and this part of the waiting list will reduce but additional adult volunteers are needed for this to happen. Inclusion remains a priority and all groups aim to be reflective of the communities in which they operate.

Whilst noting that this was not strictly speaking part of the Trustee Report Mike took this opportunity to pay tribute to four people who have made a significant contribution to Hertfordshire Scouts. The first is Mark Jefferson, known affectionately to many as 'T-shirt'. Mark was, quite literally, a larger than life character who involved himself in all aspects of Scouting but particularly with our Activity Centre activities and as a Trustee. At our AGMs Mark would always be seen wearing a Hi-Vis singlet and ensuring that our car parking was organized efficiently – Mike wondered who is doing that today? Mark leaves a gap that is almost impossible to fill and his wise counsel is sorely missed. The second is Dave Pullen who 'went home' on 21 May. Dave was a life-long Scout who was active throughout Hertfordshire, particularly in East Herts, but also at County level. Dave was a County Trustee for 18 years and only stepped down from that role recently. Another County 'character' who is well worthy of a mention is Frank Brittain who has recently retired from his role as the County Archivist & Historian. It is hard to put into words adequately the contribution he has made to Hertfordshire Scouting, but many will be aware of the books he compiled about the first 100 & 105 years of Scouting in Hertfordshire and in documenting the groundbreaking role the County played in becoming the very first Scouting County in the UK. In this capacity Hertfordshire, as a County, as well as Scouting is indebted to his work. In recognition of his meticulous and invaluable work it is proposed that we recognize his contribution under item 5 e) on the agenda today by appointing him an honorary Vice President. Mike will be disappointed if any hands are raised in objection! Frank leaves in his wake a strong History & Heritage Team to continue the work. Finally, and by no means least, Mike would like to pay tribute, and record formally in the minutes of this AGM, the tireless and inspirational role played by Liz Walker our retiring County Commissioner. Liz has given freely of her time in what is an exceptionally demanding role and has taken the County forwards in so many areas, many of which she has reflected upon earlier. We all owe her a great debt of gratitude and Mike thanked her personally for her valued leadership of the County. It has been fun as well as challenging and she is thanked for her support and friendship whilst travelling along the winding path of the last decade. In saying farewell to Liz it would be remiss not to welcome Ian Tyer to his first AGM as Lead Volunteer. Ian – I'm not sure you really fully appreciated what you were taking on when you accepted the role but I know that you will have the 100% support of myself, and members of the County as we follow your path into the next decade of leadership. We wish you an enjoyable and successful tenure.

The Trustee Report also touches on the numerous Scouting activities that took place across the County during the year. Adventurous activities at our Activity Centres returned to near normal levels during 2023 and, despite there still being a shortage of skilled seasonal instructors we offered a good programme to both our core Scouting customers, as well as Guides and schools. Large scale events included Fire and Ice at Tolmers in

January and Cubjam at Phasels in May. ASAP in September saw Beavers, Cubs and Scouts on site and a visit from the High Sherriff. A damp Green Beret, an event for the Scout Section, took place at a very muddy Phasels Wood in November with the Lord Lieutenant present, like the rest of us in his wellies.

Work at our Lochearnhead Scout Station in Scotland was completed during the year and it is now fully open again. 3 Hertfordshire Districts visited in 2023, and more are already booked for 2024, 2025 and 2026.

Perhaps our most significant Scouting event for our young people was the World Scout Jamboree held in South Korea during the summer of 2023. As reported in the press at the time the event did not go to plan but our young people and adults enjoyed alternative activities in Seoul. The participants describe it as an experience they will remember for a lifetime – fortunately in a positive manner. As many here are aware, we have an active International Team and numerous Scouts throughout the County have taken part in international events some of which are described in our Annual Review.

Talking of which, Daniel Mattes, our Communications & Marketing Manager has been putting the finishing touches to our Annual Review, which will be distributed in electronic format after the AGM. It illustrates the many activities that have been taking place over the last year and I hope you will enjoy reading it when it arrives in your in-box.

As well as Daniel I would like to acknowledge those who have assisted in arranging the AGM today; in particular I am grateful for the meticulous planning of Claire Stevens and the practical organisational ability of Doug Stack. Without them this event would not be taking place.

Finally, Mike would like to acknowledge the tireless work of our recently retired County Commissioner, Liz, to thank Ian our newly appointed Lead Volunteer/County Commissioner (whichever it is today) in anticipation of his tireless work, the board of trustees, Finance 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. Without you our 14,000 youth members would not be enjoying experiences they would not get elsewhere or gaining experiences that will benefit them for a lifetime.

5. Appointments

- a) Appoint the County Chair – Mike Shurety was appointed for 3 years
- b) Appoint the County Treasurer – Frank Monnington was appointed for 1 year.
- c) Appoint members of the County Trustee Board – previously elected trustees were appointed for the remainder of their elected term, Ian Grahame and Richard Watson for 3 years, and Dan Nathan/Nick Neider for 1 year
- d) Under TSA transformation the County Secretary is no longer a trustee and the role title will change to County Trustee Board Administrator.
- e) Re-appoint County President and Vice Presidents – the President was reappointed, as were the current County Vice Presidents. The meeting approved to appointment of Frank Brittain as a County Vice President.
- f) Appoint the Auditor – the meeting approved the appointment of MHA as County auditors for a further 2 years.
- g) Elect representatives of the County Scout Council to represent the County on the Council of The Scout Association – the meeting approved the appointment of Mike Shurety and Dan Nathan.