

MINUTES of the meeting of the LONSDALE DISTRICT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE held on 1 December 2020 online.

Present: T Andrews (Chair), M Sweet (DC), S Landles (Treasurer), A S Hague (Secretary), J Carbert, H Greenwood, C Kellett, R Parker.

Apologies Received: L Ash, B Goldsworthy, S Mather.

Not Present: D Bateman, L Maun.

Chair's 'Thought for the Day':

"When you feel wiped out and blown away by a huge challenge, trust that anything is possible. You may not see a way out at the moment. You may feel that the whole world is lined up against you. But believe that circumstances can change, solutions can appear, and help can arrive from unexpected places. Then anything is possible!"

- Nick Vujicic "Life Without Limits"

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising:

i. Trustee Declarations outstanding:

A number of declarations were outstanding. The Secretary requested that these be sent to him as soon as possible.

ii. Lease for District Headquarters:

Following approval of the action at the previous meeting the District Chair reported that the new lease had been signed by the Secretary, himself and, subsequently, the landlord. The execution of this had cost the District just £5 – that being the fee for swearing the statutory declaration before a solicitor.

iii. Lease for Communications Mast at SilverHelme:

The District Chair reported that this lease had now been signed by the SATC and Airwaves Ltd. (the lessor) and the matter successfully concluded. The operative date was 15 October 2020. The cost of completing this lease had been £600 (including VAT) for the recent, required surveyor's report plus a sum to Savills for the initial negotiations with the lessor. The Chair estimated that all these costs had been covered by an increase in rent (for the period to 31 March 2020) which Savills had negotiated on our behalf whilst in the process of agreeing the heads of terms for the new lease. Our solicitors had informed us that their (fixed) fee of £900 (including

VAT) had been paid by the lessor. (The initial agreement was that they would contribute £700 towards our solicitor's fees).

iv. COVID-19 Risk Assessment:

The Chair shared information on the numbers of COVID-19 Risk Assessments that had been approved to date. Sixteen Groups had shown an intent to take part in face to face Scouting. This compared to ten reported previously. 47% of the District's sections had shown an intent to take part in face to face activities. Groups were being encouraged to organise at least one activity, either face to face or online prior to Christmas.

v. Supporting Group Executive Committees:

The Chair wished thanks to be recorded to the Secretary for drawing together information and guidance from online sources that could support Group Executive Committees in carrying out their duties. Details of this 'Executive Committee Toolkit' had been circulated to members for comment. Other initiatives planned included a proposal to convene a discussion with Group Chairs etc. in the New Year to determine where help was most needed. The Treasurer had also been working with the Slyne with Hest Group in helping them sort out their financial situation and to produce annual accounts; this work could form the model for helping other Groups in similar situations.

E960 Secretary's Report / Correspondence:

Nothing to report on this occasion.

E961 UK District Online Meeting:

The Chair shared part of a presentation from the most recent on this online TSA meeting for Chairs and DC's. TSA was keen to raise funds to support the 10% of Scout Groups in most need. Possible Groups needing support had been identified from questionnaires completed earlier in the year by Groups. TSA's intention was to collect together and ring fence a number of funding streams, external funding, the £1.50 extra on the membership fee, the 'Race Round the World' proceeds and other fundraising activities (target £1.8m).

The plan was at census time for Groups to opt in and self-assess against five suggested criteria on their financial situation etc. On the basis of that the Groups in most need would be identified and financial support provided.

The Chair also shared information on a proposed District Hardship Fund of £5,000, which would basically loan funds to Groups experiencing financial hardship. The proposed fund would be operated in conjunction with the West Lancashire Scout County who had agreed to underwrite defaulters by 75%. This would most likely become an issue at census time when members' subscriptions were due.

A District Coordinator had been appointed to oversee arrangements.

Howard Greenwood advanced as an alternative suggestion that the District, in view of its relatively favourable financial position, rather than loan sums to Groups suffering

hardship might look to grant them a sum to be agreed, as opposed to it being a loan to be repaid within 3 years. Acknowledging that a large part of the District's balances were tied up in the Sharpe Bequest and might not be available to released (he did suggest that the Finance sub-Committee should explore the viability of reassign such funds). He felt that there could be a large number of defaulters on the loans and furthermore it would be burdensome and off-putting for any new adult coming into one of such Groups along with everything else they had to contend with.

The DC stated that she felt that, having seen a number of Group accounts in recent times, that there were very few who would be struggling to pay their members' fees this year.

The proposal to establish a District Hardship Fund of £5,000 in association with arrangements proposed by West Lancs County **was agreed**.

E962 Finance Sub-Committee:

i Minutes of Meeting held on 19 November 2020

These were taken as read.

ii Finance Officer's Report

a. Cash flow

The Treasurer highlighted that funds were being kept in accounts that earned interest and the minimum possible in the current bank account.

b. DHQ Electricity

Thanks were expressed to the Finance Officer who goes to great lengths to ensure the best deal possible.

c. Scout & Guide Shop

The Chair reported that he had been struggling for some time to convene a meeting with the two Guide Division Commissioners to discuss possible waiver of the £100 monthly payment from 1 April 2020 and a possible reopening of the shop, when allowed. This was progressing. He had written an outline risk assessment for discussion and he would write to the County RA Adviser to seek his views on the possibility of reopening.

iii Budget for 2021

The Treasurer presented his paper on this matter highlighting that COVID-19 would be making quite a difference to the short-term finances of the District. He outlined the various proposed elements. Firstly, there were a number of HQ expenses that were largely 'fixed' and difficult to adjust in the short term.

Secondly, looking at Budget Team Requests these were more discretionary and any one might be challenged acknowledging that these funded our core activities. One item that had been cut back as not a priority in this particular year was the funding of OSM for all Groups in the District (other than the standing arrangement for Explorer Scout Units). In the future it would be preferable for Budget Holders to

submit their plans for the for them to be costed and budgeted for accordingly. The FSC would also be reviewing the whole budget process next year and would include proposals on District reserves.

Moving on to income, it was difficult in the present circumstances to predict the number of youth members and the value of their fees. A reduction of 25%, as discussed previously, was one prediction. Two other outcomes of 18% and 32% reduction were included for comparison purposes. An estimate had been calculated on Scout & Guide shop income allowing for probable closure until the middle of next year.

The anticipated budget deficit would be £14,391. The District had had budgeted deficits in the past, then had a more neutral outturn. He would rather have a really good estimate and deliver that outturn even if it was a deficit. The budget should be a financial plan and we should be able to set a figure and operate to it. We could afford the deficit figure indicated as there were predicted reserves at the year end of £43k. This sum had been built up over a number of years and the Treasurer's view was that now was an appropriate time to bring this into use.

The rate of recovery would be a crucial consideration and had the potential to affect future liquidity of the District and therefore freedom of action on our budgets.

These figures did not include the £5,000 District Hardship Fund now agreed and it might be prudent to set aside a contingency sum of, say, £1,250 to cover any default in loan repayment.

The FSC had considered adjusting the £9 District Membership Fee but had decided to keep it at the same level for reasons outlined. Howard Greenwood highlighted that many Groups would have difficulty coming to terms with the 20% increase in the overall fee when the District had significant reserves that might be used to possibly mitigate the increase but he personally accepted that if the current situation occurred in the following year the reserves would be severely compromised. He therefore felt that the budget as proposed was acceptable at the present time recognising that TSA did have plans in hand to address the national financial crisis. The difficulty would be in selling this to Groups.

In concluding, the Treasurer was of the opinion that no Group should be allowed to fail through lack of money and we would find a way to ensure that this didn't happen.

Commenting on the deficit situation, the Chair highlighted the *possibility* of transfer of funds from the £4,000 budgeted for international trips should these not be able to take place.

The Secretary queried how Groups, not having met face to face for many months, could be certain of their membership numbers for the census. The two GSL members of the Executive outlined the actions they were currently taking to

determine, as accurately as possible, likely numbers of their members going forward, noting that some parents had been reluctant to respond to various communications. It was vitally important that GSLs stayed in touch with their young people and he suggested that this fact might be highlighted to GSLs to try to ensure accurate numbers were returned.

On a ballot the Budget for 2021 **was approved with no dissentions.**

The Chair agreed to draft a letter (under the DC's and his signature) to inform Groups of the situation.

Action: Chair

E963 Appointments Advisory Committee Report

No report available on this occasion.

E964 Activity Centres Management Board:

i. Minutes of Meeting held 18 November 2020

These minutes were received for information.

The DESComm had been in touch with Silverhelme ESU regarding their payment for the use of the Mortimer Centre. The Unit had agreed to make the payment in respect of 2019. It had been agreed to write-off any requests for payments for earlier years. They had asked that they be informed when the 2020 payment (if any) should be made and whether the amount would remain the same.

Action: S Mather

ii. Budget for 2021

This had been constructed on the basis of the sites opening again in July 2021.

The Activity Centres Budget for 2021 **was approved with no dissentions.**

iii. Fees for 2021

The recommendation from the ACMB was that no change should be made to the current fees. This in order to encourage the use of the sites once they were able to be reopened again. This recommendation was accepted.

E965 Explorer Report

Jamie Carbert reported that prior to lockdown all Explorer Units, with the exception of the Young Leader Unit, had met up for face to face Scouting. During the latest lockdown a good number of Units had continued to meet via Zoom and a District-wide activity had taken place. Going forward, as we were back in Amber readiness level, he would be encouraging all Units to take advantage of the easing of restrictions. The District was also organising a Christmas Quiz, which everyone could join in with. The joining process had been updated, and streamlined, and new members were now able to register online via a [link on the District website](#). Responding to a query from the Treasurer regarding Scouts moving on to Explorers

during lockdown, with one exception, it was reported that this did not appear to be happening. Howard Greenwood indicated that this had been exacerbated in his case by the fact that the linking Unit was currently full to capacity. The Unit in question was considering options to deal with this situation. Scouts had been encouraged for the time being just to stay in touch until the situation returned to some normality. This would also be happening across other sections.

Discussion took place on responsibility for payment of membership subscriptions in this situation and individual Groups would probably come to their own decisions on this.

E966 Network Report

Courtney Kellett reported that Network was struggling to get any engagement in the current circumstances, even on Zoom. This was a problem County-wide. She had been requested to organise another virtual weekend activity but was reluctant to take on all that work when only small numbers had shown interest previously. Some interest had been expressed via SSAGO to take part in face to face activities and it was hoped that some might be organised in the New Year when conditions allowed.

In response to a query from Howard Greenwood regarding what information had been passed to Explorer Scouts due to leave their Units, on joining Network Courtney stated that she had emailed parents but she would be unaware if they had passed the information on to their children. She was planning a Christmas Card drop but it was difficult to get engagement at the moment with no face to face activities were taking place because of COVID.

E967 District Commissioner's Report

Face to face Scouting:

The District had done very well in helping Groups return to F2F Scouting with many submitting the required risk assessments. Thanks were again extended to the RA Group for all their work on this. Indoor meetings were now possible and GSLs had been informed they might take advantage of this and to adjust their RA's appropriately.

Regarding possible activities over the Christmas period Groups were in many cases doing their own thing for youth members but the Network Comm. had agreed to organise a District Quiz for adult members.

Santa:

Alex James at 16th Morecambe was available (via Zoom) if anyone needs a Santa presence.

Development:

A positive meeting had been held with the County Development Officer and all the leaders at 3rd Morecambe. The ADC Scouts was presently standing in as GSL of the Group to help matters move forward.

E968 Health and Safety Report

Howard Greenwood asked if there had been any Coronavirus outbreaks reported following on from Scouting activities. The DC was not aware of any although some leaders had tested positive for the virus but not connected to any Scouting activity. Perhaps the RA process instituted had helped in this respect.

E969 Any Other Business

Nil.

Date of Next Meeting: 27 January 2021.