

Annual report
and accounts
2020 - 2021



Scouts
1st Sandwell



**1st Sandwell Scout Group
Virtual AGM**

30th September 2021

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2020 - 2021

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MINUTES OF PREVIOUS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Virtual Annual General Meeting - 16th July 2020

Present: Brigitte Hatfield (Secretary), Chris Jones (GSL), Elaine Nixon (Assistant Section Leader), Lewis Tucker (Section Leader), Alan Dean (Treasurer), Shirley Wilson (Deputy Chairman), Toby Hatfield (Sectional Assistant), Carol Payton (Section Leader), Vanessa Hitchon (Chairman), Matt Burns (Section Leader), Ben Hatfield (Section Leader), Stephen Nixon (Section Leader), Mark Green (Exec Member), Reece Williams (Assistant Section Leader), Ed O'Neal (Assistant Section Leader), Jason Cross (Assistant Section Leader), James Potter (Exec Member), Ryan Wilson (Assistant Section Leader), Julie Neil (Assistant Section Leader), Mark Bache (County Commissioner) and parents / carers of young people from the group.

Apologies: Dawn Grice (District Commissioner), Nicola Dean, Graham Jones, Sarah Linley

1. Welcome

A welcome was extended to all leaders, parents and young people in attendance via Zoom. Thank you to everyone who has mastered the technology. A particular thank you to Mark Bache as County Commissioner for the first part of the meeting.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

It was proposed that these be taken as a true record. Ed Neal proposed they be accepted. Stephen Nixon seconded.

3. Section Reports

These were taken as read and accepted as a true record. GSL wanted to make special note of achievers of top awards in the last 12 months:

- Ralph and Rosalie, Beaver Scouts, have gained the top Award the Chief Scouts Bronze Award
- Chloe Postlethwaite, who has been selected to go on the County Expedition to Iceland.

- Luis, Evie and Ayiesha, the Explorer Scouts who completed the 40-mile endurance event, 'The Chase Walk' and also Mark Postlethwaite one of our Scout Leaders.
- Alan Dean – bar as special order of merit for services to Scouting

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer explained that the Group is financially stable with 12-month reserve which will see us through the next year. The reserve has been boosted by the receipt of Government grants to provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic. These grants have totalled £10,000 to the end of 2020. A further grant to be included in 2021 accounts has also been received. A copy of the financial statement is attached.

Alan Dean Treasurer

A copy of all the section reports has been made available on our Group website for parents to view and hopefully most of you have had an opportunity to do that before this evening's 'meeting'.

There were no comments or questions raised on the report except for a general question about financial stability which was addressed.

5. Group Scout Leader's Report

The year 2019 has been another successful year for our Group, although particularly challenging in some ways. Our finances are healthy, and our Headquarters are well maintained, thanks to our hardworking Executive Committee. You will see from our section reports that our membership numbers have remained good and the activities undertaken have been very varied with our young people gaining a vast number of activity badges covering an amazing range of subjects, as well as working towards their Challenge Awards. All sections have enjoyed Sleepovers and Camps, where again they took part in lots of exciting activities. These residential experiences are so important not only because of the new skills learnt but also the valuable lesson of learning to live without all the mod cons and technical equipment that they are used to, learning to think for themselves and to stand on their own two feet and be independent. All part of the 'Skills for Life' philosophy that we are renowned for.

One of the challenges we had to face in September 2019 was to find a new team to lead the Cub Scout Pack. Kirsty, Matt, Lynne and Jackie decided it was time for them to step

down. We presented them with `Thanks` Badges and gifts at the beginning of September. They have done a wonderful job leading the Cub Scout Pack on many adventures and we thank them most sincerely. It is always sad when leaders decide to leave and finding replacements is never easy. I am sure that all of our Parents want to see the Group continue, but do not necessarily want to be leaders. However, we had to find new Leaders and we did. Matt Burns and Matt Cross took over leadership of the Pack from the second week in September, and despite the fact that at that time they had never Scouted before, they are still with us and doing a fantastic job. It has been a huge learning curve for them, and they would like more help and deserve our support, so please consider volunteering. Nicola Dean and I have supported them every week during this time despite the fact that we both live about 30 miles away. Although it is part of my job description, it is not part of hers, and she deserves a huge `Thank You`. More help is definitely needed, I am just waiting for your phone call.

Very well done to all of our young people; enjoy your successes and the challenges to come. We are very proud of you and you should be justly proud of yourselves.

My thanks as always go to our Leadership Team and our Group Executive Committee they give 100% and are `Simply the Best`. Without them the Group could not continue to offer great Scouting to all our young people. Thank you also to the parents who give their support to all our efforts and to our young people who manage to put a smile on our face week after week.

Christine Jones
Group Scout Leader

6. Election of Officers

The position of Chairman is a nominated position by GSL. The nomination this year is Vanessa Hitchon as Chair.

Only one nomination has been received for the posts of Secretary (B Hatfield) and Treasurer (A Dean) and therefore it was proposed that they continue in these roles.

7. Election of Executive Committee

James Potter, Shirley Wilson (Vice Chair) and Mark Green have all agreed to stand again. We also have one new member, Graham Jones.

Ben Hatfield proposed they be appointed en bloc. Lewis Tucker seconded

8. AOB

The GSL then gave a short talk on where we are in terms of the potential return to face-to-face scouting. We are currently in a state of Amber which means that we can meet face-to-face but with a maximum number of 15 in an outdoors setting (including leadership). Before we can proceed with this, we need to undertake risk assessments but after some discussion we are suggesting that we do not attempt to undertake this until September at the earliest and then only if parents are happy for their children to participate. There is a meeting this coming Saturday with some of the leaders to discuss how this might take place. Given the fact that by September the light will be fading, it may be that we need to meet at a weekend. There was a call for parents' input to this proposal; comments on webpage, email or phone GSL or leadership of section.

We have received government grant which is very welcome and will certainly help us during the next few months.

Mark Bache (County Commissioner) – Covid-19 has taken us all by surprise. Clearly everyone is anxious about a return to Scouting so there will be no pressure to return until everyone feels safe to do so. We need to be mindful of the potential local lockdowns and also the possibility of a second wave. Our status is reviewed in line with National Youth agencies each 12 weeks. There will be no possibility of the status changing to green until either a vaccine has been found or Covid-19 has gone altogether.

GROUP SCOUT LEADER REPORT

Once again, our Annual General Meeting will take place via Zoom, not the way we had planned to do it but hopefully, by next year we will be able to hold our AGM face to face. The report will be on the Group website, but we decided that we would also send you a paper copy of the Annual Report.

My report this year has very little content about what we have been doing because of the difficult year we have all had. We stopped face to face Scouting on 16th March 2020 and did not meet together again until April 2021.

Despite this, we have tried to keep in touch with all of our members and the section leaders have sent them activities to do at home and information about activities they could take part in online. Some of our young people have engaged with this `virtual` Scouting and some have not, but that was to be expected. Our leaders, of course, have experienced the same difficulties like everyone else, with changing work patterns, home-schooling, and forced isolation but despite this, they have done their best to keep in touch with everyone and keep their training up to date.

We met for the first-time face to celebrate St. George`s Day at the end of April with a treasure trail hike around Sandwell Valley, ending with the renewal of our Promise and, of course, chocolate treasure. It was wonderful to see our young people after such a long time, and how they had grown!

We have lost some of our members for various reasons. Some members have not returned because they have moved away, some because they are too old, and in some cases, because they did not want to come back. However, I am pleased to report that some of the ones who had said they would not be coming back have returned. We also lost 4 members of our Scout Leadership team, Stephen Nixon, Elaine Nixon, Sarah Linley and Ed O`Neal. They decided that they would not return to our leadership team. They have given good service for many years which has been greatly appreciated. Our sincere thanks go to them all.

We could not go camping this year but instead held a day in Camp at Beaudesert Campsite, during the summer holidays. This was an excellent day and all our young people had a good time, climbing, zooming down zip wires, racing peddle carts, rifle shooting and soft archery, as well as enjoying each other`s company. They also managed to consume huge quantities of hot dogs, beef burgers, cakes and toasted marshmallows.

Looking forward we need to do some recruiting of young people and most importantly recruiting of leaders. Lewis, Ben and Reece are currently running Scouts on a Tuesday evening and Explorers on a Thursday evening. This is not sustainable indefinitely, but they do it because they do not want your children to miss out on Scouting. We have been fortunate to gain one new Leader, Adastra Fletcher-Hall, who has joined Matt Burns and Matt Cross, in the Cub Scout Leadership Team. Adastra came to us when she completed her time as an Explorer Scout. She has started University, but fortunately for us at a local University. Two more of our Explorer Scouts join us as Occasional Helpers, Evie Bull and Grace Giles. They have also started University but in Liverpool and will therefore only be able to come back to us to help during their holidays. We are delighted to welcome these new additions to our team and look forward to working with them in the future.

My plea to you is to ask yourself, "Could I help or do I know someone who could"? We need to address this issue as a matter of urgency.

Finally, my thanks go to all our dedicated leaders and members of our Executive Committee, they have all had to face the same difficulties as everyone else during the past year but have given their time and have remained determined to keep Scouting at 1st Sandwell alive and well.

We now need your help to continue to do so.

Chris Jones
Group Scout Leader



BEAVER SCOUT SECTION REPORT

What can I say, we have just had a year like no other...

March 2020 saw us hit lockdown and Scouting moved online.

During the lockdown Beavers continued their scouting with weekly challenges and many completed the Great Indoors Activity badge and took part in the County 'Seven Weeks Seven Challenges' & 'West Mercia Scouts Winter World Tour' programme of activities. It was not Scouting as we know it, but it kept us in touch and gave us hope for the future.

April 2021 saw us take our first tentative steps towards a return to face-to-face activities with a St Georges Day hike around Sandwell Valley and we then returned to outdoor colony meetings in June. We ended the summer with an activity day at Beaudesert.

We are now looking forward to a fresh start in September, with a return to 'real' Scouting and will hopefully be able to build our numbers back up to strength.

Congratulations must go to Isla and Jiya, who despite all the odds completed their Chief Scouts Bronze Award - this award is not easy and requires a great deal of determination and hard work.

Well done!

Carol Payton
Beaver Scout Leader



SCOUT SECTION & EARHART EXPLORER SCOUT UNIT REPORT

As the other reports may have stated, this past year has been unusual due to the pandemic. With Scouting across the country running a limited programme in the form of online meetings or even closing. The Explorer Section did partake in some virtual meetings - we all felt it was a little odd and extremely difficult to run a virtual programme – we were all eager to return to the Scouting we knew.

Our main concern when starting back up in May were our numbers, as with most sections we thought that the extended period with a lack of Scouting would have reduced ours significantly. Fortunately, this has not been the case as we have retained the majority of our Scouts and even gained a few new ones since starting back.

For the Explorer section whilst our numbers are the same as the previous year, 'who' we have has changed greatly. Our original Explorers from the rebrand in 2018 have turned 18 and are now starting a new chapter in their life with some attending university and one who has enrolled to the Army. We wish the best for them and hope that the skills we taught along the way will be of some use and they'll look back on their Scouting days as those filled with joy (even though we forced them to do the Chase Walk).

Our current numbers for both sections are as follows:

Scouts

- 17 members
 - 7 retained
 - 10 new (including moving from Cubs)

Earhart Explorers

- 8 members
 - 2 retained
 - 6 new (including moving from Scouts)

During the pandemic the leadership team has changed for the Scouts section, this is now being run by the Earhart Explorer Leaders (Ben, Lewis and Reece) along with Mark who is continuing as an Assistant Leader. As we were unsure of numbers for both sections at the beginning, we decided it best to merge the two sections nights to one and run a dual programme. Whilst it was a good option at the beginning, we have now reverted to the separate section nights allowing us to focus on well-rounded programmes geared towards the two age ranges.

We would just like to take this opportunity to thank all who have helped us in any way over the past year, including parents, fellow leaders and of course the executive committee. We couldn't do it without you, and we are eager to see what the next year brings us.

Scouts & Earhart Explorer Leadership Team



TREASURER'S REPORT

1st Sandwell Scout Group is a registered charity, with all its income derived from; charitable donations, gift aid reclaimed from HM Revenue and Customs, fundraising and membership subscriptions. There are no paid officers, and all leaders and supporters provide their services on a voluntary basis.

The Scout Group as a trust owns the building, with the land being owned by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and leased to the Group. The group is responsible for all maintenance and running costs associated with the building and the land, along with all costs associated with providing Scouting to its members. In addition, the Group pays an annual subscription to the National Scout Association based on the number of members in the Group. During 2020 the Group, including Earhart Explorers, was operating with virtual meetings due to COVID 19 restrictions. Our numbers fluctuated and it was not possible to maintain records of attendance.

The Group Executive Committee carries out management of the group's affairs. This committee consists of the Group Scout Leader, nominated and elected officers & members. All elected officers & members are from parents/carers of young members and supporters of the Group. The executive committee members are also Trustees of the Group as required by the Charities Commission.

Accounts for the period January-December 2020 are provided in the form of a balance sheet appended to this report. The Group has a small operating loss of expenditure over income for this period. However, thanks to Government grants of £10,000 in 2020 we are able to maintain the financial security of the group.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all parents of members who have provided support to the Group and to ask for your continued support. Scouting at this level is only possible because of the time and effort provided by leaders and supporters of the Group. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all Leaders, Members of the Group Executive, and supporters for all their time, thus enabling me to carry out the role of treasurer.

Alan Dean
Group Treasurer



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